



Community Needs Assessment 2003

Most Serious Issues

- Substance Abuse
- Affordable Housing
- Domestic Violence
- Affordable medical, dental, mental health care, including pharmaceuticals

"Mesa County offers a lot, but many people don't know how to get the help they need."

Community Issues
Survey respondent

Summary of Findings

Purpose: to research critical health and human service needs, identify barriers, investigate emerging issues, and produce a Community Needs report which will assist in prioritizing areas of need, guiding our allocation process.

Methods: The following methods were employed to gather information:

1. Mail-out survey
2. Focus groups
3. Secondary research

Surveys were distributed to 574 community members. Mail-out recipients were randomly selected from existing donor lists, and included representation from retirees, students, educators, health & human service providers, law enforcement, government, business leaders, faith community and UW volunteers. Additionally, each of the 51 UW funded programs distributed a survey to five clients. The survey realized a 29% return rate (166). Three groups (20 individuals) held in-depth discussion focused on what's right in our community, what needs work, and perceived barriers to access. Secondary research was conducted to gather data at the local, state and national level for socio-economic indicators relating to issues addressed in the survey.

Major Findings: There was consensus among participating groups as to the health and human service issue categories that were of most importance to them: substance abuse, affordable housing, child & spousal abuse, and affordable health care (medical, dental, mental & pharmaceuticals).

Barriers: All groups stated cost (51%) and lack of information (34%) as the top two reasons that people didn't get the services they needed. The third reason cited as a barrier differed significantly by gender: males stated a reluctance to seek help outside of friends and family; females stated that a lack of childcare and transportation was a factor.

Community Assets & Weaknesses:

What's right with our community? Responses consistently included caring community, 'small-town' feel, low crime rate, transit system, volunteerism, recreational opportunities, entertainment choices, St. Mary's Hospital & Mesa State College, agency collaborative efforts.

What needs work? Responses included low wages, cost of health care (particularly prescriptions), accessibility and cost of recreational and entertainment options, limited and expensive substance abuse treatment, limited hours of transit system operation, lack of cross-generational interaction and communication.

Special note of thanks: this community assessment would not have been possible without assistance from Mesa State College students Jennifer Buss, Tim Janda and Terri Tupper.



Community Needs Assessment

Supporting Data

Substance Abuse

- *Mesa County Health Dept.:* Juvenile alcohol-related arrests were lower than the State through 1995 and then increasing dramatically. Juvenile drug-related arrest rates were somewhat lower than the State rate until 1996 and continued to increase. Juvenile Driving Under the Influence (DUI) rates varied widely across the decade, as did the State rate.

Affordable Housing

- *Grand Valley Catholic Outreach:* Requests for emergency housing assistance at Catholic Outreach have increased by 60% in the last two years.
- *Colorado Coalition for the Homeless:* Average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Grand Junction \$600. Hourly wage needed to afford that home at 30% of income: \$10.96. A person earning minimum wage would have to work 85 hours a week to afford a 2-bedroom apartment at 30% of income.
- A point in time survey conducted by the Coalition for the Homeless in 2002 estimates 500 homeless men, women and children in Mesa County.

Domestic Violence

- Mesa County Dist. Attorney's office reported 620 new domestic violence cases in 2002. As of September 2003, the Latimer House provided 129 women and children with 2479 shelter nights – surpassing the number of shelter nights for all of 2002.

Health care

- According to recent data from the US Census Bureau, an average of 15.8% of Colorado residents lacked health insurance.
- Marillac Clinic estimates that there are more than 15,000 individuals in Mesa County who lack insurance and qualify for the clinic's medical and mental health services. Over 29,000 qualify for Marillac's dental care program. Status of mental health care in Colorado (Oct 2003): one out of five people in Colorado need mental health services each year, yet less than a third of them received care.