



COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



ABOUT CHILDREN'S SERVICES COUNCIL OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County is an independent special district established by Palm Beach County voters, who dedicate a source of funding so more children are born healthy, remain free from abuse and neglect, are ready for kindergarten, and have access to quality afterschool and summer programming.



CHILDREN'S SERVICES COUNCIL'S MISSION

The Council's mission is to enhance the lives of children and their families and enable them to attain their full potential by providing a unified context within which children's needs can be identified and resolved by all members of the community. To achieve this, the Council plans, develops, funds, and evaluates programs and promotes public policies which benefit Palm Beach County's children and families.

INTRODUCTION

To accurately assess the needs of parents of young children Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County commissioned a number of qualitative and quantitative studies, which resulted in a final needs assessment. The assessment included a snapshot of results from a variety of sources, such as parent and provider surveys, focus groups, photovoice (a focus group with pictures) and community statistics. This Executive Summary identifies the major issues found through the Community Needs Assessment (CNA), and provides examples from the full CNA report. This summary, the full report and all sub-reports from the variety of data collected are available at <http://www.cscpb.org/commneeds>.

The Community Needs Assessment identifies health priorities and gaps in services for pregnant women, parents, infants and young children in Palm Beach County. It will be used by CSC as part of a strategic review process to improve decisions regarding program funding. The information garnered also will aid in writing a new five-year Healthy Start Service Delivery Plan. Additionally, needs will be

communicated to partners in order to help with community planning and programs for young children.

In Palm Beach County, it is estimated almost 20% (276,718) of the population in Palm Beach County in 2015 were children younger than 18, with 5% (72,744) younger than 5.

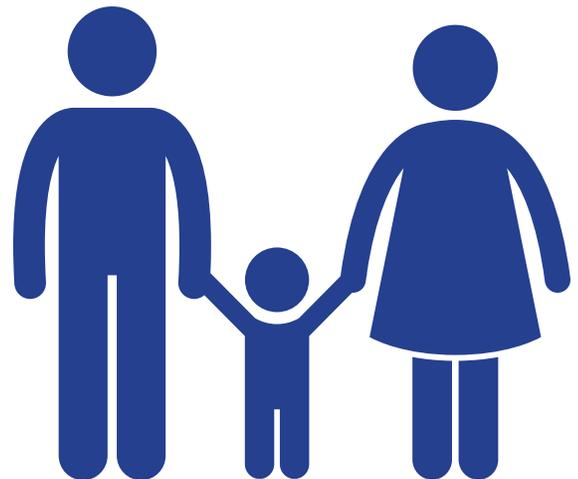
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NEEDS OF FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Investing in young children and parents in the first few years of life can save in the long term by preventing “tangible costs associated with special education, foster care, welfare, medical care, law enforcement, social security and intangible costs such as physical and/or emotional pain experienced by children with developmental delays and their families.” (CDC, 2016)

The Community Needs Assessment outlines needs specific to young children and their parents; yet, these issues may be cross cutting, affecting not only families with young children but all of the population. The needs for families with young children include:



- Access to quality affordable child care and early learning opportunities
- Information/services to ensure children are developing appropriately both socially and emotionally
- Access to helpful programs
- Improvements in health care access and health outcomes for pregnant women, babies and children
- Additional mental health services



ACCESS TO QUALITY AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

High-quality early childhood education lays the groundwork for a child’s future. Studies have shown these programs can have a positive effect on a child’s cognitive and social development. Attending a high-quality preschool program with qualified teachers can increase a child’s readiness for school, lead to higher test scores on standardized tests and increase rates of graduation.

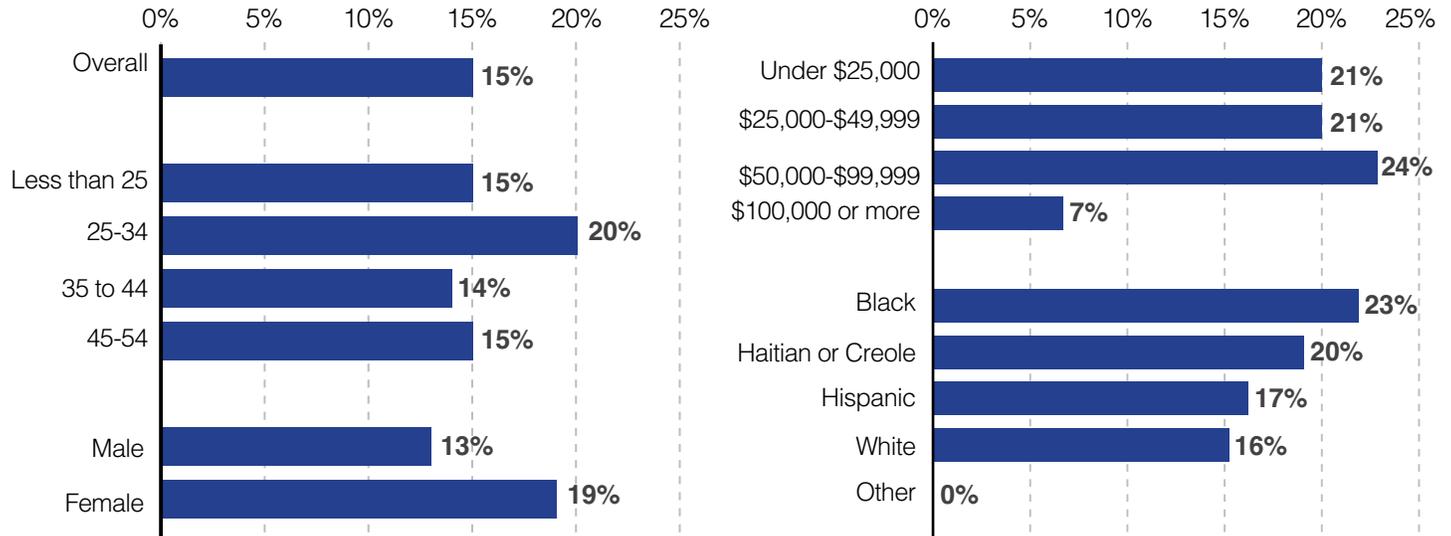
In Palm Beach County, demand for high-quality child care for families remains high; however, access to these programs remains challenging as cost and availability are major barriers. These barriers can have long-term consequences for local children. Data shows that Palm Beach County children entering school score lower on kindergarten readiness tests compared to children across the state overall.

A survey of parents in Palm Beach County indicated affordable child care as the greatest need for parents with young children at 22%. More than 15% of parents in the county could not find help meeting this need and 40% of parents indicated costs as a reason for children not accessing child care.

PERCENTAGES OF PBC FAMILIES UNABLE TO FIND HELP ACCESSING AFFORDABLE CHILD CARE, 2016

Think back to right after your most recent child was born and the first few years of his/her life.

Did you need help with finding affordable child care?



Source: Children's Services Council Community Needs Assessment Survey Report, 2016

One Palm Beach County parents who wanted to work but was unable to afford child care said, "I have two kids. After I gave birth, I left work. I worked...as a health administrator. Right now, I am not working, but I want to work. But, it's hard. Day care is very expensive."



ENSURE CHILDREN ARE DEVELOPING APPROPRIATELY BOTH SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

Socialization is an important part of child development. Interactions between children and caregivers help children develop language skills, learn to deal with emotions, learn social norms and develop appropriate behaviors.

A survey of parents in Palm Beach County indicated 19% of those with young children felt one of the greatest needs in the community for children was better, more affordable community activities and social events; this was also ranked as the most important change needed in the community overall, at 24%.

One Palm Beach County mother involved in the focus groups noted the importance of socialization: "He has a tutor that he sees like once a week to talk to him and to socialize with other kids because he doesn't get along with kids. I had to go to the school. He had beat some child up and I'm like, 'You don't fight other kids. You're supposed to get along with them.' He was like, 'I don't like getting along with other kids. They are bad.'"



ACCESS TO HELPFUL PROGRAM

While there are many programs available in Palm Beach County to support pregnant women and young children, too many families do not know how to access services – or whether they qualify for them.

As one parent stated about the gap in services: "I don't know about pregnant, but post-partum I think there are really limited resources. I think for a lot of women that's when they really, really need it. They've been pretty well take care of and then it's like the floor comes out from underneath them. So post-partum services would be beneficial."

Additionally, service providers indicated that 62% of programs were at-capacity for services. This is a serious barrier for parents who need support. A majority of providers surveyed also felt more collaboration was needed in order to maximize resources in Palm Beach County.

IMPROVEMENTS IN HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR PREGNANT WOMEN, BABIES AND CHILDREN



Access to Health Services

Access to health services is a key component to achieving health equity and improving quality of life. Access can be influenced by many factors including availability, cost, transportation, beliefs and trust.

Access to health services remains an issue for many areas and populations within Palm Beach County. Several agencies in the county, including the Palm Beach County Health Department, Bethesda Health and Jupiter Medical Center, have identified access to health services – including primary, dental and mental health – as an issue in their recent community health needs assessments.



Additional Mental Health Services

At 20 percent, parental/family support and education was the second ranked greatest need of families with young children in Palm Beach County.

According to a survey of community partners and providers, 86.1% felt that Palm Beach County needs more mental health services. Families involved in the focus groups agreed, noting that increasing the amount of informal social support systems would be beneficial.



Obesity

Obesity is an epidemic in the United States, doubling in children and tripling in adolescents in the past 30 years. (CDC, 2015) Obesity can cause many serious health conditions for individuals, and in particular for children and pregnant women.

The percent of pregnant women in Palm Beach County who are overweight increased to 25.6% in 2015 from 24.2% in 2011, and exceeds the Florida average. In 2015, 29.1% of black women were obese at pregnancy compared to 15.9% of white women; black women have been consistently higher in the percent of obesity for the past five years (2011-2015) – placing them, and their babies, at greater risk for health complications.



Healthy Babies

The well-being of an infant can help predict upcoming public health challenges for families, communities and the health care system as a whole. Additionally, poor birth outcomes can result in lifelong implications for individuals.

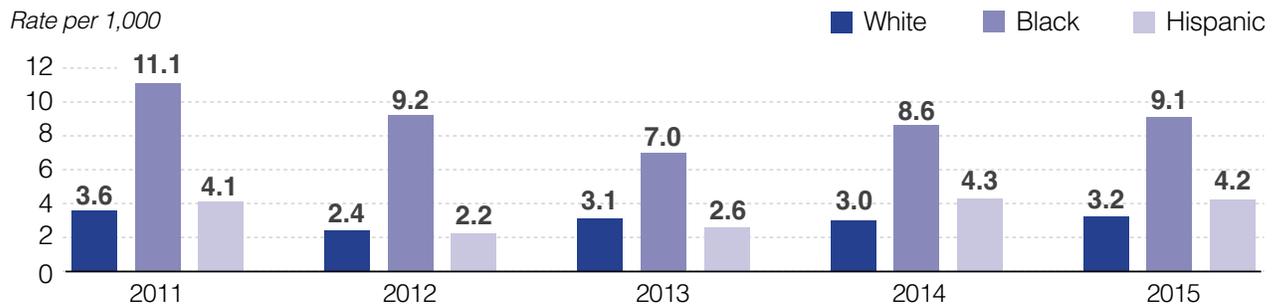
INFANT MORTALITY

Infant mortality is the death of a child before the first birthday. This measure is often used to assess the health of a nation. Deaths usually are caused by birth defects, preterm birth (before 37 weeks gestation), low birthweight (less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces), sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and injuries (e.g. suffocation). Early regular prenatal care is the best way for pregnant women to reduce the risk of complications of pregnancy for both the mother and baby. This is especially true for teen mothers, who are at higher risk for having preterm births, low birthweight babies and infant mortality.

In Palm Beach County, rates for the infant mortality rate have increased from 4.5 per 1,000 in 2012 to 4.9 in 2015; Even so, Palm Beach County's rate remains lower than that of the state. There are stark racial differences, however, in the county when

it comes to infant deaths. For blacks in Palm Beach County, the rate of infant mortality is significantly higher at 9.1 per 1,000, compared to 3.2 for whites in 2015.

INFANT DEATHS IN PALM BEACH COUNTY BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2011-2015



Source: Florida CHARTS, 2015



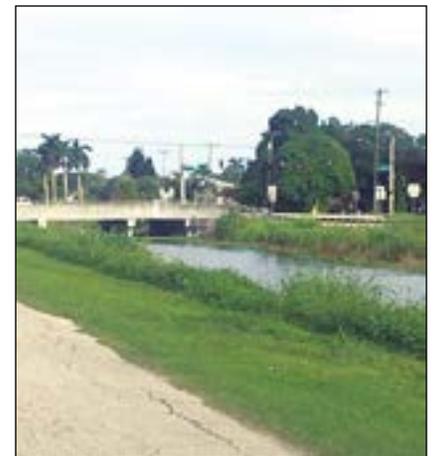
Healthy Children

Like infant mortality, a high rate of death in children can also be an indicator of community issues, such as lack of access to prenatal care, community violence or inadequate supervision. For this indicator, we've all made progress. Death rates for children have continued to decline nationally during the past thirty years.

INJURIES

Injury has been the top cause of death for children in Palm Beach County from 2010-2014 for ages 1-4 years and 15-19 years. Child injuries may be caused by unsafe environments and/or violence, as illustrated by this Glades photovoice participant.

"No side rails," the photovoice participant noted. "This is down the street from the child care center. The middle school is right there off Canal Street. This is on both sides of the street from one side to the other. Kids play around and joke around. They go to that park there. As soon as they are across the street is where the fights begin. When they are fighting they can just throw the kid in, you don't know if the child can swim or not or an alligator is nearby."



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Child abuse is the physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect of a person under 18 years old by a parent or caregiver.

Verified rates of child abuse were low in Palm Beach County compared to Florida and other large counties within the state for the Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016; however rates of children being removed from their homes because of abuse/neglect in 2016 remain higher than neighboring Miami-Dade county.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Community outcomes are shaped by the economics, physical environment, safety, policies, education, and social norms within an area. Often disparities are seen between groups which "systematically experience greater obstacles to health based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, age, physical disability, sexual orientation or characteristics linked to discrimination" (HealthyPeople.gov).

For Palm Beach County, the Community Needs Assessment found that individuals need assistance with many factors related to economics including: affording basic needs, finding housing and getting jobs. Racial and ethnic inequities also exist within these community indicators. Additionally, food insecurity and safety are persistent community problems.



BASIC NEEDS

While Palm Beach County is has a national reputation for being wealthy, many families struggle with poverty. In Palm Beach County (2014), 14.8% of individuals lived in poverty. Poverty rates were highest in 2014 for female-headed, single parent families at 27.0%.

According to a survey of parents in Palm Beach County, twelve percent (12%) of families were unable to find help paying for basic needs in the past year; this was higher for lower-income families at 30% and families who live in high-need areas (based on poverty and health outcomes) at 22%.



HOUSING

The condition of the home, location of the neighborhood and affordability of the house all impact health and quality of life.

In Palm Beach County from 2010-2014, more renters were considered house burdened (56.5%), meaning they spent thirty percent or more of their income on housing compared to home owners with mortgages (46.4%). Individuals whom are house burdened face difficulties paying for food, clothing, transportation or health care.



SAFETY

Young children can be impacted by traumatic experiences due to accidents, child abuse and neglect, and exposure to domestic violence or crimes. Repeated exposure to adverse experiences may affect both the physical and emotional health of a child and have long-term damage into adulthood.



A quote from a Riviera Beach resident illustrates the impact an abandoned home can have in the neighborhood: “We have little girls and boys walking home from school and they are sometimes being followed, they are raped and taken into these abandoned homes. Drug dealers are also using our young men to do wrong things in these homes. We could be using these for people who are homeless, sick or use these properties for people in need.”



FOOD

Food insecurity, or the uncertainty of knowing where the next meal is coming from, is often related to poverty; however, individuals who live above the poverty line also can face this challenge. This is especially tragic for young children. A lack of good nutrition in the first years of life can hinder a child’s physical and mental health, including the ability to focus, engage, learn and grow.

In Palm Beach County, 14.7% of the population and 22.2% of children are food insecure; thirty two (32%) of the children who are food insecure may not be eligible for nutritional assistance from federal, state or local governments.

There are also several areas within Palm Beach County that lack access to a grocery store. Individuals within these areas, called food deserts, are limited to getting food at convenience stores or must travel longer distances to buy healthy food.



JOBS

The rate of unemployment in Palm Beach County is the lowest it has been in the past nine years; it remains below both the Florida and U.S. unemployment rates; however, rates still remain higher for minorities.

In Palm Beach County, 17% of families with low incomes were unable to get help finding a job during the past year.

NEXT STEPS

The Community Needs Assessment will kick off the planning process for The Healthy Start Service Delivery Plan for 2018-2022. The process will include a team of community stakeholders to review the local data, prioritize community needs, conduct root cause analysis and develop an action plan.

Additionally, the data will be used as part of The Strategy Review and Allocation Analysis for Children's Services Council of Palm Beach County. This information will be paired with data from the current CSC system of care to determine if program changes are warranted in order to better meet community needs.

Children's Services Council also will provide this information to community partners and providers, so they can more effectively plan programs and implement changes for young children within Palm Beach County.

Community Needs Assessment and Supplemental Reports
<http://www.cscpbcc.org/commneeds>



Children's Services Council - a special-purpose government established by Palm Beach County voters in 1986 and reauthorized in 2014 - provides leadership, funding, services and research on behalf of the county's children so they grow up healthy, safe and strong.