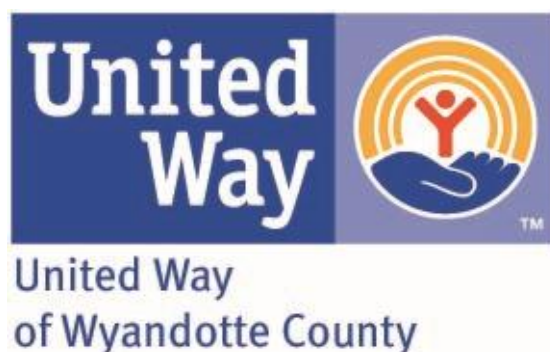
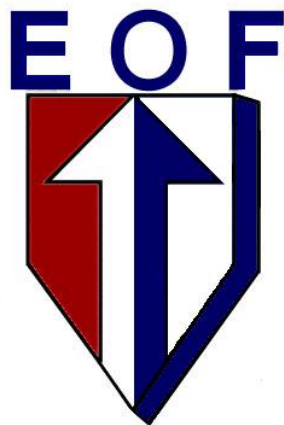


Wyandotte County 2011 Community Needs Assessment

Commissioned by the Economic Opportunity Foundation and
the United Way of Wyandotte County



This study was funded in part by a Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Discretionary Award administered by the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation.



To download a copy of the full report before July 8, 2011, visit:

<http://www.eofkck.org/news/2011-community-needs-assessment-results>

or

<http://community.unitedway-wyco.org/CNA>

After July 8, 2011, contact the Economic Opportunity Foundation to request a copy of the full 2011 Wyandotte County Community Needs Assessment.

2011 Community Needs Assessment Executive Summary

Overview of the Community Needs Assessment Process

This 2011 Wyandotte County Community Needs Assessment (CNA) was jointly initiated by the Economic Opportunity Foundation (EOF) and the United Way of Wyandotte County, in an effort to provide social service, local government, business, and other community entities with a more complete understanding of current conditions and pressing needs in the region. To collect a fuller picture of these issues and trends, EOF and the United Way of Wyandotte County solicited the participation of other agency partners, including, in addition to EOF and its Head Start centers, The Family Conservancy, El Centro, Inc., Duchesne Clinic, Catholic Charities, Metro Lutheran Ministries, Wyandot, Inc., Crosslines, Shepherd's Center, Bethel Neighborhood Center, and the Boys and Girls Clubs. More than 650 individuals, more than 80% of whom are social service agency clients, participated in this survey.

The methodology also included an online instrument that was completed by community stakeholders in Wyandotte County, including business leaders, government officials, nonprofit employees, neighborhood associations, and United Way of Wyandotte County donors. Slightly more than 540 individuals completed the online instrument in January 2011. Additionally, three focus groups, with a total of 30 participants, elicited some interpretation of the CNA findings and enriched the results with qualitative data and detailed narrative about experiences of need and assistance in Wyandotte County. These focus groups were conducted in May 2011.

Key Findings

For a full description of the demographics of client respondents and the organizational affiliations of online participants, please see the full report, which can be requested at: <http://www.eofkck.org/news/2011-community-needs-assessment-results> or by contacting the Economic Opportunity Foundation. Individuals interested in the data pertaining to a specific agency partner should contact that organization directly. The full report also includes analysis of how these data compare to emerging information from the U.S. Census Bureau, as well as more sophisticated statistical analysis that can provide insights into the relationships among attributes. Appendices to the full report

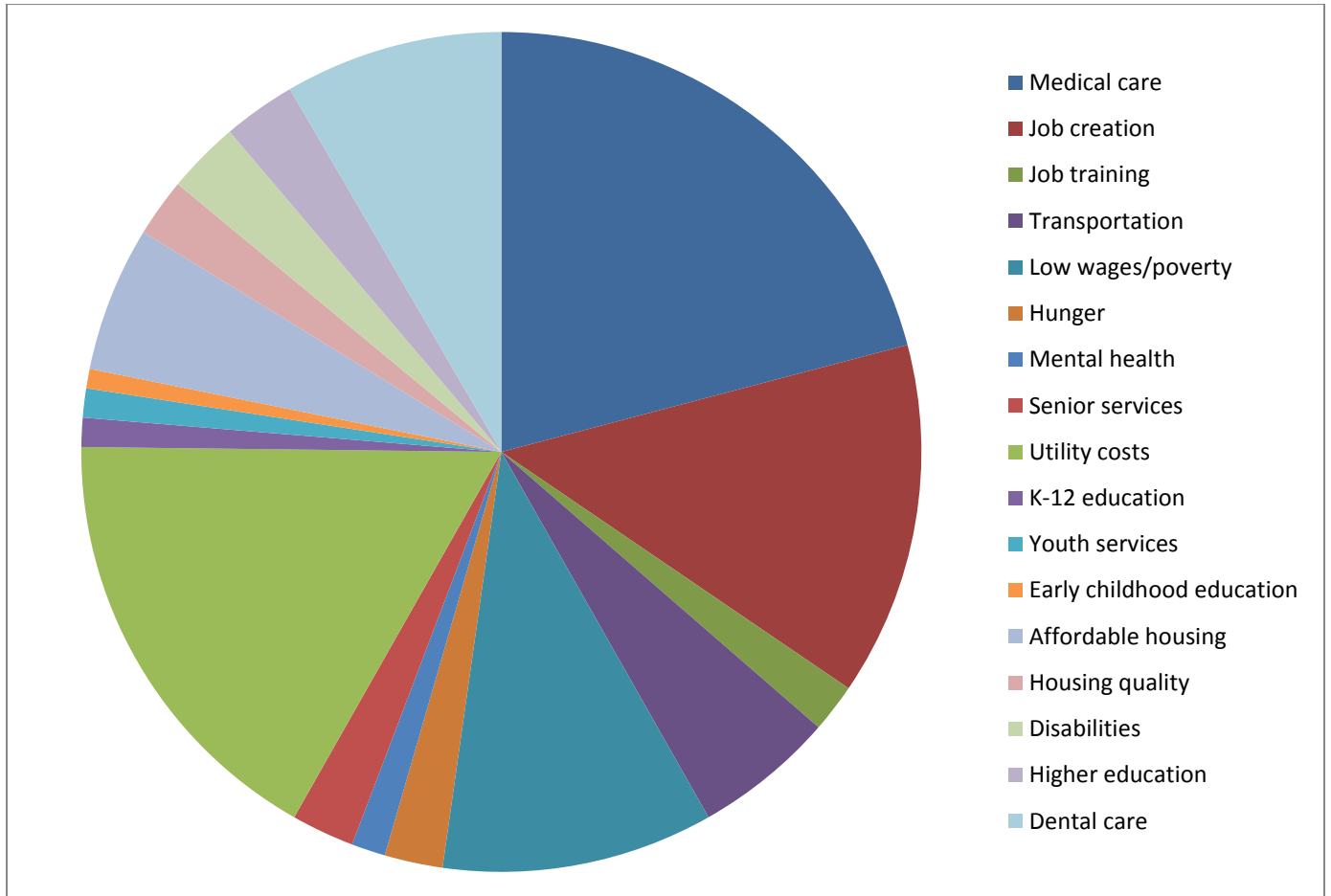
describe the findings of the online survey and the focus groups in much greater detail. Below is a summary of the key findings from all three components of the Community Needs Assessment. This Executive Summary obviously cannot provide a full treatment of the important findings, but the Economic Opportunity Foundation and the United Way of Wyandotte County hope that it sparks discussion about the implications of these results for our community, as well as thinking about how to best respond to human need as depicted here.

- Almost half of respondents (48%) are single heads of households, a rate higher than the overall population and one that likely significantly impacts household incomes and experiences of need, particularly since 60% of all respondents have children under age 18 in the household.
- Of particular interest, given the differences in poverty rates, 25% of respondents are single female heads of households with children. While these families' particular needs and experiences obviously warrant additional attention, it is also notable that most of these respondents live in two-parent families and, yet, still require assistance from social service agencies in Wyandotte County. These data certainly suggest, then, that while having two adults in a household brings some tangible economic security to the family, such family structures are not adequate to ensure that the household's needs are met.
- Single heads of household here are more likely to be unemployed and have lower incomes; 70% of single heads of household in this sample earn less than \$15,000 per year. For single women heads of household, only 45% are working, and the median wage for these workers is only \$8.84 per hour.
- Two-thirds of respondents have a high school diploma or less, a serious disadvantage in today's labor market. As would be expected, education levels are significantly correlated with household income levels, illustrating the solid link between advanced educational attainment and economic security ($r=.239$).
- Almost one-third of respondents are unemployed, a rate far higher than the overall Wyandotte County unemployment rate which, in January 2011, was 11.3% (compared to 7.4% for the state of Kansas)¹.
- For reasons likely related to disability status (23% of respondent households have at least one adult with a disability) and the presence of young children, another 22% are out of the labor market, which leaves only approximately 45% employed, even part-time.

¹ Kansas Department of Labor. (February 25, 2011). Unemployment Rates for January 2011, downloaded from: <http://www.dol.ks.gov/LMIS/newsrel/pr1101/map.html>.

- Unemployment is often a long-term phenomenon for these respondents, who have been unemployed for 8 months (median).
- Employment often fails to bring real economic security for these respondents, who earn a median \$9.28 per hour and often find full-time work elusive. This, too, varies by educational status, with education level statistically significantly correlated to one's hourly wage ($r=.375$).
- More than half of respondents live in households with less than \$15,000 in annual income.
- Only 38% of respondents report that all members of their families have health insurance, while another 31% have at least one member of their family with insurance. This means, too, that almost one-third of respondents live in entirely uninsured households, a fact which undoubtedly influences their ability to access quality medical care, and one which contributes to overall poor health outcomes in Wyandotte County.
- Almost 60% of respondents are renters, 33% are homeowners either with or without mortgage loans, and the remaining almost 9% are without permanent housing, living "doubled up" with friends or family or homeless.
- Renters paid significantly less per month in housing costs than homeowners with mortgages (\$465 v. \$679, $t=-7.346$), but significant proportions even of homeowners without mortgages, are "cost-burdened" in their housing, defined as monthly housing costs greater than 30% of gross income.
- Only 35% of respondents report receiving assistance with their number one household priority, a particularly concerning figure given the fact that these individuals are all connected already with a social service agency. Among those reporting receiving help with that issue, 57% are doing so at the agency where they were surveyed for this Community Needs Assessment and another 21% from another social service agency. Informal supports, including friends and family, are meeting the needs of another 17% of those receiving help.
- Among those not receiving help for this primary need, 61% report that they do not know where to go, again, despite having a relationship with at least one social service organization in Wyandotte County. Twenty-two percent have been turned away and/or are on waiting lists for assistance, while 17% do not want to ask for help, at least not for that particular need.

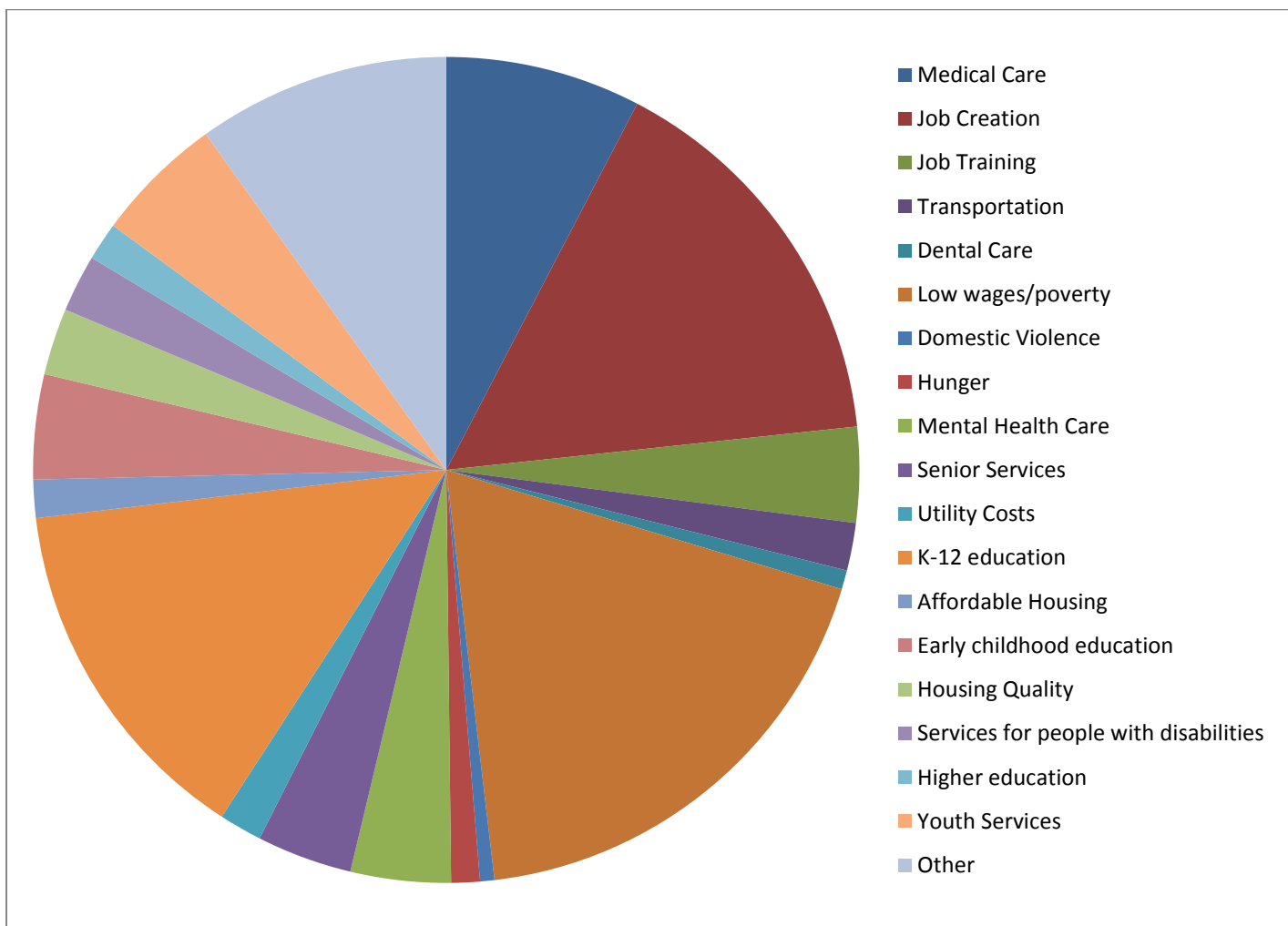
Respondents' Most Pressing Household Concerns



- While there is some convergence between needs prioritized by this client population and those cited by other entities, some noteworthy differences emerge, particularly the far greater stability in conditions reported by clients than observed by those charged to respond to them. Focus group participants hypothesized that this divergence in perspective stems from the struggles nonprofit organizations, in particular, face in trying to meet the needs of those new to the experience of need and help-seeking, in this economy, compared with their own realities of entrenched deprivation that, while onerous, has not necessarily worsened in recent months.
- Online respondents were much more likely than clients to rank K-12 education as the community's greatest challenge, and much less likely to name medical

care. Housing was also more prominent among clients than stakeholders, and housing quality was more commonly mentioned by stakeholders than housing affordability, the opposite perspective from clients. Similarly, utility costs, which barely registered as a chief priority among online respondents, were a serious concern of many clients, and were the issue most viewed as deteriorating over the past 12 months, on both the household and community levels. Focus group discussions aligned closely with the priorities evidenced in the client surveys, with particular emphasis on job creation and retention, health care, and high utility costs.

Online Respondents' Community Priorities



- Online respondents often focused on specific populations, most commonly seniors and young children, while the data reveal that working-age adults are

significantly represented among the clients of social service agencies in Wyandotte County. While these respondent demographics are undoubtedly influenced by methodological restrictions as well as by the unique emphases of the organizations that elected to participate, it is also important to recognize that, even when these “special populations” are part of the family unit seeking services, supports for the adults responsible for these households must not be overlooked.

- There are some areas of convergence between the priorities of the two groups, particularly around the importance of job creation, which may suggest some starting points for community consensus towards how to enhance quality of life in Wyandotte County. Service provider respondents also expressed the importance of creating quality jobs that pay a living wage, and focusing on that strategy would, in turn, address some of the client respondents’ other concerns, including poverty and limited access to health care. Focus group participants emphasized barriers that separate many from existing job opportunities, including lack of affordable childcare, insufficient public transportation options, and few avenues for those with prior criminal convictions, as points for intervention that could reduce unemployment in heavily-affected areas, even absent significant net job creation.
- In addition, online respondents’ rankings of *unmet needs* in Wyandotte County closely match client respondents’ priorities, with employment, emergency assistance, physical health care, and affordable housing the top four choices. These responses indicate that, while service providers are perhaps naturally inclined to advocate for their own areas of work, when surveying the total landscape of need compared to the available response, their assessments roughly align with the priorities of those living each day in need.
- Youth, whose perspectives were specifically elicited in one of the focus groups, concurred with many of the concerns related in other parts of the Community Needs Assessment process, particularly around unemployment, transportation, educational opportunities, and housing quality. Given their importance to the future of Wyandotte County, further examination of the unique experiences of young people, as well as the ways in which their needs align with those of other populations, is critical to any community change effort.
- Online respondents outlined several strengths and latent capacities of Wyandotte County, as a community, which may be leveraged as part of strategies to address lingering problems. In particular, many highlighted the attention to these issues

by the local government, the strong sense of community identity and pride, and the recent tangible strides in development.

Implications and Next Steps

Even with a sample of almost 1200 individuals and evidence of good demographic representation, this Community Needs Assessment is obviously not a definitive examination of needs and strengths within Wyandotte County. However, it does offer some data not found in other examinations, particularly given the participation of a diverse set of participating organizations, the utilization of multiple methodologies, and the inclusion of stakeholder perspectives from across the community. In particular, the ability to compare priorities among the targets of social service and community interventions and those charged with meeting these needs allows for fuller discussion of the gaps in understanding around what constitutes the most critical needs and how we should collectively respond. The Economic Opportunity Foundation and the United Way of Wyandotte County invested in this project, along with their participating agency and funding partners, to contribute valuable data and focused attention to the question of how, at this particular moment and in this specific place, we should utilize our combined resources to improve life for all in Wyandotte County. We look forward to this conversation, but, more importantly, to the action that we intend to result from it. We now know more about where we are starting, and, together, we can shape a vision for where we must go.