

Community Relations - Social Development Commission: CR-SDC Staff Survey

Executive Summary

This executive summary presents results from an online survey of 153 Community Relations – Social Development Commission (CR-SDC) staff related to poverty and associated needs in the community. The survey was commissioned by CR-SDC and conducted by the Center for Urban Initiatives & Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and CR-SDC in February 2010. The survey consisted of four questions focusing on the seriousness of poverty-related issues, importance of addressing poverty-related issues, attention to poverty-related issues, and barriers keeping people in poverty. The results discussed below highlight the findings pertinent to each of these questions.

Seriousness of Poverty-Related Issues

Pertaining to the issues of employment, education, housing, food & nutrition, transportation, health & healthcare, use of available income, and family & relationships, CR-SDC staff were asked: “How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following are serious problems in Milwaukee County?”

A majority of respondents agree that each issue area is a serious problem in Milwaukee County. The most agreement (agree or strongly agree) from respondents as to the seriousness of the problem was found for employment (97%), education (97%), housing (96%), & health & healthcare (95%). The least amount of agreement – although still a majority – was found for transportation at 84%.

Importance of Addressing Poverty-Related Issue Areas

Pertaining to the issues of employment, education, housing, food and nutrition, transportation, health & healthcare, use of available income, and family & relationships, CR-SDC staff were asked: “Please rate the importance of addressing each of the following issues in Milwaukee County, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important.”

A majority of CR-SDC staff reported high importance of addressing each issue area, with a majority of responses of either 4 or 5 (very important). However, there is considerable variation between areas. Among all issue areas, employment (98%) and education (95%) were seen as the most important areas to address. These were followed by health & healthcare at 93%, housing at 91%, and family & relationships at 88%. Transportation was the lowest issue area at 74%.

Is Enough Being Done about Poverty-Related Issue Areas

Pertaining to the issues of employment, education, housing, food and nutrition, transportation, health & healthcare, use of available income, and family & relationships, CR-SDC staff were asked: “In your opinion, is enough being done in each of the following areas to reduce poverty in Milwaukee County?”

In all eight issue areas related to poverty, a majority of CR-SDC staff reported “no,” not enough was being done to reduce poverty in Milwaukee County. For employment, 91% of CR-SDC staff reported that not enough was being done. The next closest issue areas were education and health & healthcare at 80%, which was a full 11% below employment. This was followed by 71% for housing, 66% for family & relationships, and 64 % for use of available income. Transportation (62%) and food & nutrition (58%) were the lowest.

Barriers that Keep People in Poverty

CR-SDC staff were asked: “I’m going to list a few barriers or obstacles - economic ups & downs, alcohol & drug abuse, unhealthy family relationships, poor neighborhood conditions, community violence or public safety issues, discrimination or racial injustice, ineffective government policies & programs, ineffective poverty reducing programs, lack of poverty reducing programs - that some think may keep people in poverty. Please rate how likely each is to keeping people in poverty.”

For each barrier, a majority of respondents reported that the barrier is either very or somewhat likely to keep people in poverty. Ninety-nine percent of CR-SDC staff report that economic ups & downs keep people in poverty, followed by 98% for alcohol & drug use, and 96% for unhealthy family environments. The least likely barrier – still at 81% of CR-SDC staff reporting either very or somewhat likely – was a lack of poverty-reducing programs.

Comparisons to Milwaukee County Residents

As part of the CSBG needs assessment, CR-SDC was also interested in obtaining data from a broad sampling of Milwaukee County residents. From October 12, 2009 to October 23, 2009, CUIR contacted residents of Milwaukee County using random-digit telephone dialing and the final data set is comprised of 420 completed surveys. In the telephone survey, the four questions (with a few minor word changes) asked of CR-SDC staff were also asked of Milwaukee County residents.

What the data reveals is that Milwaukee County residents and CR-SDC staff are in agreement on the top-ranked issue for three of the four questions. However, there are some differences between the two populations in the second- and third-ranked issues for each question. Moreover, the two populations also differed on the most significant barrier keeping people in poverty.

Seriousness of Poverty-Related Issues

Ranking	Milwaukee County Residents	CR-SDC Staff
#1	Employment	Education/Employment
#2	Education	Housing
#3	Family & Relationships	Health & Healthcare

Importance of Addressing Poverty-Related Issue Areas

Ranking	Milwaukee County Residents	CR-SDC Staff
#1	Employment	Employment
#2	Education	Education
#3	Family & Relationships	Health & Healthcare

Is Enough Being Done about Poverty-Related Issue Areas

Ranking	Milwaukee County Residents	CR-SDC Staff
#1	Employment	Employment
#2	Education	Education/Health & Healthcare
#3	Health & Healthcare/Family & Relationships	Housing

Barriers that Keep People in Poverty

Ranking	Milwaukee County Residents	CR-SDC Staff
#1	Alcohol & Drug Abuse/Unhealthy Family Environments	Economic Ups & Downs
#2	Economic Ups & Downs	Alcohol & Drug Abuse
#3	Poor Neighborhood Conditions	Unhealthy Family Environments

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.