

LIVINGSTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE BODY

Health and Human Service Needs FACT SHEET

No. 1

Basic Needs in Livingston County December 2006

What are Basic Needs? Basic needs are defined as air, water, food, shelter and clothing. While there are a wide range of other services and supports that may be essential for an individual to reach self-sufficiency (child care, affordable housing, health care, and education to name a few), they are not the basic needs of life that create crisis situations.

Are Residents of Livingston County Having a Difficult Time Meeting Their Basic Needs?

While Livingston County has a very low poverty rate compared to the state as a whole (4.4% vs. 11% - Census 2003), there are individuals and families in the county who are struggling to meet their basic needs. In 2004, a countywide survey of residents was conducted to assess health status and other indicators of well-being. Data regarding basic needs indicated that:

- **6.5%** of residents are having a very hard time paying for basic needs and **27%** indicated it is somewhat hard.
- **4%** of residents have been concerned about having enough food for themselves or their family in the past 30 days.
- Rural respondents were more likely than suburban respondents (46.8% vs 27.7%) to indicate they have a very or somewhat difficult time paying for basic needs.
- Those under age 35 (38.3%) and those 65 or older (36.8%) were more likely than those between 35 and 64 to have at least some difficulty paying for basic needs.
- Residents 55 to 64 and those under age 35 were more likely to say they have a very hard time paying for basic needs. These same groups were more likely than others to say they have had concerns about having enough food for themselves or their families in the past month.

Other local data also signal the problems local residents are having meeting basic needs:

- During the Point in Time count of homeless on October 19, 2006:
 - **75** people were defined as homeless
 - **127** people were considered "precariously housed" which indicates they were on the verge of homelessness
- In October 2006, **4,139** county residents were unemployed. The average number unemployed during 2006 was 4,540. In October 2000, only 2,100 County residents were unemployed.

- There has been a **166%** increase in the number of Livingston County children insured by Medicaid from 1999 – 2005 (2,121 to 5,643).
- There has been a **355%** increase in the number of children insured by MIChild from 1999 – 2005 (123 to 560).
- **9.4%** of children enrolled in Livingston County public schools (K-12) qualify for free and reduced priced lunch (up from 5.3% in 1990 and 7.4% in 1999).
- In November 2006, **135** requests for assistance with basic needs were tracked by the new 211 call center. This represented 38% of total calls received for that month.

What are the Causes for This Difficulty? While it is difficult to point to one cause for the difficulty in meeting basic needs such as housing and food, there is data that indicates residing in Livingston County is expensive, especially related to housing. Housing data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition from 2005 indicates that:

- To afford a two-bedroom apartment in Livingston County a resident would need to earn \$15.98 an hour (\$33,240 annually). According to the 2005 American Community Survey, approximately 20% of Livingston County households had incomes under \$35,000.
- Monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for an individual are \$579 a month in Livingston County. If SSI represents an individual's sole source of income, they can only afford \$174 in monthly rent, while the Fair Market Rate for a one-bedroom apartment in Livingston County is \$706.

Lack of affordable housing was cited by **74%** of homeless individuals and families as a reason for their homelessness during the Point in Time count of homeless on October 19, 2006.

What are the Services in Livingston County to Assist with Basic Needs? There are a variety of health and human service organizations in the county to assist individuals and families with meeting basic needs. Each service has eligibility requirements and should be contacted directly. People should call 211 to find out which services may be able to assist them based on their specific needs.

What can the Community do to Help? Although there are several organizations that are able to assist with meeting basic needs, there is not enough funding or resources to assist all individuals and families who need it. The community's help is needed! Following are some ideas of how to get involved:

- Donate money or time to a local organization who assists with basic needs
- Work with your township or municipality to recommend policies and ordinances to encourage and provide affordable housing and food assistance
- Organize a fundraiser through your place of employment or faith institution to benefit individuals and families in need
- Join a workgroup of the Human Services Collaborative Body to assist in planning to meet these needs