

East Missouri Action Agency
2019-2020
Comprehensive Community Needs
Assessment



EMAA Overview and History

East Missouri Action Agency, Inc. (EMAA) was established in 1965 as a Community Action Agency under the Economic Opportunity Act signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. For more than 50 years, EMAA has worked to promote initiatives and efforts that strive to end poverty and put low income neighborhoods and families on the track to self-sufficiency. Families and children in EMAA's eight county service area suffer from many hardships ranging from joblessness to hunger. These hardships present serious hurdles in creating a thriving community. There are also trends of underemployment, lack of decent, affordable housing, and children living in poverty in EMAA's service area. EMAA works to address these hardships through the agency's four departments. In 2019, EMAA's four departments provided the following services:

- **Community Services:** Provides intake, assessment, and referral for 13,367 low income persons, intervened in over 13,100 emergencies, and provided heating assistance to 5,601 persons.
- **Head Start:** Provides preschool, health screening, nutritious meals, and child development to over 636 children of low income families.
- **Housing:** Provides housing rental assistance for low income families in 12 counties totaling 1,979 households and 4,637 individuals, housing also provides weatherization services, home repair services, develops low income housing, and helps low income families achieve home ownership.
- **Women's Wellness:** Provided reproductive care that includes HIV tests and cancer screening(s) to 1,683 women.

Counties Served:

Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Iron, Madison, Perry, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, and Washington. Housing provided Section 8 Vouchers to Stoddard, Mississippi, Dunklin, and Pemiscot in the Bootheel.

EMAA Mission: EMAA cultivates communities of opportunity and supports people in reaching their highest potential.

EMAA Vision: Communities where everyone's potential to thrive is unlimited by community conditions.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Community Services Department provides assistance to a range of low-income individuals and families within EMAA's service area. We take a holistic approach to ending poverty; starting by addressing the most basic needs, eliminating them and applying progressive programs designed to move families into financial freedom. Over 21,000 people received services last year through EMAA's Community Service programs.

- *Family Intake, Assessment & Referral – Community Service Representatives (CSR)*: are housed in all eight EMAA Outreach offices. CSR's analyze each household member's individual needs as well as the family as a whole. Referrals are made to EMAA programs as well as community partners and local resources based on identified needs.
- *SEMO Assets* – This IDA savings program helps low-income families save money to be used in one of three ways: to purchase a home, for post-secondary education or to start and/or expand a small business. Families' savings are matched with funds from EMAA at different rates depending on the asset they choose to save for. Home ownership is matched 4-1; \$1000 savings will receive a match of \$4000. Post Secondary Education and Small Business are matched 8-1; \$500 savings will receive a match of \$4000. Participants of this program receive support through case management and obtain instruction in financial management, homeownership and micro-enterprise development to better ensure success and financial freedom.
- *Supporting, Empowering & Leveraging for Families (S.E.L.F.)* – This program helps low-income families overcome barriers to achieve success by providing support and bundled services. This program is a combined effort between all EMAA departments.

- *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program*: Through our partnership with the IRS, Volunteers and CSR's can prepare and electronically file Federal and State taxes for low-income households. They also prepare the Missouri Property Tax Credit (MO-PTC) for elderly and/or disabled households. In late January of 2019, EMAA began using the Fasciculated Self-Assist (FSA) Program for income tax preparation.
- *Emergency Food and Rental Assistance* – Emergency food is distributed primarily through a network of food pantries established by local churches and organizations in cooperation with EMAA and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP). EFSP funding is also utilized to assist in emergency situations with rent.
- *Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)* – This is a federally funded program. The LIHEAP program has two components: Energy Assistance (EA) and Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP). EA is a one time benefit designed to assist low-income people with their heating bills between October 1-May 31. To qualify applicants must meet income guidelines and be responsible for their heating bill. ECIP is designed to alleviate a crisis. To qualify, applicants must be in disconnection threat, low on propane or wood.
- *Other Community Services* - In addition to the above mentioned services, EMAA also administers dollars that are privately funded emergency energy programs such as Dollar More, Dollar Help, Round-Up, and Liberty Utilities. Funds are limited and certain restrictions apply.

- Step Up to Leadership -This is a 12-session course designed for low-income people who are interested in making a difference in their local community. There is a strong focus on developing leadership skills, service on nonprofit boards, public speaking and grant writing. The goal of this program is to offer low-income people a voice and skills to make a change in their community.
- Summer Food Service Program -The Summer Food Program is available to all children through age 18, as well as disabled adults 18-21 who are enrolled in public or private school during the regular school year.
- Reality Enrichment And Life Lessons (REALL) – The REALL simulation was developed by Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC). It is designed to challenge youth to think critically about how choices and decisions made in adolescence may have consequences in adulthood. During a REALL Simulation, youth will encounter issues of inadequate education, inadequate income, managing a budget, being labeled as an ex-offender, caring for small children and more. They will be challenged to make REAL decisions.
- Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) – Understanding the day-to-day reality of poverty is important for everyone involved in fighting poverty – from policymakers to service providers. MISSOURI'S COMMUNITY ACTION POVERTY SIMULATION (CAPS) is a unique tool that helps people begin to understand what life is like with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress.

HEAD START

Head Start is a child development program designed for three to five-year-old children from low-income families with the hope of breaking the cycle of poverty. Head Start is also governed by a policy council. The Head Start approach involves including the parent as the child's primary educator and getting the entire family and community involved. Since 1965, Head Start has been helping meet children's needs by offering the following services:

- **Health**—Medical and dental health screening and follow-up is designed to help children feel their best.
- **Nutrition**—Head Start serves a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack and promotes nutrition awareness to help children build strong bodies.
- **Parent Involvement/Social Services**—Families, whose basic needs are met and who are involved in the lives of their children, provide their children with a wonderful head start in life!
- **Education**—Our program is designed to meet the social/emotional, intellectual, language and physical needs of children
- **Diversity and Inclusion**—Our program includes the presence of others with disabilities. At Least 10% of the children in our program have disabilities.
- **Mental Health**—We contract with a licensed psychologist, our Healthy Living Counselor to provide services to children, families, and staff.

HOUSING AND WEATHERIZATION

St. Francois County Public Housing Agency provides rental assistance through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program which is funded by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development. St. Francois County Public Housing Agency currently administers approximately 2370 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers in the counties of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Dunklin, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, Pemiscot, Perry, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, and Stoddard. The Housing Choice Voucher program is the federal government's major program for assisting very low income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing.

In the Housing Choice Voucher program, eligible families generally are required to pay 30% of their adjusted income towards gross rent. St. Francois County Housing Agency pays the difference between the amount of the required tenant payment and the gross rent.

The Housing Department also administers a Housing Rehabilitation program through a Housing Preservation Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These programs target owner-occupied and are funded by the Missouri Housing Development commission.

East Missouri Action Agency's Weatherization Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. The Weatherization Program provides energy conservation measures for homes occupied by the elderly, the disabled and families with small children, which are income qualified. Weatherization services may include: air filtration sealing, wall and attic insulation, floor repairs and insulation, and furnace replacement.

WOMEN'S WELLNESS

EMAA's women's wellness clinics provide reproductive health care services to women through three clinic sites covering all eight counties. All services are provided on a sliding fee scale, so that no one is denied health care based on their ability to pay. Medicaid and private insurance is also accepted. The bulk of funding for this program is generated through patient fees and donations. Additional funding is provided by state and federal monies such as Title X Family Planning grant.

Services offered at the clinics include complete physical exams (including a Pap Smear), serum screening, treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, breast exams, birth control methods, pregnancy tests and referral for prenatal care.

The clinic proudly participates in the Show Me Healthy Women Project which offers free breast and cervical exams for eligible participants, plus free follow-up mammograms and colonoscopies as needed.

Community Needs Assessment

METHODOLOGY

The comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CNA) presents an overview and analysis of the communities the East Missouri Action Agency (EMAA) serves and supports. These communities consist of the following eight counties: Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Iron, Madison, Perry, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois and Washington. EMAA is governed by a 24 member board. The board consists of 3 representatives from each county representing the public and private sectors and 1 representative elected by our clients; ie: families with low income.

The CNA that follows and the data reported was obtained through: statistical data, surveys of individuals/families with low income, surveys of community partners, and local focus groups. This method of data collection provides EMAA with a cross section of responses from stakeholders on how poverty issues are viewed in their communities. This allows EMAA to make well educated decisions regarding the needs of the communities we serve and helps provide invaluable information. This information is taken into consideration when addressing the needs and priorities of the communities we serve and how we will deliver programs and services to aid in our mission to help move people out of poverty.

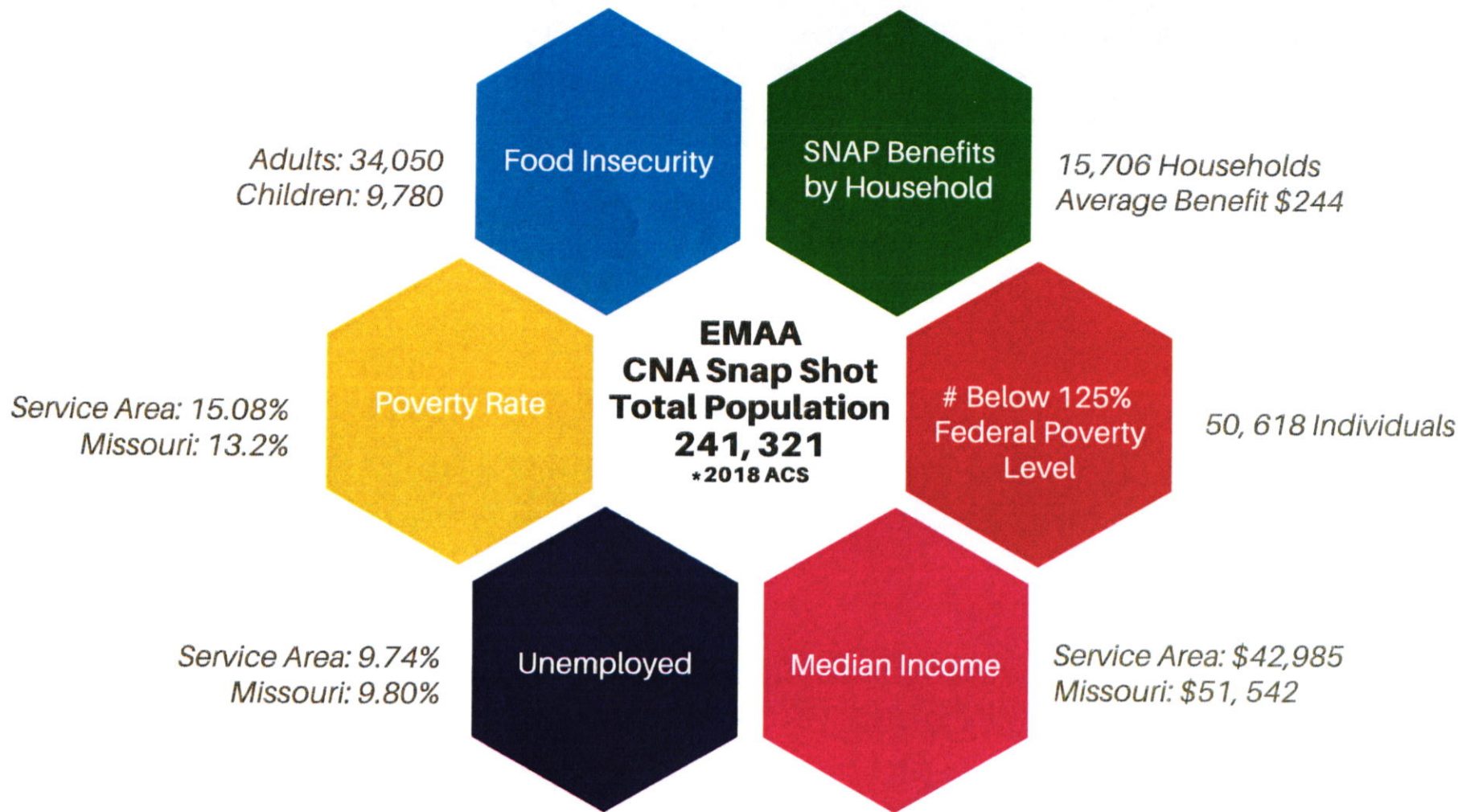
The CNA is based on statistical and demographic data that was collected from a variety of reliable sources to ensure that all data is current and relevant. These sources include the MOCAN Community Needs Assessment toolkit, U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and other reliable and valid resources.

EMAA received 926 responses from individuals/families with low income and 96 responses from community partners (service providers, education, health, law enforcement, elected officials, board members, faith based, and business community members).

The surveys contained questions targeted at seven areas known to impact poverty in communities: Income, Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Nutrition, and Transportation. Each of the areas explored; revealed causes, barriers, gaps and linkages to poverty issues within the communities we serve.

Focus groups held at the local level were key in gathering opinions, anecdotes and local community knowledge needed to provide a grass root view of poverty issues within the communities we serve.

All of the data collected is compiled in the following report. EMAA analyzed the data and reviewed responses to help determine root causes. This then has allowed us to turn our focus to setting priorities to address these needs. EMAA also utilized the leadership team as well as other agency staff during this process. These processes can be explained in detail in this assessment document under the DATA ANALYSIS and PRIORITIES tabs.



The comprehensive Community Needs Assessment (CNA) presents an overview and analysis of the service area for the East Missouri Action Agency.

EMAA serves the following 8 counties: Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Iron, Madison, Perry, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois, and Washington.

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EAST MISSOURI ACTION AGENCY

Community Needs Assessment

Data Analysis

Executive Summary

Beginning in February 2020, East Missouri Action Agency conducted a **Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment**. East Missouri Action Agency provides assistance and services to residents of eight counties in Southeast Missouri. These counties are Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Iron, Madison, Perry, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois and Washington. The results of the comprehensive assessment are included in this document.

Assistance to residents is provided by four departments within the Agency:

- Community Services
- Head Start
- Housing
- Women's Wellness

Statistical data came from a variety of sources including (but not limited to) MOCAN network, census, University of Missouri, family services, Annie Casey foundation and HUD. The information presented is the most recent data available.

Qualitative data was collected via a paper survey that included questions on demographic information as well as questions targeted at seven issue area characteristics:

- **Income**
- **Education**
- **Employment**
- **Health**
- **Housing**
- **Nutrition**
- **Transportation**

From February thru April 2020, each department provided the surveys to those seeking and/or receiving assistance. The target population for this survey was individuals with low income.

A second survey was developed and distributed to community partners to solicit their views on poverty issues in their community.

Lastly, East Missouri Action Agency conducted in person focus groups in each of the eight counties. Participants were a mix of community members from education, health, Board of Directors, public officials and other services providers. Questions to the group focused on how they viewed poverty in their community and included questions related to the seven issue area characteristics.

The major challenge in gathering information was the onset of COVID19 and the resulting stay at home orders. While the pandemic slowed down the process, EMAA was able to complete the data collection process.

East Missouri Action Agency utilized its leadership team to review the data collected. Groups were then assigned a characteristic to further review and conduct a root cause analysis. Their findings were presented to the team for further discussion. Those findings will be presented in the Issue Area Analysis.

Issue Area Analysis

Issue Area (I) Use of Income

Quantitative data collected for this issue area indicated that:

The average poverty rate for EMAA service area is 15.87% while the state poverty rate is 14.63%.

Average median income for EMAA service area is below the state average of \$51,542

Required living wage in EMAA service area is below the required \$11.16

In the EMAA service area, 35,094 families live at or below 125% of the federal poverty guideline

16,978 families received SNAP benefits

57,585 individuals receive SSA benefits (disability)

36% of families surveyed reported incomes of \$0-\$10,000

31% of families surveyed reported incomes of \$10,001-\$20,000

79% of families surveyed said they have NO emergency savings

Qualitative data was collected from client surveys, partner surveys and community focus groups. Over 900 clients and around 100 community partners participated in the surveys. The cause of poverty as it relates to the issue area of income was identified as:

Causes identified were: lack of living wage

Barriers identified were: lack of employers who pay living wage and lack of transportation.

Issues Area (II) Education

In this issue area, quantitative data collected indicated the high school graduation rate was higher than the State average of 90.1% in 5 of the 8 counties in the EMAA service area.

In the EMAA service area, 9.9% of individuals possess a Bachelor's degree, far below the State average of 32%, and only one county, Bollinger, had a higher percentage of enrollment in higher education (36%) than the State average of 28%.

Qualitative data was collected from client surveys, partner surveys and community focus groups. Over 900 clients and over 100 community partners participated in the surveys. This data shows the causes of poverty related to education as:

Individuals lack the education/skills training needed for better paying jobs

Barriers to furthering education are: high cost of training, transportation and child care.

Issue Area (III) Employment

Quantitative data collected for this issue area shows:

The average hourly wage in the EMAA service area is \$17.04 compared to the State average of \$24.30

The average unemployment rate for the EMAA service area is 9.73%, the State average is 9.8%

25.57% of individuals in the EMAA service area receive SSA benefits, compared to the State average of 21.04%

Qualitative data was collected from client surveys, partner surveys and community focus groups. Over 900 clients and about 100 community partners participated in the surveys. This data shows the cause of poverty related to employment as:

Lack of living wage jobs.

The majority of responses from focus groups showed that the lack of living wage jobs prevented individuals from becoming more self-reliant.

71% of individuals surveyed indicated there was no chance for advancement

72% of community partners surveyed felt families in their community did not have enough income each month to meet needs.

74% of individuals surveyed indicated jobs did not pay enough to support a family without assistance.

Barriers indicated include:

Lack of transportation. 75% of individuals surveyed agreed/strongly agreed that lack of transportation was a barrier to obtaining/maintaining employment.

Issue Area (IV) Housing

In this issue area, quantitative data showed home ownership rate (averaged over 8 counties) is 62.25%, which is lower than the State rate of 67%

Average fair market rent for EMAA service area is \$908, which is higher than State rate of \$809

Four of the eight counties in EMAA service area have no transitional/supportive housing units.

Qualitative data was collected from client surveys, partner surveys and community focus groups. Over 900 clients and over 100 community partners participated in the surveys. This data shows the causes of poverty related to housing as:

High utility bills (45.7% pay over \$200 per month)

High cost of rent/mortgage (20% surveyed use more than 50% income for rent/mortgage)

Child care (high cost and lack of availability prevent people from working)

Barriers include low incomes (lack of living wage jobs) and background/credit checks that preclude them from being able to rent better properties.

Issue Area (V) Nutrition

Quantitative data for this issue area was collected and showed:

7 of the 8 counties in EMAA service area have Free and Reduced lunch rates that are higher than the State rate of 51.46%

33,322 individuals have food insecurity

Qualitative data was collected from client surveys, partner surveys and community focus groups. Over 900 clients and over 100 community partners participated in the surveys. This data shows the causes of poverty related to nutrition as:

Nutritious foods were difficult for families to purchase due to:

High cost of nutritious foods. 65% of individuals surveyed stated nutritious foods were unaffordable.

Food desserts can be found in 5 of the 8 counties in EMAA service area (Bollinger, Iron, Madison, St. Francois and Washington)

50% of families surveyed use a food pantry

Barriers in this issue area are: lack of living wage jobs (50% surveyed rely on food pantry assistance) and transportation (32 % surveyed indicated they have to travel 10-20 miles to buy food)

Issue Area (VI) Health

Quantitative data collected for this issue area indicated that:

Only 80 dentists are available in the EMAA service area which has 241,321 residents.

91 deaths from opioid overdose was reported in the EMAA service area (*DHSS 2018)

The average adult mortality rate (per 100,000) for the EMAA service area is 1,477 compared to the State average of 1,253.

79% of individuals surveyed who did not have insurance cited “unable to afford” as the reason

Qualitative data was collected from client surveys, partner surveys and community focus groups. Over 900 clients and about 100 community partners participated in the surveys. This data shows the causes of poverty related to health is:

People lack adequate access to mental and dental health services. Prescription drug costs are very high.

Barriers indicated included:

Access to mental health services. 72% of community partners surveyed indicated that there was a lack of access to mental health treatment.

High cost of prescription medication. 41% of individuals surveyed had trouble getting prescriptions filled. 76% of community partners surveyed indicated they knew of someone who went without medicine because of high cost.

Issue Area (VII) Transportation

Quantitative data collected for this issue area indicate:

27% of families in the EMAA service area only have one vehicle.

13% of individuals in the EMAA service area rely on carpooling, compared to the State average of 8%

Qualitative data was collected from client surveys, partner surveys and community focus groups. Over 900 clients and over 100 community partners participated in the surveys. This data shows the cause of poverty related to transportation as:

Lack of transportation prevents people from taking better paying jobs and from accessing skills training that would lead to increased income.

50% of individuals surveyed strongly agree that lack of transportation is a barrier to finding or keeping a job, 25% of those surveyed agree with that statement.

80% of community partners surveyed stated they knew of someone who lacked transportation.

Barriers identified were: cost (could not afford to own & maintain a vehicle) and lack of public transportation (too expensive to ride, availability is very limited or non existant).

Community Needs Assessment

Prioritization Summary

Executive Summary

East Missouri Action Agency conducted a Community Needs Assessment for their eight county service area. The counties in our Southeast Missouri service area are: Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Iron, Madison, Perry, Ste. Genevieve, St. Francois and Washington.

The community needs assessment process was carried out by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources. Over 900 individuals with low incomes were given surveys and over 100 community partners were surveyed. Focus groups were conducted in all eight counties in the EMAA service area. Focus groups were comprised of a diverse mix of community partners that included members of various faith based organizations, United Way, Salvation Army, homeless shelter providers, school district personnel, ambulance district staff, health departments, University of Missouri extension offices, mayors, elected public officials, Board members, retired educators, HSET(High School Equivalency Test) staff, veterans service, community partnerships, food pantry operators, hospital staff and law enforcement.

Eight issue areas of concern were analyzed during this process. Those issue areas were Income, Education, Employment, Health, Housing, Nutrition, Transportation and Other. Results from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in each of the issue areas revealed causes of poverty, barriers to getting out of poverty, gaps in services, and existing and needed community linkages.

Barriers were identified in each of the issue areas and are listed here:

INCOME: Lack of transportation and lack of living wage jobs

EDUCATION: Lack of transportation, lack of childcare and high cost of tuition

EMPLOYMENT: Lack of transportation and lack of child care

HEALTH: Access and affordability of dental care and high prescription drug cost

HOUSING: High cost of housing, high utility bills and lack of child care

NUTRITION: High cost of nutritious foods, lack of knowledge in food preparation and the presence of food deserts

TRANSPORTATION: Low incomes and lack of public transportation

OTHER: COVID 19

Needs in each of the issue areas were identified and are listed here:

INCOME: Transportation and affordable child care

EDUCATION: Tuition Assistance and transportation

EMPLOYMENT: Transportation and affordable child care

HEALTH: More dental providers (who accept Medicaid) and affordable transportation

HOUSING: Alternative financing options, help with deposits and help overcoming barriers

NUTRITION: Nutrition classes (including shopping on budget and meal preparation)

TRANSPORTATION: Affordable/accessible public transportation and gas cards

OTHER: Rent/Mortgage help, personal care items and utility assistance

Each of the 8 issue areas were discussed and potential linkages that need to be created are listed here:

INCOME: Increasing access to public transportation in the EMAA service area is not within the capacity of the Agency. EMAA has been a voice in the community for improving public transportation and will continue to advocate on behalf of families we serve.

EDUCATION: Higher education and/or skills training is directly related to better job opportunities. EMAA will continue to promote the benefits of such to families we work to create links to training opportunities and work within the communities to eliminate identified barriers such as childcare and transportation.

EMPLOYMENT: With the onset of COVID19, the need for online services, such as soft skills training, is critical. EMAA will work with Missouri Job Center staff to help make these possible. EMAA will continue to advocate with local elected officials to develop better access to public transportation. Agency staff will increase efforts to promote entrepreneurship and exposure to SEEDS.

HEALTH: Agency staff will seek out resources and explore the use of funds to help offset high prescription costs. EMAA will continue to advocate with State elected officials for increased mental health services.

HOUSING: Agency staff will work to develop local resources to help with costs of deposits and EMAA will seek out grant funding that can assist with overcoming barriers created by subpar background/credit checks. Agency staff will work with local elected and civic leaders to seek funding for transitional housing.

NUTRITION: Agency staff will communicate with local chambers of commerce on the need to establish or expand hours of operation for farmers markets and for farmers markets to accept EBT. EMAA will work to create a linkage to potential services offered by Missouri Extension offices.

TRANSPORTATION: EMAA will continue to communicate with local public transportation providers regarding access and affordability. Agency staff will work with local chambers of commerce as well as local elected officials, to point out the disparity between income of working individuals and vehicle ownership with hopes to have them advocate to employers regarding improving local wages.

OTHER: EMAA will explore the use of CARES funding to establish Wi-Fi hotspots thru local service providers. Agency staff will also look into using funds to provide PPE and personal care items. CARES funds can possibly fund a mobile office that would allow agency services to be taken to areas where transportation is lacking.

Descriptions

Priority #1: HOUSING gap#2, barrier #2

During the Community Needs Assessment process, which included the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, comparison of data from the last CNA, and a root cause analysis of the data collected, EMAA leadership team determined that housing is a priority in the communities served. Barrier #2 (background issues) and gap #2 (low stock of decent rental properties) are priorities that EMAA feels they have the capacity to address and have impact.

Priority #2 EDUCATION causes #1,#2,#3, barriers #1 #2

Based on the data analysis methodology previously described, EMAA leadership team determined that education is a priority in the communities served. EMAA feels they have the capacity to address causes #1(lack of transportation), #2 (lack of childcare) and #3(high cost of training) and barriers #1(transportation) and #2 (childcare) and that by addressing these families will have improved access to educational and training opportunities that will lead them to being more self-reliant.

Priority #3 EMPLOYMENT barriers #1, cause #1, gap#1, needs #1

Based on the data analysis methodology previously described, EMAA leadership team determined that employment is a priority in the communities served. EMAA has the capacity to work on barrier #1(transportation) and barrier #2 (childcare) as well as cause #1(lack of living wage jobs), gap #1 (work ethics training) and need #1(transportation services) and achieve positive impact in the communities for families served.

Priority #4 NUTRITION causes #2, gap#1, barrier #2

Based on the data analysis methodology previously described, EMAA leadership team determined that nutrition is a priority in the communities served. EMAA will work to address cause #2(food desert), cause 3 (lack of food preparation knowledge), gap #1 (nutrition classes), gap#2 (farmers markets) and barrier #2 (food desert). EMAA has the capacity to work on this priority and have an impact in the communities that will benefit families served.

Others for Consideration

HEALTH (CAUSE #2 & #3) TRANSPORTATION (CAUSE #1, GAP#1)

After analyzing the data collected in the Community Needs Assessment process and setting the priorities that EMAA can effectively address, the leadership team agreed that EMAA does not have the capacity at this time to address Health cause #2(limited access to mental health) and #3(lack of dental providers). Communities served would benefit by other more appropriate, organizations working to expand both access to mental health services and access to dental care. By improving access to both of these critical services, individuals and families would have opportunity to have necessary assessments and treatment to stabilize their overall health conditions and improve their quality of life.

Transportation cause #1(lack of public transportation) and gap #1(public transportation) are priorities that impact nearly every other issue area analyzed in the community needs assessment process. After much consideration and discussion, EMAA leadership team confirmed the needs, as indicated in the data, but believe that these issue area priorities are outside of the capacity for EMAA to address.

Communities would benefit by other appropriate organizations working toward improving access to public transportation. This would improve opportunity for employment, education/training and access to health services that many individuals and families currently lack which impedes their ability to become more self-reliant.