

Community Relations - Social Development Commission: Consumer Interviews

Executive Summary

This executive summary presents a summary of results from in-depth interviews with 20 recipients of Community Relations – Social Development Commission (CR-SDC) services. The intent and focus of these interviews was to obtain direct feedback from CR-SDC consumers related to needs, service gaps, barriers, and suggestions for overcoming these barriers; and was not evaluative of current services. The interviews were commissioned by the CR-SDC and conducted by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research (CUIR) in February/March 2010. This is one of six research components of a comprehensive needs assessment for the CR-SDC. The needs assessment has four goals:

- (1) Identify and quantify the incidence or prevalence of individual need;
- (2) Identify gaps in human service provision;
- (3) Identify barriers to self-sufficiency; and
- (4) Identify strategies for overcoming barriers to self-sufficiency.

It is important to note that these results are only representative of the consumer sample of 20 interviewees, and should not be generalized across all CR-SDC interviewees. The results discussed below highlight the findings pertinent to each of these goals.

Poverty is a Serious Problem in Milwaukee County

All interviewees indicated that poverty is a serious problem in Milwaukee County. In terms of the change in quality of life for the consumers' families over the past three years, two out of five reported that it has stayed the same, while 35% reported that it has gotten worse and 25% reported that it has gotten better.

Consumers have Many Service Needs

The four core areas with the most service or resource needs identified by consumers are Education, Food and Nutrition, Employment, and Housing.

There are Many Barriers that Keep People in Poverty

The consumers who participated in this research identified several barriers that keep people in poverty in Milwaukee County. Employment-related barriers were the most frequently cited by respondents, with 42% of all responses, and a lack of jobs or employment was the most frequently cited barrier (33%). Drugs and alcohol issues were identified in about one of eight responses (12%). Education-related barriers were identified in 9% of responses.

Suggested Strategies to Reduce Poverty in Milwaukee County

There were multiple suggested strategies and solutions to reduce poverty in Milwaukee County suggested by the consumer interviewees. Employment-related strategies were the most frequent with 36% of responses, and the most commonly reported strategy was more jobs (18%). Fifteen percent identified education strategies, with 10% of coded responses being "more education." One in eight responses (13%) were identified as more programs or resources as a suggested strategy.

These results show that the causes and effects of poverty are intricately interconnected. The information above will be used to advise and guide the CR-SDC as it plans programming for low-income individuals in 2010 and beyond. These results will also be used to inform and educate community leaders on issues related to poverty in Milwaukee. As reports become available, they will be posted at www.cr-sdc.org.