

Community Relations - Social Development Commission: Survey of Milwaukee County Stakeholders

Executive Summary

This executive summary provides the results of a poverty survey of 182 Milwaukee County stakeholders. The survey was designed to gather input about how stakeholders perceive the issue of poverty in Milwaukee County and ways the Community Relations – Social Development Commission (CR-SDC) can help address it, especially from a systemic perspective. A stakeholder was considered to be someone who has an interest in or direct or indirect involvement with poverty, its causes, effects, and solutions. The survey was commissioned by the CR-SDC and conducted by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research (CUIR) in January/February 2010. This survey 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.

The results discussed below highlight the findings pertinent to each of these goals.

Poverty is Perceived as a Serious Problem and on the Rise

Almost all stakeholders (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that poverty is a serious problem in Milwaukee County. Similarly, nearly nine of ten stakeholders (87%) surveyed thought that poverty had increased in Milwaukee County in the past three years.

Employment and Education are Major Factors Related to Poverty

Overall, respondents were found to offer employment- and education-related responses when asked about the various aspects of poverty. Education and employment-related responses were consistently found among the top three most frequently cited responses for each open-ended question asked. Specifically, education- and employment related themes were consistently found to be the most frequently mentioned problems, barriers, and solutions associated with poverty.

People in Poverty Face Multifaceted Problems

When asked about the biggest problems facing people in poverty, the top three areas were problems related to employment, education, and health and healthcare. However, another common theme for this question was that people in poverty suffer multiple, serious problems, and that there is not one single problem that affects them most, but rather a list of interconnected problems.

Recommendations for How SDC Can Reduce Poverty

Respondents were asked a short question about solutions to poverty with respect to SDC in particular: “What else do you think SDC could do to help reduce poverty in Milwaukee County?” The top three most cited recommendations were related to education (21%), advocacy/leadership (17%), and comprehensive/strategic programming (16%).

Reducing Black Male Joblessness

Researching issues related to black male joblessness is of particular interest for SDC, and a question regarding this issue was included in the survey. When asked about what can be done to reduce black male joblessness in Milwaukee County, stakeholders' most popular responses focus on job training and skills (36%), education (34%), and jobs/employment (29%). Improved programming for felons/reentry was another responses highly discussed by stakeholders, especially in the "VIP" interviews.

Other Major Themes

While education and employment issues were consistently mentioned top themes, other themes were also consistently mentioned without being among the top three responses. These other themes include: (1) transportation/transit, (2) hopelessness, and (3) coordinated/strategic service delivery.

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.