



# **SCHUYLKILL COMMUNITY ACTION (SCA)**

## **Executive Summary**

### **2021 Needs Assessment**

Completed: August, 2021  
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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 2021 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 our staff, clients, and 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. One distinct survey was developed to reflect the board composition of Community Action Programs as follows:

- SCA Clients –
  - low-income and have direct knowledge about which services are utilized and most needed.
- 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) –
  - 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.

Two hundred and sixty-three (263) surveys were completed between the three sectors. The results from these groups were used to determine their distinct perspective on the resources and services needed locally.

**Customer Survey Summary**

The top ten needs identified by respondents were:

1. Weatherization Services
2. Home heating assistance
3. Affordable/safe rental units
4. Homeowner repairs
5. Housing for the homeless
6. Finding employment or better paying employment
7. Food assistance
8. Affordable/safe home owner opportunities
9. Assistance with utility bills (water, sewer, trash, etc.)
10. Child care assistance to support working parents

| <b>HOUSING NEEDS:</b>                                | <b>NO HELP NEEDED</b> | <b>SOME HELP NEEDED</b> | <b>MORE HELP NEEDED</b> | <b>MODERATE HELP NEEDED</b> | <b>REALLY NEED HELP</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</b> |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Weatherization services                              | 14.65%<br>29          | 6.57%<br>13             | 24.24%<br>48            | 22.22%<br>44                | 32.32%<br>64            | 198          | 3.51                    |
| Home heating assistance                              | 15.46%<br>30          | 7.73%<br>15             | 21.65%<br>42            | 25.77%<br>50                | 29.38%<br>57            | 194          | 3.46                    |
| Affordable and safe rental units                     | 22.34%<br>44          | 3.05%<br>6              | 17.77%<br>35            | 25.38%<br>50                | 31.47%<br>62            | 197          | 3.41                    |
| Homeowner repairs                                    | 19.49%<br>38          | 4.10%<br>8              | 22.56%<br>44            | 24.10%<br>47                | 29.74%<br>58            | 195          | 3.41                    |
| Housing for homeless                                 | 26.26%<br>52          | 3.03%<br>6              | 14.65%<br>29            | 17.68%<br>35                | 38.38%<br>76            | 198          | 3.39                    |
| Affordable and safe home ownership opportunities     | 19.50%<br>39          | 8.00%<br>16             | 22.00%<br>44            | 23.00%<br>46                | 27.50%<br>55            | 200          | 3.31                    |
| Repairs for rental units                             | 22.28%<br>43          | 5.18%<br>10             | 20.21%<br>39            | 31.61%<br>61                | 20.73%<br>40            | 193          | 3.23                    |
| Guidance and financial assistance to purchase a home | 20.60%<br>41          | 8.54%<br>17             | 23.62%<br>47            | 23.12%<br>46                | 24.12%<br>48            | 199          | 3.22                    |

|   |              |             |              |              |              |     |      |
|---|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|------|
| Property tax assistance                             | 20.20%<br>40 | 9.09%<br>18 | 23.23%<br>46 | 23.74%<br>47 | 23.74%<br>47 | 198 | 3.22 |
| Relocation/Moving assistance                        | 23.71%<br>46 | 9.79%<br>19 | 18.04%<br>35 | 23.20%<br>45 | 25.26%<br>49 | 194 | 3.16 |
| Assistance for homeowners with delinquent mortgages | 29.80%<br>59 | 7.58%<br>15 | 23.23%<br>46 | 17.68%<br>35 | 21.72%<br>43 | 198 | 2.94 |

| <b>Employment &amp; Education Needs:</b> | <b>NO HELP NEEDED</b> | <b>SOME HELP</b> | <b>MORE HELP</b> | <b>MODERATE HELP</b> | <b>REALLY NEED HELP</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</b> |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Finding a job or better job              | 21.61%<br>43          | 5.53%<br>11      | 18.59%<br>37     | 25.63%<br>51         | 28.64%<br>57            | 199          | 3.34                    |
| Childcare assistance for working parents | 27.14%<br>54          | 4.02%<br>8       | 16.58%<br>33     | 22.61%<br>45         | 29.65%<br>59            | 199          | 3.24                    |
| Transportation assistance for employment | 25.63%<br>51          | 5.53%<br>11      | 21.11%<br>42     | 16.08%<br>32         | 31.66%<br>63            | 199          | 3.23                    |
| Education/Training for employment        | 24.24%<br>48          | 8.59%<br>17      | 19.19%<br>38     | 24.75%<br>49         | 23.23%<br>46            | 198          | 3.14                    |

| <b>FINANCIAL NEEDS:</b>               | <b>NO HELP NEEDED</b> | <b>SOME HELP</b> | <b>MORE HELP</b> | <b>MODERATE HELP</b> | <b>REALLY NEED HELP</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Managing bills or expenses            | 26.24%<br>53          | 6.44%<br>13      | 21.78%<br>44     | 22.28%<br>45         | 23.27%<br>47            | 202          | 3.10                    |
| Financial Planning                    | 27.14%<br>54          | 7.54%<br>15      | 23.12%<br>46     | 18.09%<br>36         | 24.12%<br>48            | 199          | 3.05                    |
| Tax preparation                       | 29.50%<br>59          | 5.50%<br>11      | 20.50%<br>41     | 21.00%<br>42         | 23.50%<br>47            | 200          | 3.04                    |
| Establishing a savings plan           | 27.78%<br>55          | 9.60%<br>19      | 21.21%<br>42     | 20.71%<br>41         | 20.71%<br>41            | 198          | 2.97                    |
| Opening a checking or savings account | 35.15%<br>71          | 8.42%<br>17      | 12.87%<br>26     | 21.29%<br>43         | 22.28%<br>45            | 202          | 2.87                    |

| <b>ADDITIONAL NEEDS:</b>                                   | <b>NO HELP NEEDED</b> | <b>SOME HELP</b> | <b>MORE HELP</b> | <b>MODERATE HELP</b> | <b>REALLY NEED HELP</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>WEIGHTED AVERAGE</b> |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Food assistance  | 19.00%<br>38          | 10.00%<br>20     | 22.50%<br>45     | 16.00%<br>32         | 32.50%<br>65            | 200          | 3.33                    |
| Assistance with utility bills (water, sewer, trash, elec.) | 19.21%<br>39          | 9.36%<br>19      | 24.63%<br>50     | 19.70%<br>40         | 27.09%<br>55            | 203          | 3.26                    |
| Mental Health services                                     | 22.50%<br>45          | 7.50%<br>15      | 24.00%<br>48     | 21.00%<br>42         | 25.00%<br>50            | 200          | 3.19                    |
| Car purchase repair programs                               | 23.50%<br>47          | 10.50%<br>21     | 21.50%<br>43     | 17.00%<br>34         | 27.50%<br>55            | 200          | 3.15                    |
| Health insurance/affordable medical services               | 23.38%<br>47          | 5.47%<br>11      | 29.85%<br>60     | 20.40%<br>41         | 20.90%<br>42            | 201          | 3.10                    |

|  |              |              |              |              |              |     |      |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|------|
| Clothing assistance                            | 25.00%<br>48 | 8.33%<br>16  | 26.04%<br>50 | 20.31%<br>39 | 20.31%<br>39 | 192 | 3.03 |
| Support services to keep Seniors in their home | 28.86%<br>58 | 6.47%<br>13  | 21.89%<br>44 | 21.89%<br>44 | 20.90%<br>42 | 201 | 3.00 |
| Internet access for Virtual Learning           | 27.27%<br>54 | 6.06%<br>12  | 28.28%<br>56 | 16.67%<br>33 | 21.72%<br>43 | 198 | 2.99 |
| Assistance obtaining legal services            | 25.00%<br>50 | 11.00%<br>22 | 25.50%<br>51 | 20.50%<br>41 | 18.00%<br>36 | 200 | 2.96 |
| Public transportation services                 | 29.21%<br>59 | 5.94%<br>12  | 29.21%<br>59 | 15.35%<br>31 | 20.30%<br>41 | 202 | 2.92 |
| Recreational Opportunities (indoor/outdoor)    | 28.71%<br>58 | 10.89%<br>22 | 21.78%<br>44 | 16.83%<br>34 | 21.78%<br>44 | 202 | 2.92 |
| Information/referral for human services        | 27.14%<br>54 | 9.55%<br>19  | 30.15%<br>60 | 18.59%<br>37 | 14.57%<br>29 | 199 | 2.84 |
| Drug and alcohol counseling/support services   | 32.02%<br>65 | 7.88%<br>16  | 24.63%<br>50 | 16.75%<br>34 | 18.72%<br>38 | 203 | 2.82 |
| Gambling Support Services/Counseling           | 25.93%<br>7  | 14.81%<br>4  | 25.93%<br>7  | 18.52%<br>5  | 14.81%<br>4  | 27  | 2.81 |
| Sexual assault victim services                 | 31.68%<br>64 | 10.40%<br>21 | 21.78%<br>44 | 21.78%<br>44 | 14.36%<br>29 | 202 | 2.77 |
| Domestic violence victim services              | 30.54%<br>62 | 13.30%<br>27 | 23.65%<br>48 | 17.24%<br>35 | 15.27%<br>31 | 203 | 2.73 |
| Gambling Support Services                      | 35.50%<br>71 | 11.00%<br>22 | 19.00%<br>38 | 21.00%<br>42 | 13.50%<br>27 | 200 | 2.66 |

### **Survey Results**

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

Schuylkill Community Action Needs Assessment-  
Survey Results 2021

|    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 1  | Weatherization Services                        | 3.51 |
| 2  | Home Heating                                   | 3.46 |
| 3  | Affordable/Safe Rental Units                   | 3.41 |
| 4  | Homeowner Repairs                              | 3.41 |
| 5  | Housing for Homeless                           | 3.39 |
| 6  | Finding a job or a better job                  | 3.34 |
| 7  | Food Assistance                                | 3.33 |
| 8  | Affordable/Safe Home Owner Opportunities       | 3.31 |
| 9  | Assistance with Utilities                      | 3.26 |
| 10 | Child Care Assistance for working parents      | 3.24 |
| 11 | Transportation Assistance for Employment       | 3.23 |
| 12 | Repairs for Rentals                            | 3.23 |
| 13 | Guidance & Finance to purchase a home          | 3.22 |
| 14 | Property Tax Assistance                        | 3.22 |
| 15 | Mental Health                                  | 3.19 |
| 16 | Moving/Relocation Assistance                   | 3.16 |
| 17 | Car purchase repair program                    | 3.15 |
| 18 | Education/Training for Employment              | 3.14 |
| 19 | Managing Bills or Expenses                     | 3.10 |
| 20 | Affordable Health Insurance & Medical Services | 3.10 |
| 21 | Financial Planning                             | 3.05 |
| 22 | Clothing Assistance                            | 3.03 |
| 23 | Support services to keep seniors in their home | 3.00 |
| 24 | Internet Access for virtual learning           | 2.99 |
| 25 | Establish a Savings Plan                       | 2.97 |
| 26 | Assistance with legal services                 | 2.96 |
| 27 | Assistance for homes w/ delinquent mortgages   | 2.94 |
| 28 | Public Transportation Services                 | 2.92 |
| 29 | Recreational Opportunities                     | 2.92 |
| 30 | Opening a checking/savings account             | 2.87 |
| 31 | Information for human services                 | 2.84 |
| 32 | Drug & Alcohol counseling/support services     | 2.82 |
| 33 | Gambling Support Services                      | 2.81 |
| 34 | Sexual assault victim services                 | 2.77 |
| 35 | Domestic Violence victim services              | 2.73 |

**CSBG Service Category**

- Employment
- Income and Asset Building
- Housing
- Health/Social Behavior
- Development
- Support Services

## 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. Weatherization services

Home Weatherization is the top need for service in our community, based on the survey results. Statistics reinforce the need for this program.

- According to the American Community Survey, 2015-2019 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 300 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.

#### 2. Home Heating assistance

The second overall service need for Schuylkill County is Home Heating Assistance. Relevant statistics to support this need include:

- In 2019-2020, the average LIHEAP Cash grant for Schuylkill County was \$281.83 compared to the Statewide average of \$259.84. Cash grants are used to assist low-income households pay heating assistance bills.
- According to the American Community Survey, 2015-2019 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.

#### 3. Affordable and safe rental units

This was ranked third among Providers, Clients and Stakeholders. Current statistics support this need:

- 13.03% of Schuylkill County homes are vacant. Approximately 10% of the vacant properties are designated for rental occupancy.
- According to the American Community Survey 2015-2019 5 year estimates, 42.13% of Schuylkill County renters pay 30% or more of their income for gross rent.
- 64% 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.

#### **4. Homeowner Repairs**

Stakeholders identified Homeowner Repairs as their fourth top need for Schuylkill County. Schuylkill County statistics support these rankings.

- The yearly estimate shows in Pennsylvania that homeowners spend 1-3 percent of their home's cost for maintenance each year.
- The fact of 47.6% of Schuylkill County homes being built before 1940 and the current county poverty level at 11.7% shows that this service would be highly beneficial to receive homeowner repairs. (2015-2019 ACS)
- 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 \$138,000 countywide, compared to \$158,700 statewide. This statistic provides insight into the quality of the housing in Schuylkill County.

#### **5. Housing for Homeless**

Homeless assistance ranked as the number five need for Schuylkill County. The only overnight shelter available in Schuylkill County is through Schuylkill Women In Crisis (SWIC) serving people in need who are experiencing domestic violence. A day shelter is available through *Servants to All*.

- During the 2020 Point In Time count, fifty (50) homeless people were sheltered and twenty-one (21) people were unsheltered.
- During 2020, *Servants to All*, Schuylkill Counties primary homeless service provider, served two hundred and eight (208) homeless individuals. Of those individuals, sixty-nine (69) were newly homeless at time of initial service contact with *Servants to All*.

#### **6. Finding a job or a higher paying job with benefits**

Finding a job or a higher paying job with benefits was among the top ten needs identified. Statistics do support this need.

- The current unemployment rate as of June 2021 in Schuylkill County is 6% vs. 6.9% statewide. These high statistics are based on the economic hardship we currently face due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Statistics indicate working Schuylkill County residents have lower incomes than statewide residents. The average weekly wage is \$1,005 in Schuylkill County vs. \$1,127 statewide.
- The average median household income in Schuylkill County is \$52,280 vs. \$62,843 statewide.

#### **7. Food Assistance**

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 12.93% statewide.
- Hispanic households in Schuylkill County are particularly vulnerable as 30.8% of Hispanic households in the county receive SNAP benefits.

- According to *Feeding America: Map the Meal Gap*, 17,140 of Schuylkill County residents experience food insecurity. It is estimated that it would take an additional \$9,105,000 to eliminate food insecurity in Schuylkill County.

#### **8. Affordable and safe home owner opportunities**

This specific need is assessed as something that plays a large role in our community. Obtaining affordable and safe home ownership is desired.

- A home ownership program within our county would enable individuals and families with low to moderate incomes be able to purchase newly constructed homes in Schuylkill County at a price that is affordable. Providing a new homebuyer with the knowledge of all aspects of purchasing a home will enable them to make educated decisions.

#### **9. Utility Assistance**

Utility Assistance ranked as the ninth need for customers. 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 2020, the top three unmet needs for Schuylkill County were all utility assistance related. Below are the top three needs highlighted in the July 2020 Data Report:

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

#### **10. Child Care assistance for working parents**

Schuylkill County has been identified Child Care assistance for working parents as a top ten need. This need may consist of financial support or service provider availability.

- The early childhood programming and head start participation in Schuylkill County has a participation rate of Ages 0-2 at 33% and Ages 3-4 at 67%. The average costs for child care based on responses from licensed care provider centers in Schuylkill County state the daily full-time cost is \$21.30 and the daily part-time cost is \$16.76.
- As of 2020, the ACS states that 18.8% of children ages 0-4 in Schuylkill County are at poverty rate.

### **III. Other Priorities**

This section will outline additional priority needs outside of the top ten from the assessment survey. It Relevant statistics will be utilized to validate the service need for Schuylkill County.

#### **Transportation Assistance for Employment**

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 0.8% of Schuylkill County workers access public transportation to get to work. Comparatively, between 5.3% and 5.6% of workers in the State of Pennsylvania use transportation to get to work. This average has remained stable for work commute.



- Schuylkill County households with no motor vehicle average 9% and the state of Pennsylvania is 10.94%.
- 91% of Schuylkill County’s workforce drives alone to work versus 89.06% of the Pennsylvania workforce. This can be attributed to the rural nature of Schuylkill County.

**Mental Health Services**

The need for quality Mental Health Services in Schuylkill County is an important service area. 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.

**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 2015-2019 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 | 135,206          | 16,816                | 12.44%                        |
| Pennsylvania      | 12,380,284       | 1,539,183             | 12.43%                        |
| United States     | 316,715,051      | 42,510,843            | 13.42%                        |

**Population in poverty by gender**

| Report Area       | Total Male | Total Female | Percent Male | Percent Female |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Schuylkill County | 7,512      | 9,304        | 11.25%       | 13.59%         |
| Pennsylvania      | 679,545    | 859,638      | 11.26%       | 13.55%         |
| United States     | 18,909,451 | 23,601,392   | 12.19%       | 14.61%         |

### **Population in Poverty by Ethnicity Alone**

| Report Area       | Total Hispanic / Latino | Total Not Hispanic / Latino | Percent Hispanic / Latino | Percent Not Hispanic / Latino |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Schuylkill County | 1,857                   | 14,959                      | 35.36%                    | 11.51%                        |
| Pennsylvania      | 253,077                 | 1,286,106                   | 28.08%                    | 11.20%                        |
| United States     | 11,256,244              | 31,254,599                  | 19.64%                    | 12.05%                        |

### **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 | 11.45% | 44.40%                    | 37.95%                          | 15.66% | 75%                                | 33.88%          | 35.85%        |
| Pennsylvania      | 9.72%  | 25.97%                    | 24.56%                          | 13.88% | 24.50%                             | 31.36%          | 22.04%        |
| United States     | 11.15% | 23.04%                    | 24.86%                          | 10.94% | 17.51%                             | 21.04%          | 16.66%        |