

HUMAN SERVICES NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROVIDER AND CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS



Report to Bradford County: Executive Summary
Commissioned by Partners in Family & Community
Development and United Way of Bradford County



United Way of Bradford County



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Respondents: Insights from three stakeholder groups were sought using survey techniques. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to a target audience of providers and service users, online survey collection was also available and shared with providers and employers throughout the county. There was special measure taken with this target audience to be able to have participation from people from the entirety of the county. 526 surveys were completed-196 in paper copy and 330 in e-survey tool.

Questionnaire Design

Copies of both the citizen and the provider questions were drafted based on systematic review of previously conducted needs assessment surveys from other jurisdictions. The draft survey solicited information from advisory groups for the study. These included those that served: 1) healthcare, 2) childcare, 3) basic needs (e.g. food, rent, housing, financial, transportation) , and 4) mental health/substance abuse. Through focus groups held with local community members from different service providers, questions were also generated. Additionally, questions were asked about various “other” services. The draft questionnaires were circulated to the advisory group members for their review and comment. The final survey contained 75 questions and asked respondents to indicate their perceptions regarding the need, accessibility, and effectiveness of a variety of services within Bradford County. Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions regarding the need, accessibility, and effectiveness of a variety of services within the county. They were also asked about their personal use of human services and their familiarity with how to access services if needed, as well as a variety of demographic questions.

Introduction

Needs assessments, also called community profiles, needs and resource surveys, or similar designation seek to inform those that have the ability to implement changes. The scope of the assessment may be broad, where communities have concerns about issues and services. Bradford County Pennsylvania is located in the northeastern section of the Commonwealth.

County Demographics

DEMOGRAPHICS

Bradford County is located in the heart of the Endless Mountains Region in northeastern Pennsylvania. It is the home of breath-taking vistas and winding country roads. Bradford County is home to nearly 63,000 residents and the second largest county geographically in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania containing over 1161 square miles.

United States Census information from 2015 indicates:

Population estimate is 61,784

Female population 50.5%

Male population 49.5%

24,453 households

31% of households have children under the age of 18

19.6% of the population is over 65

Median age –39

17,312 families

Ethnic background

White 96.2%

Black .6%

Native American .3%

Asian .6%

County Demographics (cont.)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Foreign born 1.5%

Language other than English 3.1%

Education

High School graduates 87.3%

Bachelor's degree or higher 17.1%

Veterans 2009-2013 5.8%

Households

Housing units 30,129

Homeownership rates 2009-2013 74.9%

Median value of owner-occupied housing-
\$119,900.

Median household income 2009-2013- \$46,963.

Person below poverty level 2009-2013– 13.3%

Business facts

Private non farm employed—19,558

Private non-farm establishments– 1,394

Geography facts

Land area—1147.40 square miles

Persons per square mile– 54.6

Schools

Public school districts –7

Private schools-12

Libraries– 11

Public transportation– BeST– serving Bradford,

Sullivan and Tioga County

County Parks– Mt. Pisgah, Sunfish Pond, Larnard
Hornbrook

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BRADFORD COUNTY SURVEY

Executive Summary

Needs as Indicated by the Survey Respondents

The results of the survey of Bradford County's social service needs reveal many people in the county have needs. A little over one-quarter of the respondents said that they needed social services within the last year. Of those who needed services, health care was the first and mental health was the second most commonly needed service. Emergency or crisis service, along with child care and transportation were commonly mentioned needs. Senior and day care services were least mentioned needed services.

When asked about being able to access the social services that the respondent needed, roughly 4 out of 5 said that they were able to do so. One out of five, however, reported that they were unable to do so. These two groups were then asked another question about how they gained access to services or what prevented them from accessing services.

The most frequently occurring answer to how respondents were able to learn about needed services was referral from a health care professional followed closely by referral from a friend or from the phone book. Social service agencies were responsible for a large number of respondents finding out about needed services. County directory, church and online rounded out least used ways respondents indicated that they found out about services. Hotlines were mentioned by the fewest number of respondents.

Various reasons were chosen or written in for why respondents were prevented from accessing needed social services. Given the list of specific response choices, having no money was the most checked reason. Having no health insurance was the second most commonly checked reason. A long waiting list and lack of transportation were also reasons frequently checked. The choice labelled as "Other" received more checks than the specific choice of having no money. Respondents frequently wrote in answers such as lack of coverage, lack of providers, service not available, not eligible and lack of knowledge.

Bradford County residents had a wide array of thoughts about services which they thought were lacking in the county. The answers were similar to the ones given above where individuals reported on their own needs as opposed to broader needs of the county.

Overall, 2 out of 3 respondents indicated that they thought Bradford County is lacking services. Only 1 out of 3 thought that the county was not lacking any services.

The top two services that respondents felt were lacking were transportation and mental health. The next two most frequently mentioned services checked were child care and senior care. Day care and health care were two types of services that substantial numbers of respondents thought were lacking in the county. Many respondents also checked the "Other" response choice. Among the written in responses, the most frequently occurring were: drug and alcohol services, housing, homeless shelter and services, and psychiatry.

Given the high level of belief among the respondents that Bradford County is lacking services, it is no surprise that many thought that a directory of social services would be helpful. Some 9 out of 10

respondents thought such a directory is needed. Only 17 percent of the respondents were aware of existing directories or specifically “211”, “Helpline” and the website www.Helpline-NEPa.info.com.

Health Issues of the Survey Respondents

Around 1 out of 4 respondents indicated that they exercise. The remaining respondents do not exercise. Of those who exercise, around half of them exercise 2 or 3 times a week. One out of three exercise 4 or more times a week. Finally, 1 out of 10 exercise only once a week. In terms of intensity level, nearly 1 out of 10 respondents who exercise do so with high intensity. Moderate intensity is the most frequent intensity type with around half of those who exercise engaging in such. Around 1 out of 3 indicates that they exercise with low intensity.

Most of the respondents who took the survey indicated that they had health insurance coverage (97%). Only a few respondents said that they did not have such coverage. The top reason they wrote for not having coverage was not being able to afford it. Although nearly everyone has coverage, many people do not fully use it. One out of three respondents indicated that their co-pay or deductible cost negatively influences their use of services.

Half of the respondents reported that they know someone who is receiving mental health services in Bradford County. Almost a third of the respondents reported that they know someone who could benefit from the use of mental health services but cannot access them. The most common reasons for not accessing them were lack of insurance or cost of treatment, transportation issues and lack of doctors to treat the needs.

In terms of receiving mental health services, only 1 out of 20 respondents indicated that they were currently receiving such. Three out of four of these service users were outpatients. Almost 1 out of 5 respondents indicated that a family member was receiving mental health services. Again, the majority of these service recipients were outpatients.

Besides themselves and outside their family, a fair number of the respondents seem to know someone who is dealing with mental health issues. For example, half of them know someone who is autistic. Almost a third of them know a child who is receiving mental health services. Almost a third of them know a child who is depressed. Many of the above respondents know several youth who have such issues.

Children’s Activities and Care

Two out of three survey respondents believe that there are not enough non-school related activities for children 18 years old or younger in their community. Half of them believe that there were enough school activities for children. However, 1 out of 4 believes the opposite. Nearly the same number is unsure. When asked to list the type of after school activities that they would like to see be made available, the top two responses were exercise/sport activities and outdoor activities. Other frequently occurring responses included recreational facilities, YMCA, a swimming pool and places to hang out.

A majority of the survey participants who answered the question about their children participating in any of the following three programs, namely Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, Big Brother/Big Sister or Rainbow Riders, indicated that they did. Some of the respondents indicated that several of their children participated in such mentoring or therapeutic programs.

In terms of whether there are enough family friendly places in the community for adults and children to enjoy, over half of the respondents said no. Only around a quarter of them said yes. The remainder was unsure. When given a list of activities or places that could be added to the community, the ones most frequently desired by respondents were by far hobbies and playgrounds. Museums came in third place. Ball fields, sports teams and libraries rounded out the remaining choices. Some respondents wrote in their own ideas under the "Other" choice. Outdoor activities, recreation center and indoor public pool came up as the most frequently occurring answers.

When asked about services and activities for gifted children in the area, the most frequent response was "Unsure". One out of four respondents indicated that there are no gifted children services. One out of three said the same about activities for gifted children. A third or fewer of the respondents thought that services and activities were available for gifted children.

The respondents were asked two questions about day care. Around 1 out of 10 report that they use day care. Nearly 2 out of 3 think that day care is not affordable to those in need of it. Only 1 out of 10 think it is affordable. Many of the respondents reported that they were unsure whether day care was affordable since they did not use such services.

Transportation

Three out of four respondents indicated that there are public transportation services available in their community. Some 14% of the respondents said there were no such services. One out of ten was unsure.

The primary method of transportation for those in the survey was privately owned motor vehicle. Nearly 90% of the respondents checked the choice for vehicle. Some 4% of the respondents checked public bus. A few respondents reported using each of the following methods of transportation: walk, bike, ride share, neighbor and disability service transportation. A few respondents reported using a combination of the above methods.

A question was asked about whether public transportation was available at times when the respondent needed it. Only 16% responded that it was. One out of four said that it was not. The remainder said either they are unsure or do not care.

Private vehicle was the most common method of transportation. But vehicles can break down. When asked if they can get their vehicle repaired when it needs it, 7% of the sample said no. Among those who said yes, a small number (3%) indicated that they need assistance with paying the bill. Family members are the main providers of such assistance followed by credit card or borrowing money.

Housing

The survey participants were asked about housing problems. A list of outcomes was included in the housing section of the questionnaire. The first question asked them if they ever had any of the problems. One out of ten reported that they experienced homelessness. One out of four respondents reported relocating to cheaper accommodations or sharing housing. Some 60% of the respondents indicated that they provided help to family or friends who had housing needs. Around the same number reported that they had to cut back on basic necessities in order to afford housing.

The second housing question was similar to the first. However, it asked them if they experienced any of the problems in the present year. One out of twenty reported that they experienced homelessness. Three out of twenty respondents reported relocating to cheaper accommodations or sharing housing. Some 55% of the respondents indicated that they provided help to family or friends who had housing needs. Two out of three respondents reported that they had to cut back on basic necessities in order to afford housing.

Religion

Respondents were asked if they attended a religious organization. Some 58% checked yes while 42% checked no. Of those who attended, 68% attended on a weekly basis, 13% on a monthly basis and 19% on special occasions. All of the religious organizations were reported to be Christian Churches.

Natural Gas

Over the past ten years or so the natural gas industry has entered Bradford County in order to extract gas from the Marcellus Shale. Several questions on the survey tap into the effects of the natural gas industry on local residents and their communities.

Overall, two out of three respondents indicated that the gas industry has not negatively affected them. However, 1 out of 3 said that it has negatively affected them. When asked how it negatively affected them, among the provided list of responses the two most common responses were environment and housing. The next two frequently checked responses were economy and values. Families and employment rounded out the checked responses. A significant number of respondents wrote in remarks under the "Other" choice. They included traffic, housing and home prices, road conditions and water.

The question was reversed somewhat in order to uncover how the industry positively affected Bradford County communities. Overall, 93% of respondents indicated that the gas industry has positively affected their community. Only 7% said that it has not positively affected their communities. When asked how it positively affected them, among the provided list of responses the two most common responses were economy and employment. The next frequently checked response was housing followed by families and environment. Values rounded out the checked responses.

Drugs

Respondents were asked about illegal drug use. Some 87% of the respondents indicated that they never used illegal drugs. Some 13% said that they did use illegal drugs. Among the users, the age range when they first used such drugs varied from 12 to 25 years old. In a majority of the cases marijuana was the illegal drug used most often. Following marijuana was underage use of alcohol. The main reason cited by the users for using illegal drugs was peer pressure.

Many types of drugs appear to be the illegal drug of choice among adults in Bradford County according to the survey respondents. Alcohol was at the top of the list followed closely by meth, bath salts and marijuana. Cocaine was marked less frequently than all others.

A majority of respondents believed that the public could be educated about prescription drug abuse (95%). The most frequently checked method in the minds of the respondents for educating the public about this drug problem was through schools. Classes, pamphlets/flyers and town meetings were popular methods to use according to the respondents. Others thought that the media could be used to fight prescription drug abuse.

According to 94% of the respondents, drug and alcohol abuse negatively impacts their community. It does so through negatively impacting families, the social fabric, people's health and the economy and business. In addition, significant numbers of respondents wrote that it led to crime and traffic problems.

The following activities were checked by respondents as activities which would be beneficial to reduce substance abuse in their communities. Therapy, classes on drug use and physical activity. Under the "Other" category the written in responses focused on more law enforcement, better jobs, rehabilitation and drug testing.

Education

When asked about how positive cultural values can be developed in education, the respondents marked many of the choices provided on the questionnaire. They thought it best to help students if they are having trouble and to teach children at younger ages. Some thought it best to educate students about the importance of finishing school to get a job. A few thought that a reward system should be built for students that get good grades. Many of the respondents wrote in under "Other" category that all of the above things should be done. Many of them also wrote in that parents should be worked with in order to develop positive cultural values.

In the minds of the survey respondents, the best way to foster family support towards the schools was through education. Another way to foster support was through cultural values. Some respondents thought that extra-curricular activities would help improve support.

Respondents were asked how regular attendance in school can be encouraged. The most frequent reply was through education. Cultural values was the next most checked option followed by extra-curricular

activities. Among the written in answers for the “Other” category, parent or family responsibility/care were the most frequent type of responses. Creating a positive atmosphere and imposing stronger penalties were other penned in suggestions.

Respondents checked multiple answer choices about how to provide affordable post high school education to the youth of Bradford County. Scholarships and loans were the most frequently checked answers. Tuition waivers and grants also received checks. A significant group of respondents wrote in under “Other” that all of the above methods should be used.

Regarding the consolidation of public schools in the area, the most common attitude toward such a policy was negative. Some 43% of the respondents believed it would have a negative impact on small communities in the long term. Only 25% of those surveyed thought it would have a positive impact. The remaining respondents were unsure of the type of impact. Respondents wrote in under the “Other” category that they were concerned about consolidation leading to longer bus rides, larger classes and loss of extra-curricular activities near home.

Managing Money

The residents of Bradford County were asked a bunch of questions about managing their money. The results indicate that half of them have trouble saving money and the other half does not. Two out of three indicate that they use a budgeting system. One out of three does not. Of those who do not use a budgeting system, some 41% think it would be useful for them to have a budgeting center to help them out. Around 70% of the respondents say that they succeed at using their budgeting system while 30% say the opposite.

When asked if money management services would make the county a better place to live about 8 out of 10 respondents indicated that it would. Two out of ten checked that it would not. Of those who thought it would make the county a better place to live, a high number believed it would lead to financially stable households. Many believed it would lead to better management of money in the economy. Some believed it would lead to less poverty. Written in responses included the belief that jobs are the issue and that money management classes should be mandatory for those on assistance.

Some 14% of the respondents indicated that they searched for a job without success within the past twelve months. All other respondents checked that they did not look for a job in the past year.

Meals and Groceries

Do families in Bradford County have enough food for each day? Some 7% of survey participants indicated no. The rest checked yes. The reason cited most frequently for not having enough food to eat each day is poverty. A small number of respondents indicated that they did not have time to travel and buy groceries. Under the “Other” category some wrote in that they did not have transportation while others noted the high cost of food.

One out of twenty respondents indicated that they do not have access to a nearby grocery store to buy food. The rest of the respondents do have access to a nearby store. The reason checked most often by

the respondents who did not have access was not being close enough. Others indicated that the problem was with no money or no transportation.

Volunteering

The residents of Bradford County were asked a number of questions about volunteering. Only a quarter of the respondents indicated that they did not participate in a volunteer activity in the last twelve months. One-third of the respondents indicated that they participated in one or two volunteer opportunities. Some 16% participated in three or four such opportunities while one-fifth answered five or more. The most common type of volunteer activity was church events. The number of hours that they volunteered ranged from half an hour to sixty hours per week on average.

Those who were not involved in volunteer activities were asked if they would like to be involved. Nearly half of them indicated yes they would. They were further asked what information or services do they need. The item checked most frequently was to know where volunteers are needed. They also indicated that they needed time to be able to volunteer. Some respondents indicated that transportation was a problem.

In the minds of the survey respondents, the greatest need for volunteers in the community was for the following: fire and EMS, elderly and nursing homes, children and clean up the area. The largest barriers to becoming a volunteer were time and money.

Overall Needs and Strengths

At the end of the survey all respondents were asked to write what were the greatest needs and strengths of their communities. In the area of needs the most frequent responses were the following: services and programming for children and disabled, housing, affordable childcare and better transportation. In the area of strengths the most frequent responses were the following: strong families, strong churches, friendly people, beautiful community, caring people, libraries, parks and recreation and healthcare.

Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents were ascertained at the end of the survey. From their responses a picture emerges of their demographic profile. Some 98% of the respondents were white. A majority had graduated from college. A majority of the respondents were married. Most of the respondents were registered to vote and the most frequent party affiliation was Republican. Two out of three participants indicated that their household income was above \$50,000 per year. Eight out of ten respondents indicated that children live in their household. Of those with children in the household some 43% had children less than eighteen years of age. Almost one out of ten of the respondents indicated that they had a disability. Only fourteen respondents indicated that they planned on moving out of the county in the next year.