



SCHUYLKILL COMMUNITY ACTION (SCA)

Executive Summary

2018 Needs Assessment

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I. INTRODUCTION - COMMUNITY INPUT

Purpose of the Report

Schuylkill Community Action (SCA), a private non-profit Community Action Agency dedicated to serving low-income people, conducted the 2018 Community Needs Assessment in accordance with agency strategic planning efforts. The Assessment is SCA's effort to report on the needs of low-income persons in Schuylkill County. Assessing the needs, specific to Schuylkill County, is essential to coordinating, planning, and providing a variety of social programs and services.

Community Input

Schuylkill Community Action (SCA), working with the support of other service providers and local municipalities, conducted a survey with the primary goal of determining the most serious service gaps in Schuylkill County. This information will be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of existing SCA programs, to revise programs, and/or to develop new programs to reduce service gaps.

Survey Methodology

Surveys provided the primary source for community input. Three distinct surveys were developed to reflect the board composition of Community Action Programs as follows:

- SCA Clients – Two hundred seven (207) surveys were completed by SCA clients.
 - SCA clients are low-income and have direct knowledge about which services are utilized and most needed.
- Human Service Providers – Sixty-four (64) surveys were completed by Schuylkill County Human Service Providers.
 - Human Service Providers typically have knowledge about the necessity and availability of all programs to address the needs of low-income and vulnerable populations.
 - Faith-based organizations and churches were also solicited for their input for their dealings with helping members of their respective congregations.
 - School social workers were also requested to complete surveys because of their experience in dealing with the different needs of their students and student's families.

- Stakeholders/Community Partners (Including local municipalities, community donors, SCA Board Members and SCA staff) – Seventy-nine (79) surveys were completed by agency Stakeholders/Partners.
 - Stakeholders and community partners are often in a position to determine which projects are prioritized and how local funding gets distributed. For this reason, it was important to obtain their perspective on local needs.

The results from these groups were isolated to determine their distinct perspective on the resources and services needed locally.

Customer Survey Summary

207 SCA customers completed the survey. The top ten needs identified by respondents were:

1. Food assistance
2. Home heating assistance
3. Assistance with utility bills (water, sewer, trash, etc.)
4. Weatherization services
5. Clothing assistance
6. Finding employment or better paying employment
7. Car purchase repair programs
8. Managing bills or expenses
9. Education/training for employment
10. Health insurance/affordable medical services

* The remaining service categories are included on the attached survey summary chart.

Service Provider Survey Summary

Sixty-four (64) human service providers, churches, and social workers were surveyed. Human service providers were asked to rate service categories utilizing two questions:

- How serious is the need for low-income people to have services available in the following categories?
- Are those needs met with existing resources and services in Schuylkill County?

The average of the two answers was utilized to rank the seriousness of the need for each of these service categories. Below is a list of the top ten most serious service gaps identified by respondents of the Human Service Provider survey.

1. Housing for homeless
2. Affordable and safe rental units
3. Transportation assistance for employment
4. Mental health services
5. Public transportation services
6. Child care assistance for working families
7. Support services to keep seniors in their home
8. Finding employment or better paying employment
9. Education/training for employment
10. Drug and alcohol counseling/support services

Stakeholder Summary

Seventy-nine (79) surveys were completed by stakeholders including local municipalities, local partnering businesses, community donors, SCA Board Members, and SCA staff. Stakeholders were asked to rate service categories in the same way as Service Providers, by answering two questions:

- How serious is the need for low-income people to have services available in the following categories?
- Are those needs met with existing resources and services in Schuylkill County?

The average of the two answers was utilized to rank the seriousness of the need for each of these service categories. Below is a list of the top ten most serious service gaps identified by respondents of the Stakeholder/Partner Survey.

1. Support services to keep seniors in their home
2. Health insurance/affordable medical services
3. Mental health services
4. Child care assistance to support working parents
5. Homeowner repairs
6. Drug and alcohol counseling/support services
7. Transportation assistance for employment
8. Home heating assistance
9. Property tax assistance
10. Finding employment or better paying employment

Summary of Results from Three Sectors:

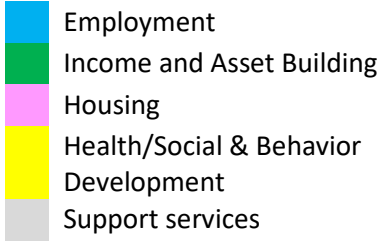
On the following page there is a summary chart showing the results of each of the three sectors.

Survey Results all Sectors								
Customers		Score	Human Service Providers		Score	Stakeholders		Score
1	Food Assistance	3.39	Housing for homeless	3.94	Support services for seniors	3.565		
2	Home heating assistance	3.24	Affordable and safe rentals	3.915	Affordable medical services	3.495		
3	Utility Assistance	3.03	Transportation for employment	3.9	Mental Health services	3.455		
4	Weatherization	2.93	Mental health services	3.8	Childcare for employment	3.405		
5	Clothing assistance	2.88	Public transportation services	3.775	Homeowner repair	3.385		
6	Higher paying jobs w/ benefits	2.81	Childcare for employment	3.685	Drug and alcohol counseling	3.35		
7	Car purchase/repair program	2.75	Support services for seniors	3.665	Transportation for employment	3.34		
8	Managing bills or expenses	2.65	Higher paying jobs w/ benefits	3.645	Home heating assistance	3.335		
9	Edu/Training for employment	2.63	Edu/Training for employment	3.645	Property tax assistance	3.305		
10	Affordable Medical services	2.63	Drug and alcohol counseling	3.64	Higher paying jobs w/benefits	3.29		
11	Transportation for employment	2.62	Managing bills or expenses	3.635	Sexual assault services	3.285		
12	Public Transportation	2.62	Affordable Medical services	3.625	Housing for homeless	3.27		
13	Mental Health services	2.56	Home heating assistance	3.62	Weatherization	3.24		
14	Homeowner repairs	2.54	Utility Assistance	3.565	Edu/Training for employment	3.235		
15	Affordable and safe rentals	2.54	Mortgage assistance	3.555	Managing bills or expenses	3.23		
16	Support Services for seniors	2.52	Homebuyer Education	3.52	Utility Assistance	3.21		
17	Establishing a savings plan	2.5	Affordable Homeownership	3.51	Domestic violence services	3.205		
18	Info/referral for human services	2.48	Property tax assistance	3.49	Affordable and safe rentals	3.19		
19	Repairs for rental units	2.46	Establishing a savings plan	3.485	Establishing a savings plan	3.18		
20	Recreational opportunities	2.43	Repairs for rental units	3.48	Tax preparation	3.165		
21	Domestic violence services	2.37	Car purchase repair program	3.47	Food assistance	3.075		
22	Childcare for employment	2.36	Homeowner repairs	3.46	Mortgage Assistance	3.075		
23	Affordable homeownership	2.35	Weatherization	3.45	Affordable homeownership	3.045		
24	Drug and Alcohol Counseling	2.35	Legal services	3.395	Repairs for rental units	2.975		
25	Tax preparation	2.34	Food assistance	3.38	Homebuyer education	2.97		
26	Legal services	2.34	Sexual Assault services	3.365	Opening a bank account	2.97		
27	Homebuyer education	2.33	Opening a bank account	3.335	Recreational opportunities	2.955		
28	Property tax assistance	2.33	Domestic violence services	3.305	Public transportation	2.95		
29	Sexual assault services	2.32	Tax preparation	3.29	Car purchase repair program	2.95		
30	Housing for homeless	2.21	Clothing assistance	3.255	Info/referral for human services	2.905		
31	Opening a bank account	2.19	Info/referral for human services	3.205	Clothing assistance	2.835		
32	Mortgage assistance	2.02	Recreational opportunities	3	Legal services	2.81		

Single Survey Results

The below chart references the top needs as tabulated by averaging the survey scores from the three sectors that were solicited for input. These sectors include Low-income Schuylkill County residents, Agency Stakeholders, and Schuylkill County Human Service providers.

Schuylkill Community Action Needs Assessment-Single Survey Results

	Need	Avg. Score	
1	Home heating assistance	3.4	CSBG Service Category 
2	Transportation assistance for employment	3.29	
3	Food assistance	3.28	
4	Mental health services	3.27	
5	Utility Assistance	3.27	
6	Support Services to keep seniors in their home	3.25	
7	Affordable medical services	3.25	
8	Higher paying jobs with benefits	3.25	
9	Affordable and safe rental units	3.21	
10	Weatherization services	3.21	
11	Managing bills or expenses	3.17	
12	Education/Employment training opportunities	3.17	
13	Child care assistance to support working parents	3.15	
14	Homeless housing	3.14	
15	Homeowner repairs	3.13	
16	Public transportation services	3.12	
17	Drug and alcohol Counseling	3.11	
18	Car purchase repair program	3.06	
19	Establishing a savings plan	3.06	
20	Property Tax Assistance	3.04	
21	Sexual assault victim services	2.99	
22	Clothing assistance	2.99	
23	Repairs for rental units	2.97	
24	Affordable and safe homeownership opportunities	2.97	
25	Domestic violence and victim services	2.96	
26	Homebuyer Education & Assistance	2.94	
27	Tax preparation	2.93	
28	Assistance for homeowners with delinquent mortgages	2.88	
29	Information/referral for human services	2.86	
30	Legal services	2.85	
31	Opening a bank account	2.83	
32	Recreational opportunities	2.8	

II. Top Needs and Relevant Statistics

The following list represents the top ten (10) service areas identified through the needs assessment survey process. These needs were taken from the single survey list, which came up with a cumulative average for each of the surveyed groups. Also included are pertinent statistics, which might verify or explain the nature of the service gaps. The majority of the statistics provided are derived from the Community Commons needs assessment tool provided through the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania. All other sources are individually noted.

Top 10 Needs

1. Home Heating assistance

The top overall service need for Schuylkill County is Home Heating Assistance. Agency customers rated this as their #2 overall need, followed by Stakeholders as their #7 need, and human service providers as the #13 overall need. Relevant statistics to support this need include:

- In 2015-2016, the average LIHEAP Cash grant for Schuylkill County was \$229.25 compared to the Statewide average of \$206.46. Cash grants are used to assist low-income households pay heating assistance bills.
- According to the American Community Survey, 2012-2016 5 year estimates, the median year built for houses in Schuylkill County was 1943 compared to 1962 for the State of Pennsylvania. The antiquated age of the housing stock suggests an increased need for heating assistance due to the lack of insulation and energy assistance building measures in these older homes.

2. Transportation Assistance for Employment

This service area ranked as the #3 need for Human Service provider, the #7 need for Stakeholders, and the #11 need for Agency customers. Schuylkill County is a rural county making it very difficult to access with public transportation. There is a fixed route bus system that operates 6 days each week during mid-day hours. Most routes do not run before 9:00 AM or after 5:00 PM, making public transportation a difficult option as a transportation source to access full-time employment.

- Only 0.6% of Schuylkill County workers access public transportation to get to work. Comparatively, 5.6% of workers in the State of Pennsylvania use transportation to get to work.
- 83.1% of Schuylkill County's workforce drives alone to work versus 76.5% of the Pennsylvania workforce. This can be attributed to the rural nature of Schuylkill County.

3. Food Assistance

Food assistance ranked as the top priority for agency customers. Stakeholders and Human Service providers had it ranked #21 and #25 out of 32 service need areas, respectively. Statistics indicate that a larger percentage of Schuylkill County residents qualify for food assistance than the number statewide.

- 14.5% of Schuylkill County households receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payments compared to 12.98% statewide.
- Hispanic households in Schuylkill County are particularly vulnerable as 43.27% of Hispanic households in the county receive SNAP benefits versus 36.02% of Pennsylvania Hispanic households.

- According to *Feeding America: Map the Meal Gap*, 12.2% of Schuylkill County residents experience food insecurity. It is estimated that it would take an additional \$9,205,000 to eliminate food insecurity in Schuylkill County.

4. Mental Health Services

The need for quality Mental Health Services in Schuylkill County was an important service area to each of the surveyed groups. Mental Health services ranked as the 3rd need for Stakeholders and 4th need for Schuylkill County Human Service providers. Customers ranked this as their number 13 need overall. Statistics indicate there are fewer mental health professionals serving Schuylkill County.

- Schuylkill County has 13 Psychologists serving Schuylkill County. There are 0.09 mental health professionals per 1000 persons in the report area. The Pennsylvania average is 0.43 mental health professionals per 1000 persons.
- There are 94 mental health service providers including psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, and counsellors that specialize in mental health care located throughout Schuylkill County.
- The Ratio of Mental Health Providers to Population in Schuylkill County is 1 provider per 1,551 persons. Conversely, the ratio at the State level is 1 provider per 583 persons.

5. Utility Assistance

Utility Assistance ranked as the 3rd ranked need for customers. Human Service providers and Stakeholders had utility assistance ranked this as their 14th and 16th ranked need respectively. General utility statistics are not readily available; however, Schuylkill County participates in United Way's 2-1-1 Pennsylvania East Human Service directory system. According to their Data Report published July 2017, the top three unmet needs for Schuylkill County were all utility assistance related. Below are the top three needs highlighted in the July 2017 Data Report:

- 1) Water Service Payment Assistance
- 2) Electric Service Payment Assistance
- 3) Sewer Service Payment Assistance

6. Support Services to keep Seniors in their home

Stakeholders identified Support Services to keep Seniors in their home as their top need for Schuylkill County. Human Service providers ranked it 7th and customers ranked it 16th. Schuylkill County statistics support these rankings.

- According to American Community Survey 5 year estimates 2012-2016, 19.2% of Schuylkill County's population is seniors age 65 and over compared to 16.7% of the population for Pennsylvania.
- 14.3% of Schuylkill County Seniors have income below 125% of the Federal poverty level. 8.4% of Schuylkill County Seniors income is below 100% of the Federal poverty guidelines. Comparatively, 12.8% of Pennsylvania seniors age 65 and over live below 125% the poverty threshold and 8.1% live below 100% of the Federal poverty guidelines.

7. Affordable Medical Services

This was among the top twelve needs identified by all survey respondents. Stakeholders rated Affordable Medical Care as the #2 need, Providers ranked it 10th, and Clients ranked it 12th. Schuylkill County statistics support this need:

- The estimate of uninsured households in Schuylkill County was 6.2% compared to 5.6% for the state of Pennsylvania.
- Schuylkill County has far fewer medical professionals to serve its population than Pennsylvania as a whole. The below table reflects the number of available medical professionals per 1,000 individuals.

Profession	Schuylkill County	Pennsylvania
Physicians/Assistants	1.71	3.92
Dentists	0.98	1.26
Therapists	1.43	1.83

- According to the US Department of Health and Human Resources, Schuylkill County has twenty-four (24) census tracts that have been designated as “Medically Underserved Areas.” The census tracts are located largely in the northern part of Schuylkill County.
- According to data compiled by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Program in 2018, Schuylkill County’s Health Rankings were the following (out of 67 Counties in the State of Pennsylvania):
 - Schuylkill County ranked 59th out of 67 counties for Health Outcomes.
 - Schuylkill County ranked 51st out of 67 for Health Factors.
 - Schuylkill County ranked 42nd out of 67 for social & economic factors that affect health.

8. Higher paying jobs with benefits

Higher paying jobs with benefits was among the top ten needs identified by all sectors. Customers ranked this need #3, Providers ranked it #9, and Stakeholders ranked it #10. Statistics do support this need.

- In November 2017, the unemployment rate in Schuylkill County was 5.1% vs. 4.3% statewide.
- The below table looks at unemployment trends over the past 5 years for Schuylkill County and Pennsylvania. The table shows unemployment has affected County citizens consistently at a higher percentage than Pennsylvania as a whole.

Report Area	November 2013	November 2014	November 2015	November 2016	November 2017
Schuylkill Community Action	7.93%	5.81%	5.73%	5.7%	5.13%
Pennsylvania	6.37%	4.92%	4.73%	4.86%	4.29%

- Statistics indicate working Schuylkill County residents have lower incomes than statewide residents. The average weekly wage is \$681 in Schuylkill County vs. \$918 statewide. The average median household income in Schuylkill County is \$58,932 vs. \$69,960 statewide.

9. Affordable and safe rental units

This was ranked 2nd among Providers, 15th among clients and 18th among Stakeholders. Current statistics support this need:

- 15.4% of Schuylkill County homes are vacant. Approximately 10% of the vacant properties are designated for rental occupancy.
- According to the American Community Survey 2012-2016 5 year estimates, 37.14% of Schuylkill County renters pay 30% or more of their income for gross rent.
- 63.55% of homes in Schuylkill County were built prior to 1960. The result of this antiquated housing stock is that many of the homes are in need of repair and often times apartment units do not meet the local building codes.

10. Weatherization services

Home Weatherization was ranked 4th among clients, 13th among Stakeholders, and 23rd among Providers. Statistics reinforce the need for this program.

- According to the American Community Survey, 2012-2016 5 year estimates, 47.6% of Schuylkill County Homes were built prior to 1940. Older homes often receive more benefit from Weatherization services.
- Currently, Schuylkill Community Action has 400 plus customers on the Weatherization call back list for interested households
- Approximately 25-30% of homes that apply for Weatherization through Schuylkill Community Action programs are deferred due to health and safety issues that are found in the home during the auditing process leaving these homes ineligible to receive Weatherization services.

III. Other Priorities

This section will outline additional priority needs outside of the top ten from the single survey. It will highlight a top need from each of the surveyed subgroups that did not make the top ten. Relevant statistics will be utilized to validate the service need for Schuylkill County.

Customers

Clothing Assistance:

This service ranked as the #5 need for agency customers. There are no direct statistics related to clothing, however, the statistics regarding income levels for Schuylkill County residents indicate people have less money to meet basic needs such as clothing.

- 13.04% of all person living in Schuylkill County lived in a state of poverty during 2016.
- The Median Household Income, Per Capita Income and Average Income Per Earner are considerably lower in Schuylkill County (see chart below). This implies that local people may not have as much money available to meet basic needs.

	Median HH Income	Per Capita Income	Avg. Income per Earner
Schuylkill County	\$58,932	\$24,274	\$33,055
Pennsylvania	\$69,960	\$30,136	\$41,219

Human Service Providers

Homeless Assistance:

Homeless assistance ranked as the top need for Schuylkill County Human Service providers. Since the last Needs Assessment conducted by Schuylkill Community Action in 2015, a local non-profit agency, *Servants to All*, has opened up an emergency shelter. The shelter was initially opened as an all-male shelter, but expanded to serving both sexes in December 2017. Despite the addition of emergency shelter services, homeless assistance remains a priority need.

- During the 2018 Point In Time count, fifty (50) homeless people were sheltered and twenty-one (21) people were unsheltered.
- During 2017, *Servants to All*, Schuylkill Counties primary homeless service provider, served two hundred ninety (290) homeless individuals. Of those individuals, one hundred ninety-two (192) were newly homeless at time of initial service contact with *Servants to All*.

Stakeholders

Home Repair:

The need for assistance to complete essential Home Repairs was ranked 5th by Stakeholders. Statistics reinforce the need for programs of this type:

- In 2016, the median age of Schuylkill County’s housing stock was 73 years compared to 54 years statewide. Older housing typically requires more repairs.
- The most notable difference in the age of the housing stock is in the category of houses built in 1939 or earlier. According to the American Community Survey 20012-2016 statistics, 47.6% of the county housing stock was built in 1939 or earlier. The percentage statewide was at 26.5%. A large number of housing units were constructed during the height of the coal industry. Many of those units were constructed quickly for workers in the area coal mines, and were not of high quality. The nature of this older housing stock is more likely to need repairs.
- The median value of housing in Schuylkill County is also substantially lower than the median value of housing statewide. The median value of owner occupied housing was \$95,200 countywide, compared to \$167,700 statewide. This statistic could provide insight into the quality of housing in Schuylkill County.

IV. Poverty Statistics Schuylkill County

General poverty statistics about Schuylkill County residents living in poverty are listed below. All data listed below is from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5 year estimates 2012-2016 and the Community Action Association of Pennsylvania “Community Commons-HUB.”

Poverty Rate (ACS)

Report Area	Total Population	Population in Poverty	Percent Population in Poverty
Schuylkill County	138,212	18,029	13.04%
Pennsylvania	12,369,671	1,647,762	13.32%
United States	310,629,645	46,932,225	15.11%

Population in poverty by gender

Report Area	Total Male	Total Female	Percent Male	Percent Female
Schuylkill County	7,999	10,030	11.71%	14.34%
Pennsylvania	730,029	917,733	12.12%	14.46%
United States	21,012,839	25,919,386	13.82%	16.34%

Population in Poverty by Ethnicity Alone

Report Area	Total Hispanic / Latino	Total Not Hispanic / Latino	Percent Hispanic / Latino	Percent Not Hispanic / Latino
Schuylkill County	1,633	16,396	38.2%	12.24%
Pennsylvania	255,243	1,392,519	31.51%	12.05%
United States	12,653,597	34,278,628	23.4%	13.36%

Population in Poverty Race Alone, Percent

Report Area	White	Black or African American	Native American / Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	Some Other Race	Multiple Race
Schuylkill County	12.12%	47.43%	60.9%	14.43%	0%	38.35%	34.08%
Pennsylvania	10.39%	28.24%	30.43%	15.65%	24.51%	34.93%	25.2%
United States	12.44%	26.22%	27.59%	12.33%	20.07%	25.37%	19.27%