

Key Informant Interview Responses

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Jennifer Caravella, Family Living Educator
UW Extension-Waushara County

Introduction

In an effort to learn about the *needs* and *issues* facing families and children in Waushara County, UW Extension's Family Living Educator conducted twenty-five "Key Informant" interviews within the county. The Key Informant Interview process involves identifying specific individuals who are closely linked to their community, and then asking questions relative to the greater population or to a specific population which includes the clientele base they work with on a daily basis. The information obtained from Key Informants is "biased" from the respondent's personal and professional perspective. This bias however is valuable and even more telling when combined with the opinions and beliefs of a range of other key informants.

The interviews were brief, informal and utilized one main, open-ended question. In addition to gathering important information as to the needs of children and families, these interviews were useful for the new Family Living Educator in that they introduced her to unfamiliar agency staff and individuals, some of whom will make good partners for future educational programs.

After the information was analyzed, theme categories were identified and used to organize the responses. Some responses were put into two different categories. For example, "Teen pregnancy" was put under Parenting/Marriage Issues as well as Youth Issues. A professional might argue too, that teen pregnancy is often a Health issue as well as one that often impacts a county's financial well-being.

To better understand and utilize the information from the responses, the department or agency of the individual(s) interviewed, has been identified.

The question asked of each Key Informant was:

#1. In your opinion, what are some of the major needs/issues facing families and children in Waushara County?

For most of those interviewed, a second question was asked regarding the needs/issues specific to the Hispanic/Latino families in the county.

Housing Issues

CAP Home Buyers Assistance/Assets and Weatherization Program Staff

- We have old "housing stock" to choose from
- People can't afford to maintain their homes
- People need education about credit issues and the importance of good credit
- We have an issue of affordability
- Most \$30,000-\$80,000 houses have lead issues...they are affordable but are substandard
- Eighty-five to 90% of the people living in the county are eligible for the \$60,000 homes, but these homes must meet HUD health and safety codes for CAP program to help individuals and families purchase them.

(Housing Issues cont.)

- We need a program that teaches about tenant and landlord rights
- Many rental units are not able to accommodate large families

County Administrative Coordinator

- City taxes are high, city is land-locked and can't annex township land
- We don't have a lot of subsidized housing
- Property values are high

Migrant Labor Inspector

- Not enough adequate housing, especially for migrants

Advocate for the Hispanic Community, from a Faith-based Organization

- Hispanic population needs adequate, low-income housing

Family Literacy Program Staff

- Families need adequate housing...without bugs
- We don't have a homeless shelter

Waushara County Zoning Department

- We are losing "open space" very quickly
- Big houses are being built on small lake lots as well as on large, 20 or 40 acre parcels (country estates)
- Waushara County is a commuter and retirement community
- 1/3 of homes outside of city of Wautoma are permanent residents, 1/3 are 2nd homes and 1/3 are lake properties

City Clerk's Office

- There really isn't a housing problem in Wautoma...there's plenty of housing for sale and for rent.
- There may be an issue of "affordability" ...a new, 2 bedroom unit rents for between \$600 -\$650

Tri-County Schools Title I Migrant Program Director and English as a Second Language Teacher

- Hispanic families have a hard time finding adequate housing
- Habitat for Humanity has a hard time finding families that can qualify for a home

Waushara County Department of Human Services

- We need affordable housing
- Low-income housing for families is hard to find
- A co-worker of mine told me of a family living in a pole barn
- We have slum lords who own trailer parks
- Habitat for Humanity has a hard time finding families that can qualify for a home
- There's a waiting list for SECTION 8 housing assistance

Waushara County Department of Aging

- Many Seniors can't afford the expense of maintaining their own home, so they move into low-income apartments

Economics/financial Issues

Family Court Commissioner

- High school students have no understanding of checking accounts. These youth have no idea about the difference between needs and wants.

Advocate for Hispanic Community, from a Faith-based organization

- There is a lack of jobs here in the winter months
- The Hispanics who come here need job skills training

Waushara County Zoning Department

- We need a mix of manufacturing/industrial/service industries along with residential
- Kirk Company is going out of the Christmas Tree business and we'll see less seasonal jobs because of this
- A "bedroom community" doesn't usually bring in money to a community

Tri-County Schools Title I Migrant Program Director and English as a Second Language Teacher

- "Brain drain"
- We need jobs
- In Plainfield, there's only seasonal, agricultural labor

County Circuit Judge and District Attorney

- People need money
- Employment is a huge issue and families need financial stabilities
- One part of the family is working in Milwaukee while the rest stays here
- We need the good \$10-\$15 per hour jobs
- "Brain drain"
- Many people we see have "sporadic employment"
- Self-employment is "risky" for many folks
- People need to learn money management skills and skills for starting and growing a business
- People need employable skills
- We need programs in high school that teach employable trades or skills, kids are "dead-ended" here
- There are limited blue-collar jobs and most don't teach a trade
- There's a community resistance to creating an industrial base of jobs, this doesn't help the core of the people
- We have nursing assistants how about para-construction positions?
- Traveling to the "Valley" for work is expensive...how might we help cover the cost of this travel so people can get employed and stay employed?

Family Health/La Clinica

- About 40% of patients we serve are on Medical Assistance, about 50% are low-income

Waushara County Child Support Department

- Families need money
- There's not enough good paying jobs with benefits for the people in our county
- We need industry
- We have high unemployment

(Economic/Financial Issues Cont.)

- Our young people are leaving

Waushara County Human Services Department

- We need decent paying work
- We need living wage employment with benefits
- People don't have enough money for child care...to support their families
- We don't have a strong manufacturing base

CAP Family Development Services

- People need money to pay bills

Waushara Community Food Pantry

- \$635 is the average monthly income of the 900 families that utilized the pantry last year

Waushara County Sheriff's Department

- We need more jobs and better paying ones too
- People who haven't paid their child support, is a real issue

Waushara County Health Department

- People we see just don't have enough money
- We don't have a strong manufacturing base here

United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Family Services Coordination

- The migrants I work with need food and clothes when they get here

Health care Issues

Advocate for the Hispanic Community, from a Faith-based Organization

- One of the reasons "undocumented" folks come here is for health care

Family Literacy Program Staff

- CAP has a 3 month waiting list for folks who need dental care
- There are a limited number of providers who take Medical Assistance
- Hispanic families need immunizations
- I know of pregnant Moms who think that if they smoke outside of their house, it won't hurt their baby

Family Health/La Clinica

- Low-income elderly have a hard time paying for prescription drugs
- Amish folks are low-income and have significant dental and health issues

Waushara County Human Services Department

- People need access to health care
- Individuals without health insurance
- Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA)

Waushara County Sheriff's Department

(Health Care Issues Cont.)

- People need health care
- Mental health issues

Waushara County Health Department

- Dental health
- Overweight
- Smoking
- We need to raise public awareness of AODA issues with government officials, businesses and the public

United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Family Services Coordination

- Hispanic population is susceptible to diabetes

Waushara County Department of Aging

- Medical coverage for Seniors...Senior Care Program is a good thing

Parenting & Marriage Issues

Family Court Commissioner

- Problems have reached a magnitude!
- There's a lack of counseling for marriages and families
- The concerns of the children are not a priority for the majority of parents I see
- Parents (I work with) are concerned about how the children might benefit them financially
- How are these parents going to answer questions like, "Where's Dad?"
- Single parent families
- Problems arise when the "new" significant other comes into the picture
- People need a better understanding of how hard marriage is before they get married
- Most divorcing couples I see, have only been married for 3-5 years
- Need parent support groups

Migrant Labor Inspector

- There's a lack of daycare and the available care isn't long enough to cover twelve hours shifts that many migrants work

Family Literacy Program Staff

- Not enough offered in area of parenting
- 3rd highest in state for teen parents
- Parents have no support group
- We have no parenting classes for teens...how about education in the schools?

County Circuit Judge and District Attorney

- There's a total lack of family structure, this is where a high level of criminal activity occurs
- We see parents enabling and facilitating criminality in their children
- Parents need to role-model the value of education and employable skills

Waushara County Human Services Department

- We need quality day care

(Parenting & Marriage Issues Cont.)

- It's hard to find a way to get information/resources to parents...parenting classes have not been well attended in the past

CAP Family Development Services

- We need parenting workshops and resources...classes have been offered sporadically
- We need child care
- We need parenting classes on: ADHD, How to discipline kids and 1, 2, 3 Magic

Waushara County Sheriff's Department

- I see kids raising kids
- Teen pregnancy

Waushara County Health Department

- Teen pregnancy

UMOS Family Services Coordination

- Teen mothers

Waushara County Department of Aging

- Families need support and activities they can do together

Issues related to Hispanics/Latinos

Migrant Labor Inspector

- There is a need for translation services and translated signs
- There is a general lack of understanding of the migrant's life and what migrants go through to come to Waushara County to work
- The community, employers and migrants all need to be educated at different levels

Advocate for the Hispanic Community, from a Faith-based Organization

- Hispanics need help with the most urgent needs, like getting a driver's license, learning about our laws and customs
- They need education
- There is profiling happening...a person driving a car is pulled over just because he is Hispanic
- There is prejudice here, even on the part of "agency" people
- Deportation tears the family apart, often leaving the women alone to care for the children
- Living in poverty here for Hispanics is no where near what it is like to live in poverty in their country
- We are getting the poorest of the poor coming here

Family Literacy Program Staff

- The Hispanics work late so they come late to our evening programs, but they come

Tri-County Schools Title I Migrant Program Director

- We need more English as a Second Language classes, especially for the single men
- The Hispanics need help to finish their high school education
- They need help getting driver's licenses

(Issues Related to Hispanics/Latinos Cont.)

County Circuit Judge and District Attorney

- The Hispanics haven't lost the work ethic and they have lesser expectations
- They endure, and don't get discouraged easily
- They are basically good natured

Family Health/La Clinica

- Prejudice and profiling is happening here
- Resources and services aren't accessible for undocumented people

Waushara County Child Support Department

- We have a lot of undocumented people here

CAP Family Development Services

- Hispanics need English as a Second Language classes
- They don't have driver licenses
- They work long hours

Waushara Community Food Pantry

- Only 10-15% of the food pantry participants are Hispanic

Waushara County Sheriff's Department

- We've recently hired two bilingual staff
- The Hispanics we come in contact with, don't understand our culture
- There are language barriers on both ends
- The migrant kids in schools have a tough time

United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Family Services Coordination

- The families we serve need basic education and GED...most are at a 4th or 5th grade level
- We need English as a second language classes
- Many individuals have an education in Mexico but it is not valid here

Youth Issues

Family Court Commissioner

- Just because individuals turn 18 years old, they haven't had anyone explain what it means to be an adult

Tri-County Schools Title I Migrant Program Director

- There are no activities for youth, particularly those in High School living in Plainfield
- Hispanic kids need to learn how to read and write Spanish

County Circuit Judge and District Attorney

- Kids are "dead-ended" here
- Home-schooled youth who have been taken out of school and are now just "hanging out"
- Kids need a program like "Big North" where the kids learned to build a house

(Youth Issues Cont.)

Waushara County Human Services Department

- The older kids need to learn how to manage money and how it relates to buying food
- I'd like to see adults have youth more involved in decision-making and looked upon as resources in our community so that they feel valued...example: the kids who helped fund a skateboard park

Waushara County Sheriff's Department

- The youth think that they have no activities available to them...we provide so much to them, they don't know how to entertain themselves
- Teen pregnancy...more mobile kids with more unsupervised time

Waushara County Health Department

- Teen pregnancy
- Youth lack of productive stuff to do

United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Family Services Coordination

- Teen mothers

Waushara County Department of Aging

- Underage drinking
- We need youth activities for the smaller towns especially Redgranite and Plainfield

Elderly Issues

Waushara County Zoning Department

- Waushara County has a higher average age of residents...we are a retirement community

Family Health/La Clinica

- Low-income elderly need help paying for prescription drugs

Waushara County Health Department

- The elderly we come in contact with are isolated
- They also need help with cleaning their homes and keeping them maintained

Waushara County Department of Aging

- The elderly need: transportation to meal sites, care-giving support, help cleaning and doing chores in their homes, someone to do their grocery shopping for them
- They can't maintain the expense of owning their own home, so they go into low-income apartments
- The 60-65 year-olds need health insurance coverage

Transportation

Family Literacy Program Staff

- We have no bus or cab system here

(Transportation Issues Cont.)

Family Health/La Clinica

- Transportation is an issue

Waushara County Human Services Department

- Transportation is an issue

CAP Family Development Services

- Transportation is an issue...vehicles owned by our clientele, break down often

Waushara County Health Department

- Transportation is an issue

Food In-Security

Advocate for the Hispanic Community, from a Faith-based Organization

- One reason undocumented folks come here is for food

Family Literacy Program Staff

- I overheard a Mom saying how she was feeding her baby dog food, stating, “Didn’t you know it is one of the healthiest things you can feed your baby?”
- We need a Summer food program
- We need more schools to encourage parents to apply for free and reduced lunches

Waushara County Human Services Department

- The people we see don’t have enough food for their families

Waushara Community Food Pantry

- 900 (unduplicated) families are served each year by this pantry, multiply this by an average of 3 people per family...we feed at least 2,700 people a year

United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS), Family Services Coordination

- A parent said to me, “beans and rice for the poor” meaning this is what they eat when there is no money for food

Miscellaneous Issues

Waushara County Human Services Department

- We have a lot of absent property owners and they don’t have a big investment in the community
- Where’s the educational attainment in our county?
- People don’t take personal responsibility for their actions/situations

Waushara County Sheriff’s Department

- People we see lack ambition...they’ve come to expect “instant gratification”
- I see “laziness”
- We provide so much for folks that they don’t know how to entertain themselves

(Miscellaneous Issues Cont.)

- Drugs....Cocaine, marijuana, beer, tobacco

United Migrant Opportunity Services UMOS, Family Services Coordination

- 130 Families were served by UMOS last year, in Waushara County (each family has roughly 2.5 children)

Summary

The findings from the Key Informant Interviews were in line with results of other data collected by various individuals, schools and agencies during the past eight years (1995-2003). *See attached document. However, some “new” information was learned. Specifically, some of the needs and issues facing Hispanic/Latino individuals and families have not been as well documented in previous needs assessments.

Information gleaned from surveys, interviews or focus groups are only useful to the degree to which the information leads to positive changes in programs, policies and organizational goals. Although the original objective of these Key Informant Interviews was to alert the Family Living Educator to potential areas for educational programs, the findings will be shared with interested individuals and groups. These entities can extract the information they find significant and use it to strategically plan present and future efforts that will benefit the families and children in Waushara County.