



East Texas
Human Needs Network

2013 Human Needs Report
Smith County, TX

Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The East Texas Human Needs Network (ETHNN) conducted a Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CCNA) in order to understand the nature, extent, and effects of poverty on Smith County residents. The CCNA survey contained 65 questions and more than 300 possible responses. Surveys of clients and visitors were conducted by trained staff and volunteers at 14 ETHNN member agencies.

This report is organized into three areas: Demographic Profile, Economic Wellbeing, and Areas of Study. The areas of study are Education, Employment, Healthcare, and Housing. Each of these areas contains specific indicators of need. We will utilize all components of this research to develop a community action plan and to measure progress over time.

Data Highlights:

Demographic Profile:

CCNA data accounts for 341 households made up of 455 adults and 597 children, for a total of 1,052 individuals.

- 64% are White, 24% are Black, 11% two or more races, and 1% Asian.
- 18% are of Hispanic descent.
- 37% are single, 19% are married, and 21% are divorced or separated.
- 33% are raising children.
- The average household size is 3.4.
- 12% are US Veterans.

Economic Wellbeing:

Although a variety of factors are associated with the needs of Smith County residents, household income emerged as the factor that has the greatest impact on need, access to services, and quality of life.

- 65% of those surveyed are living below the official poverty line. These official measures, however, do not account for the working poor, individuals working full time, earning more than the poverty line and still unable to make ends meet.
- Earning a living wage and the health insurance were identified as the most critical needs in relation to economic wellbeing.

Areas of Study:

There are several key indicators that place a person at risk of living in poverty, including: Low educational attainment; unemployment; large family size; single parent family; disability; minority race or ethnic group; female gender; size and remoteness of home community; and no healthcare coverage, among others. Top indicator and need per area of study were:

- Education
 - Indicator: 33% have less than a high school education.
 - Need: Assistance with school tuition was identified as the top need.
- Employment
 - Indicator: 42% are unemployed.
 - Need: Career and job training was identified as the top need.
- Healthcare
 - Indicator: 44% have no healthcare coverage.
 - Need: Health insurance and the need for dental care were identified as needs which were equally severe.
- Housing
 - Indicator: 12% percent are experiencing homelessness with an additional 14% at risk of becoming homeless.
 - Need: Utility assistance was identified as the top need.

In addition to these areas of study, ETHNN surveyed participants on the issues of Transportation, Childcare, Legal Needs, and the Needs of Veterans. This information is included in the Economic Wellbeing section of the report.

The top ten needs quantified by the CCNA are:

1. Living Wage
2. Health Insurance
3. Dental Care
4. Eye / Vision Care
5. General Medical Care
6. Credit Repair
7. Treatment for Depression
8. Utility Assistance
9. Transportation to Medical Appointments
10. Planning for the Future / Goal Setting

Finally, CCNA data present the reality of poverty in Smith County, how it affects all aspects of life and limits people's ability to live fruitful and happy lives. The data also present how people living in poverty experience a range of disadvantages which combine to reinforce each other and trap them in poverty, which reduces the length and quality of life often for multiple generations.

Next steps

With this valuable information now available, ETHNN will work towards collective impact through cross-sector collaboration of public, private, and non-profit sectors. ETHNN believes that through common goals, shared measurements, mutually reinforcing activities, and continuous communication we can achieve large-scale impact to solve our community's complex social problems.

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