



Allegheny County  
Department of  
Human Services  
**Community Services  
Block Grant (CSBG)  
2018 Needs Assessment**

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## Key Findings

As the causes and conditions of poverty change and distressed communities emerge and shift, we must adapt our services to effectively serve those in poverty. To do this, Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) engaged in a comprehensive needs assessment. This assessment guides us in determining how we can meet the needs of individuals and families living in poverty with Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funds.

DHS conducted an assessment of qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. Surveys and interviews revealed that CSBG participants, community-based stakeholder agencies, and other community members all agree that employment, housing and transportation are top concerns for our community. This was true three years ago and remains so today. In addition, mapping CSBG service agencies within Allegheny County in relation to distressed communities revealed that the most underserved communities are located to the south and west of the city. DHS will use findings from this assessment to explore and plan how to improve service delivery and access for all residents of Allegheny County, including areas that are currently underserved.

## Background

Individuals and families living in poverty encounter a variety of challenges accessing employment, job training, transportation, housing, and child care, challenges that impact people's progress towards stability and economic security. The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) was created to address these needs and alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty. CSBG funds are provided to Community Action Agencies (CAA) across the country, which work to support those living in poverty with their self-sufficiency goals.

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) is responsible for providing and administering publicly-funded human services to Allegheny County residents. The Office of Community Services (OCS), a program office of DHS, is the CAA for Allegheny County, excluding the City of Pittsburgh. A team of individuals and agencies, including OCS staff, contracted agencies and staff, the Community Services Advisory Council (CSAC)<sup>1</sup>, and community partnerships contribute to the success of CSBG programming in Allegheny County.

In January 2015, the Federal Office of Community Services released a set of standards designed to ensure CSBG entities effectively serve families and communities. Public CSBG entities follow 50 standards, which are categorized in three thematic categories: maximum feasible participation, vision and direction, and operations and accountability. A portion of these standards require CSBG entities to engage in a community

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<sup>1</sup> The CSAC is comprised of fifteen (15) persons who are residents of Allegheny County. Per CSBG legislation, membership is comprised of one-third (1/3) members to be appointed by the County Executive; one-third (1/3) members who have been nominated and approved by the CSAC who represent the interests of low-income persons; one-third (1/3) members who have been nominated and approved by the CSAC who represent service providers, business, education, housing, employment, and health care and who have an interest in helping low-income persons become more self-sufficient. For a list of CSAC members, see Appendix G.

needs assessment. Between May 2018 and August 2018, DHS staff and other CSBG stakeholder agencies engaged in an extensive assessment to comply with these standards.

DHS' Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE) planned and implemented a multi-faceted needs assessment for CSBG in Allegheny County, outside the City of Pittsburgh. The assessment included an analysis of qualitative data (e.g., interviews of CSBG participants and community stakeholder agencies, as well as SMS surveys of community members in July and August 2018, and input from the CSAC) and quantitative data (e.g., demographics, mapping and surveys). The needs assessment revealed a variety of service needs (e.g., transportation, employment, affordable housing) and identified underserved communities (e.g., inner suburbs).

**Figure 1. Needs Assessment Standards for Public CSBG Entities**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Standard 2.2</b> | Department utilizes information gathered from key sectors of the community in assessing needs and resources. This would include at a minimum community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, private sector, public sector, and educational institutions. |
| <b>Standard 3.1</b> | Department conducted an assessment and issued a report within the past 3 years.   |
| <b>Standard 3.2</b> | Department collects and includes current data specific to poverty and its prevalence related to gender, age, and race/ethnicity for the service areas in the community assessment.  |
| <b>Standard 3.3</b> | Department collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data on its geographic service area in the community assessment.   |
| <b>Standard 3.4</b> | Community assessment includes key findings on the causes and conditions of poverty and the needs of the communities assessed.   |
| <b>Standard 3.5</b> | Tripartite board/advisory body formally accepts the completed community assessment.   |

In addition to meeting the Organizational Standards listed above, the purpose of this community needs assessment is to serve as a reference and guide to DHS in planning for and implementing services and strategies to address the causes and conditions of poverty.

## **Community Engagement**

Beginning in spring 2018, OCS collaborated with DARE to design and implement an engagement plan to obtain feedback from program participants, community stakeholder agencies and Allegheny County residents, using traditional and innovative methods, as described below.

## Methodology (Brief)<sup>2</sup>

DHS developed a multi-pronged strategy to collect qualitative data using traditional and novel approaches and targeting four distinct groups to gather the voice of the community and assess the strengths and needs of the communities (groups shown below).

**Figure 2. Target Stakeholder Groups, Community Engagement Respondents and Community Services Advisory Council**



### 1. Interviews of CSBG Participants and Community Stakeholder Agency Staff

- a. Researchers conducted in-person interviews of 22 CSBG program participants using an interview guide (Appendix C). The process gathered information on successes and barriers, perceptions of the individuals’ and their community’s greatest needs, and suggestions for solutions leading to greater self-sufficiency.
- b. Researchers conducted interviews over the phone of 12 individuals in a leadership position within 9 community stakeholder agencies pursuant to Organizational Standard 2.2. Interviewers used an interview guide (Appendix B). This process collected insights on community strengths and needs, identified barriers to self-sufficiency and gathered suggestions on resources to help individuals achieve greater self-sufficiency and to strengthen communities so that individuals can attain that goal.

**Figure 3. Number of CSBG Participant Interviews by CSBG Provider**

| CSBG-funded Service Provider   | Geographic Region        | No. of Participants Interviewed |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Allegheny Valley Association of Churches   | Northeastern Communities | 2                               |
| Allegheny LINK   | County-wide              | 2                               |
| Community College of Allegheny County – Modern Office System Training Program (MOST) | County-wide              | 3                               |
| Human Services Center Corporation  | Mon Valley               | 3                               |

<sup>2</sup> For more extensive description about this project’s methodology and data collection procedures, see Appendix E.

**Figure 3. (continued) Number of CSBG Participant Interviews by CSBG Provider**

| CSBG-funded Service Provider                  | Geographic Region                        | No. of Participants Interviewed |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Mon Valley Initiative                         | Mon Valley                               | 3                               |
| North Hills Community Outreach (Bellevue)     | Northern Communities of Allegheny County | 2                               |
| North Hills Community Outreach (Millvale)     | Northern Communities of Allegheny County | 2                               |
| North Hills Community Outreach (McKees Rocks) | Western Communities of Allegheny County  | 2                               |
| Rainbow Kitchen Community Services            | Mon Valley                               | 3                               |
| <b>Total CSBG Client Interviews</b>           |  | <b>22</b>                       |

**Figure 4. Community Stakeholder Agencies Interviewed (See Description of Stakeholder Agencies in Appendix A)**

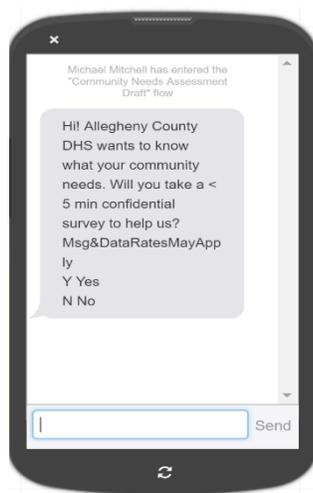
| Community Stakeholder Agencies Interviewed   | Geographic Area                                   | Services Provided  |
|--|---|--|
| The Allegheny Intermediate Unit – Head Start   | County-wide (less City of Pittsburgh)             | Early Education  |
| The Allegheny Intermediate Unit – Family and Community Education Workforce Development Program | Eastern and Southern Allegheny County Communities | Workforce Development, Basic Needs, Family Support                 |
| Circles  | Mon Valley and other Allegheny County communities | Poverty Elimination, Financial Literacy, Education, Family Support |
| Community Kitchen of Pittsburgh  | Greater Pittsburgh Area                           | Food Security, Workforce Development                               |
| Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania  | Mon Valley  | Workforce Development  |
| Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank  | County-wide                                       | Food Security  |
| Just Harvest   | County wide                                       | Food Access, Basic Needs, Advocacy                                 |
| Literacy Pittsburgh  | County-wide                                       | Education  |
| PA CareerLink  | County-wide                                       | Workforce Development  |
| United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania  | County-wide                                       | Health, Education, Financial Stability, Basic Needs                |

## 2. Surveys of Allegheny County Residents

DHS piloted the use of text message (SMS) survey technology to obtain qualitative data that captured the voice of the community. Using the method outlined below, DHS contacted 6000 Allegheny County residents by text message, inviting them to complete a 10-question community needs survey using their cellphones. Respondents agreeing to participate in the survey were presented with one question at a time and a subsequent question being automatically sent when a valid response was selected, or when the participant opted to skip and advance to the next question. Eight questions used a Likert<sup>3</sup> scale and participants could select only one response. Two questions were open-ended, allowing participants to enter a free text response to the question prompt. Over 600 people (10%) opted in to the survey; of those, roughly 50% answered at least one question.

Staff designed this brief SMS community text message survey based on human/social services and health services literature, including other community needs assessments. Survey items encompassed core areas of need for people in poverty or with low incomes and sought to identify community stakeholders' perspectives on areas of concern within their community, including housing, basic needs, employment, education, transportation, financial, and health information, and elicited suggestions for improving self-sufficiency programs and expenditures.

**Figure 5. Summary of SMS Community Survey Respondents**



| SMS Community Survey Respondents |                       |                              |                                |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                                  | Agreed to Take Survey | Completed Some/All of Survey | % Completed Some/All of Survey |
| <b>Male</b>                      | 348                   | 138                          | 40%                            |
| <b>Female</b>                    | 380                   | 152                          | 40%                            |
| <b>Blank/Other</b>               | 18                    | 9                            | 50%                            |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>646</b>            | <b>299</b>                   | <b>46%</b>                     |

<sup>3</sup> A Likert Scale is a type of rating scale used to measure attitudes or opinions. With this scale, respondents are asked to rate items on a level of agreement. For example: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

### 3. Review and Input by Community Services Advisory Council

The CSAC reviewed and discussed a preliminary report of the qualitative and quantitative data and findings. CSAC members offered additional insights and assessments based on their respective experiences as low-income individuals, service providers, or others involved in helping low-income people become more self-sufficient. Some of those insights had not been specifically identified through the interviews and surveys and, therefore, provided valuable appraisals of, and additions to, the needs of the community.

#### Findings on Qualitative Data

Across the interviews and surveys, the three areas of concern that were identified across all stakeholder groups were employment, affordable housing and transportation. Figure 6 presents the five top perceived needs and concerns expressed by each stakeholder group, with the common concerns across categories displayed in bold.

**Figure 6. Top Concerns Expressed by each Stakeholder Group**

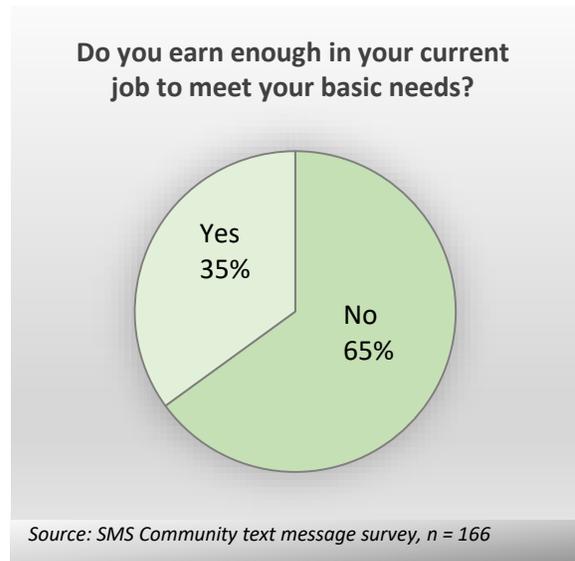
| Community Stakeholder Agencies  | CSBG Participants   | Community Members   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Affordable Housing</b><br>Mental Health<br><b>Employment</b><br><b>Transportation</b><br>Childcare | <b>Employment</b><br><b>Affordable Housing</b><br><b>Transportation</b><br>Physical Health<br>Basic Needs | <b>Employment</b><br><b>Affordable Housing</b><br>Childcare<br><b>Transportation</b><br>Physical Health |

Below we examine the top areas of need that were mentioned across all stakeholder groups, and other common concerns. While employment, affordable housing and transportation are discussed separately below, these needs are clearly intertwined and closely related to many other needs identified throughout this needs assessment process. Other significant concerns raised by community stakeholder agency staff include childcare, physical and mental health care, social isolation, issues related to the “benefits cliff”, education and training, and financial literacy, all of which were also mentioned repeatedly.

## Employment

Community stakeholder agencies and CSBG participants identified a variety of employment concerns, including the lack of jobs that pay a living wage. Employment opportunities that do offer a living wage and good benefits require skills that many participants do not have. Criminal records pose a significant barrier to participants reaching gainful employment. Agency staff said that individuals have difficulty retaining employment because they have limited job readiness skills, like punctuality and proper work attire, and complicated life issues, such as behavioral health concerns, child care, and transportation.

**Figure 7. Responses of Employed Persons**



SMS survey respondents identified as “very hard” or “hard” three distinct factors that create barriers to employment: lack of education or skills specific to employment opportunities (50%); access to reliable transportation (46%); and access to childcare while at or looking for work (39%). (Figure 8). Sixty-five percent (65%) of community respondents who were employed indicated that they did not earn enough in their current job to meet their basic needs (Figure 7).

**Figure 8. Employment-Related Concerns in the Community**

| Employment-Related Barriers in Community          | Percentage (%) |      |         |      |           |
|---|----------------|------|---------|------|-----------|
|   | Very Hard      | Hard | Neither | Easy | Very Easy |
| Access to Reliable Transportation                 | 18%            | 28%  | 22%     | 19%  | 13%       |
| Finding Child Care While at Work/Looking for Work | 24%            | 15%  | 43%     | 8%   | 10%       |
| Education or Training to Get a Better Job         | 21%            | 29%  | 32%     | 11%  | 6%        |

Source: SMS Community Text Message Survey

## Affordable Housing

Affordable housing was another common concern raised by community stakeholder agencies, CSBG participants and the greater community. Multiple agencies acknowledged that their clients experience unstable housing and homelessness. While the local housing market is growing, increased rental rates have created an additional financial barrier for low-income individuals or families seeking affordable housing options. In some neighborhoods, available affordable housing options may be unsafe or located in an otherwise unhealthy living environment. Stakeholders were also concerned about landlords who neglect their properties and put the health and safety of their tenants in jeopardy. In addition, landlords often

refuse to participate in Section 8, which provides housing vouchers to low-income individuals and families. Community stakeholder agency staff noted that unstable housing creates extended disruptions for individuals and families and affects many facets of life including education, job stability, and health.

Eighty-one percent of community respondents indicated that finding safe and affordable housing was hard or very hard (Figure 9). When asked in an open-ended question what their biggest challenge was over the past year, one third pointed to finding and maintaining safe and affordable housing, confirming the responses of all other participants. Issues of poor credit, physical or mental disability and lack of transportation posed barriers for individuals seeking to find and retain secure housing.

**Figure 9. Housing-Related Barriers as Reported by Community Survey Respondents**

| Housing-Related Barriers in Community | Percentage (%)   |             |                |             |                  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
|                                       | <i>Very Hard</i> | <i>Hard</i> | <i>Neither</i> | <i>Easy</i> | <i>Very Easy</i> |
| Finding Safe and Affordable Housing   | 39%              | 42%         | 11%            | 5%          | 3%               |
| Pay Rent or Mortgage                  | 17%              | 36%         | 28%            | 14%         | 17%              |

Source: SMS Community Text Message Survey

Along with Affordable housing, the CSAC identified the dearth of accessible housing as an additional, and sometimes overlooked, barrier to self-sufficiency for those with physical challenges. The lack of modification of housing to allow individuals with disabilities to live independently poses a significant barrier for some. CSAC members identified some specific issues related to accessible housing:

- Lack of awareness of the need, i.e., people don't realize that individuals need accessible and affordable housing.
- Lack of awareness of the available accessible housing stock, i.e., those who need accessible housing are often not aware of available housing and those apartments/houses that are accessible end up being rented to others who don't need accessibility.
- Location of available accessible housing: accessible housing is often located in low-income neighborhoods that may not have the resources and supports that people with disabilities need such as transportation. People sometimes turn down accessible housing because they cannot live in the communities where the housing is located.

### Transportation

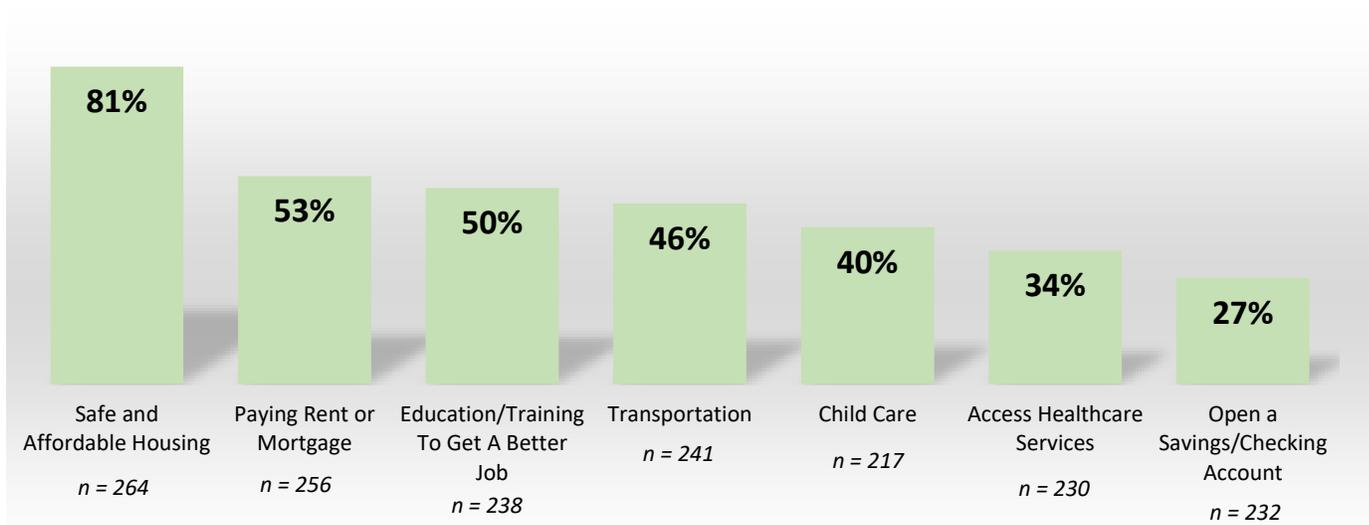
Transportation was cited often as a barrier to employment concerns, as fares can be prohibitive and transit cutbacks have negatively affected routes and timetables. For a working individual with limited resources, the current fare presents a financial challenge. Port Authority's recent move to the Connect Card has had an adverse effect on low income residents who often must pay with cash. The cash fares are higher than if paying with the Connect Card. The one-way city fare is \$2.50, and a transfer is \$1.00 with a Connect Card, as compared to the cash fares of \$2.75 and \$2.75, respectively.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Port Authority. Fare Information. <http://www.portauthority.org/paac/FareInfo/FareInformation.aspx>

Stakeholders DHS interviewed also raised transportation as a barrier to accessing education, health care, childcare and food and to maintaining meaningful social contacts and supports. More than one respondent reported turning down a job offer since they could not reliably make it to work because the work location was not on a bus line or the bus did not run during their work hours.

Several CSBG participants expressed the benefit of owning a car to access goods and services, however they also identified the cost as being prohibitive.

**Figure 10. Percent of Survey Respondents Reporting “Hard” or “Very Hard” by Category**



Source: SMS Community Text Message Survey

Members of the CSAC raised additional issues related to transportation. They identified a need for transportation accessible to those with mobility issues and other physical challenges. Routes and schedules are not sufficient, nor are the options for types of transport for people with special physical needs.

**Other Concerns**

Community members responding to the community text message survey and CSBG participants identified many other issues that obstruct their path to self-sufficiency. Specifically, they mentioned unaddressed mental health and substance use issues and difficulty navigating behavioral health benefits coupled with a lack of affordable and high-quality health care options. More than a third (34%) of community survey respondents felt that obtaining health insurance is “very hard” or “hard” (Figure 10). Also, they pointed to the absence of reliable and safe childcare, feelings of helplessness and lack of social belonging, the opioid epidemic and community isolation as affecting self-sufficiency.

Additionally, many community stakeholder agency staff cited the “benefits cliff” as a large barrier to self-sufficiency. Often, when people earn more, their increased wages can result in a net loss of valuable benefits to them or their family, such as childcare or housing subsidies.

CSAC members pointed to deficiencies in health insurance, citing that many people have health insurance that does not actually meet their health care needs. As a result, they cannot afford, and do not seek, the health care that they truly need.

### **Barriers and Successes Toward Achieving Self-Sufficiency**

Community stakeholder agency staff identified barriers for reaching successful outcomes including system-level challenges as well as client-level challenges. The system-level challenges include the access and cost of transportation and the lack of safe and affordable housing. Client-level challenges include difficulty focusing or maintaining their commitment to achieve greater self-sufficiency. CSBG participants offered the following statements concerning barriers they faced:

- “I have a criminal history which has created a hardship with securing employment.”
- “One barrier was being able to connect to different services because there was not just one place to go or to call. Access to internet and phone services at the self-sufficiency center was a big help because these are things I did not have, coming out of the criminal justice system.”
- “Finding housing was the biggest barrier due to my poor credit history.”
- “No transportation. I do not have a car. The only way I can get a car is to get a job first. Jobs I have been called for are not on the bus line.”

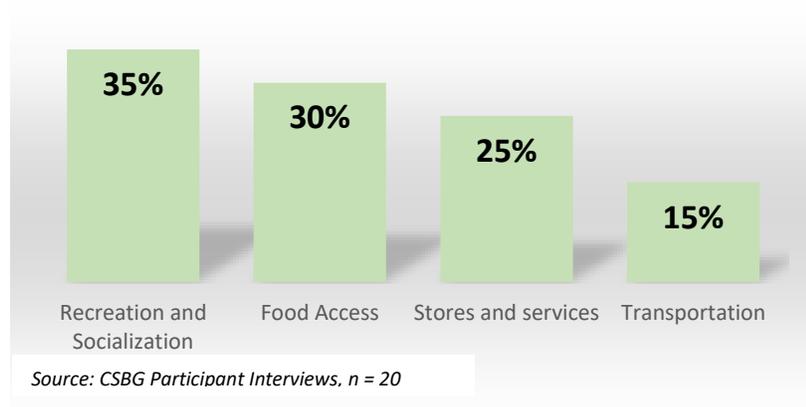
CSBG participants listed several successes, when asked what they accomplished since connecting with their agency:

- “Learning computer skills.”
- “I have not had a shut off notice in four years. That’s a big thing to me. I have some student loans that I have been able to pull out of default.”
- “I cleared out two misdemeanors, have taken a class to get my notary license and am now getting interviews, which makes me feel like I am getting closer to obtaining employment. I secured an apartment with proximity to the business district and am employed.”
- “I have built my credit up and was able to get a car.”

### **What My Community Needs Most**

CSBG participants were asked to look beyond their personal and family needs and identify needs for the people living in their specific community (Figure 11). Many comments revolved around infrastructure needs such as a more robust business district, removal of blight, improvement and development of green spaces and recreation facilities and programming for children. Additionally, food and transportation access were consistent themes.

**Figure 11. CSBG Participants Identifying What Their Communities Need Most**



#### Recreation and Socialization

- “Thinking about the library, we need something to bring the people together, something to bring the community together.”
- “I think program for kids, and a summer programs for kids. Lots of kids around and they are left on their own. There is no real place for the kids to connect and I think that could lead to trouble when kids have nothing to do.”
- “Green space is needed.”
- “I wish there was more of a place for my kids to play, there is no green space, the little park is not family friendly.”
- “A community center would help all ages in the community.”

#### Food Access

- “More food bank services are needed in our immediate community with better quality food products.”
- “Food pantry is lacking and is a need.”
- “Assistance for people who work. Like I work but I don’t make enough. I make too much for assistance, so I need help.”

#### Stores/Services

- “A shelter for the homeless. Where people can go and take showers and get meals.”
- “Create more job opportunities in the community. So much of what families need requires you to leave the community to access services and resources.”
- “We need to tear down abandoned buildings. When we take the buildings, people are more inclined to bring businesses. It looks like a dying community.”

#### Transportation

- “Improve transportation as there is not enough bus service in our community. That would improve my chances for employment.”

## Community Assessment

### Demographic Profile

Allegheny County has a population of about 1.2 million individuals and is home to the City of Pittsburgh. The CSBG-funded service areas for which the Allegheny County Department of Human Services is responsible lie outside of the City of Pittsburgh. Demographic information about the population within the County as a whole, as well as just the municipalities falling outside of the City of Pittsburgh is listed in Figure 12. Excluding the city, Allegheny County has a moderate poverty rate of nine percent (9%), and seven percent (7%) of working age adults are unemployed. The population is primarily White (85%) and African American (9%), and only six percent (6%) of adults over age 25 lack a high school diploma or equivalency. Yet, some neighborhoods have much higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and educational challenges.

**Figure 12. Allegheny County Demographic Profile (ACS 5-year Estimates)**

|   | Allegheny County | Allegheny County, excluding City of Pittsburgh |
|---|------------------|--|
| <b>Population</b>                                 | <b>1,230,360</b> | <b>925,055</b>                                 |
| <b>Race</b>                                       | <b>1,230,360</b> | <b>925,055</b>                                 |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race)                  | 1.90%            | 1.60%  |
| <b>Not Hispanic or Latino Population</b>          | <b>1,207,105</b> | <b>910,452</b>                                 |
| White alone                                       | 79%              | 85%  |
| Black or African American alone                   | 13%              | 9%   |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone           | 0.10%            | 0.10%  |
| Asian alone                                       | 3.40%            | 2.70%  |
| Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone  | 0.00%            | 0.02%  |
| Some other race alone                             | 0.20%            | 0.15%  |
| Two or more races                                 | 2.30%            | 2.00%  |
| <b>Population Ages 25 and Older</b>               | <b>880,163</b>   | <b>676,199</b>                                 |
| Percent high school diploma/equivalency or higher | 94%              | 94%  |
| Bachelor's Degree or higher                       | 39%              | 39%  |
| <b>Language Spoken at Home (Ages 5+)</b>          | <b>1,165,553</b> | <b>875,428</b>                                 |
| English only                                      | 93%              | 94%  |
| Speak a Language Other than English               | 7%               | 6%   |
| Spanish or Spanish Creole                         | 1%               | 1%   |
| Other Indo-European languages                     | 3%               | 3%   |

|   | Allegheny County | Allegheny County, excluding City of Pittsburgh |
|---|------------------|--|
| Asian and Pacific Island languages              | 2%               | 1%   |
| Other languages                                 | 0%               | 0%   |
| <b>Poverty Status</b>                           | <b>1,196,956</b> | <b>914,809</b>                                 |
| 50 percent of poverty level                     | 6%               | 4%   |
| 100 percent of the poverty level                | 13%              | 9%   |
| 125 percent of poverty level                    | 16%              | 13%  |
| 150 percent of poverty level                    | 20%              | 16%  |
| 200 percent of poverty level                    | 28%              | 23%  |
| <b>Employment Status (Ages 16+)</b>             | <b>1,023,291</b> | <b>760,999</b>                                 |
| In labor force                                  | 65%              | 68%  |
| Unemployed                                      | 6%               | 7%   |
| <b>Persons with a disability</b>                | <b>76,738</b>    | <b>54,872</b>                                  |
| <b>Household Information</b>                    |                  |  |
| Total families                                  | 303,753          | 243,902  |
| Percentage of families headed by single females | 20%              | 18%  |
| Renter-occupied homes                           | 35%              | 30%  |
| Receiving Cash Assistance or SNAP               | 13%              | 11%  |

Source: American Community Survey 2012-2016 5-Year Estimates: Tables, B02001, S0101 S1501, C17002, S2301, S1101, B19058, S2701, B11004, S1601

Examining poverty, education, and employment data at the county or municipal level has its limitations since the characteristics of the population in some parts of the county or a municipality differ dramatically from communities a short distance away. We also find that poverty alone is not always the best indicator of need. As a result, DHS has developed a Community Need Index in Allegheny County to assess a community's relative need for publicly funded social services<sup>5</sup>. (We exclude the City of Pittsburgh from the calculations when assessing need outside of the central city). The Community Need Index includes the following variables from the American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-year estimates:

- Percentage of the population below 100% of the federal poverty line
- Percentage of the population below 200% of the federal poverty line
- Percentage of families headed by single females
- Percentage of civilian males ages 16-64 who are unemployed or not in the labor force
- Percentage of adults ages 25 and older without a high school diploma or equivalency
- Percentage of households without access to a vehicle
- Percentage of households that are vacant

<sup>5</sup> Good, Megan, Kathryn Collins, and Erin Dalton. (2014). Suburban Poverty: Assessing Community Need Outside the Central City. Updated (2015), [American Community Survey, 2017] Unpublished raw data.

This information is analyzed at the census tract level since suburban communities tend to cover large and diverse geographical areas. Communities are ranked by these metrics and then split up into ten, equally sized tiers ranging from low need to distressed. Figure 13 displays the median indicator values for the communities within each of the five most distressed tiers, as well as the overall median. One can see by reviewing this chart that the socioeconomic conditions in these Census tracts differ dramatically from the County average.

**Figure 13. Median Values of Indicators in the Community Need Index, For the Top 5 Tiers**

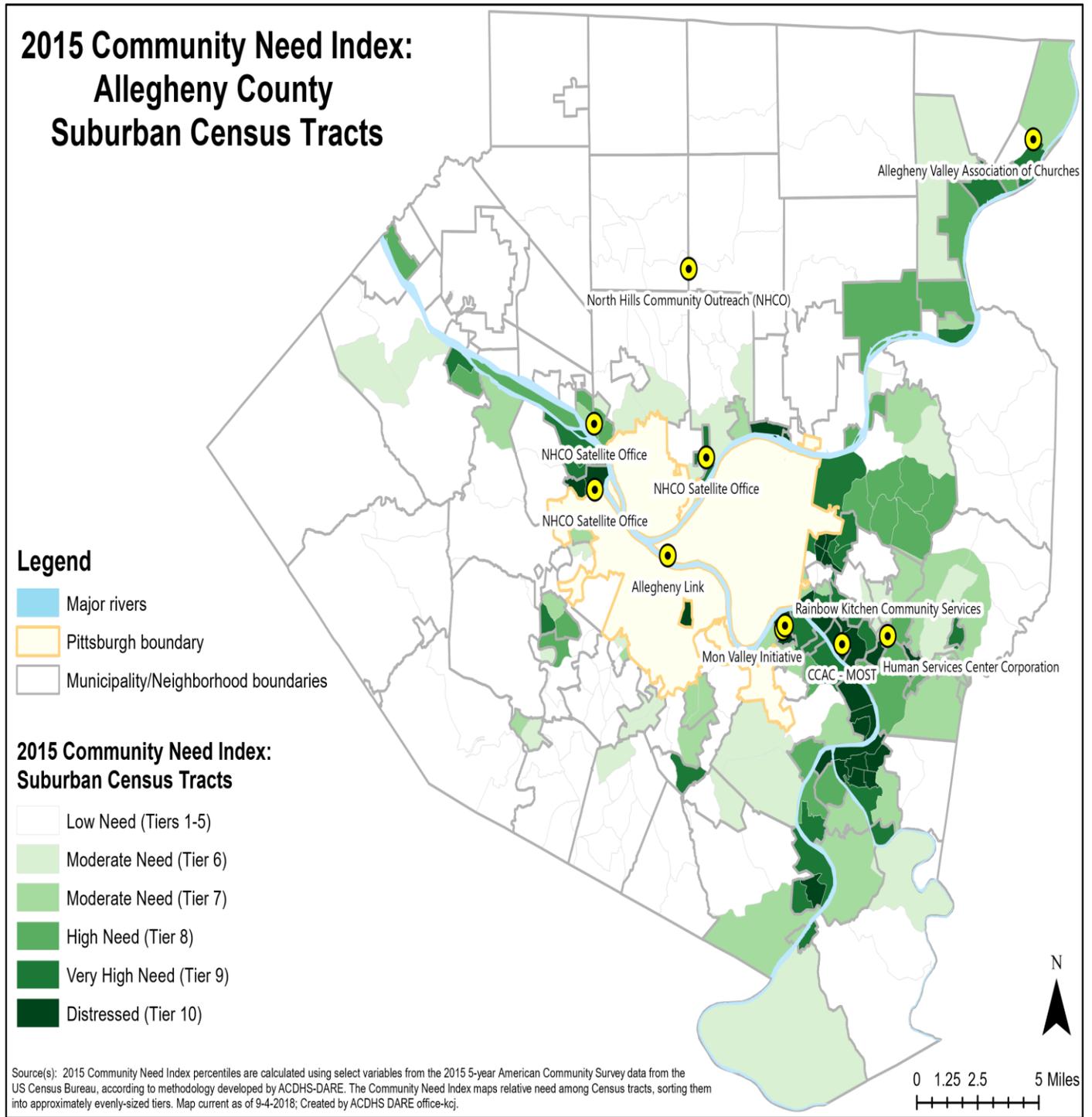
|                         | <b>Female Headed Family</b> | <b>No High School Degree</b> | <b>Below Poverty Line</b> | <b>Below 200% Poverty</b> | <b>Males Not in Labor Force or Unemployed</b> | <b>No Access to Vehicle</b> | <b>Vacant Houses</b> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Median</i>           | 22%                         | 6%                           | 8%                        | 23%                       | 22%   | 7%                          | 7%                   |
| Moderate Need (Tier 6)  | 25%                         | 6%                           | 8%                        | 26%                       | 22%   | 8%                          | 6%                   |
| Moderate Need (Tier 7)  | 29%                         | 6%                           | 9%                        | 28%                       | 25%   | 9%                          | 6%                   |
| High Need (Tier 8)      | 35%                         | 7%                           | 13%                       | 34%                       | 26%   | 12%                         | 7%                   |
| Very High Need (Tier 9) | 44%                         | 9%                           | 18%                       | 45%                       | 32%   | 20%                         | 9%                   |
| Distressed (Tier 10)    | 68%                         | 13%                          | 36%                       | 63%                       | 49%   | 37%                         | 13%                  |

### Findings on Quantitative Data

CSBG provider locations are layered in this map (Figure 14) with the Community Needs Index. The communities with the darkest shading in the background are those with the highest levels of need for publicly funded services. Many of these communities are concentrated in the Southeastern part of Allegheny County (the Mon Valley), but there are others in each region of the county that stand out as high need as well. Overall, this map gives us a sense of which areas are being served through at least one of CSBG’s services.

CSBG providers, such as Rainbow Kitchen Community Services, Human Services Center Corporation, Mon Valley Initiative and Community College of Allegheny County – MOST Program are located within the high need communities within the Mon Valley. There are other communities within Allegheny County outside of the Mon Valley with a high need. North Hills Community Outreach serves high needs communities in the northern areas of Allegheny County in Millvale and Bellevue, and serves communities in the southwest of Allegheny County in McKees Rocks.

**Figure 14. CSBG-Funded Provider Locations**



## Appendix A: Characteristics of Community Stakeholders

| Community Stakeholders   | Respondents  |
|--|--|
| Community-based Organizations  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Allegheny Intermediate Unit</li> <li>• Circles</li> <li>• Community Kitchen of Pittsburgh</li> <li>• Goodwill of Western Pennsylvania</li> <li>• Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank</li> <li>• Just Harvest</li> <li>• Literacy Pittsburgh</li> <li>• PA Career Link</li> <li>• United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania</li> </ul> |
| CSBG Program Participant Interviews from the following CSBG organizations: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allegheny Link</li> <li>• Allegheny Valley Association of Churches</li> <li>• Community College of Allegheny County – MOST Program</li> <li>• Human Services Center Corporation</li> <li>• Mon Valley Initiative</li> <li>• North Hills Community Outreach</li> <li>• Rainbow Kitchen Community Services</li> </ul>                       |
| SMS Community Survey   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey distribution via SMS messaging to individuals in the DHS Data Warehouse who have a history of service with DHS.</li> </ul>   |

### Overview of Community-based Organizations

Interviewed stakeholders offer an array of services for the most vulnerable population with either a focus on a specific sub-population or a specific program area and are described below.

**The Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU)** is a regional public education agency and a crucial part of Pennsylvania's public education system. AIU's staff of educators, administrators and support staff provide specialized services to Allegheny County's suburban school districts as well as non-public, charter and vocational-technical schools.

*Head Start program* provides high-quality, comprehensive programming and services to families with preschool children. These services improve school readiness in home, classroom, and child care settings. *Pre-K Counts* provides high-quality programming for preschool children in both classroom and child care settings.

*Family & Community Engagement*, through multiple Family Support Centers and other programs, works collaboratively with a variety of groups and organizations to impact communities and help families become strong by offering programs that give adults the chance for a better life, educate students in non-traditional locations, help our youngest students prepare for success in school and strengthen our neighborhoods, one family at a time.

**Circles®** is a nationally-known, proven, and innovative way of connecting people across socioeconomic lines to move people and families out of poverty. Circles of Greater Pittsburgh's mission is to inspire and equip Pittsburgh area families and communities to resolve poverty and thrive. Circles believes no one should live in poverty. Families and communities can take charge of their destinies. And if given the right tools and support, economic stability can be achieved.

**Community Kitchen Pittsburgh** uses food as the foundation to change lives and strengthen communities. Community Kitchen Pittsburgh offers culinary training, food access, food service, and food education.

**Goodwill of Southwestern Pennsylvania** is a human service agency and network of not-for-profit businesses whose mission is to help people overcome barriers to employment and enjoy the dignity and benefits of work and improved quality of life.

**Greater Pittsburgh Community Foodbank** exists simply because people in our community struggle with meeting a basic human need- having enough to eat. The Foodbank sources healthy food in a variety of ways and distributes it to neighbors in need.

**Just Harvest** educates, empowers and mobilizes people to eliminate hunger, poverty, and economic injustice in our communities by influencing public policy, engaging in advocacy, and connecting people to public benefits.

**Literacy Pittsburgh (formerly Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council)** is the largest provider of adult basic education in Allegheny and Beaver counties. Last year, Literacy Pittsburgh helped more than 4500 individuals acquire reading, writing, math, English language, computer and workforce skills so they may reach their fullest potential in life and participate productively in their communities.

**PA CareerLink®** is a "one-stop shop" that connects employers and job seekers in the most efficient manner possible. At their sites in Downtown Pittsburgh and Forest Hills, highly-trained staff offer visitors a wide range of materials, workshops, consultation services, recruitment events and on-line access to a comprehensive database of job opportunities and employment information. CareerLink also has satellite offices across Allegheny County.

**United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania** focuses on preventative strategies that help before problems escalate. They identify the most critical needs in our local community and collaborate with high performing partners who they hold accountable to deliver measurable results.

## **Description of CSBG Self-Sufficiency Program**

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds the Self-Sufficiency Program, Education and Training, Employment Assistance, and Tax Assistance Program.

Self-sufficiency services are provided by five service coordination/case management sub-contractors at seven locations which include Allegheny Valley Association of Churches, Allegheny Link, Human Services Center Corporation, North Hills Community Outreach (3 sites), and Rainbow Kitchen. The DHS VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program is also a core component of our self-sufficiency services.

Five service coordination/case management CSBG sub-contractors utilize the case management model. This model enables service coordinators/case managers to plot a participant's status at a given point and over time based upon factors that measure relative self-sufficiency. The agencies utilize the individual and family strengths and needs assessment process. This process has the central concept of identifying families' needs and developing an action plan to meet those needs. The goal is for the families to attain greater control over their lives, enhance self-confidence, and increase their economic independence and overall self-efficiency. The process provides for the use of appropriate resources and services which are individually determined.

Education services are provided by Community College of Allegheny County's Modern Office Systems Training (MOST) program. The MOST Program provides up-to-date, quality office technology training to individuals for the purposes of developing employment skills that will lead to self-sufficiency and career advancement. The MOST Program offers many office-related courses and awards up to 10 college credits that may be transferred for advanced placement with CCAC.

Employment assistance services are provided by Mon Valley Initiative's Workforce & Business Development program. The subcontractor assists unemployed and under-employed individuals to become prepared for and able to access employment opportunities that exist in the region.

## Appendix B: Interview Guide for Community Stakeholder Agency Interviews

### Introduction:

Hi, I'm <name>. Thank you for making time to speak with me. As I mentioned previously, under the Community Services Block grant, we are required to conduct a Community Needs Assessment every three years, to assess gaps in services, identify resources to address existing needs, support strategic planning, establish program priorities and assist with program evaluation.

<Your agency> is a primary stakeholder within the County and we expect that your knowledge and insights will greatly contribute to this effort. I do not want to take a lot of your time, but I just want to get your thoughts in a few keys areas.

### Background

- What community(ies) does <your agency> serve?

### Community Needs

- What do you see as the strengths, in terms of services and resources, in the community you serve?
- What is the most valuable service or resource your agency provides in the community?
- What do you see as the primary gap(s) and/or need(s) in your community that prevent(s) people from attaining self-sufficiency?
- If you had a magic wand, what service or resource would you summon to this community for greatest impact?
- The largest portion of the funds Allegheny County Department of Human Services administers under the Community Services Block Grant is to help citizens achieve self-sufficiency. Do you have any thoughts about what services or resources would be most valuable to citizens to help them attain that goal?
- Are there any other thoughts or questions you would like to share with us?

### Thank you

Thank you so much for your time and your thoughts. What you've shared will help us improve services throughout the county.

## Appendix C: Interview Guide for CSBG Participant Interviews

### Introduction:

Hi, I'm <name> is. Thank you for making time to speak with us. We are part of a team at the Allegheny County Department of Human Services that is looking for ways to be sure that the programs and resources we fund are meeting the needs of the people they serve. We do that, periodically, by going out to the programs and talking to people like you who are using the services and gathering your thoughts and opinions.

This should take about 30 minutes. Your answers will be kept confidential and will only be used to give us valuable feedback from the people, like you, who know best.

### Individual

- How did you first learn about and connect with <the agency>?
- What motivated you to enroll in services with this agency?
- How long have you been coming? How often?
- Tell me what you do when you come here?
- What goals are you working on at <the agency>?
- Can you tell me about what you have accomplished since connecting with <the agency>?
- Have you encountered any challenges or barriers? If so, please tell me about them. What have you done to overcome them? What assistance have you had?

### Community

- The questions I have been asking have been about you and your experiences. Now, I would like you to think a little bit broader and let's talk a bit about your family and your community.
- What would you say are the major needs of your family? Can you think of anything that local government can provide that would be of help?
  - o And what about your community? Where do you live?
- Can you think of anything(s) that is/are especially needed for people who live in <community>?
- If money was no object, what could Allegheny County do for you, your family and/or your community that would help you feel a great sense of self-sufficiency?
- Do you have any other thoughts or questions you would like to share with us?

Thank you so much for your time and your thoughts. What you've shared will help us improve services throughout the county.

## Appendix D: SMS Community Text Message Survey

| Question Number | Question  | Response Options   |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Introduction    | Hi! Allegheny County DHS wants to know what your community needs. Will you take a < 5 min confidential survey to help us? Msg&DataRatesMayApply | Y. Yes<br>N. No  |
| Opt-In          | Thank you. Throughout this survey you can reply SKIP to SKIP any question. To stop receiving messages from this number, reply STOP              | No Response  |
| 1.              | How easy is it to find safe and affordable housing?   | A. Very Easy<br>B. Easy<br>C. Neither<br>D. Hard<br>E. Very Hard |
| 2.              | How easy or hard is it for you to pay your rent or mortgage?  | A. Very Easy<br>B. Easy<br>C. Neither<br>D. Hard<br>E. Very Hard |
| 3.              | Do you earn enough in your current job to meet your basic needs?  | A. Yes<br>B. No<br>C. Unemployed                                 |
| 4.              | How easy or hard would it be for you to get education/training to get a different or better job?  | A. Very Easy<br>B. Easy<br>C. Neither<br>D. Hard<br>E. Very Hard |

| Question Number | Question  | Response Options   |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 5.              | How easy or hard is it to get transportation to meet your needs?  | A. Very Easy<br>B. Easy<br>C. Neither<br>D. Hard<br>E. Very Hard |
| 6.              | How easy or hard would it be for you to open a savings/checking account?  | A. Very Easy<br>B. Easy<br>C. Neither<br>D. Hard<br>E. Very Hard |
| 7.              | How easy or hard is it for you to access the health care you need?  | A. Very Easy<br>B. Easy<br>C. Neither<br>D. Hard<br>E. Very Hard |
| 8.              | In general, how would you rate your health?   | F. Excellent<br>G. Very good<br>H. Good<br>I. Fair<br>J. Poor    |
| 9.              | Over the last year, what has been the biggest challenge for you? Please briefly describe  | Open-ended Response  |
| 10.             | What community/neighborhood do you live in?   | Open-ended Response  |
| Conclusion      | Thank you for your feedback. Thank you for completing our survey. To learn more about Allegheny County DHS visit <a href="http://bit.ly/2Lm61DP">bit.ly/2Lm61DP</a> | No Response  |

## Appendix E: Methodology Description (Full)

DHS developed a multi-pronged strategy to collect qualitative data using traditional and novel approaches.

### Interviews

- c. Researchers conducted in-person interviews of 22 CSBG program participants using an interview guide (Appendix C). The process gathered information on successes and barriers, perceptions of the individuals' and their community's greatest needs, and suggestions for solutions leading to greater self-sufficiency.
- d. Researchers conducted interviews over the phone of 12 individuals in a leadership position within 9 community stakeholder agencies pursuant to Organizational Standard 2.2, following an interview guide (Appendix B). This process collected insights on community strengths and needs, identified barriers to self-sufficiency and gathered suggestions on resources to help individuals achieve greater self-sufficiency and to strengthen communities so that individuals can attain that goal.

### Surveys

DHS piloted the use of text message (SMS) survey technology to obtain qualitative data that captured the voice of the community. Using the method outlined below, DHS contacted 6000 Allegheny County residents by text message, inviting them to complete a 10-question community needs survey using their smartphones.

Staff designed brief voice of community surveys based on human/social services and health services literature, including other community needs assessments (e.g., Allegheny County Self-Sufficiency (2012), Schuylkill County (2011)<sup>6</sup>, UPMC (2013)<sup>7</sup>, Fayette County [Kentucky] (2013)<sup>8</sup>). Survey items encompassed core areas of need for people in poverty or with low incomes including: housing, basic needs, employment, education, financial, health, and information.

Piloting this new method of survey technology involved a multi-step process consisting of:

#### SMS Survey Process:

1. Extracted contact information about clients from administrative data source systems<sup>9</sup>
2. Verified cell phone information, i.e., active, type of carrier, landline vs. mobile phone
3. Sent an initial text message asking for survey participation in batches of 1k increments (6 batches total) using the SMS survey tool<sup>10</sup>
4. Pushed SMS survey to those who accepted the request

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.schuylkillcommunityaction.com/pdf/ExecutiveSummary\\_10-11-11.pdf](http://www.schuylkillcommunityaction.com/pdf/ExecutiveSummary_10-11-11.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.upmc.com/about/community-commitment/Pages/community-health-needs-assessment.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lexingtonky.gov/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=25908>

<sup>9</sup> Allegheny County maintains a Data Warehouse to link client-level data across multiple systems without requiring that those individual systems share a common technology.

<sup>10</sup> The SMS survey was done in accordance with the telephone Consumer Protection Act (47 U.S.C. § 227)

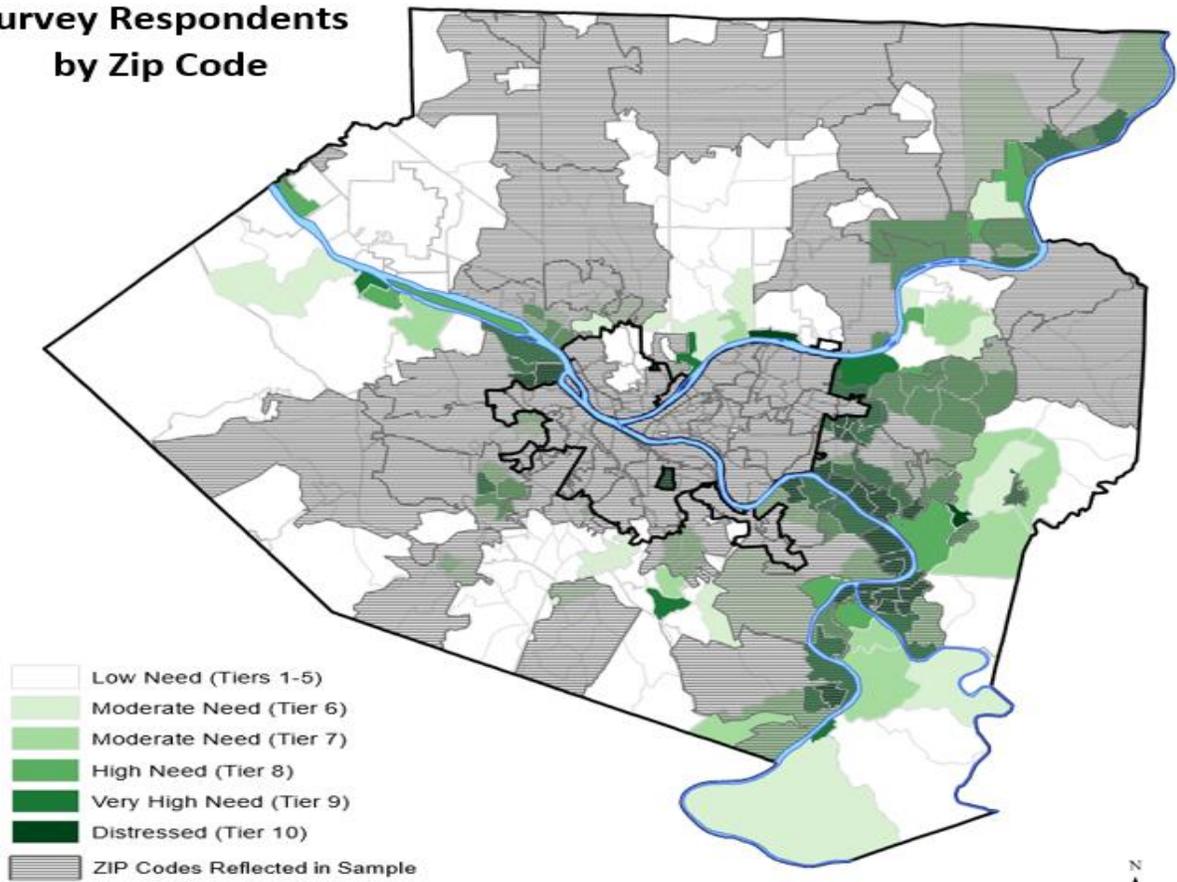
DHS experienced an approximate 10% *engagement rate*, meaning approximately 600 respondents replied to the invitation to participate in the survey with some response, including “Stop,” “Yes”, “No,” or other. About 4% (299 individuals) actually responded by answering at least the first survey question.

SMS Survey Results Analysis

1. Raw data exported to Excel for statistical analysis - descriptive analysis or statistics (e.g., counts, frequencies, percentages) for each survey question
2. Reviewed neighborhoods and cleaned data; removed responses from those outside of Allegheny County
3. Calculated respondents per survey question
4. Categories combined (e.g., “Easy” and “Very Easy”)
5. Filtered out “Skip” respondents

**Figure 15.** This map shows the zip code areas from which we received SMS survey responses (in gray) plotted over the Community Need Index census data. It demonstrates that we received responses from our SMS community text message survey from a large swath of Allegheny County, and, in particular, from the moderate high need to distressed communities as identified by the Community Need Index.

**Community Needs Index and SMS Survey Respondents by Zip Code**



Source(s): 2015 Community Need Index percentiles are calculated using select variables from the 2015 5-year American Community Survey data from the US Census Bureau, according to methodology developed by ACDHS-DARE. The Community Need Index maps relative need among Census tracts, sorting them into approximately evenly-sized tiers. Map current as of 5-5-2017. Created by ACDHS DARE office-kq.

### **Community Services Advisory Council (CSAC) Review**

Once all qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed, the CSAC reviewed and discussed a preliminary report of the data and findings. CSAC members offered additional insights and assessments based on their respective experiences as low-income individuals, service providers, or others involved in helping low-income people become more self-sufficient. Some of those insights had not been specifically identified through the interviews and surveys and, therefore, provided valuable appraisals of the needs of the community. This report incorporates the additional insights and feedback of the CSAC.

## Appendix F: Summary Statistics: Personal Hardships Experienced Over Past Year

In the open-ended responses to the SMS survey, respondents were asked to identify barriers they experienced over the past year. Clients could identify multiple barriers. We received 212 open-ended responses and could not code 11 responses. *Note:* Survey respondents could identify more than one personal challenge.

**Figure 16. Personal hardships: All community members**

| Personal Challenges               | n  | %   |
|-----------------------------------|----|-----|
| Housing                           | 66 | 33% |
| Physical Health                   | 44 | 22% |
| Employment                        | 33 | 16% |
| Financial                         | 33 | 16% |
| Family and Childcare              | 21 | 10% |
| Transportation                    | 19 | 9%  |
| Other                             | 14 | 7%  |
| Food and Other Basic Needs        | 11 | 5%  |
| Mental Health/Chemical Dependency | 10 | 5%  |
| No Challenges/Unsure              | 6  | 3%  |

**Figure 17. SMS Survey Responses**

| SMS Survey Question                            | N   | Percent of individuals identifying hard or very hard |
|--|-----|--|
| Safe and affordable housing                    | 264 | 81%  |
| Paying rent or mortgage                        | 256 | 53%  |
| Receive education/training to get a better job | 238 | 50%  |
| Transportation                                 | 241 | 46%  |
| Child care                                     | 217 | 40%  |
| Access health care services                    | 230 | 34%  |
| Open a savings/checking account                | 232 | 27%  |

## **Appendix G: Allegheny County Department of Human Services Community Services Advisory Council Members**

### **Provide Services to Low-Income People**

Lynn Tatala, MPA, MSW  
Coordinator, Project ELECT Allegheny  
Intermediate Unit/Family and  
Community Education Services

Karen Clunas, Customer Relations  
Peoples Natural Gas

Mary Frances Pilarski  
Health Care for the Homeless,  
Veterans Program,  
VA Pittsburgh Health Care System,  
Veterans Recovery Center

Mike Selep, Manager, Universal Services  
Duquesne Light Company

Stephanie Eson  
Human Services Center Corporation

### **Political Appointments**

Cynthia Moore, MSW  
Clairton Cares

Dr. Doyin Desalu  
Health and Human Services Consultant

Andrea Horton-Mericli  
Literacy Pittsburgh

Laura Zinski  
Mon Valley Initiative

*vacancy*

### **Representative of Low-Income People**

Dee Lanier, President of CSAC

Jeanne Marie McDonald

Bill McDowell

Janet Terry

*vacancy*