Introduction

The 2012 Community Data Report informs the mid-point review of the 2010-2014 Human Services Strategic Plan (HSSP), which was adopted in June, 2010. The report includes an overview of the city’s existing human services strategies, current Tacoma demographic information, community provider feedback, and identification of emerging community needs.

Community Profile

The City of Tacoma, located in Pierce County, is the third largest city in Washington State with 198,397 residents. The city faces many challenges in meeting the needs of its residents. The percent of Tacoma residents living below the federal poverty level is 17.1% compared to 12.1% statewide, and the median household income is nearly $10,000 less than the statewide median income ($47,862 to $57,244 respectively). Sixty (60) percent of Tacoma Public School students receive free or reduced lunch and only slightly over half will graduate from high school on time (55.3%, Class of 2010). On any given night, there are 1,997 homeless adults and children in Tacoma & Pierce County. Tacoma residents continue to experience slightly higher rates of unemployment, with 9.3% unemployed in January 2012 compared to 9.0% statewide.

Critical Community Needs

1. Educational & Employment Services for Youth & Adults
2. Transportation
3. Affordable Housing
4. Services & Housing for Unaccompanied Youth & Young Adults
5. Greater Access to Mental Health Care & Medical Care

Affordable Housing

Many Tacoma residents do not have the income to afford housing on the private market. For example, in Pierce County, a one-bedroom apartment at 2012 Fair Market Rent values (FMR) is $745.00 per month and a two-bedroom $929.00 per month, not even affordable to a full-time minimum wage worker. According to HUD standards, rent is affordable when it amounts to 30% of the household’s income. To afford the FMR for the two-bedroom apartment, a household would need an annual income of about $37,200 or the full time equivalent of $17.98/hour. This is in contrast to the average renter earning approximately $12.50/hr and the state’s minimum wage being $9.04/hr.
Greater Access to Mental Health Care & Medical Care

Survey participants identified access to mental health and medical care as equally important.

One of the themes that emerged is a need for effective dual diagnosis treatment that integrates mental health and substance abuse interventions.

Participants cited the dental and vision needs of clients are often marginalized. A local service provider in the survey passionately stated, “It is easy for [many] to think dental and vision are not important issues. If your teeth are rotten who will hire you? If you are hired and have to continuously take time off due to problems with your teeth, you lose your job. If you need diabetic test strips and DSHS doesn’t pay for them, then what? If your glasses are five years old and no longer work for you, how are you going to see to get a job and become self-sufficient?”

Source: City of Tacoma