



United Ways of Southeastern MA:
Community Needs Assessment

A project of
BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

**INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT (IPARE)**

and

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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Institute for Policy Analysis and Regional Engagement (IPARE)
and
School of Social Work

for

The United Ways of Southeastern MA, including:

United Way Cape and the Islands
United Way of Greater Attleboro/Taunton
United Way of Greater Fall River
United Way of Greater New Bedford
United Way of Greater Plymouth County

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the 2014 United Ways of Southeastern MA Community Needs Assessment is to identify the most pressing concerns in the region and inform program delivery goals in the regions served by the United Ways Cape and Islands, Greater Attleboro/Taunton, Greater Fall River, Greater New Bedford and Greater Plymouth County. The survey was distributed by each local United Way entity to leaders of organizations located in or providing services within the United Way service area. Responses were collected in the last week of October and the first week of November 2013 using Qualtrics survey software. One hundred fifty surveys were attempted and useful data collected from approximately 120 respondents.

The survey collected information about service priorities and gaps in three broad areas: education, economic self-sufficiency¹ and health. Respondents identified the most significant barriers faced by clients attempting to access services, existing services that the organization would like to expand and services that they would like to develop.

If organizations could expand one of their current services they would prioritize:

- Youth development
- Housing/housing vouchers/rent
- Providing more basic amenities/emergency services (food, shelter, clothing) to clients
- Health/wellness services

If organizations could create one new service they would prioritize:

- Education support/tutoring
- Outreach/home-based services
- Youth development/At-risk services

Priorities and Gaps:

Lack of transportation was identified as the most significant barrier to accessing existing services.

Respondents prioritized a list of services and assessed how well the needs in that area are being met. The gap between these two measures is an indication of the need for enhanced services in that area.

Education (child, youth, adult) – Gaps were identified in all categories of education. The largest gaps were reported in early intervention to address behavioral issues, wrap-around services for students from low-income families, bullying prevention, parenting education, tutoring for youth, professional skill training, technological skills building and vocational/trades training.

¹ The term **economic self-sufficiency** is used interchangeably with “self-sufficiency/income,” “income” and “self-sufficiency,” all referring to services and needs related to adequate income and financial security.

Economic Self-Sufficiency– Gaps were identified in all categories related to jobs and emergency funding. The largest gaps are reported in finding jobs and job training and placement. Large gaps were also reported in financial help for clients needing financial assistance during a crisis, housing and transitional housing, community shelters and transportation. Gaps were narrower or met in the categories of financial planning and financial literacy, though large unmet needs in budgeting/bill paying and financial literacy training were noted.

Health and Wellness – Gaps were identified in all categories of health and wellness with the exception of falls prevention and hospice care. The largest gaps are in oral and dental health services, especially for under or uninsured persons. Large unmet need was reported for in-home direct mental health services, mental health assessment or counseling and psychiatric care and access to healthy food choices.

The leaders were asked to suggest priorities for the United Way in education, self-sufficiency and health for the next five years. The three most frequently mentioned priorities in each category are:

- Education
 - Graduation rates/retention
 - Vocational training
 - Affordable early childhood programs
- Economic Self-Sufficiency
 - Housing
 - Employment
 - Financial literacy/security
- Health and Wellness
 - Wellness education/nutrition/physical fitness
 - Prevention services
 - Substance abuse issues and services for the aging population (tied)