

COMMUNITY HUMAN SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

2011 REVIEW AND REPORT

21ST Century Council
Tallahassee, FL

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Unique to Florida, in fact, unique in the U.S., is the City of Tallahassee, Leon County, and United Way of the Big Bend collaboration to form the Community Human Service Partnership (CHSP). Apart from the small number of citizens involved in reviewing grant proposals, the majority of Leon County-Tallahassee residents are unaware of the scope of human services efforts the CHSP has supported over the last 15 years. The 21st Century Council, a local non-profit involved in community quality of life issues, conducted a review of the reports of 2011 accomplishments that were included in this year's 74 CHSP grant applications. The purpose of this report is to highlight some of the accomplishments that reflect the range and impact of social services provided by these agencies.

What is striking from the start is the sheer number of local citizens whose lives have been impacted by the 120 programs offered by the grant applicants and supported by the CHSP. In 2011, the agencies reported providing **direct services** to:

- 41,376 Seniors (Age 55+)
- 88,349 Adults (19-54)
- 57,623 Children and Youth (0-18)
- 7,422 Families

In addition, over 130,000 individuals received information, education, referral or other assistance from these organizations.

Although these numbers included duplicate counts in some cases (individuals or families receiving multiple services or help from several agencies), they clearly reflect neighbors reaching out to help meet the critical needs of many children, adults and seniors in our community.

The City of Tallahassee, Leon County and United Way of the Big Bend invested \$4.9 million in these agencies in 2011/12 and \$4.7 million has been allocated for 2012/13. The County contributes 17% of the total, the City 24%, and the United Way 60%. Often overlooked is that these funds provide less than 4% of the operating budgets of the participating organizations. Contracts, grants, fundraisers and individual and client contributions add up to more than \$121 million spent each year on services and programs. The positive economic impact for the community is a significant addition to the individual benefits that clients receive.

Another overlooked contribution is the significant value of the community volunteers recruited by these non-profit agencies in support of their efforts. In 2011, the economic value of the time and energy of over 860,000 volunteer hours was reported to be worth over \$18 million. More than the dollar value is the opportunity of so many thousands of people to demonstrate care and concern for their neighbors in need, a benefit that is often as significant for the volunteer as for the person being helped. Most importantly, when individuals work collaboratively to resolve local problems, the quality of life for the larger community is enhanced.

Other highlights from the review include (again, the numbers may be duplicated):

- 7422 families received direct assistance with services ranging from help with caregiving and bereavement to legal aid and shelter.
- 11,432 individuals received medical services, health tests, medical case management and counseling, prescription assistance, HIV screening and treatment for serious concerns including cancer and heart disease. Many thousands more were provided information on health lifestyles and signs of specific conditions or diseases that might place and individual at risk.
- 2717 homeless adults were provided short term, transitional or semi-permanent housing by larger community agencies such as the Shelter and Homeless Coalition as well as smaller church related groups such as Lutheran Social Services and Hope House. Almost 80,000 nights of emergency shelter were also provided to adults and families in 2011.
- 640 children in crisis situations were provided transitional or semi-permanent housing from agencies such as Refuge House and Boys Town.
- 591 Citizens at risk of having their utilities disconnected due to lack of funds were helped by organizations such as the Capital Area Community Action Agency, Elder Care Services and Catholic Charities.
- 2,883,375 pounds of food was distributed to families, adults and seniors from several agencies, including America's Second Harvest of the Big Bend and Good News Outreach.
- 407,448 meals were provided by Capital Area Community Action Agency to kids and Elder Care Services to seniors as well as by homeless shelters and other groups. Locally over 77,000 people received meals –some daily (Elder Care's Meals on Wheels and The Shelter), some weekly (ECHO weekend meals program) and some monthly (Good News Outreach). Each month approximately

19,000 Leon County residents receive food assistance, including many who represent the working poor.

- 2867 preschool children were provided child care which allowed parents to work, seek work or deal with other family issues while their children received meals, socialization and care.
- 9429 young people participated in character development, mentorship, recreation, academic or other after school activities to help them be successful in school, stay healthy and safe and avoid school discipline, gang involvement or other legal problems. Special needs youth, young parents, girls and boys of all ages were offered programs from sports and recreation (YMCA and Miracle Field) to character building and social skills (Pivotal Point and Distinguished Young Gentlemen of America). Established agencies like Boys and Girls Club, YMCA and Big Brothers/Big Sisters were joined by a number of smaller programs to make youth services the category with the largest number of programs for which funds were requested.

These numbers are a snapshot and represent only the United Way and other agencies participating in the CHSP process. Many additional non-profits, clubs, sororities and agencies in our community also provide outreach, education and direct service to many more individuals and groups. However, the CHSP agencies have agreed to complete a detailed application, make available financial audits and tax returns and be accountable through their volunteer boards for the appropriate use of grant funds. With a citizen review process, there is a level of transparency and oversight in the CHSP process that is unique in the social services arena.

The wide range of CHSP programs offers a challenge to those community members reviewing the agencies and the City, County and United Way funders. There is great competition for very limited dollars with over \$7 million requested in 2012/13 with less than \$4.8 million dollars available. Added to the difficulty is deciding how to prioritize dollars with a broad range of services proposed. Review teams were grouped in the following categories with these 2012/13 requests and approved allocations:

TEAM		REQUESTED	APPROVED
Team 1	Children's Services	\$1,040,455	\$695,552
Team 2	Community Support	500,698	337,772
Team 3	Services to Disabled	362,174	294,893
Team 4	Emergency Services	723,000	543,737

Team 5	Family Support	582,263	395,280
Team 6	Physical Health	790,000	593,701
Team 7	Senior Services	550,830	464,121
Team 8	Substance Abuse	343,000	229,000
Team 9	Youth Character Building	1,042,047	608,241
Team 10	Youth Education	818,072	364,434
Team 11	Basic Needs	339,600	250,400

Allocations in part are continuation of past funding if an agency can document effective use of the grant. Basic needs and emergency services do not compete with youth and families across teams in most cases. Within teams, however, there is often a wide range of delivery strategies, from daily services for seniors and the homeless to quarterly outreach or annual community fairs. As each grant proposal is required to identify the community and client needs they seek to address, it becomes clear that there are not enough current resources to provide for all that has been identified. Despite generous support from agency fund raisers and CHSP grants, there are waiting lists for services from preschoolers to seniors. Given the reality of declining state and federal resources available to provide an adequate government safety net, it will remain up to community groups like the CHSP agencies to fill the gaps. The data show that they are reaching many in need. It is also apparent that more can be done if given additional community support and funding.

This brief report was produced by the 21st Century Council, P.O. Box 10312, Tallahassee, FL 32302. The Council is a non-partisan volunteer group dedicated to improving the quality of life for all citizens in the Tallahassee-Leon County community. The membership in the Council is open to anyone interested in policies, practices or programs that might make a positive difference in people's lives.

This study was conducted by James M. (Jim) Croteau (jmcroteau@hotmail.com) and Theresa A. Croteau with support of the Council and assistance from Pat Holliday of the City of Tallahassee, Department of Economic and Community Development. The data used were garnered from the agency self-reports and verification was beyond the scope of this review. Totals in various categories were made by the authors of the report who accept all responsibility for their limitations and accuracy. As stated earlier, many numbers included duplicated services or individuals served more than one time by more than one agency. Thus the numbers are reflected of the scope of services, not a precise measure.

The review by the 21st Century Council also highlighted a number of issues that could be addressed to improve the process and reporting of impact and results of the CHSP. These issues are raised for further consideration by the funding agencies and the Joint Planning Board (JPB) responsible for coordinating the partnership. Detailed recommendations for addressing these issues are beyond the scope of this brief report. Many substantive recommendations have already been presented by two recent study groups to the JPB. The 21st Century Council and the authors encourage further consideration of these recommendations in the very near future.

Unevenness of Reporting. There is great variability in the quality of the grant applications, especially in the narrative and performance outcome sections. The directions for reporting previous year's accomplishments state: "Please identify goals and objectives accomplished during the last year completed. (Please make sure your objectives are measurable.)" Thirty-two of the 74 reports contained no numbers in this section of the report. While most had client data reported in other sections, it was often difficult to assess how many clients received which types of services and to what effect for that year. Many focused on process or organizational accomplishments or listed anecdotal stories rather than measurable impact on clients. (For example, the only accomplishments one organization listed were: recruited two new board members...website was redesigned...we produced a video...worked together to complete a strategic plan.) There were several very good examples of agencies that succinctly described significant client services and impacts (for example, We Care Network and Legal Aid Foundation) that could be shared as models.

Different Numbers in Different Sections. In many of the reports, the numbers do not add up. Sections on client demographics often do not match clients reported as served in the narrative or included in client outcome measures. Agencies with very large numbers served by several programs have a challenge collecting demographic information, especially when trying to combine those receiving direct services and those only getting information or referral. Several agencies did not report data in one or more requested categories adding to the difficulty in making comparisons. Several agencies combined clients receiving direct services with those who were handed pamphlets when calculating cost per client. Four agencies did not even complete the cost per client section.

Separating Multi-County Services. Many agencies serve several other counties and were challenged to separate out information pertaining just to Leon County. Some of the required data, especially in the budget areas, reflect agency wide expenses and revenues, skewing the picture of what funds are available to match the local grant request. Review committee members are often faced with trying to separate out which resources from the agency would be combined with

CHSP funds to maximize cost effectiveness and program impact in Leon County. Add to the complexity is the competition between a multimillion dollar agency request that may be less than one half of one percent of the agency's budget and a small agency who's grant application represents nearly 100% of its operating resources. This may result in reviewer discussion of allocations becoming about the impact upon the organization rather than the impact on services to clients. (To be fair, the 2013 Citizen Teams recommendations reflect the fact that several smaller agencies receiving 50% or more of their resources from CHSP failed to meet other grant criteria and were not allocated continuation funds.)

Objectives and Outcomes. While the grant applications and reports show an improvement in the quality of objectives and outcomes over the last three years, many still fail to report data that measures the effectiveness of services and client impact. Numbers are reported with no measure of success, percentages with no numbers, counts of services with no results, or sample survey data that reflect only perceptions with no evidence of impact. Client self-reports provide important and useful feedback and it is essential to count people and types of services. Data on the impact on clients' lives that result in meeting or reducing the conditions that generated the need for the program are essential. As citizen teams seek to compare effectiveness among programs competing for limited funds, lack of comparative data makes their task difficult. As a result, client stories and anecdotal narratives sometimes carry significantly more weight than demonstrated outcomes. However, the 2012/13 funding demonstrated that the volunteers are increasingly basing their recommendations on the ability of programs to document positive client outcomes. In each of the team categories there are very good examples that can be shared with other grant applicants. But at a minimum, the reader should easily be able to identify:

- What services were delivered to how many people? (Unduplicated if possible.)
- What were measurable short term impacts or evidence of effectiveness? (Percentages and numbers if possible.)
- What were long term impacts on meeting clients identified need? (Related to the needs identification portion of the grant application.)

Average Cost per Client. A challenge in this grant process is comparing costs per client served. The formula that is used has resulted in significant variance within every team. Some of the variance can be explained by examining the nature of the services provided. However, evaluating the return on investment, identifying best practices and comparing cost effectiveness is very difficult. The table below illustrates the issue.

TEAM	LOWEST ACPC	HIGHEST ACPC	MEDIAN
Children's Services	\$ 355	\$ 9994	\$2934

Community Support	4	4750	392
Disabled Services	4	4936	170
Emergency Services	8	334	40
Family Support	26	25,480	1475
Physical Health	4	8272	185
Senior Services	16	762	81
Substance Abuse	1160	3361	1783
Character Building	181	2090	764
Youth Education	7	4217	689
Basic Needs	44	2429	561

The lowest overall Team average of average cost per client was Emergency Services at \$112 per client followed by Seniors Services at \$176. Highest Team average was Family Support at \$5291 followed by Children’s Services at \$3690.

Basic Needs vs. Prevention vs. Information and Outreach. The diversity of the 120 programs proposed by the 74 CHSP grant applicants present a challenge to the citizen reviewers. Although the teams are formed around programs that have some commonalities, there are great variations in activities that are proposed within teams (for example, the Children’s Services Team includes pregnancy help and childcare tuition assistance). Assignment to a team poses a challenge. Some agencies have programs on two or more teams (Refuge House and Good News Outreach) while others have up to five programs on one (Elder Care Services). The Tallahassee Boys Choir is in the Youth Education team while the Girls Choir (Bethel by the Lake) is in the Youth Character Building Team.

Most allocations appear to generally follow previous year awards. A process for establishing funding priorities that reflect data on the most critical human service needs and gaps in utilizing evidence based best practices to meet those needs should be considered. Children and youth services account for almost 30% of the CHSP budget, reflecting the number of agencies requesting funds more than anything else. Youth Education and Development had 21 agencies apply for 34 programs, while Substance Abuse had proposals from only three agencies, with only one dealing directly with the critical issue of youth drug and alcohol use. Almost 30% of CHP funds support children and youth activities, with 11% dedicated to the safety net of Emergency Services.

Meeting critical social service needs, prevention activities, information and outreach are all important activities. Several agencies have programs and services that address all of these areas. Many address only one or two strategies. The CHSP process has work relatively well supporting many activities in each area. With limited or declining funds, the need for a process to prioritize critical community needs, assess the return on investment and encourage the use of evidence based best practices becomes more important.

SUMMARY

The results of this brief review demonstrate that there is a tremendous benefit to many thousands of citizens served the CHSP funded agencies and programs that should be regularly reported to the community. The return on investment to the community is significant and support from the City of Tallahassee, Leon County Board of County Commissioners and the United Way of the Big Bend should be recognized and continued. The citizen involvement in the partnership works well and adds greater credibility to the review and recommendation process. The application and reporting process could be improved to give a clearer picture of the services provided and their impact on meeting community and client needs. The process could also benefit from a regular review of priority needs, a comparison of costs and effectiveness among programs, and an examination of gaps or redundancies in services that address critical needs. The assessment and recommendations from the Joint Planning Board's special advisory committees could serve as a starting point for having this critical discussion. In any case, the unique collaboration of funding agencies, social services organizations and citizens should be annually recognized and celebrated.