



**Community Action Coalition
for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.**

**COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION FOR SOUTH CENTRAL
WISCONSIN, INC. (CAC)
2004 NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

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**COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION
FOR SOUTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN, INC. (CAC)
2004 NEEDS ASSESSMENT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

From January through October 2004, CAC staff and volunteers facilitated interviews with individuals experiencing poverty, proctored surveys of community agencies, and reviewed readily available secondary information detailing issues of poverty in Dane, Jefferson, and Waukesha counties. The 2004 Dane, Jefferson, and Waukesha County Needs Assessment has been created from the body of data generated through this extensive research.

Prior to conducting this study, CAC solicited the input of numerous community organizations and people experiencing poverty throughout these three counties in order to make the Needs Assessment most useful. CAC then included their ideas and concerns when creating the interview questions and surveys.

Thereafter, CAC and its partners conducted 100 in-depth interviews (30-60 minutes each) with both English- and Spanish-speaking individuals from each county; in total, 299 surveys were completed and tallied. CAC currently offers a limited number of programs in Jefferson and Waukesha counties in addition to our programs in Dane County. By conducting an equal number of interviews at numerous community service providers central to the communities of Jefferson and Waukesha counties, it was CAC's intention to realize the most effective, meaningful, and relevant ways to expand or strengthen its programs in all three counties.

The activities involved in creating the 2004 Needs Assessment have been an opportunity for agencies and individuals to gain timely information about issues relating to poverty. In the future, this data will be used to plan, develop, and coordinate services to most appropriately serve our communities. The results of the Needs Assessment will be published on the CAC website enabling a diverse range of users to assess this valuable information.

To receive a hard copy of the results, please contact Kathleen Lane at klane@cacsew.org or 608-246-4730 Ext. 222.

Partner Agencies

CAC would like to thank the following organizations in Dane, Jefferson and Waukesha Counties who participated in our Needs Assessment Survey and provided insight, advice and information along the way.

Dane County

Centro Hispano
Dane County Food Pantry Network
Dane County Homeless Consortium Agencies
Fitchburg Senior Center
Harambee Health Center
Joining Forces for Families
Middleton Senior Center
Omega School
Porchlight
Safehaven
United Refugee Services of Wisconsin
United Way of Dane County
YWCA

Jefferson County

Bread and Roses
Conexiones Latinas
Counseling Center of Watertown
Early Intervention Program
Fort Atkinson Senior Center
HeadStart-Jefferson County
Integrated Counseling Services
Jefferson Food Pantry
Jefferson County Human Services
Jefferson County Literacy Council
Jefferson County Nutrition Site
Jefferson Senior Center
Jefferson Workforce Development
Opportunities, Inc.
People Against Domestic Abuse
Rock River Free Clinic
Waterloo Food Pantry
Waterloo Meals on Wheels
Watertown Family Aid
Watertown Food Pantry
Watertown Health Department
Watertown Senior Center
Watertown St. Vincent de Paul Society
Workforce Development

Waukesha County

The Addiction Resource Council
The Caring Place
Food Pantry of Waukesha County
Hebron House
Hispanic Community Health & Resource Center
La Casa de Esperanza
Mental Health Associates of Waukesha
Mukwonago Nutrition Center
Richard's Place
The Salvation Army
Saratoga Heights Senior Nutrition Site
Sienna House
Sussex Food Pantry
United Way-Waukesha County
University of Wisconsin Extension-Waukesha County
Waukesha County Health & Human Services
Waukesha County Public Health
Waukesha County Department of Senior Services
The Women's Center

**COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION FOR SOUTH
CENTRAL WISCONSIN, INC. (CAC)
2004 NEEDS ASSESSMENT: SUMMARY of ACTIVITIES**

Planning process:

The goal for the planning process was to fill in program gaps and design strategies to alleviate poverty in Dane, Jefferson, and Waukesha counties. The needs assessment survey was developed with internal and external input in the planning process.

Internal Involvement

Staff: CAC's Planning and Development Office developed the survey model and timeline, coordinated the activities, processed the data, and gathered secondary data. In addition, the coordinators of each of CAC's divisions reviewed the model and provided input. CAC staff members were also trained to conduct individual interviews throughout the 3-county area.

Volunteers: CAC's 5 Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) Placements received training and then conducted surveys for 3 days in Dane, Jefferson, and Waukesha counties.

Board: The Plans, Priorities and Development Committee of the CAC Board of Directors reviewed and affirmed all aspects of the planning processes and methodology.

External Involvement:

Partner Agencies: CAC circulated a preliminary survey model to partner agencies for their suggestions regarding the format and comprehensiveness of questions. In addition, partner agencies were invited to assist in conducting interviews with their participants and/or open up their agency for CAC staff or volunteers to conduct interviews at their sites.

Low-income Participants: Participants experiencing poverty created and/or reviewed the interview model. One major focus group with 3-5 participants was held in each county. The participants were given a one page description of the interview tool, including goals, objectives and how they would benefit. CAC also outlined their roles and decision-making abilities in the process, and explained the methods for ensuring confidentiality.

University of Wisconsin Survey Center: The survey instrument was reviewed by the UW Survey Center. Assistance was also provided by the Center in generating and summing data.

Methodology

CAC designed and implemented Needs Assessment tools, including the following methods:

- *Additional focus groups*

In addition to the preliminary focus groups mentioned above, HeadStart of Jefferson County conducted a focus group concerning housing development in Jefferson County and invited individuals experiencing poverty as well as public and private sector representatives to discuss the potential for future housing developments in Jefferson County. The discussion included co-housing as an affordable and supportive model. Before designing and implementing this focus group, CAC sought the assistance of the UW Center for Cooperatives to ensure that proper and effective methods were used.

CAC conducted focus groups with the Latino population in Jefferson and Dane counties to discuss the provision of services to these populations. As a token of appreciation, CAC provided transportation and grocery vouchers as appropriate to individuals who participated in a focus group.

- *Agency surveys (by e-mail and ground mail)*

CAC conducted numerous surveys with service providers in each county.

- *In-depth interviews with individuals experiencing poverty*

CAC conducted 299 in-depth interviews with individuals experiencing poverty—approximately 100 in each county. Partner agencies conducted interviews with their participants and/or opened their sites on certain dates for CAC to conduct interviews. The interview process was advertised, and CAC provided a grocery voucher to persons experiencing poverty who took the time to participate.

- *Review and analyze secondary data, including data from other regional needs assessments*

In order not to duplicate efforts, CAC has included the results of various data and needs assessments within the counties we serve.

Outcome Objective

The 2004 Needs Assessment will be used to set priorities, design programs, and assess strengths in the communities of Dane, Waukesha, and Jefferson counties. It will help define the contours of CAC programs in the future and be available online for other individuals and service providers to garner information necessary to understanding the immediate needs of people experiencing poverty. It is CAC's goal to design and offer programs and services that will enable these individuals with the means and knowledge to move out of poverty. With this in mind, CAC staff will feel confident they are upholding the agency mission to develop the economic and social capacities of individuals, families, and communities to reduce poverty in Dane, Jefferson, and

Waukesha counties.

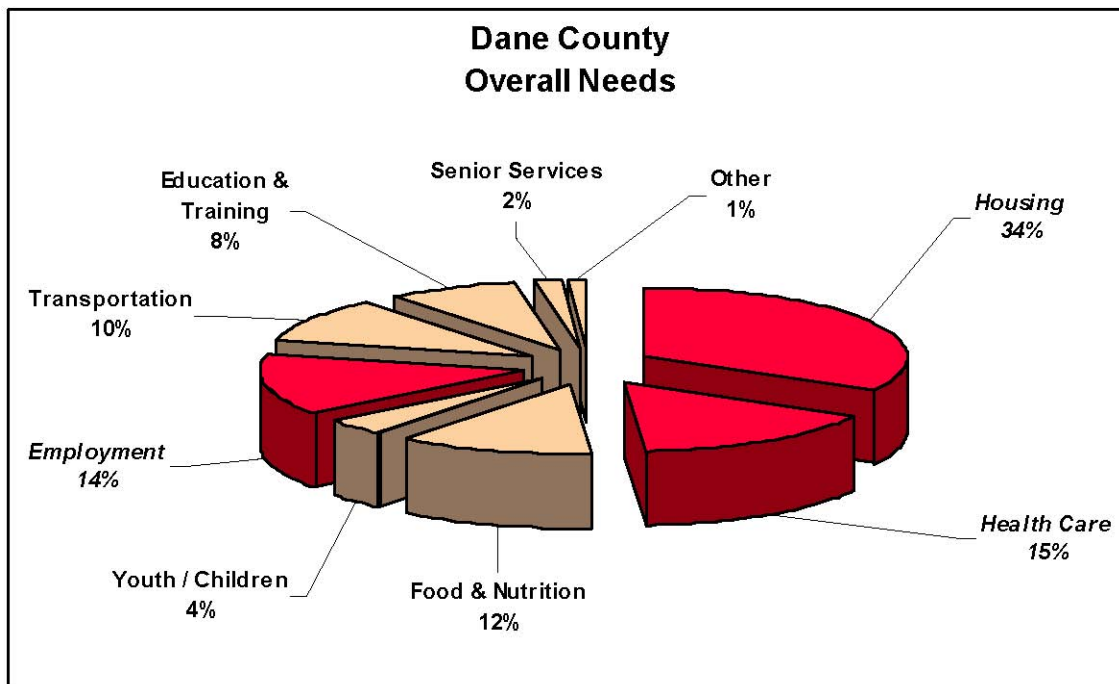
With the information gathered from the 2004 Needs Assessment, CAC will conduct continued analysis of the data and develop additional literature to publish agency-wide, through the local media, and on the Internet.

Results and Analysis

The Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc. (CAC) interviewed hundreds of individuals affected by poverty to discuss their thoughts on current community services and futures needs. They were asked about seven different categories: housing, employment and finance, health, food and nutrition, transportation, seniors, and children. Respondents were asked to rank their top three community needs. These needs in Dane, Jefferson and Waukesha County are discussed below.

Dane County – Top Needs

Dane County residents discussed affordable housing as their top priority in the community. Interviewees reported that affordable housing, financial assistance in acquiring housing, and phone bill assistance were primary concerns. The top three issues that were related to employment, education, and finances were: obtaining full-time employment; obtaining higher wage employment; and receiving vocational training to gain a better job. Primary needs related to health include the need for affordable health care, dental care services, and access to eye care. Regarding food and nutrition issues, the main priorities were affordable food and access to food stamps. Top transportation needs for Dane County include access to public transportation, dependable personal transportation, and assistance with car repairs. Childcare, summer/after school activities and affordable extracurricular activities ranked among top needs relative to children in the county.

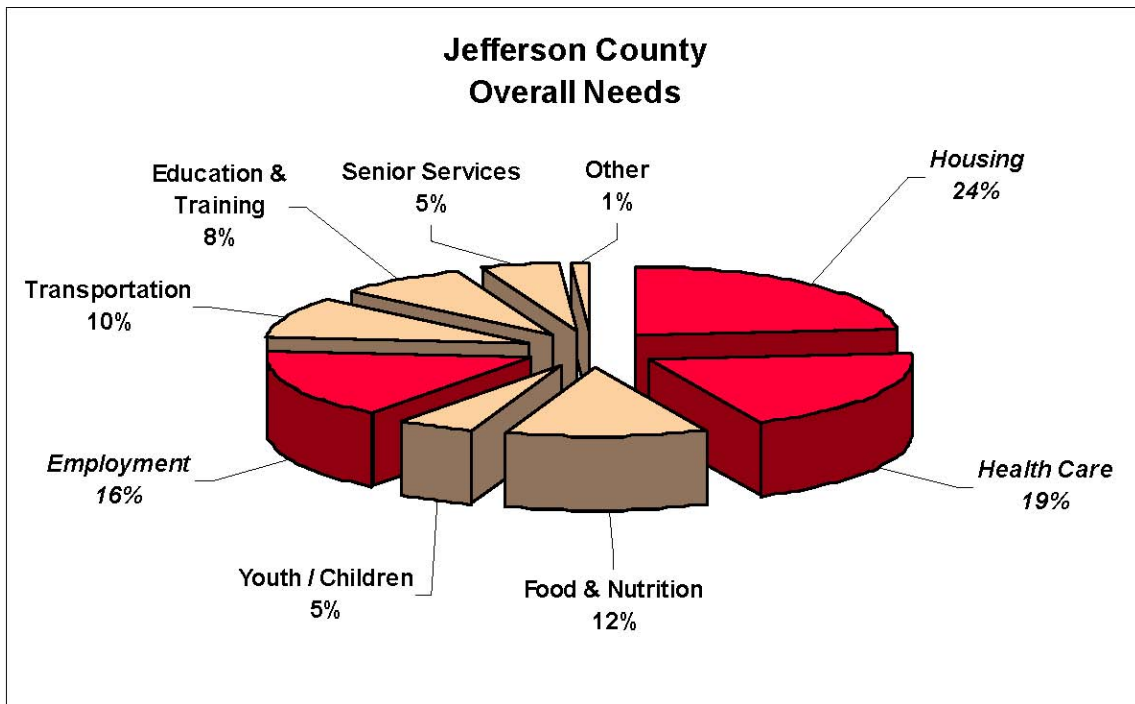


Housing, health care, and employment were the top three concerns for Dane County residents. Source: Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc. (2004)

Jefferson County – Top Needs

Jefferson County residents identified their top community needs as housing, employment and health care.

Jefferson County respondents reported that affordable rental housing, help with heating fuel costs, and financial assistance in acquiring an apartment were primary concerns. The top three issues concerning employment, education, and finances were: obtaining full-time employment; obtaining higher paying employment; receiving education/training to get a better job; and employment with health care benefits. Primary needs related to health include affordable health care, dental care, and eye care. Regarding food and nutrition issues, the main needs were affordability of food and access to a local grocery store. Top transportation needs for Jefferson County include dependable personal transportation and assistance with car repairs. Childcare, after-school programs, and affordable extracurricular activities ranked among top needs relative to children in the county.

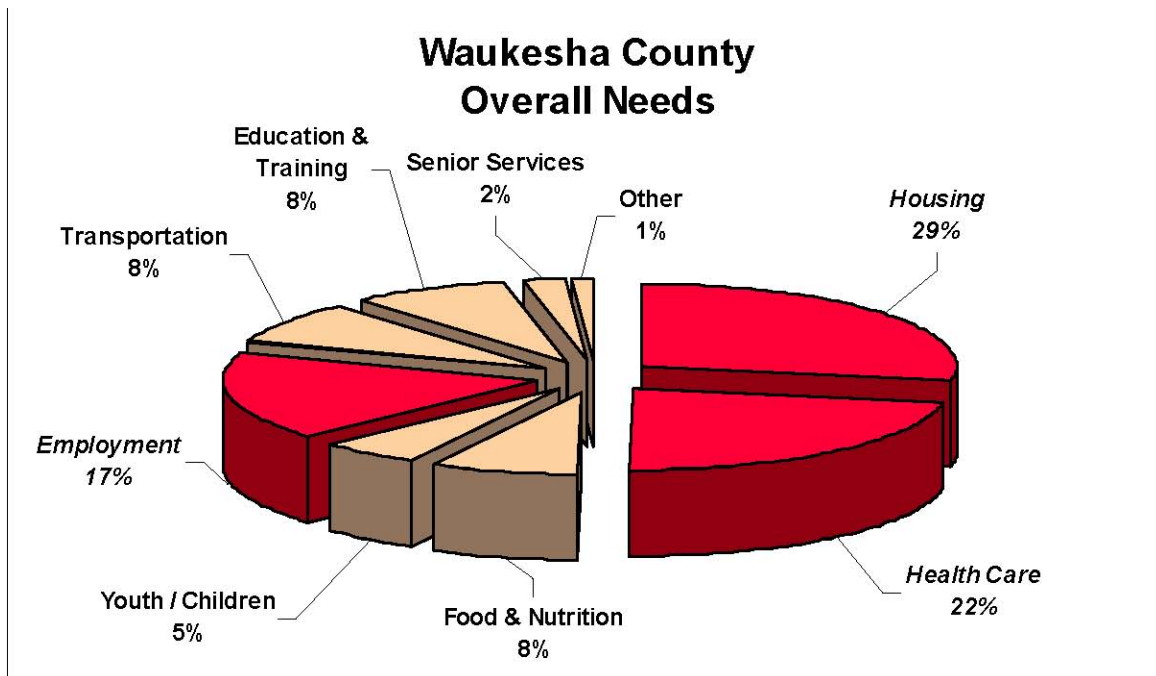


Housing, health care, and employment were the top three concerns for Jefferson County residents. Source: Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc. (2004)

Overall, the data show that housing, healthcare, and employment were ranked as the primary needs of the region, with transportation and food/nutrition also ranking as important issues for respondents.

Waukesha County – Top Needs

Waukesha County respondents reported that acquiring affordable housing, financial assistance in getting rental housing, and financial assistance for heating fuel costs were their main concerns regarding housing in the county. The top three issues concerning employment, education, and finances were obtaining full-time employment, obtaining higher paying employment, and employment with health care benefits. Primary needs related to health include affordable health care, dental care, and eye care. Regarding food and nutrition issues, the main needs were affordable food and gardening space and tools. Top transportation needs for respondents include access to public transportation, dependable personal transportation, and assistance with car repairs. Affordable extracurricular activities, summer programs, and mentoring ranked among top needs relative to children in the county.



Housing, health care, and employment were the top three concerns for Waukesha County residents. Source: Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc. (2004)

Overall, the data show that housing, healthcare, employment, and transportation were ranked as the primary needs of the region.

Overall Needs

Analysis of the three counties collectively shows that the top three needs of the selected region are:

1. **Housing:** 41% of respondents ranked housing as their number one need.
2. **Healthcare:** 23.7% of respondents ranked healthcare as their number two need.
3. **Employment:** 15.7% of respondents ranked employment security as their number three need.

It is important to note that employment and food/nutrition were also considerable needs based on survey responses. 15.3% of respondents ranked employment as their top priority, while 14.7% listed food and nutrition as a close second for need. In contrast, issues concerning children and seniors do not rank as high in importance to the survey respondents. Very few people responded to senior-related questions on the survey.

Within these areas of need, respondents listed the following specific services as their greatest overall needs:

1. **Housing:** The need for affordable rental housing was considerable, according to the survey, with 44.7% of respondents across the three counties listing it as their number one housing-related need. Financial assistance to get into an apartment is the number two need in this category. Help with phone service and heating fuel costs is the number three need.
2. **Employment, Education, and Financial Issues:** Full-time employment is the greatest need of respondents, with 30.7% of respondents listing it as their number one need. Higher paying employment and employment with health care benefits scored numbers two and three respectively for the tri-county area.
3. **Health:** 45% of respondents ranked affordable health care as the number one need, with affordable dental care and affordable eye care ranking second and third in the health needs category.
4. **Food and Nutrition:** Overwhelmingly, respondents reported a need for access to food at a lower cost, with 46% ranking it the number one need and 23.3% ranking it a number two need. The need for food stamps comes in third.
5. **Transportation:** Access to public transportation was the top need in this category according to 23.3% of respondents. Dependable personal transportation and assistance paying for car repairs ranked numbers two and three within this category.
6. **Seniors:** Senior residents of Dane, Jefferson and Waukesha Counties who are experiencing poverty face a number of challenges. Due to a lack of sufficient data on seniors experiencing poverty, we are unable to formulate a complete list of community needs.
7. **Children:** While childcare did not prove to be a significant need overall, those who reported having child-related needs listed childcare as their number one need.

Summer programs and affordable extracurricular activities were listed as needs two and three overall.

In contrast, issues concerning children and seniors do not rank as high in importance to the survey respondents; very few people responded to senior-related questions on the survey.

Poverty in Wisconsin

The findings of CAC's community need assessments coincide with the numerous publications on poverty in Dane County. The United Way of Dane County and the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) have conducted comprehensive studies of the state of poor and working families in Wisconsin and its counties. CAC uses this research to provide a well-rounded and informative Needs Assessment of our three service areas.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

According to the United Way of Dane County (UWDC), the number of Dane County residents turned away from shelters in 2002 (7,925) doubled the number of individuals who were actually served in shelters (3,452). As the poverty rate continues to grow in general in Wisconsin, and specifically in Dane County, the number of families unable to acquire affordable housing has increased and many face housing challenges (UWDC: Dane County Assessment Report 2004). CAC staff members also participate in the City of Madison Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Homeless Services Consortium which produces the 2004 Annual Report on the Homeless Served in Dane County. This report provides similar findings regarding shelter visits and estimated number of gaps in service. The report stated that between 919-961 families with children, 1215 to 1233 men, and 807 to 824 women were not able to stay in shelters because of a shortness of rooms.

There are a number of reasons for the occurrence of homelessness, and a lack of affordable housing contributes to this situation. A number of non-profit agencies in Dane County provide services for individuals and families who are unable to acquire secure and affordable housing. While a number of organizations provide housing case management for homeless individuals, and those at risk of becoming homeless, non-profits have begun developing affordable housing units themselves or in partnership with a development firm.

Health Care

Of great concern for individuals affected by poverty is access to quality health care. The United Way of Dane County (UWDC) reports that about 60% of Dane County residents felt that the "most important indicator of the well being in our community ... was the percentage of people able to get good healthcare" (United Way of Dane County Assessment Report 2004). A lack of insurance, which is directly related to income and employment status, is a major obstacle to acquiring health care. The UWDC works with officials in the City of Madison, the Dane County

Human Services Department and the Madison Metropolitan School District to address the complex issues of health care affordability and skills required to attain secure, full-time employment with health benefits.

The gap in health insurance coverage in Wisconsin is significant when compared to other states. According to the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), the rate at which companies offer health insurance benefits is the lowest among Wisconsin's peer states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan and Minnesota (The State of Working Wisconsin 2004). COWS concludes that this may mean that a historic commitment of Wisconsin employers to providing health insurance has diminished since the recent economic recession.

Employment

The barriers to acquiring secure employment in our service are complex and subject to changes in the national, state and regional economic climate. Even though Wisconsin experienced some impressive job growth in the manufacturing sector in 2004, the overall job growth in the previous 10 years has been modest, according to the State of Working Wisconsin 2004, published by COWS. Research has also showed that not all jobs are created equal and that the growth of low-paying jobs without benefits does little to improve the overall economic health of an individual or family experiencing poverty.

CAC's Mission

CAC's mission is to develop the economic and social capacities of individuals, families and communities to reduce poverty in Dane, Jefferson and Waukesha Counties. CAC provides services and programs based on the needs of those experiencing poverty that range from intensive housing case management to access to community garden plots and a free clothing center. CAC offers these programs in Dane, Jefferson and Waukesha Counties to provide both urban and rural communities with the services they need, ranging from affordable health care to transportation needs.