



Sangamon County Community Resources

Stakeholder Community Needs Assessment

August 11, 2017

Executive Summary

As part of an on-going assessment of community need, Sangamon County Community Resources (SCCR) annually engages our clients, clients of other partner social service agencies, our staff, staff of other agencies and other community stakeholders. In addition, each client who visits SCCR is asked to complete a needs assessment survey, thereby yielding a high return of responses. ***Special Thanks to Dr. Junfeng Wang, Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, University of Illinois at Springfield for analyzing and preparing Sangamon County Community Resources Stakeholder data report. You will find significantly deeper analysis based on use of a relational data base that allows for reporting of needs by demographic category. For this, we are deeply appreciative.***

Conclusions

The stakeholder survey contained 22 close-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions. The close-ended questions reveal stakeholders' understanding of community needs and whether these needs were met. The open-ended questions asked stakeholders to provide opinions regarding the causes of poverty, what community improvement initiatives they would propose, and how they would spend one million dollars to solve a community issue. Eighty-five stakeholders participated in the survey.

Regarding causes of poverty, these stakeholders identified external causes such as lack of job opportunities, lack of resources, and cost of living. They identified internal causes such as family cycle (no role model, a lifestyle), unwillingness to work and a feeling of entitlement of welfare, low self-esteem and lack of hope, dream, and ambition, lack of family support and planning. They viewed lack of education, family cycle, and lack of employment as the top three causes.

Stakeholders proposed initiatives from 12 aspects: education, mental health and substance abuse, housing, welfare dependency, crime, job assistance, medical, dental, and vision care, childcare, outreach, public transportation, technology, and service provision. Some stakeholders made suggestions that were more concrete, while others discussed more generally.

For the last resource allocation question, stakeholders expressed interests in investing on 11 areas, with mental health and substance abuse, education, and homelessness as the top three targeted areas.

Thank you to staff of our community partners who took time to complete this survey. Participating organizations included Helping Hands, The Springfield Urban League, Community Connection Point, Contact Ministries, Fishes and Loaves Outreach Ministries, Sangamon County Public Health, Capital Township, Springfield Housing Authority and Central Counties Health Center, Sangamon County Board members and the Staff of Community Resources. This assessment will inform Community Resource's 2018 Strategic Plan and Community Action Plan and continue to be done annually, assessed and updated.

On behalf of our CSBG Advisory Council, I want to express my appreciation for the work *you* do in our community. We look forward to continuing our relationship with our community partners in years to come.

Sincerely,
Sharmin Doering, Executive Director

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2017 Annual Community Stakeholders Survey Report

Introduction

Sangamon County Department of Community Resources conducted a stakeholder survey between April and May 2017. There were 85 survey participants in total, in which 49 of them were parts of the County government (Figure 1).

In the survey, the term community means the City of Springfield and Sangamon County.

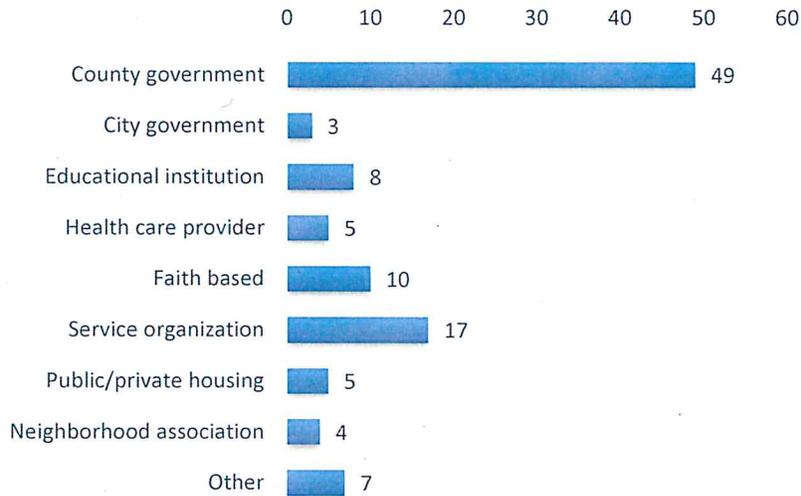


Figure 1 Number of Stakeholders Surveyed

Full-time Living Wage Employment

In responding to the question whether there were full-time living wage employment (\$15/hour or higher) opportunities available in the community, close to half of the respondents (48%) indicated insufficient opportunities, while 15% of the respondents provided optimistic answers (Figure 2). Slightly more than 1/3 of the survey respondents were unsure about the situation. This reflects a need among stakeholders to understand the community better in order to allocate resources and serve the needed families and individuals more efficiently.

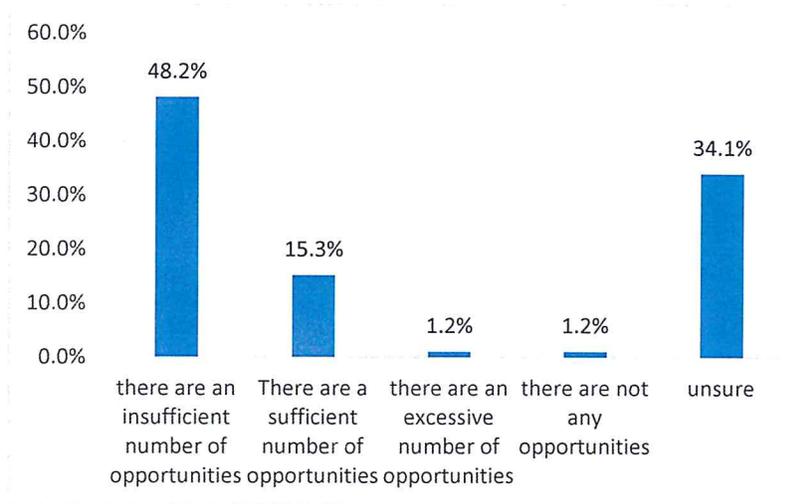


Figure 2 Living Wage Job Opportunity in the Community

Programs in Getting or Keeping Full-time jobs

In thinking about why people have problems getting or keeping a full-time living wage job (Figure 3), respondents were able to choose multiple choices. Out of 85 survey respondents, 45% of them thought lack of job opportunities was the reason. This was consistent with the 48% answer “there are an insufficient number of opportunities” from question #2.

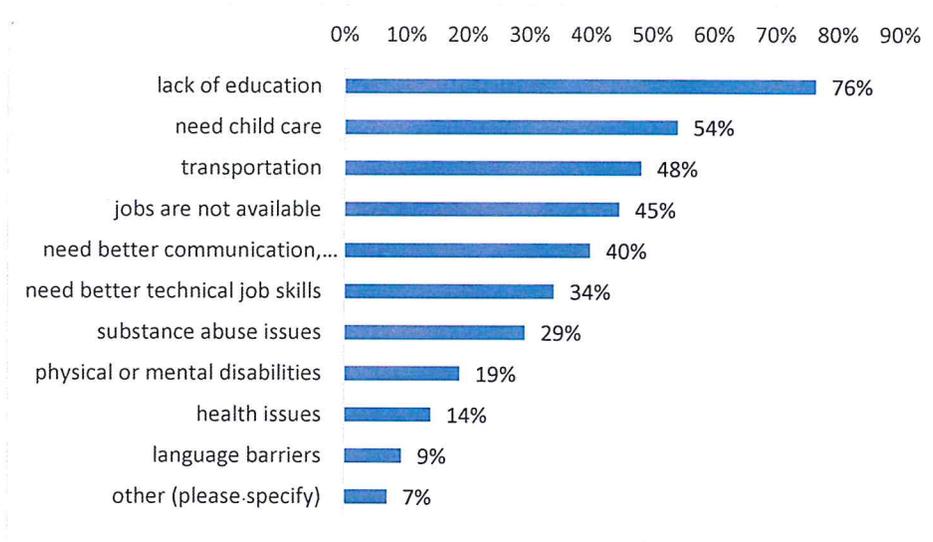


Figure 3 Problems in Getting or Keeping a Full-time Living Wage Job

Figure 3 shows the top three reasons are:

- Lack of Education
- Need Child Care
- Transportation

Childcare during Work Day Hours

Regarding workday childcare program availability in the community, the opinions were mainly divided into three groups, insufficient, sufficient, and unsure (Figure 4).

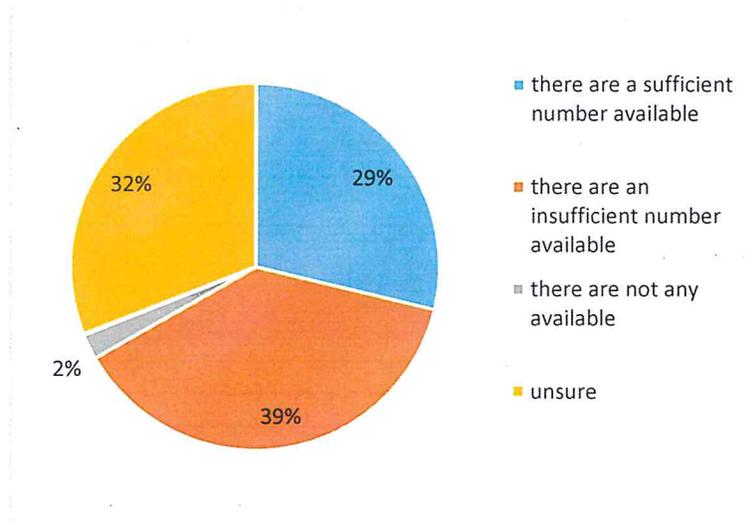


Figure 4 Child Care Programs during Workday Hours

Near 30% of the respondents thought there were sufficient number of childcare programs during the day, Monday through Friday available in the community. However, considering 54% of them thought one of the main reasons that prevented people from getting or keeping a full-time job was childcare problem, this may reflect an issue of affordability of childcare programs.

Again, more than 1/3 of the respondents were not sure about the situation.

Childcare during Nights and Weekends

When talking about childcare programs at nights and weekends (Figure 5), respondents who thought sufficient availability dropped to only 1%. 58% of the survey respondents thought either insufficient number of programs or none available in their communities.

More people were not sure about the night and weekend childcare programs, 41%, comparing to 32% of them not sure about the workday hour childcare programs.

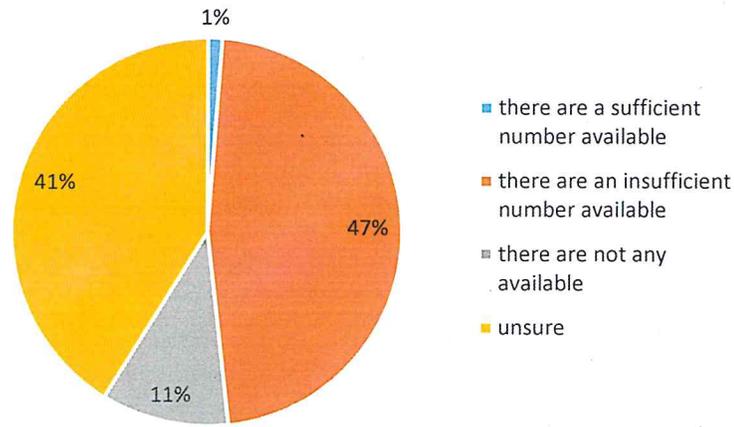


Figure 5 Childcare Program during Nights and Weekends

Pre-School Program

Regarding to pre-school program availability, the opinions were also divided, with 40% of the respondents thought sufficient, while 25% of them thought insufficient, and 35% of them were unsure (Figure 6).

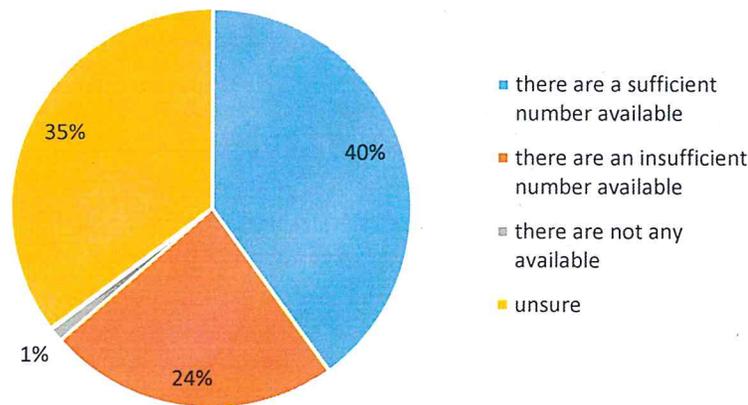


Figure 6 Pre-school Program Availability

Affordable Child and Youth Activities and After-School Programs

Close to half of the respondents thought there were insufficient numbers of or none affordable child and youth activities and after-school programs available in the community (Figure 7).

There were 28% of the respondents who answered not sure about the situation.

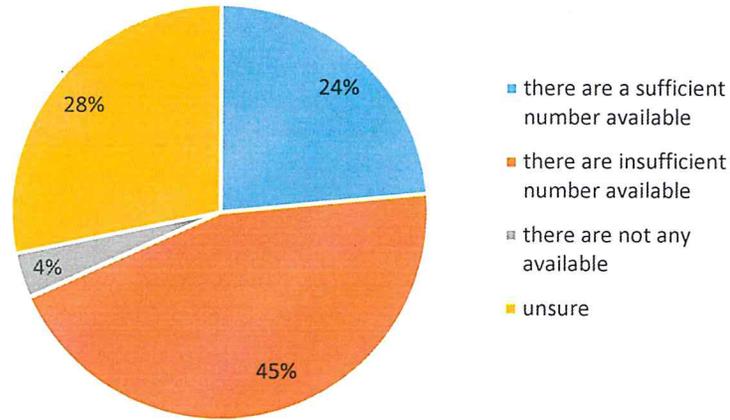


Figure 7 Sufficiency of Affordable Child and Youth Activities and After-School Programs

Areas of Need among Youth

Figure 8 shows the respondents' views regarding the areas youth may need information, education, guidance, and/or assistance in the community. These answers reflect stakeholders' areas of expertise and work experiences. It would be interesting to conduct a survey among youth to see whether their answers match these statistics.

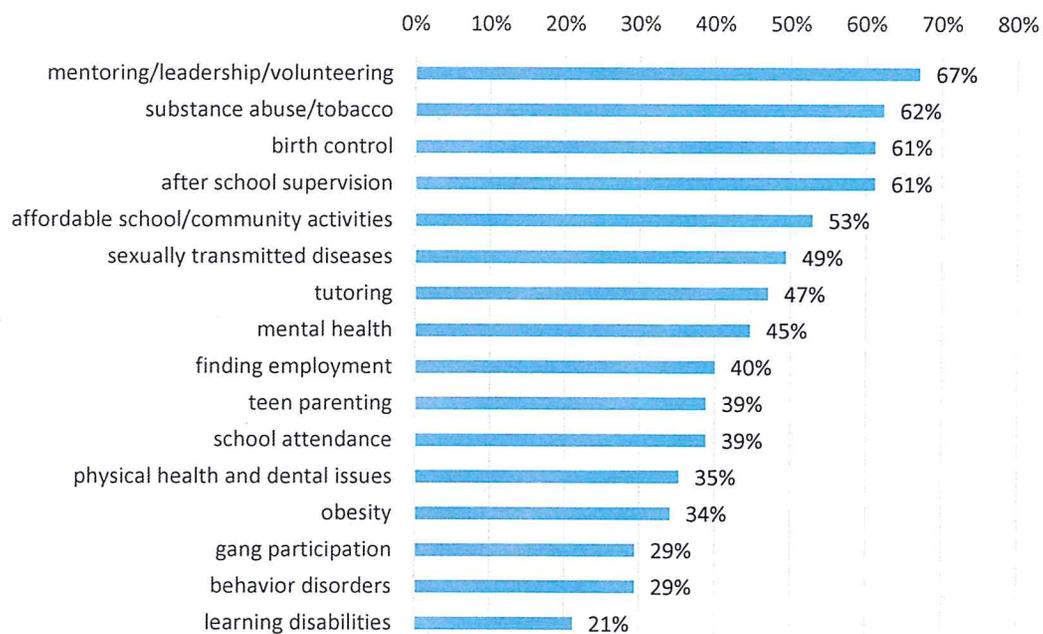


Figure 8 Areas of Need among Youth

Schools and Educational Needs

Among the 85 survey respondents, 31% of them thought schools in the community could meet educational needs of the children they serve. 56% of them expressed concerns as they answered the needs were met “in some cases,” “in a few cases,” and “not at all.” Here, “unsure” was again provided as an answer option and 14% of the respondents chose that answer.

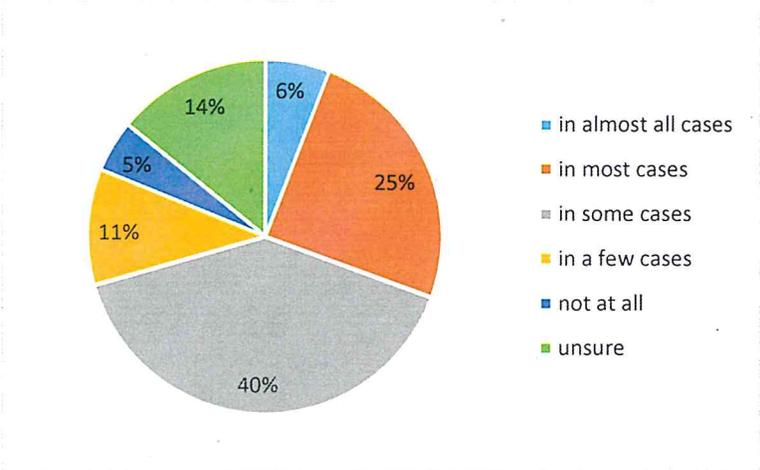


Figure 9 Schools Meeting Educational Needs

Non-medical emergency Services

More than half of the respondents thought there were adequate levels of non-medical emergency services available in the community (Figure 10). 21% of them said not adequate, while 28% of them were not sure about the situation.

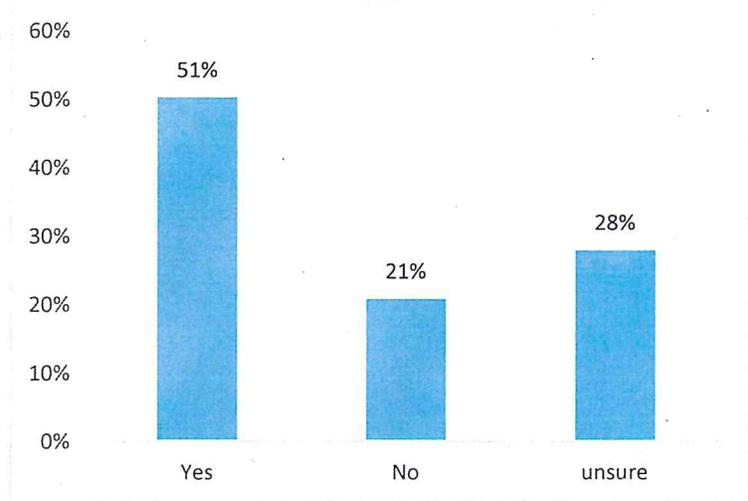


Figure 10 Adequacy Non-medical Emergency Services

Emergency Shelters

The majority of the respondents did not think there were a sufficient number of emergency shelters available in the community (Figure 11). Again, many respondents (27%) were not sure about the situation.

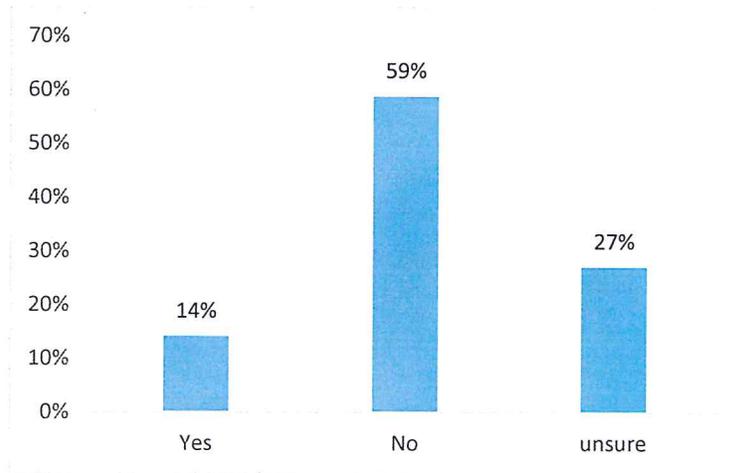


Figure 11 Sufficiency of Emergency Shelters

Medical Services

More than half of the respondents thought there were adequate levels of medical services available for low-income people in the community (Figure 12). 28% of them expressed different opinions, while 21% of them were unsure.

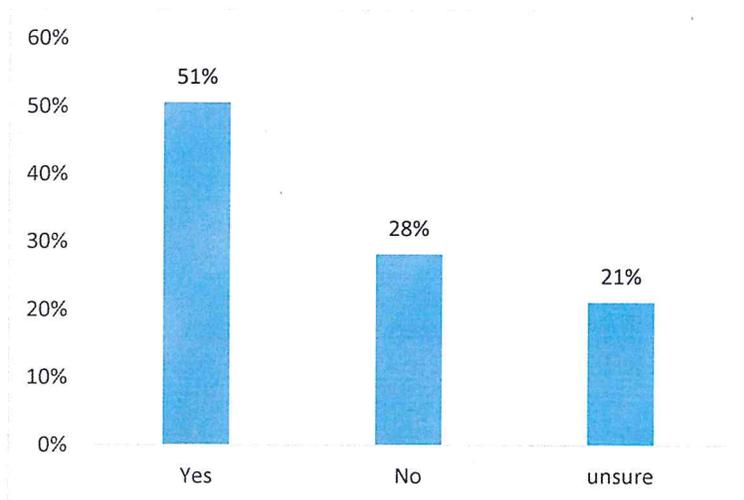


Figure 12 Adequacy of Medical Services

Dental Services

Opposite to the medical service responses, over half of the respondents indicated there were not adequate levels of dental services available for low-income people in the community (Figure 13). The percentage of respondents who answered “unsure” increased to 28%, comparing to the medical services question.

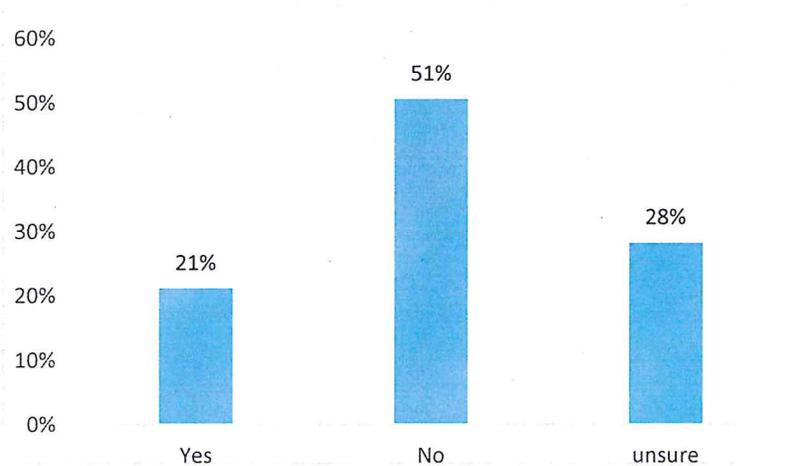


Figure 13 Adequacy of Dental Services

Wellness Programs

Again, over half of the respondents did not think there were adequate levels of wellness (nutrition, exercise, etc.) programs available for low-income people in the community (Figure 14). Comparing to previous service adequacy questions, more people answered “unsure.”

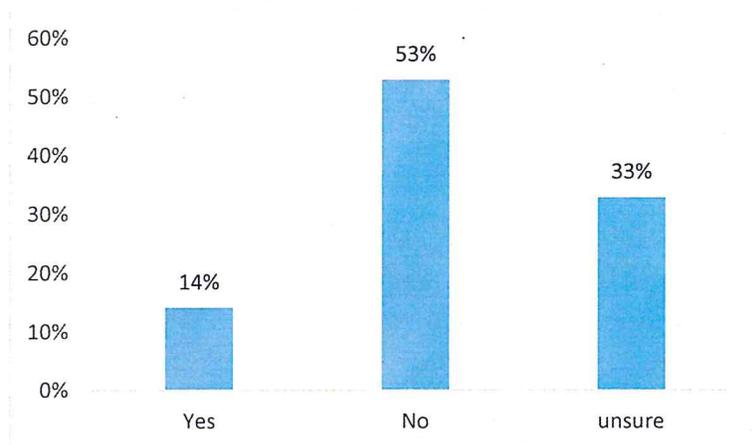


Figure 14 Adequacy of Wellness Programs

Public Transportation Options

Among the 85 survey respondents, 58%, or 49 of them thought there were adequate levels of public transportation options, including cabs, taxis, buses, trolleys, etc. available in the community. However, it would be interesting to see whether this answer would change if the question was worded consistently with previous questions, “available in your community” vs. “available for low-income people in your community.” Availability and affordability are two different issues.

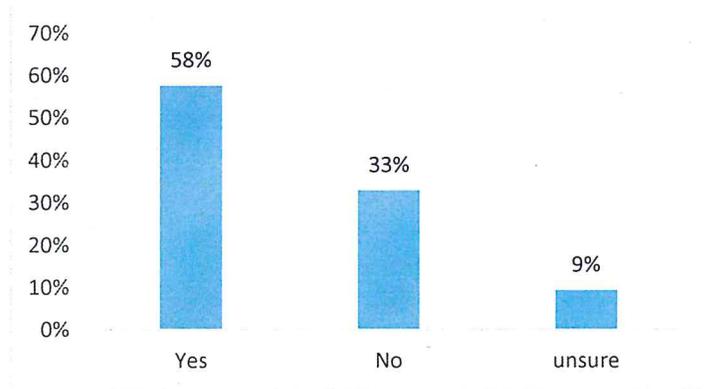


Figure 15 Adequacy of Public Transportation Options

Home Repair

When asked about whether the homes in the community were in good repair, very few people were unsure (Figure 16). This may have something to do with the nature of the question. People could easily see the conditions of the houses in the community.

Only 1/3 of the respondents indicated most homes were in good repair, which reflects a need of assistance in home repair in the surveyed communities.

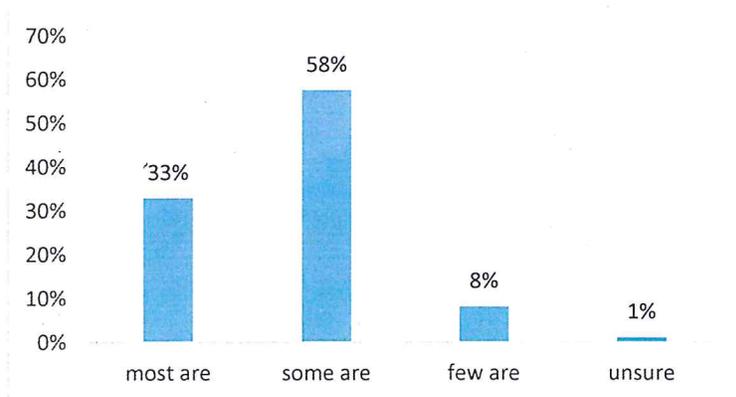


Figure 16 Homes in Good Repair

Greatest Challenges for Low-income Families and Individuals

Consistent with the question regarding barriers to full-time employment (Figure 3), respondents again cited education as the number one challenges for low-income families and individuals (Figure 17). However, substance abuse was viewed significantly more important in this question than in the employment question.

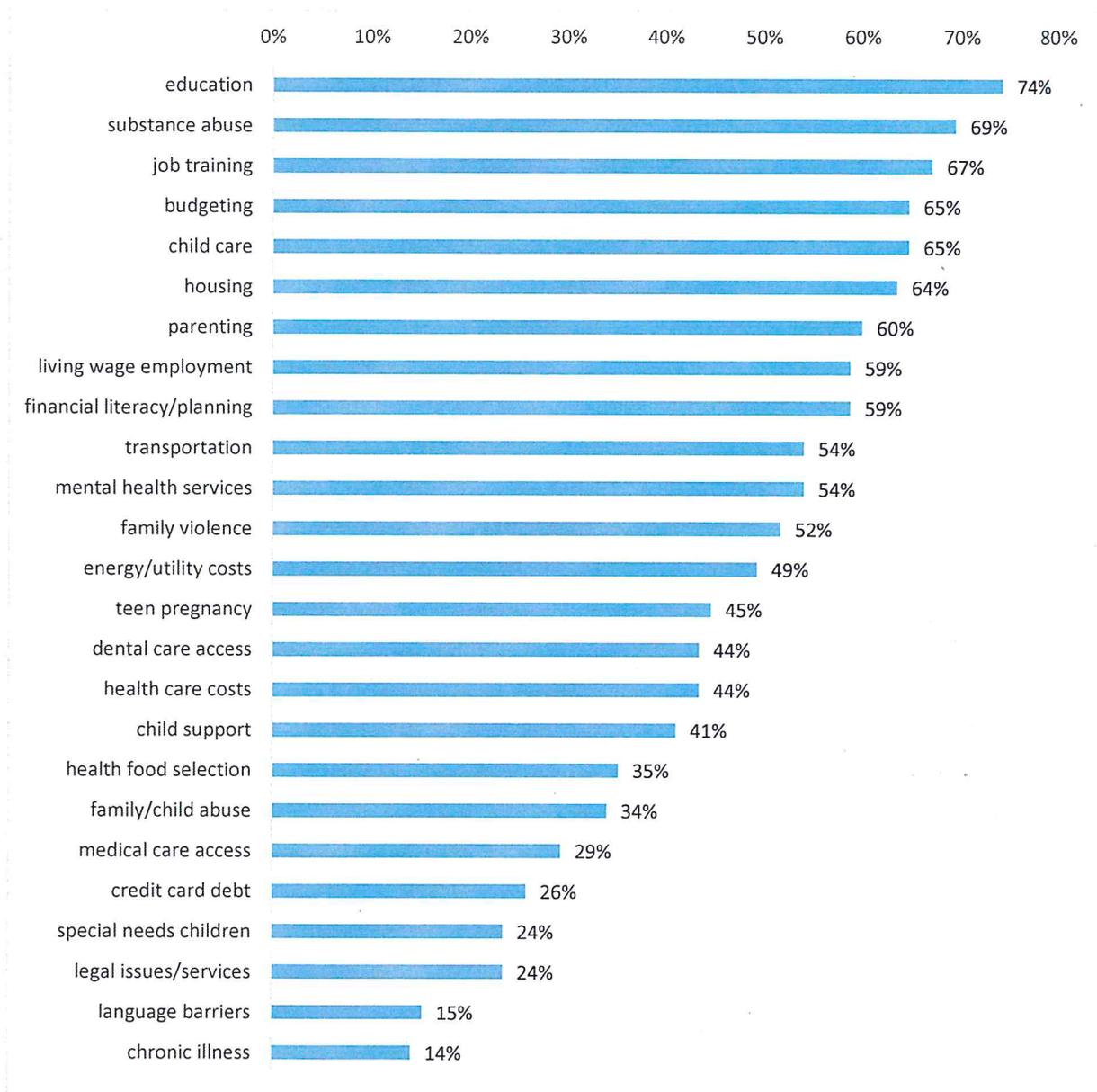


Figure 17 Greatest Challenges for Low-income Families and Individuals

Assistance Needed for Self-Sufficiency

For the question on areas of low-income families and individuals need assistance with in order to achieve or maintain self-sufficiency, employment was identified as the number one area (Figure 18). It makes sense the job training as the number two choice since it is highly related to employment opportunities.

Childcare, education, transportation, housing, and substance abuse are all top issues for low-income families and individuals that have been identified over and over in the survey.

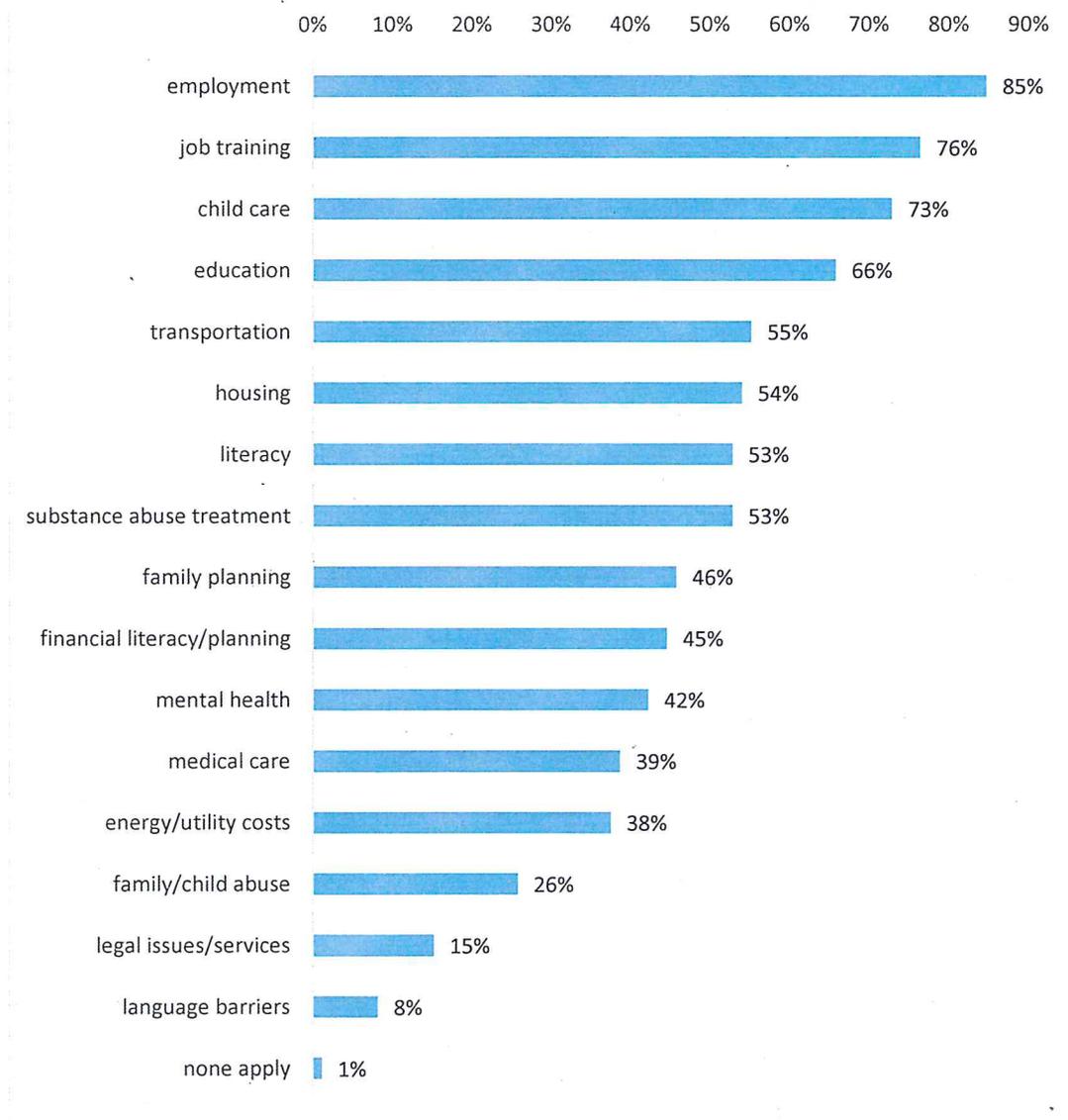


Figure 18 Areas of Assistance Needed to Achieve or Maintain Self-sufficiency

Senior Service Needs

More than half of the survey respondents thought seniors in the community need assistance in almost all the listed service areas (Figure 19) except for “laundry” and “tax preparation/legal issues.” Home repairs was identified as the number one need. Considering seniors preference of independent living in their own homes, and the cost saving to government social services, it may be worth further investigation on how to help seniors to maintain their home repair and provide safe and more energy efficient living environment for them.

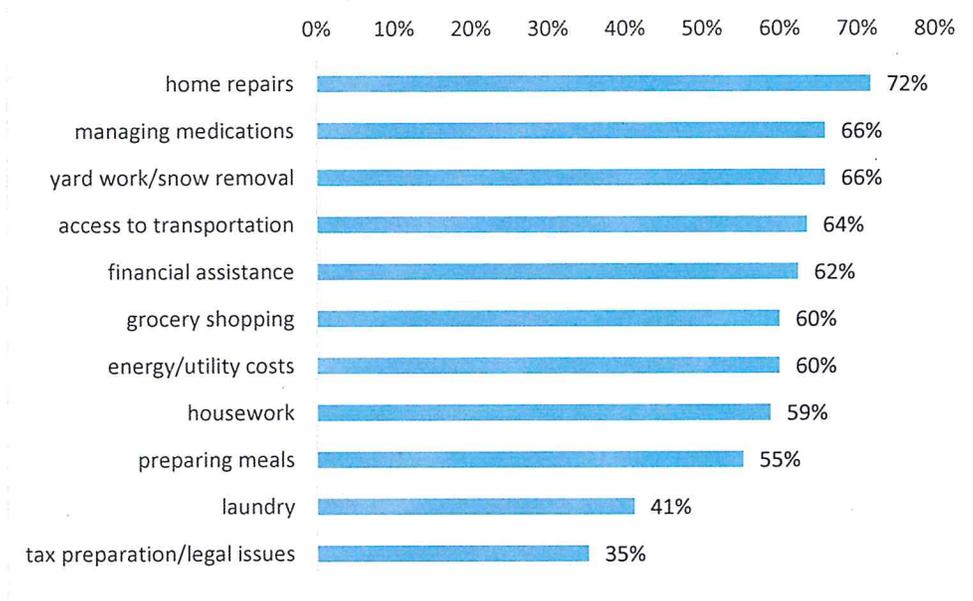


Figure 19 Senior Service Needs

Financial Need among Low-income Families and Individuals

In answering the question what financial aspects low-income families and individuals need information, education, guidance, and/or assistance, the top three issues were identified as “budgeting or money management,” “checking and saving accounts,” and “landlord/tenant” (Figure 20).

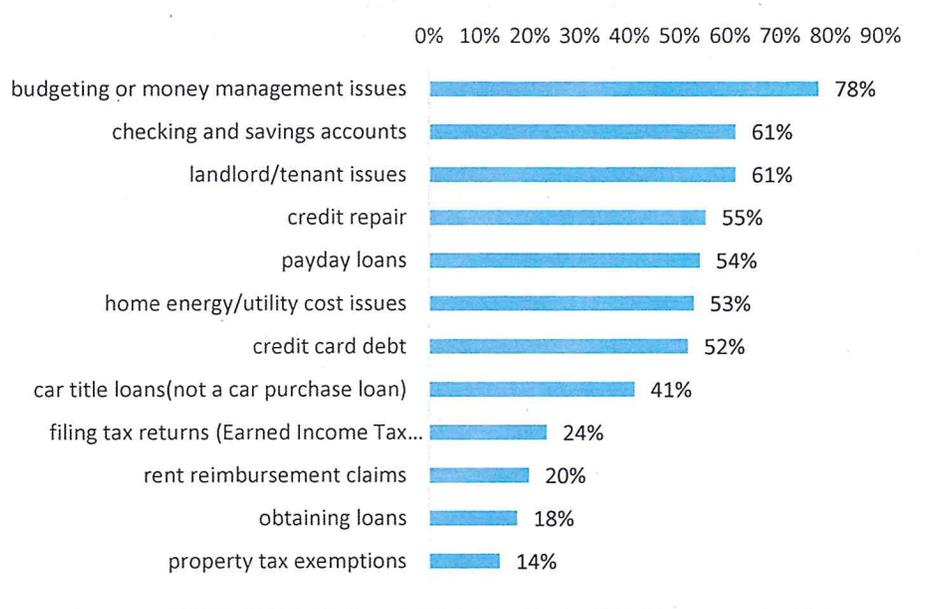


Figure 20 Areas of Need among Low-income Families and Individuals

Knowledge about SCDCR

The majority of survey respondents (72%) indicated that they were very familiar or somewhat familiar with Sangamon county Department of Community Resources (SCDCR) and the LIHEAP program it operates (Figure 21). A little less than 1/3 of them did not know much or never heard of the organization. This gives SCDRCR an opportunity to build new communication channels to share information and collaborate with organizations in the community to better serve clients.

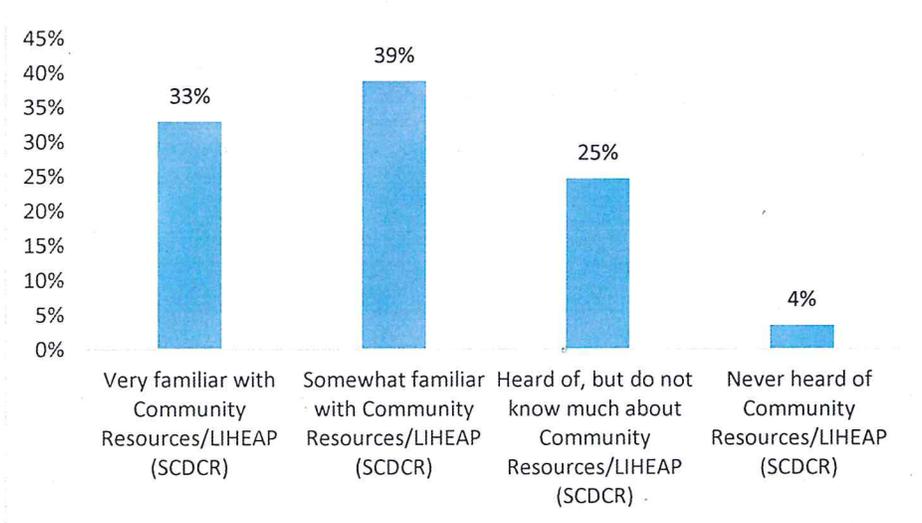


Figure 21 Knowledge about SCDRCR

Organizational Performance

If the respondents answered very familiar or somewhat familiar with SCDCR (61 respondents), they were asked to assess the organization’s performance. 53 of them provided their opinions. According to the survey respondents (Figure 22), SCDCR did well in terms of visibility/leadership in the community within the last year, quality of service, effective in working with others in the community, and leadership/involvement in identifying/advocating on community issues. There were quite a few respondents (12) indicated that the agency did not receive the publicity the agency deserves for its good work.

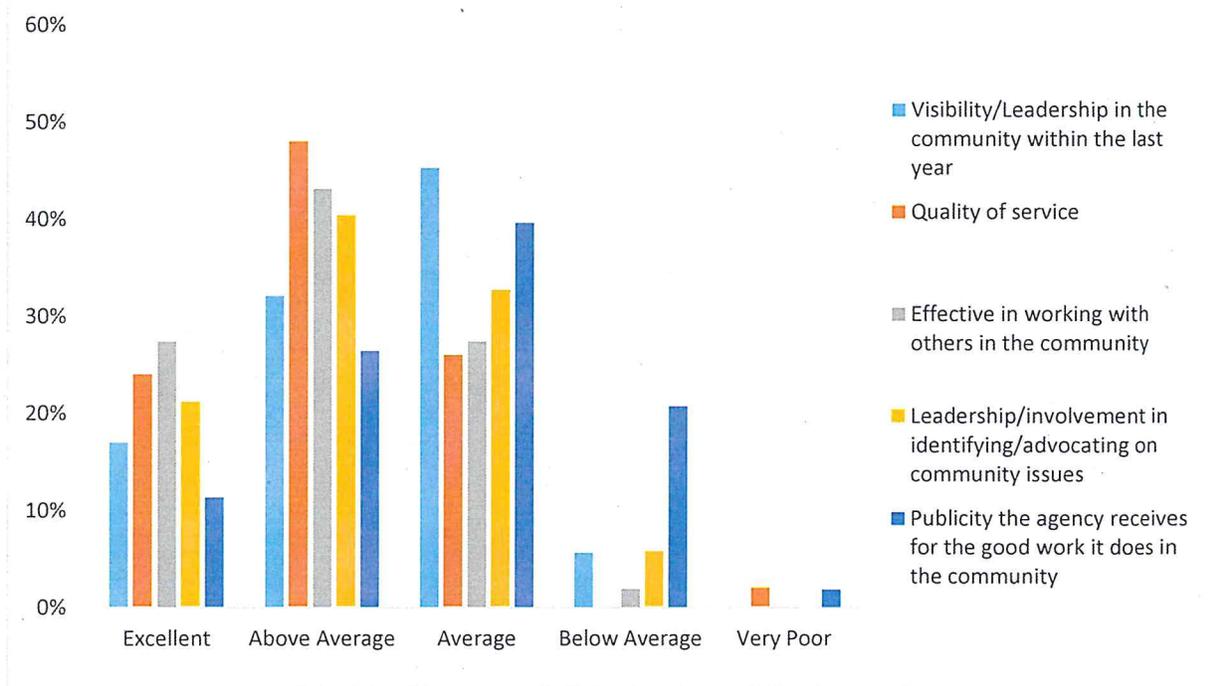


Figure 22 SCDCR Organizational Performance

Causes of Poverty

Sixty-two respondents provided their views of causes of poverty. “Lack of education” was mentioned 42 times (Figure 23). Family cycle followed as the number two cause. The respondents thought “those at risk and born into poverty have the hardest time getting out of it and it becomes a cycle.” It became a lifestyle, a norm, and a follow-the-leader mentality. Poverty caused by various government policies were mentioned 7 times. There were two branches of thoughts here. One group of respondents thought government gave too much

assistance to people who were able to work, and made people feel that they were entitled to more, which consequently caused them to do less for themselves. Also there was “a societal persevering attitude that persons in poverty are there due to a lack of personal achievement” and therefore people in poverty experienced discrimination and were unable to get fair opportunities. Family cycle, lack of family support, lack of motivation, and low self-esteem together were mentioned 43 times. These are more challenging issues for social service agencies to deal with.

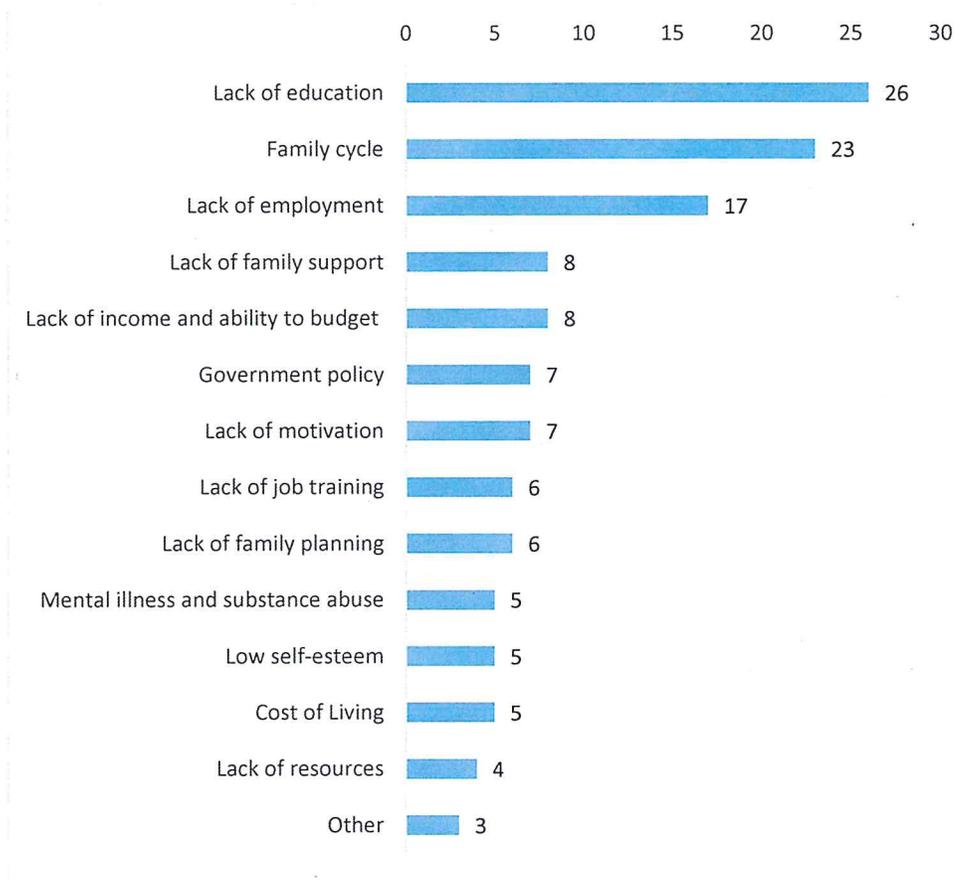


Figure 23 Causes of Poverty

Community Improvement Initiatives

Fifty respondents recommended initiatives to improve the community. Table 1 categorizes their recommendations.

Table 1 Recommended Community Improvement Initiatives

Category	Initiatives	Number of Respondents
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs that educate young parents how to get out of the poverty cycle • After school programs offering healthy lifestyles enrichments and fine arts • Educational and recreational activities for youth after school and on weekends • Mentors for all ages (role models) • Raise the income requirements for kids to get free breakfast and lunches at school. No child should not have food to eat especially at school. • Initiating parental involvement in our school systems • Offering education on financial literacy/planning 	14
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning up one neighborhood and making homeowners responsible for the property they own • Condemned houses in poor repair and fix or replace • Need better landlords, solve the absent/delinquent landlord problem • Help with landlord/tenant rights and issues • Need more affordable, habitable low-income housing for families and the elderly • More homeless programs 	10
Mental Health and Substance Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need emergency mental health options rather than jail • Mental health awareness programs • More mental health clinics • Help with substance abuse 	9

Job Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide job training • Help in resume writing and job interviews • Help connect people with jobs easier • Bring in new businesses to create more jobs 	6
Welfare Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives to work • Limit handouts • Not just allowing others to foot the bill, graduated entitlements to encourage employment • Make assistance programs be utilized for short term/emergency situations and not a dependency to survive • Offer more services to the working poor and not keep giving more and more to the lazy non-working • Stricter guidelines on all programs, drug testing for assistance eligibility 	5
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More help for those just above the living wage. Single parents, abused women • More help for working families that are underpaid. • Some people do not realize there are resources out there. Need an educational meeting about the different resources. • know what assistance is available and how to qualify 	5
Health, Dental, and Vision Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something like the Enos Park project • More dental clinics • Help with dental and vision care • High rates of STD's in 15-24 yr. They have too much time on their hands after getting out of school early and they are having unprotected sex in groups. • Availability of birth control 	5
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop the thieves from stealing in our neighborhood 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce violence • Funding for the 5th St's effort to reach out to prostitutes 	4
Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need quality affordable child care • Need more licensed child care opportunities for families who need care on the weekends or in the evenings 	4
Public Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More public transportation such as Sunday buses • Improve transportation access for east and south sides of Springfield 	2
Service Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized services - offer multiple services at one location to decrease duplication • Coming together as a community and working together to make positive change as a change agent 	2
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build better communities, improving technology that can help improve health, education and jobs 	1

Funding Allocation

The last question asked stakeholders what community issues they would spend \$1,000,000 to solve. Figure 24 shows the areas they would address with the one million dollars. Among the 50 stakeholders who answered this question, 10 of them would invest on mental health and substance abuse issue. For example, they proposed to open more mental health institutions and clinics, increase treatment and programs for persons with mental illness, and open more shelters equipped with complete mental health and drug abuse counselors.

Nine respondents would invest in education such as scholarships, mentoring programs, and classes in financial management, parenting skills etc. Two respondents argued that we would take care the elderly and veterans first.

Homelessness was another area that got more attention. Specifically, they would invest on shelters for families and take care of homeless children. One respondent would open shelters that “would allow pets and wouldn’t require IDs or birth certificates for families.”

Two respondents would like to invest on law enforcement, one with the purpose of get rid of drugs in the neighborhood and the other one to get rid of panhandlers approaching cars.

The other category includes answers that were either too general such as “poverty” or “help the working poor” or reflecting a less active thinking. Two respondents thoughts one million dollars might not solve any community issues. One respondent would like to distribute the money to other agencies to serve or assist at risk families and their children.

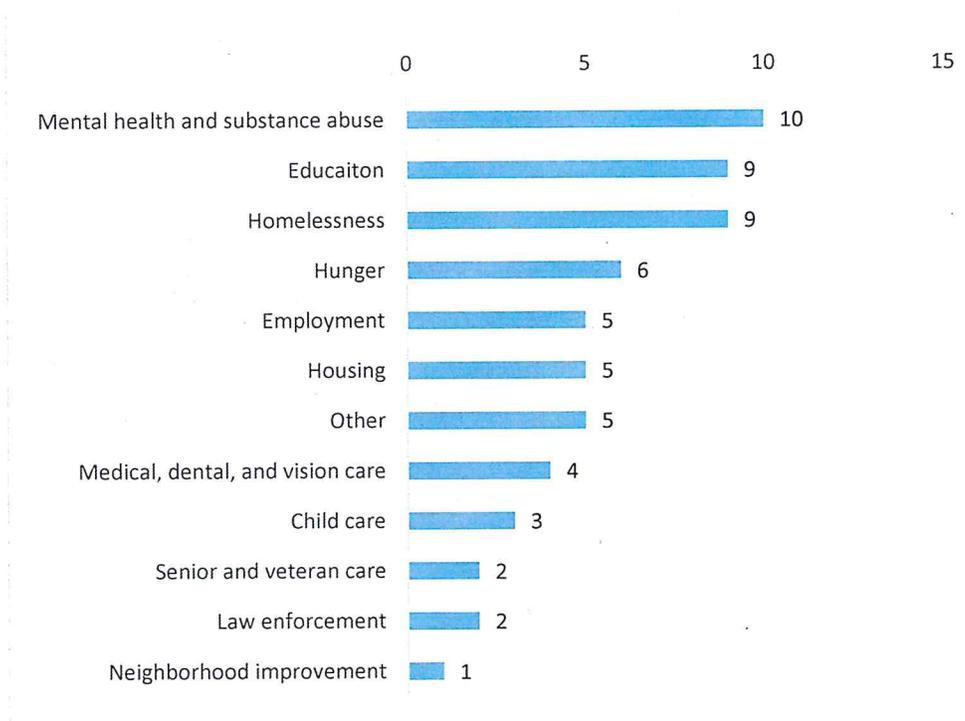


Figure 24 Plans for One Million Dollars to Solve a Community Issue

Conclusion

The stakeholder survey contained 22 close-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions. The close-ended questions reveal stakeholders’ understanding of community needs and whether these needs were met. The open-ended questions asked stakeholders to provide opinions regarding the causes of poverty, what community improvement initiatives they would propose, and how they would spend one million dollars to solve a community issue. Eighty-five stakeholders participated in the survey.

In terms of survey design, the use of “unsure” option should be careful. On the one hand, for many questions, there were close to or more than 1/3 of the respondents answered “unsure.” This may reflect a lack of understanding about the community, and a need for information sharing among stakeholders. On the other hand, the unsure option may encourage respondents not to give a question more serious thoughts, and take advantage of the option availability to save time.

Regarding causes of poverty, these stakeholders identified external causes such as lack of job opportunities, lack of resources, and cost of living. They identified internal causes such as family cycle (no role model, a lifestyle), unwillingness to work and a feeling of entitlement of welfare, low self-esteem and lack of hope, dream, and ambition, lack of family support and planning. They viewed lack of education, family cycle, and lack of employment as the top three causes.

Stakeholders proposed initiatives from 12 aspects: education, mental health and substance abuse, housing, welfare dependency, crime, job assistance, medical, dental, and vision care, childcare, outreach, public transportation, technology, and service provision. Some stakeholders made suggestions that were more concrete, while others discussed more generally.

For the last resource allocation question, stakeholders expressed interests in investing on 11 areas, with mental health and substance abuse, education, and homelessness as the top three targeted areas.