

I Introduction and Methodology

The University of Delaware's Center for Community Development and Family Policy (CCDFP) carried out a community needs assessment for the state of Delaware to identify the major social and economic issues that are affecting communities, neighborhoods, and families within the state and to gain insight into how these issues can be effectively dealt with in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. The community needs assessment employed a combination of methods including 1) a review of existing studies and reports on social and economic problems in Delaware, 2) the collection and analysis of existing secondary data on Delaware social and economic problems, and 3) the collection of new data through surveys and focus group meetings. The final product clearly identifies the major social and economic problems facing families, neighborhoods and communities in Delaware with recommendations for policy strategies that can effectively reduce the problems identified. Four reports have been produced as part of the 1999 Community Needs Assessment project. These include:

Volume 1: Executive Summary;

Volume 2: Synthesis of Survey and Focus Group Findings and Existing Needs Assessment Reports;

Volume 3: Inventory of Existing Needs Assessment Reports.

Volume 4: Responses from Surveys of Households and Service Providers and Focus Group Report; and,

The purpose of the 1999 Community Needs Assessment is to establish a common information base which can be used to address the challenge of meeting community needs. The challenge of meeting community needs is a shared responsibility of government, the nonprofit sector, and business. Accordingly, these reports will:

- assist nonprofit organizations in their strategic planning and service delivery;
- assist legislators in their policy making to meet community needs through the appropriate mix of legislation, regulation, taxation, and direct subsidies;
- assist the state and its public and private partners in mobilizing the public to support responses to social and economic issues;

- assist the state and its public and private partners in leveraging federal dollars and other resources to address social and economic issues; and,
- assist grant makers and philanthropic institutions in identifying pressing and emerging needs and in directing resources more effectively.

This report presents a comprehensive collection of data, including the results of two surveys (of households and service providers), four focus group meetings that were conducted to gather information and opinions on the social and economic needs of Delawareans, and the findings of related secondary data and needs assessment studies.

Household Survey

The Sample

A telephone survey was conducted of twelve hundred (1,200) randomly selected households statewide in four geographic areas (suburban New Castle County, the City of Wilmington, Kent County, and Sussex County) by the Center for Applied Demography and Survey Research (CADSR) during February and March 1999. The telephone survey included nearly 300 households in each of the four geographic areas.¹ The sampling design used a random digit dialing method. The telephone numbers were generated using a random number generator on the University of Delaware mainframe computer and information from the telephone company about telephone exchanges in each county.

The quantity of numbers generated from the sampling frame was calculated to provide the desired finished sample size. This design permitted the collection of a substantial amount of data from a fairly large number of households and provided results with a high degree of reliability and accuracy at a reasonable cost and within a short period of time. In addition, this design protected the respondents' rights to anonymity and confidentiality. For the four geographic areas, and inter-geographic area comparisons, the sample is of sufficient size to achieve a high level of reliability and accuracy with a margin of error within plus or minus five percent at a 95 percent level of confidence and to allow for cross-tabulations by factors such as race, age, income level, and gender.

Weighted Sample Construction

The sampling strategy employed here is known as a disproportionate stratified

¹The suburban New Castle County sub-sample includes 304 cases, while the City of Wilmington sub-sample includes 296 cases. This is a result of verification of telephone numbers and addresses after the survey was fielded.

random sample, that is, an equal number of households were randomly selected in each geographic area, regardless of their corresponding proportions in the state population. Therefore, it was necessary to weight the sample to reflect the proportion of households in each geographic area. According to the Delaware Population Consortium projections for number of households in each geographic area in 2000, suburban New Castle County contains 54.15 percent of the households in the state, the City of Wilmington includes 10.29 percent, Kent County, 15.88 percent, and Sussex County, 19.68 percent of the households in the state. To account for this distribution, the surveys were weighted accordingly so that each geographical area was accurately represented in the statewide data set. Table 1-1 shows the composition of the weighted sample. At the statewide level, the weighted sample is of sufficient size to achieve a high level of reliability and accuracy with a margin of error within plus or minus four percent at a 95 percent level of confidence and to allow for cross-tabulations by factors such as race, age, income level, and gender.

Table 1-1: Composition of the Weighted Sample

Area	Number of Households	Percent of New Castle County Households	Number of Surveys	Percent of Total Sample
Suburban New Castle County	161,305	100.00%	300	54.15%
City of Wilmington	30,504	18.91%	57	10.29%
Kent County	47,373	29.37%	88	15.88%
Sussex County	58,858	36.49%	109	19.68%
Total	298,040		554	100.00%

Source: Delaware Population Consortium, Annual Population Projections, July 1, 1999, Version 1999.0

The Survey Instrument

The household survey is comprised of four parts: 1) problems in the area where the respondent lives, 2) household problems and needs, 3) reasons for not getting help with problems, and 4) household demographic characteristics (See Appendix A for a copy of the Household Survey). The household survey instrument was developed with assistance from the Community Needs Assessment Research Panel and CADSR staff. The instrument was pretested by experienced interviewers. A total of 26 pretests were conducted throughout the state. Comments from the interviewers and preliminary tallies from the pretest sample guided final refinement of the questionnaire and survey administration.

Conducting the Survey

The method used for the telephone interviews was random digit dialing with up to 15 call backs. Respondents were screened for the required survey characteristics. Only respondents who were over the age of 18 and who bore major responsibility for the household were included in the sample.

Analyzing the Results

A raw data file was prepared for analysis which required coding of the questionnaire and double-coding every tenth questionnaire to verify coding and data entry. Data analysis includes a set of computer frequencies for each variable as well as cross-tabulation tables by segments of the population such as race, age, gender, and geographic location and use of the chi-square test. The chi-square test is used when respondents have been allocated to categories of two variables (e.g., race and neighborhood problems). The chi-square test compares the number of cases falling into each cell of the table with the frequency that would be expected if there were no association between the two variables that form the table. If the significance value is equal to or less than .05, you can conclude that the chi-square test indicates that there is a statistically significant association between the two variables.²

Interpreting the Results

The protocol for the analysis is to focus on statistical relationships in which there is an observed significance level of .05 or less as measured by the Pearson chi-square. These are relationships in which we can be confident that there is a 95 percent probability (or better) that the relationship did not occur by chance. In some cases, a somewhat lower confidence level will be used (up to .10 if a particularly interesting result is observed or to compare results for two or more subgroups). When significant statistical relationships are observed between variables, a comment will be made as to how these variables seem to be related. These relationships will be noted in the analysis, but the reader should keep in mind several qualifications. The margin of error for the stratified random sample (e.g., the four geographic areas) is plus or minus five percent and this margin of error decreases at the statewide level (the weighted sample) to plus or minus four percent. Furthermore, confirmation of the way in which two variables are related would require more elaborate statistical tests than are presented in this analysis.

² The chi-square test is only valid if three conditions are met. First, the data must be independent; no respondent can appear in more than one cell of the table. Secondly, no cell should have an expected frequency of less than one. The third requirement is that no more than 20 percent of the expected frequencies in the table can be less than five. The expected frequencies are calculated for each cell in the table by multiplying the appropriate row and column totals and dividing by N. The chi-square frequency table shows the number of cases in each cell of the table, followed by the value of chi-square (labeled Pearson), the degrees of freedom, and the probability (Significance) (Jeremy J. Foster (1998) *Data Analysis: Using SPSS for Windows*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, p 144).

Nonetheless, the results of the analysis presented here provide us with strong indications of the groups in the sample which are responding in a significantly different manner to particular items than the sample as a whole.

Service Provider Survey

The Sample

A comprehensive list of 794 Delaware service providers was developed from the DANA Community Services Directory (1997) and the state Human Services Directory of Delaware (1998). The survey was mailed to those providers in May 1999, with a second mailing in July 1999 and follow-up telephone calls in August and September 1999. The sample size was revised, following exclusion from the sample of 1) for-profit organizations, 2) organizations no longer operating in Delaware, 3) organizations that do not provide direct services, 4) agency locations which are one site of a multi-site agency for which the main administrative site responded for the entire agency, and 5) organizations for which we could find no current mailing address. The revised sample size is 685. A total of 141 service providers completed and returned the survey, for a response rate of 20.58 percent.³ The sample is of sufficient size to achieve a 95 percent level of reliability and accuracy with a margin of error of plus or minus approximately seven percent at a 95 percent level of confidence and to allow for cross-tabulations by factors such as number of clients, service area, provider type, and client type.

The Survey Instrument

The survey instrument gathers information in four areas: 1) the nature of the services provided; 2) service delivery concerns; 3) the characteristics of clients; and 4) characteristics of the responding agency (See Appendix B for copy of the Service Provider Survey). The service provider survey instrument was developed with assistance from the Community Needs Assessment Research Panel. The instrument was informally pretested with 10 service providers. Comments from the pretest respondents guided final refinement of the questionnaire and survey administration.

Analyzing the Results

A raw data file was prepared for analysis which required coding of the questionnaire and double-coding every tenth questionnaire to verify coding and

³ Because the provider survey did not use a random sampling design, some selection bias may be present. However, the distribution of different respondent characteristics such as service area, provider type, number of clients, and type of clients, are not seriously skewed.

data entry. Data analysis includes a set of computer frequencies for each variable as well as cross-tabulation tables by agency and service characteristics such as geographic area served by the agency, type of service provided by the agency, and number of clients served annually by the agency, and use of the chi-square statistic. The explanation of the chi-square statistic and caveats on interpreting the results as discussed for the Household Survey are also relevant for the Service Provider Survey.

Focus Groups

Focus Group Participants

Focus group participants were recruited using CCDFP's data base of community-based organizations, state agencies, the philanthropic community, and elected officials. Each focus group had a pre-registered list of participants and a waiting list. The targeted focus group size was 15 persons. Actual focus group participation ranged from 15 to 26 persons with a total of 54 persons participating in the four focus groups.

Question Guide

The focus group question guide was developed with assistance from the Community Needs Assessment Research Panel and Goeins-Williams principal, Dr. Devona Williams. The question guide is comprised of four areas: 1) problems/needs in the area where the participant lives or works, 2) quality of life in the area where the participant lives or works; 3) changes in problems/needs or quality of life in the area where the participant lives or works in the last five years; and 4) service accessibility in the area where the participant lives or works.

Conducting the Focus Groups

During the second week of April 1999, four focus groups were conducted statewide by Goeins-Williams Associates, Inc., one in each of four geographic areas (suburban New Castle County, the City of Wilmington, Kent County, and Sussex County). The Wilmington and New Castle County focus groups were held on April 6, 1999 at the Community Service Building in Wilmington, Delaware. The Kent County focus group was held on April 7 at the Community Legal Aid Society in Dover, Delaware. The Sussex County focus group was held on April 9 at First State Community Action Agency in Georgetown, Delaware. Dr. Devona Williams facilitated all four focus groups with assistance from CCDFP graduate research assistants and an MPA intern who served as observers/recorders.

Analyzing the Results

The four focus groups were audio taped and the graduate assistants recorded all

participant comments. Using the question guide as the organizing structure, systematic coding and content analysis of each focus group and comparisons across focus groups were completed by Goeins-Williams staff under the direction of Dr. Devona Williams. A copy of the focus group report is included in **Volume 3: Responses from Surveys of Households and Service Providers and Focus Group Report.**

Review of Other Studies

CCDFP staff and graduate research assistants tracked down, obtained, and analyzed existing needs assessment reports and secondary data to determine what is known about the social and economic needs of Delawareans in the fall 1998 and spring 1999 semesters. While each report and data base differs in its scope and methodology, each has been assessed for its contribution to the understanding of problems and needs in thirteen categories corresponding to the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) Classification Codes.⁴ These are:

- 1) children/youth problems/needs;
- 2) civil rights problems/needs;
- 3) crime and legal services problems/needs;
- 4) problems/needs of the disabled;
- 5) domestic violence problems/needs;
- 6) problems/needs of the elderly;
- 7) emergency assistance problems/needs;
- 8) employment problems/needs;
- 9) health/health care problems/needs;
- 10) housing problems/needs;
- 11) parenting problems/needs;
- 12) public infrastructure problems/needs; and
- 13) victim assistance needs.

In addition, data pertaining to the supply of and demand for social and economic services and/or barriers that Delawareans confront when trying to obtain services is

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The National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE) is a comprehensive classification system of tax-exempt organizations and services. The NTEE is a mixed notation classification system of 26 major groups collapsible into 10 major categories and divisible into over 645 groups. Created by the National Center for Charitable Statistics in cooperation with scholars and practitioners in the early 1980s, NTEE is now housed at The Urban Institute.

documented. **Volume 4: Inventory of Existing Needs Assessment Reports** includes a full listing of the studies with the following information; author (if applicable), date of publication or data collection, the source of the report or data, the geographic area(s) of the state addressed, and the kinds of information/data utilized. A summary table listing each report and its area(s) of study is provided in Appendix C.