

Community Needs Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its planning efforts, the Family Center located in Salisbury, PA commissioned a survey of citizens in its service area—the school districts of Berlin, Confluence, Meyersdale, Rockwood and Salisbury. The Family Center was looking to identify and prioritize the health and human service needs, as expressed by its citizens of Southern Somerset County, PA. The survey was also designed to provide a “snapshot” of the community in terms of transportation, employment, health and healthcare, housing, parenting and care giving issues.

In terms of participants in this project, a sub committee of the Family Center Board of Directors worked with the project author (Michael F. Walsh, Ph.D.) to identify key community issues and to refine/ approve the survey instrument. The Family Center staff was responsible for the survey implementation and data entry. Dr. Walsh was responsible for the data analysis and this written report. The goal of this research project is to provide the Board and staff of the Family Center with objective data on community needs and issues in order to help in policy and resource allocation decisions.

Based on a total of 462 completed surveys, the key conclusions are:

- The greatest needs in Southern Somerset County include health issues (insurance, medical care, mental/emotional), economic issues (good credit, paying utility bills, better jobs, reliable transportation), social needs (being a good parent), education and having enough food.
- Respondents rated their communities on a number of dimensions (e.g. “good place to raise children”). Overall, the combined school districts were rated positively by its

citizens. Two community dimensions received slightly lower scores: ample police service and affordable, available healthcare. Analyses were done comparing responses between school districts and family type (e.g. single adult, two parent households etc.) and the results revealed no significant differences between school districts and family types.

- In terms of transportation, 24% of respondents were not aware of Somerset County Transportation System (SCTS). Slightly less than 15% of respondents claimed to have difficulty affording transportation.
- 15-20% of respondents have unfulfilled healthcare needs. Slightly over one third of respondents (36.2%) indicated someone in their family did not have insurance coverage last year. 15% of respondents claimed last year to have not received medical care when needed. The same percentage (15%) claimed to have not been able to get a needed prescription. A higher percentage (22.9%) did not receive needed dental care last year.
- 11% of respondents indicated an interest in additional job training. The same percentage indicated interest in computer skills training. Respondents were asked questions pertaining to their computer usage and access to the internet. 15% of respondents do not have a computer at home and 20% of respondents do not have internet access at home. 15% of respondents claim to not have any internet access outside of the home.
- 17.3% of respondents have trouble affording utility payments and 15.1% of respondents have been denied housing, mortgage or car loan due to credit problems.
- Respondents were asked a series of questions pertaining to parenting. The leading concern is finding a safe place for children to congregate. Other concerns include having enough food for their family, having enough activities for their children and having someone they trust be available to help watch their children when they are out of the home.