



## Unmet Needs Survey Results

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**Background.** Late in 2010, Continuum of Care (CoC) representatives were asked to provide their perspectives regarding the unmet needs of their clients, and the current practices for the tracking of unmet needs at the continuum level. CoC representatives were asked to participate in an online survey by a Campaign to End Homelessness (CTEH) statewide workgroup. The CTEH communication protocol was enacted to issue invitations and prompts, where needed to ensure input from all CTEH eight regions.

**Purpose of the Survey.** The purpose of the survey was to enhance the understanding of the needs of housing-related agency clients, and the degree to which needs are met or unmet. Results will preliminarily be used to identify the relative urgency of specific client needs, to propose implications for next steps and services, and to identify current gaps in knowledge around needs. The survey will be reissued in the future to allow more opportunity for others to respond and to gather insights on an ongoing basis.

**Responses.** The survey netted 148 respondents, but only 120 of these completed the entire survey. Individuals from all 8 regions participated in the survey; of respondents, 28.3% were from region two (northern lower peninsula), 6.7% were from region 5 (thumb area), and 3.3% said were not sure of their region. The respondents, then, are not representative of the state's population distribution. Future survey rounds hope to remedy this issue.

**Areas of Inquiry.** The survey instrument clustered inquiries around areas of need: housing supports, employment and income, health and wellness, and supportive services.

- For each cluster, a series of potential needs were presented and respondents were asked to rate the degree to which a particular need was unmet within their Continuum and how important a resource is to a household's ability to find and retain housing. Respondents were also asked to rank what they saw as the three most pressing unmet health and wellness needs in the Continuum.
  - The degree to which a need is unmet within their Continuum
  - How important a resource is to a household's ability to find and retain housing
  - Ranking the three most pressing unmet health and wellness needs in the Continuum.

**Results.** Below are highlights of findings across all the potential unmet needs, organized by need cluster.

■ *Housing Supports*

- The need for affordable housing units—no matter how affordable was defined—was most urgent, as it was largely unmet, widely considered a pressing housing support need, and rated the most important for finding and retaining housing (50% - 72% pressing; 63% - 85% unmet; 4.7 to 4.8 range of importance).

- Housing vouchers of all types were deemed important for retaining housing (rated 4.5), and were said to be somewhat or mostly missing by the majority of respondents, housing vouchers for families were more frequently seen as pressing, compared to vouchers for singles and for barrier free units (barrier-free units were 8% pressing and 56% unmet; families were 45% pressing and 64% unmet; and singles were 25% pressing and 71% unmet).
- *Employment and Income Needs*
  - Issues deemed most pressing, frequently unmet, and important for retaining housing were:
    - ◆ Employment (92% pressing; 80% unmet; 4.9 of 5 point scale in importance)
    - ◆ Transportation to work (68% pressing; 62% unmet; and 4.6 importance rating)
    - ◆ Job training or job skills (42% pressing; 44% unmet; and 4.5 importance rating)
    - ◆ Other needs that were noted as very important for finding and retaining housing were child care (mean rating 4.5), GED or diploma (mean 4.5) and SSI or SSDI entitlement (mean 4.4).
- *Health and Wellness Needs*
  - ◆ Considering all indicators, mental health treatment appears to be the most urgent of the health and wellness issues (49% pressing need; rated 4.4 in its importance in retaining housing; 53% said somewhat or mostly unmet in their CoC).
  - ◆ Other issues deemed both immediately pressing and important to finding and retaining housing, were substance abuse treatment (31% pressing, 4.2 importance rating), basic medical care (31% pressing, 4.0 importance rating), and prescriptions (30% pressing, 4.1 importance rating).
  - ◆ The needs most frequently mentioned as unmet, however, were access to a dentist (74% unmet, 34% pressing, and 3.5 importance rating), specialized care (66% unmet), and an eye doctor (70% unmet).
- *Supportive Services*
  - Housing case management was the need identified most frequently as pressing (68%), and with the highest mean rating of importance in the set of supportive services (4.3). Importantly, housing case management was rated as somewhat or mostly unmet by only 28% of survey respondents.
  - Transportation, in its various forms, was among the items most frequently chosen as pressing needs. Public transportation in particular is a critical need area (59% pressing; 4.3 in important for retaining housing; 55% somewhat or mostly unmet)
  - Budgeting or financial services was rated among the most important in retaining housing, at 4.3 on a scale of 5.

**Opportunities.** Overall, *the housing supports and employment and income needs* that stand out as urgent—and require intensive resources—are employment, affordable housing units, transportation to work, and job training or job skills. The single greatest opportunity to enhance current housing supports is to improve the availability of affordable housing units. To further impact the ability to find and retain housing, efforts must focus on the unmet need for child care, GEDs or diplomas, and access to SSI or SSDI entitlements.

Within the realms of *health and wellness* and *supportive services*, the needs that are largely unmet, yet vital for retaining housing, are access to mental health treatment, and transportation. Opportunities to impact homelessness will require resources directed to mental health and substance abuse treatment, access to dental care, basic medical care, and prescriptions. Resources that are currently mostly available, and are critical to maintain are housing case management, and budgeting assistance.

**Tracking Potential Unmet Needs.** Of the CoC representatives who completed the survey, the majority could not say whether their CoC tracked unmet needs (60.8%), and over one-quarter said that the CoC did track (26.2%). Responses suggest that the manner of collecting unmet need information is not standardized across CoCs.

**Respondent Characteristics.** While responses were gathered from each region, the highest proportion of responses was from region 2 (Northern Lower Peninsula, 28.3%), and the lowest from region 5 (Thumb Area, 6.7%), providing opportunity for results to be more representative of some areas than others. The types of service populations were balanced, reflecting a normal mix of services for families and singles. All types of programs were represented in the sample, although case management services, outreach, and prevention dominated.

*For a complete report on the survey findings, click [here](#).*