

Burlington County Needs Assessment 2020

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County Human Services Advisory Council

Authored by:

The Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs at Rutgers
University, Camden and the Burlington County
Department of Human Services

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PART 1



Executive Summary

Narrative: In the Words of the County

The Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs (WRI), part of Rutgers University, Camden, was contracted by Burlington County to conduct the County's Human Services Needs Assessment. WRI is a research institute that has been operating in southern New Jersey since 2000. The applied research and technical assistance work of WRI focuses on social services, criminal justice, population health and wellness, education, and more.

WRI transcribed the state supplied Human Services Needs Assessment Survey into Qualtrics in order to encourage online completion, which was of the utmost importance once COVID 19 forced workplaces and public spaces to close. At the request of Burlington County, WRI added services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and substance use disorder services for children as two additional needs to be addressed in the survey. The needs survey was publicized on the County's Human Services website and sent to the LINC system, which distributed the survey to a variety of different County listservs. Roughly 1,000 postcards with links to the online survey were handed out at food distribution events in the County at the start of the assessment; as well as given to the Human Services Needs Assessment Team to disseminate at organizations and provide to clients. The New Jersey state of emergency and subsequent stay at home orders prevented further distribution of these post cards to County residents. WRI also sent the survey to all 38 municipal clerks in the County, as well as the librarians at the 7 Burlington County Library System branches. Additionally, focus group participants and interviewees received the survey link and were encouraged to distribute to coworkers, friends, neighbors, and other County residents. The needs assessment survey remained open for a period of 3 months and had 411 survey respondents.

A couple of limitations of the survey results worth noting are survey respondent fatigue and potential lack of representative sample of the County. Respondent fatigue occurs when survey participants become tired of the survey and the quality of the data they provide begins to deteriorate. This is evident in the number of responses in the later needs sections, such as in the legal and advocacy/advisory services and services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities sections, where there are between 208 and 213 responses. Additionally, survey respondents skewed older, white, employed, and educated, which may not be the slice of County population most in need; however, over half did indicate they accessed services in the past two years. Interestingly, the survey received the most responses from residents of Maple Shade, Evesham, and Willingboro.

WRI reorganized the state supplied County data profile and included additional data about the County from its work on a juvenile delinquency prevention initiative in the County and a Community

Health Needs Assessment to provide an even deeper understanding of the needs and services in the County. WRI presented the updated County data profile to the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team at the start of the needs assessment process. After reviewing the County data profile, the Needs Assessment Team agreed on 5 different needs that necessitated a deeper look: Transportation; Substance Use Disorder Services; Access to Safe & Affordable Housing; Mental Health (Adult and Children); and Cost of Living. These needs align with the Prioritized Needs (see next section of Executive Summary) determined after reviewing the results from the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews; with the exception of Transportation and Cost of Living, which are identified as Barriers to Services by the state, and are also two of the top barriers identified from the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews across all needs.

Focus group recruitment was conducted by the Burlington County Department of Human Services. Due to the safety requirements necessary to avoid the spread of the novel coronavirus, all outreach was conducted via email. In total, the County reached out to 60 individuals for participation. Focus groups were conducted by WRI staff via WebEx. Due to the current public health crisis and state restrictions on public gatherings, the recruitment for and participation in the focus groups was hindered a bit. Parents served by the Department of Child Protection and Permanency, young people, local business owners, and community members served by community based providers were especially difficult to recruit. There were; however, 8 focus groups, totaling 29 participants, and the groups consisted of the following categories: Community Members served by Children’s System of Care; Youth/Young Adults; Community Based Organizations; Public Service Organizations; Community Members at large, and Community Leaders.

Recruitment for key informant interviews was also conducted by the County, and via email. Educators, social service providers, criminal justice professionals, and health officials were the type of key informants invited to participate. In total, the County reached out to 15 individuals for interviews. Key informant interviews were also conducted by WRI staff via WebEx. A number of informants needed to reschedule due to personal or work issues, all of which were spurred by the public health crisis. Despite these challenges, most key informants were able to participate, providing important information to the County about the needs of its residents. There were a total number of 12 interviews conducted along with an additional one who wrote and emailed WRI their assessment of the County's needs.

- Prioritized Needs -

The Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team, along with members of the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC), decided to prioritize the following needs:

- Housing
- Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Adults
- Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Children
- Substance Use Disorder and Prevention Services for Adults and Adolescents

for this needs assessment report. This was based on information from the County data profile, and results from the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Special attention was paid to the current public health crisis and its expected long term impacts on Burlington County residents. Mental health services for children and adults are both noted as needs that are likely to grow as a result of the pandemic and its effects on everyday life. County strengths and services were discussed at length, with members noting the work that has been done in the past few years as well as the future planned work. Expanding food access and the creation of the Housing Hub in particular were mentioned as ongoing and effective projects. Funding was also considered; the group wants to ensure that any additional resources provided by the state would be directed towards needs the County is not in a position to address on its own.

- Prioritized Needs Findings -

- Housing-

Overall, there is a perception that there is not enough safe and affordable housing, or housing services, available for those who need them in Burlington County. Housing came up more than any other Basic Need, being referenced 56 different times in focus groups and key informant interviews (85% of the focus groups and interviews). Further, less than one third of survey respondents report that they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that there are enough housing services available in the County.

There is also a perception that cost is a major barrier to accessing housing. Housing is the second highest monthly expense for families in Burlington County. But the County also has one of the lowest rates of severe cost burden for housing (14%) in the state. Since 2014, the percent of households with severe housing problems has remained steady at 16%. Transportation and affordability are also linked as significant barriers. Fifty-four percent of survey respondents identify transportation as a barrier and many focus group participants share that the most affordable housing in the County is in areas with the least access to public transportation.

A consistent barrier for all of the Basic and Services Needs in the County, with Housing being no different, is lack of awareness. Seventy-one percent of survey respondents state that they “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that housing services in Burlington County are known and widely advertised.

The most recent estimate of the homeless population in the County indicates that 518 people comprising 313 households are experiencing homelessness; and according to the key informant interviews, there are no homeless shelters in Burlington County. This conflicts with the information provided by HUD, which states there are four shelters in Burlington County. There seems to be a perception that there is not enough safe and affordable housing stock available to meet the housing needs in the County.

Lastly, a number of focus groups participants shared that many of the housing services in Burlington County will help a person only in the short term, and longer term housing supports do not exist. There is a need to provide wraparound services and address the root causes of housing insecurity. Long wait times/lists is also identified by 63% of survey respondents as a major barrier.

A bright spot mentioned 24 different times in 10 different focus groups and interviews is the County's Housing Hub. The Housing Hub is a one-stop shop for individuals who are housing insecure, experiencing housing hardships, at-risk of, or currently experiencing homelessness. Even with this service, nearly all focus group and interview participants mentioned that people often do not know where to start when looking for housing help; and that having navigators/case managers taking clients through each step of the housing process would streamline services.

The Burlington County Housing Hub, which opened December 2019, is operated under the Department of Human Services and located on the first floor of its building to provide housing advocacy and supportive services to all Burlington County residents. The goal of the Housing Hub is to provide assistance to those who are housing insecure, experiencing housing hardships, at-risk of, or currently experiencing homelessness. It serves as a single "point of entry" for residents who are either already homeless or experiencing housing problems—a single destination to go for help.

The location houses the housing advocate staff and a room where residents can meet with representatives from other County agencies and community service providers. Volunteers from those providers help staff the Hub during weekdays from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. After hours, residents in need can call 211 for referrals. Some of the volunteer providers at the Hub are: Christian Caring Center, Belmont Homes, St. Vincent DePaul, Legacy PATH Services, Soldier On, Salvation Army, Social Security, and Children's System Partners. The Hub also coordinates with the County Board of Social Services to respond faster to those at risk of becoming homeless. The Hub conference room also has a table of personal computers that residents can use to access or enroll in other assistance programs that could help address other underlining problems or issues a homeless resident might face. The County also tries to address the homeless problem with the "rapid re-housing," model of housing. During the recent pandemic, the Hub added a COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program for residents as well. The program provides temporary rental assistance to low- and moderate-income households that experience a substantial reduction in income or became unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That program was funded by the state.

The County does have a homeless trust fund which is a \$3 surcharge on all deeds, mortgages and land records filed in the County Clerk's Office. This funding is directed into a trust fund dedicated for services to help homeless residents or those at risk of becoming homeless. Trust fund money is permitted to be used to acquire, construct or rehabilitate affordable housing for homeless individuals or families or those in danger of becoming homeless, as well as for rental vouchers, subsidies and other assistance programs.

It is interesting to note that the County does not operate its own emergency shelter, but it does provide funding for providers to shelter homeless during "Code Blue" emergencies when temperatures fall below freezing and pose a threat to life. On the positive side, the County received \$145,000 in Code Blue funding from the state in 2020.

Further, County residents also receive housing services through the Burlington Community Action Partnership (BCAP), which provides comprehensive housing counseling to low and moderate income individuals and families through the Housing Counseling Program. The services include rental housing counseling, homelessness prevention, and budget counseling. BCAP provides financial assistance to residents who are behind in their rent, facing eviction, or are homeless and in need of rental assistance to secure permanent housing; as well as housing and/or emergency motel stay(s) for individuals reentering the County from incarceration or suffering from domestic violence. BCAP works with nearly 450 individuals/families in need.

Lastly, Oaks Integrated Care provides housing services to over 180 individuals in the County. Oaks provides case management services to veterans, mentally ill individuals, and some mentally ill chemically abusing (MICA) individuals, as well as some who are developmentally disabled/mentally ill. Oaks has scattered site locations throughout Burlington County and some single and some shared housing.

- Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Adults -

Burlington County residents have some of the highest rates of mental health distress in the state, with 15.8% of residents reporting having 14 or more "not good" mental health days out of the past 30. This is the fourth highest rate in the state, and represents a spike in the number of poor mental health days from previous years. Behavioral and mental health was mentioned in 9 out of the 20 focus groups and interviews and is the top Service Need identified by survey respondents. Considering the recent impact of the novel coronavirus on residents' lives, it is being predicted that mental health services will be in higher demand in the coming months and years. Interestingly, the vast majority of survey respondents (53%) did not agree that the County has enough behavioral and mental health services. On the positive, respondents and participants believe that organizations doing this work are of good quality and staff are competent.

Black residents report being diagnosed with depression almost a full 5% more than their white counterparts; and focus group participants pointed out that Black families are disadvantaged by the system when it comes to mental and behavioral health. Members of the LGBTQIA community also are identified as an impacted subgroup by focus group participants and interviewees. Transgender individuals especially can face real stigma when it comes to expressing their identity, which can have negative impacts on an individual's mental health.

Given the impact COVID 19 has had and will continue to have on people's employment, ability to access services, and ability to take advantage of their informal support systems, it is likely that mental and behavioral health services will become even more important in the next three years, which underscores the County's need to expand and advertise these services. Just like with housing, there is a perception of a lack of awareness about mental and behavioral services in the County, with 56% of survey respondents indicating that the amount of outreach is lacking. Focus group and interview participants are not convinced there are enough behavioral and mental health providers to meet the needs of Burlington County residents. Transportation has long been an issue in the County and the lack of providers in the eastern half of the County is something that came up frequently. Wait lists are identified as a barrier by 50% of survey respondents, which also speaks to the number of providers in the County. Expanding telehealth services is a recommendation that could help meet the needs of more residents, but also address the issue of transportation and current social distancing requirements.

- Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Children -

This Service Need was mentioned as a top need in 12 out of the 20 focus groups and interviews; and is the second most selected need by survey respondents. Again, there is a perception that there are not enough services to meet the behavioral and mental health needs of children in the County, as evidenced by 60% of survey respondents indicating this. According to residents and service providers, there is a serious lack of services for children under the age of nine, and inpatient services in particular are nearly impossible to access because of long wait times and limited number of providers.

There is also a sense that young Black boys with mental or behavioral issues are treated unequally, as one participant pointed out, "They're less likely to get an accurate diagnosis, they're much more likely to be segregated off to out of district programs, much more likely to be restrained or suspended, and that's done without going back and getting proper behavioral supports in place." Trauma informed practices and school disciplinary policies may be areas the County should explore.

Lack of awareness is the most frequently identified barrier from survey respondents, which lines up with the fact that 55% of survey respondents do not think that Burlington County does a good job advertising its behavioral and mental health services for children. Further, community members and service providers alike report a lack of knowledge about the services that do exist. A barrier to service access that came up repeatedly is that unless parents already know how to navigate the behavioral health system or use certain “key words and phrases”, they are unlikely to get the help their child needs.

School districts could be a useful resource for children to get help, but staffing and staff knowledge are identified problems. Focus group participants report that it is not uncommon for an entire school to be served by one counselor. This is a real issue for high needs children, and according to the parent focus group participants, some schools have not yet gotten up to speed on how the referral process works and what services are available in the County. This can lead to a child’s behaviors being punished rather than being addressed holistically. PerformCare was also mentioned as a resource, but multiple people reported that the application process is arduous for parents and further, once a family is approved for assistance, the help given is limited in scope.

Wait lists are also a barrier, citing that service providers like child psychologists in Burlington County do not make as much money as they could in less expensive counties, leading to a lack of providers, causing longer and longer wait lists. Another barrier is transportation and many focus group participants lamented the difficulty of traveling for at least an hour to therapist appointments with a high needs child. Some mentioned telehealth as a way to address this barrier.

When considering the long term impact COVID 19 is having on children and their support systems, the need for additional services and creative ways of delivering these services is crucial. Families are struggling economically and are disconnected from important supports like school counselors and extended family, none of which bodes well for the health of children with these kinds of needs.

Streamlining the application for and expanding PerformCare services is a major step the County could take. Also suggested is expanding trauma informed care services, as one participant put it, “I think trauma based counseling is huge, especially with the pandemic. Our crisis units are bursting at the seams. They screen upwards of 200 people per night. And there’s nowhere for them to go.” This was followed with the additional suggestion of bringing in more child psychiatrists to work in the County.

Finally, a recommendation that emerged in this need area, but also in others, is the desire for peer to peer and patient navigator services. Parents report feeling like they are not being

understood by providers and when they connect with parents of children who have similar needs they finally feel supported. Having a navigator available to assist parents in completing the proper documents, connect families with behavioral and mental health needs with service providers, and advocate for these families in difficult moments is a wish of many families.

- Substance Use Disorder and Prevention Services for Adults and Adolescents -

The need for substance use disorder and prevention services in Burlington County touches all types of individuals and has gotten noticeably worse over the past few years, as evidenced by the fact that overdose deaths in the County increased from 75 in 2014 to 161 in 2017. Survey respondents identify this as the third most important Service Need in the County, with double the responses of the fourth most selected Service Need. Focus group and interview participants referenced this need 21 different times, which is just a few references less than behavioral and mental health services for adults and children, which were each referenced 28 times. One local service provider indicated that in recent years there has been an “escalation in substance use,” particularly opioids. Heroin and alcohol are the main drugs of choice among County residents entering substance abuse treatment centers.

Again, there is a perception there are not enough substance use disorder and prevention services in Burlington County; and, further, that available services are not widely advertised and known. Project Hope, the availability of Naloxone, straight to treatment services like Operation Helping Hand, and Hope One, are identified by focus group and interview participants as positive supports in the County. For the most part, survey respondents and focus group and interview participants indicate that services are of quality and staff are well trained and competent.

The top barriers are lack of awareness, stigma leading to avoidance of accessing services, and wait lists. One recommendation is to create and maintain an up to date and easily accessible repository of substance use disorder and prevention services. Faith leaders were mentioned multiple times as a resource for many individuals who prefer to seek help from someone they have a relationship with versus going into a treatment center. Ensuring that the faith community has access to this repository is key when trying to connect people in need to available services. Increasing the amount of information available to the public might also help address any stigma surrounding accessing substance use disorder services. Wait lists were often coupled with a lack of service providers, although participants did name Catholic Charities, Delaware House, and the Hope One mobile unit as providers in the County. One interviewee noted that, “Timing is so important, because when you’re ready, you need the help right now.”

Transportation is also a real barrier for people who want to receive substance use disorder and prevention services. Given this, mobile response (Hope One) is something the County

should work with the state to expand. Growing existing programs or starting new ones, especially straight to treatment services and peer to peer services, would make getting help easier and more accessible for County residents. Also, ensuring sliding fee scales or supplemental funding for low income individuals in need could also increase the number of individual suffering from substance use disorders receiving the assistance/treatment they need to live clean and sober lives.

The Burlington County Sheriff's Department operates the mobile unit, Hope One, that brings addiction and recovery services and resources to those struggling with drug addiction. The goal of Hope One is to help curtail the opioid epidemic, and in turn reduce drug-related crimes in the County. The motor home includes representatives from the Burlington County Health Department, Virtua Health, Sheriff's Department, and a peer-to-peer advisor. Hope One travels throughout Burlington County and provides Narcan training, HIV testing, photo identification, and toiletry kits, some of which is possible through a partnership with Burlington County's Health and Human Services Departments. The vehicle was donated by Mount Laurel Police and funding from the NJ Attorney General's Operation Helping Hand effort pays for staff, as well as the Narcan kits. Hope One expanded its services during the recent pandemic to offer COVID 19 testing. Further, the Prosecutor's Office's Straight ... to Treatment is a program that allows people to walk off the street and into police stations in four municipalities (Burlington City, Evesham Township, Mount Holly, and Pemberton Township) to seek treatment for drug addiction.

An exciting innovation in the County is their Recovery Center, an initiative aimed at both improving access to addiction treatment as well as linking those in recovery to resources that will help them get back on their feet. The Recovery Center is located on the third floor of the county's Human Services building. The Department of Human Services, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) provided the startup funds for the Recovery Center and will continue to fund this effort through June 2021. The Center is staffed by Prevention Is Key (PIK) and its recovery services department, CARES (Center For Addiction, Recovery, Education and Success). In addition to peer support and information about treatment programs, the Recovery Center offers other wellness activities and classes on subjects like nutrition, anger management, relaxation and meditation and resume writing. The Center also hosts groups like Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous. Lastly, the Prosecutor's Office also implements the Operation Safe Overnight program, which began in November 2018, and focuses on saving lives and increasing enforcement activity at hotels and motels that have experienced overdoses and drug-related criminal activity. Through this program, with the support of Virtua Health, the Prosecutor's Office has provided Narcan to County hotels and has also trained hotel employees how to use it to reverse an overdose and save a person's life.

Over the first six months of the coronavirus pandemic, the number of overdoses where naloxone, or Narcan, was administered was up 30% over the same six-month period last year. By the fall of 2020, there have been 91 suspected overdose deaths in Burlington County, according to data from the New Jersey Attorney General's Office. Another 473 possible overdose victims have been revived thanks to timely naloxone administration.

Also, in July, the County approved a contract extension with Maryville Inc. to continue services at the Post House treatment center in Pemberton Township. The 48-bed facility offers services for male patients struggling with substance abuse and other co-occurring disorders. Oaks Integrated Care also provides substance use disorder and prevention services in the County.

Prevention Plus of Burlington County also provides approximately 10 different programs to address addiction services. Here are highlights of these programs: (1) Strengthening Families includes a family dinner and separate education classes for youth and parents. Lessons focus on family management techniques, decision making, coping with stress, and social skills. There is also a Military Family Nights version of this as well that also includes lessons on resisting peer pressure and consequences of substance use; (2) Footprints for Life is a school based 2nd and 3rd grade program focusing on self-esteem, coping skills, good decision making, assertiveness, and alcohol and tobacco's harmful effects through the use of animal puppets. It currently operates in Willingboro Township (approximately 300 3rd graders across 3 elementary schools); (3) Botvin Life Skills Training is another school based program designed around changing the beliefs and behaviors that lead to school and social failure, violence, drug abuse/dependency, and criminal behavior. It currently operates in Maple Shade with 8th graders (approximately 150); (4) Coping with Work and Family Stress is designed to meet the needs of all adults and especially those that may be economically disadvantaged with co-occurring mental health and substance misuse problems. The purpose of the program is to teach individuals how to develop and apply effective coping strategies that can modify sources of stress, techniques to modify cognitive as well as appraisal processes that exacerbate stress, and skills to manage stress by reducing the use of avoidance coping habits. There is also a military focused effort based on this program as well; (5) Burlington County Coalition for Healthy Communities aim is to reduce the underage use of alcohol and illegal use and misuse of other drugs across the lifespan in in the County by utilizing community collaboration to facilitate population level environmental change. The Coalition has organized special events, trainings, assemblies for school staff, students, and counselors, candlelight vigils for Overdose Awareness Day, poster contests, and social media campaigns. There is a similar effort called the Riverfront Coalition which has organized/participated in Sicker Shock Campaigns, peer leader trainings, PRIDE Survey, and Play Streets; (6) Youth Tobacco Action Groups which is a prevention and cessation program for youth ages 13-18. Currently, Bordentown High School has core group of students involved in this program; (7) Young

Athletes Opioid Program which is an education effort for young athletes involved in high school sports, coaches, parents, and school nurses in the harmful highly addictive effects of the use of opioids for sports related injuries.

Introduction

Purpose

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) is partnering with human services organizations in each county to undertake an assessment of local strengths and needs. The goal of this assessment is to collect the information needed to make sure the right mix of services and activities are available in every county in New Jersey to support families. The findings from the needs assessment can be used to support the development of local recommendations to assist with decision making; the identification of high priority human Service Needs and barriers to service delivery for New Jersey's communities; the coordination and improvement of services to the Departments' target populations; the planning, funding, coordination and implementation of Department Initiatives.

This statewide approach to county-specific needs assessments aligns with DCF's existing county based continuous quality improvement review cycle, in which each county is evaluated every two years. The findings from the needs assessment will be embedded into the DCF's existing ChildStat process and shared with DCF staff and stakeholders during the county's ChildStat session. ChildStat is a learning, management, and accountability tool used by DCF to support continuous quality improvement, foster a shared sense of accountability and promote system-wide problem solving around critical issues affecting child and family outcomes. A ChildStat session incorporates analysis and interpretation of administrative data to support planning and dialogue between DCF executive management and senior leadership and system partners.

County Description

Narrative: In the Words of the County

- Demographics -

Burlington County is the largest county by area in the state of New Jersey, covering roughly 820 square miles. It is primarily a suburban/rural county, with only 3 of its municipalities being cities and the other 37 being townships and boroughs. The population density reported in the 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update is 500 residents per square mile, meaning the County does not reach the level necessary to be considered an Urbanized Area. The eastern half of the County is especially rural and includes Brendan T. Byrne, Bass River, and Penn State Forests, as well as most of Wharton State Forest. The average commute time for Burlington County residents is about a half hour.

According to the Burlington County Profile published on the County website, its population is 448,734, which represents no real growth over the past few years, with the following racial/ethnic breakdown: 76% white, 19% Black, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 6% Asian, 3% other, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and less than 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The majority of the County (87%) only speaks English, and just under 10% of the population was born somewhere other than the United States.

- Employment and Income -

The largest employers in the County are Lockheed Martin and Virtua Memorial Hospital. Health Care and Social Services are both major industries in Burlington County, accounting for 17% of all jobs. There are also robust agricultural and manufacturing industries in the County. Burlington County has more land area devoted to farming than any other county in New Jersey, mostly for producing blueberries, cranberries, and sweet corn. Manufacturing is concentrated along the Delaware River Front. The median family income is \$82,839, which is higher than the median family income for the state and eighth highest among all New Jersey counties. The cost of living is near the average for New Jersey counties, ranking thirteenth out of twenty-one. For a two parent two child family, the cost of living is \$95,493 per year. This is near the average for New Jersey, but is significantly higher than the median family income for Burlington County families. Transportation, housing, taxes, and health care are all major expenses for families in the County. According to the Economic Policy Institute, Burlington County families are spending over \$1,000 per month on each of these expenses and that is without including the largest cost burden - child care. Transportation is especially burdensome, accounting for 22% of a family's annual income.

A year ago (May 2019), unemployment in Burlington County (2.8%) was slightly lower than New Jersey's rate (3%) and there were only seven counties in the state with lower rates. Although this rate was the lowest in the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metropolitan Statistical Area, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, looking ahead a year, after COVID 19 hit, the County's unemployment rate has significantly increased to 13.7%, according to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. This compares with New Jersey's rate of about 16.6%, which is higher than the United States as a whole (11.1%), likely because New Jersey was one of the states hit hardest by the pandemic early on. The labor force participation rate, a way of gauging how many workers are active in the job market, is also higher in Burlington County than in the state. Comparing June 2019 to June 2020, the number in the labor force for the County increased by 1.3%.

- Poverty and Cost of Living -

According to the County data profile supplied by the state for this needs assessment, the County has a lower poverty rate for families with children under the age of eighteen than the state, with 7% of Burlington County families falling below the poverty line, while 12% of families do statewide (2017). There are some municipalities that are outliers in this regard – Wrightstown, Beverly City, Pemberton Borough, Burlington City, Bass River, Palmyra, and Pemberton Township all have families with children under eighteen poverty rates surpassing 15%.

Also according to the County data profile, it appears as if food insecurity in Burlington County is decreasing, as evidenced by the number of children receiving free or reduced lunch and/or SNAP nutritional assistance steadily declining since 2013; as well as a lower than state average food insecurity; however, these data points are pre-COVID 19 and may not reflect the current need for food in the County. Further, it is important to question whether these reduced numbers are a result of people not accessing these supports due to lack of information or eligibility requirements versus an actual reduced need.

With almost one third of all households in Burlington County having children under the age of 18. childcare is a major expense for County residents, costing roughly \$1,500 per month and outpacing family spending on each housing, health care, and transportation. Childcare costs in the County are also high compared to other counties in the state, surpassing the average costs in the infant, toddler, and pre-Kindergarten categories.

- Health Care -

As of 2017, only 2.5% of minors in Burlington County were without health insurance coverage, the lowest county rate in the entire state. Burlington County minors without health insurance primarily reside in the municipalities of Eastampton, Bass River, Edgewater Park, Bordentown Township, Pemberton, and Woodland Township, all of which have rates ranging from 5 – 11%. The vast majority of children (93.5%) in the County meet all immunization requirements, but this percentage is down

from 96% in 2013. Burlington County is in the bottom half of New Jersey counties when it comes to prenatal care, with 300 reports of late or insufficient prenatal care in 2018, a 47% increase (96 additional reports) since 2016. In 2019 the County had 16,303 people on Medicaid, which is firmly in the middle of all twenty-one New Jersey Counties.

- Community Safety and Crime -

Burlington County has the lowest crime rate of the 8 southern New Jersey counties. Its violent crime rate is lower than the state average and the juvenile arrest rate has been decreasing since 2012.

When it comes to domestic violence, Burlington County is in the top ten counties in the state, with 3,821 incidents occurring in 2016. This is primarily led by Pemberton Township, which strictly follows the state reporting/arrest guidelines for domestic violence incidents, as well as Evesham.

Needs Assessment Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative data from various sources and stakeholders related to housing, food, health care, community safety, employment and career services, child care, services for families caring for a child of a relative, behavioral/mental health services for children, behavioral/mental health services for adults, substance use disorder services, domestic violence services, parenting skills services and legal and advocacy services were collected to inform this needs assessment.

County Data Profile

DCF provided a county data profile to the county Human Service Advisory Council (HSAC) to support the HSAC in identifying key topics to be explored in more depth. The data profile consists of the most recently available administrative data related to demographic population and selected indicators of poverty, housing, food security, childcare, health care, transportation, employment, community safety, mental health and substance use. The sources for the data included in the profile include a combination of federal databases. The primary purpose of the county data profiles is to support the HSAC needs assessment team in identifying key areas to prioritize during the focus group data collection efforts.

Approach for Prioritizing Needs

The Walter Rand Institute (WRI), part of Rutgers University, Camden, was contracted by Burlington County to conduct the County's needs assessment according to the guidelines set forth by the state, as well as compile this report. WRI is a research institute that has been operating in southern New Jersey since 2000. The applied research and technical assistant work they do touches on social services, population health, education, criminal justice, and more. WRI conducted and analyzed the focus groups and interviews, as well as analyzed the needs assessment survey results, and provided technical assistance to the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team on understanding the County data profile, the qualitative results, and determining the Prioritized Needs of the County.

The prioritization process began with the Walter Rand Institute disseminating a perceptions survey to the Needs Assessment Team after analyzing the Basic Needs and Service Needs categories included in the County data profile provided by the state. The Needs Assessment Team gathered in person to discuss the results of the perception survey and highlights of the data provided by the state. The Walter Rand Institute helped facilitate this meeting and presented the quantitative data from the County data profile, as well as the results from the perceptions survey.

The Needs Assessment Team conducted two rounds of voting at this meeting and agreed upon five different issues/needs that they wanted to look at more deeply. These five issues of concern were: transportation, substance use disorder services, access to safe & affordable housing, mental health, and the cost of living in the County. Other issues discussed, but did not rise to the level of these top

needs are: services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance use disorder services specifically for young people, and food. Based upon this voting, the County decided to add two sections of questions to the state supplied needs assessment survey, one about individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs), and another about substance use disorder services for children.

Walter Rand Institute transcribed the survey questions into the online survey platform Qualtrics. This allowed for respondents to take the needs assessment survey online, which was of the utmost importance especially once COVID 19 forced workplaces and public spaces to close. In order to maintain uniformity among the data collected, the Institute copied the wording and style of questions from the state for the additional survey topics of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and substance use disorder services for children. The needs survey was distributed via email to county residents and stakeholders and remained open for a period of 3 months. A link to the online survey version was posted on the County's Department of Human Services' website, as well as sent out through the County's LINCS, in an effort to increase participation during the current public health crisis. The Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team further distributed the survey via email and pre-printed post cards to their contacts and constituents. The Walter Rand Institute also distributed the survey via email to the roughly thirty-eight municipal clerks in the County and the librarians at each of the Burlington County Library System's branches. Overall, there is a total of 411 survey respondents. While the survey was open for residents and stakeholders to answer, the Burlington County Needs Assessment Team provided the Walter Rand Institute with the names and contact information of local leaders, service providers, parents, and other key informants for additional data collection. The Walter Rand Institute reached out to these individuals to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews via the video-conferencing application WebEx.

The Walter Rand Institute used the analysis tools embedded in Qualtrics to analyze what County residents and stakeholders considered to be the most important need areas and barriers for the County. Burlington County residents and stakeholders who took the survey identified: housing, health care, food, behavioral and mental health services for adults, behavioral and mental health services for youth, and substance use disorder and prevention services for adults and adolescents as the top needs of the County.

After uploading detailed notes from the focus groups and interviews into the coding software program NVivo, the Walter Rand Institute created categories and coded the information provided by these County residents and stakeholders. The focus group and key informant interview participants reported: housing, health care, food, behavioral and mental health services for adults, behavioral and mental health services for youth, and substance use disorder and prevention services for adults and adolescents as the top needs for Burlington County.

The Walter Rand Institute considered the top needs identified by survey respondents and focus groups and interview participants, and sent the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team a list of the six most identified needs. These are: housing, health care, food, behavioral and mental health services for adults, behavioral and mental health services for youth, and substance use disorder and prevention services.

With these data in hand, the Needs Assessment Team and members of the Human Services Advisory Council (HSAC) met again to narrow down the list of top needs from six to four, as the report requires. Members discussed the needs identified by County residents and stakeholders, offering their expertise on the needs, and the County's current efforts to address each one. Special attention was paid to the current public health crisis and its expected long term impacts on Burlington County residents. Mental health services for youth and adults are both noted as needs that are likely to grow as a result of the pandemic and its effects on everyday life. County strengths and services were discussed at length, with members of HSAC and the Needs Assessment Team noting the work that has been done in the past few years, as well as the future planned work, to expand food access, and the creation of the Housing Hub. Funding was also a large part of this conversation; the group wants to ensure that any additional resources provided by the state to address Prioritized Needs would be directed towards needs the County is not in a position to address on its own. While the Housing Hub is an excellent program, it cannot provide help to all the families in the County who struggle with housing needs. The same goes for substance use disorder and prevention services. Members of the Needs Assessment Team and HSAC acknowledge that the County has made strides in addressing these issues, but needs additional funding and support from the state to more fully provide for its residents.

At the conclusion of this conversation, and based on their expertise in the community, the group decided to make housing, behavioral and mental health services for adults, behavioral and mental health services for youth, and substance use disorder and prevention services for adults and adolescents the four Prioritized Needs for this needs assessment report. By considering information from the County data profile, results from the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews, the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team and HSAC, have ensured that these Prioritized Needs are as accurate as possible.

The four need areas selected by the county to be the focus areas and primary topics in the qualitative data (e.g. focus groups and key informant interviews) collection included:

1. Housing
2. Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Adults
3. Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Children
4. Substance Use Disorder and Prevention Services

Focus Groups

In an effort to implement a uniform needs assessment approach across counties to support statewide trend analysis, DCF required HSACs to conduct a series of focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to collect qualitative information to better understand the scope, nature and local context related to addressing community needs that influence families.

Focus groups sessions were scheduled for approximately one and half hours with the first thirty minutes being designated for introductions and survey completion and the remaining hour being designated for the focus group dialogue. In each focus group session, participants were asked to complete a standard survey to gather data about the key topic areas outlined in the aforementioned data profiles. The survey was developed to identify areas of strength and areas in need of improvement related to county-based supports and service array. The survey consists of demographic data and approximately 10 questions related to each of the eleven basic and service needs. Six of the questions are based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Upon completion of the surveys, the focus group participants were asked to transition into the dialogue component of the session. The dialogue requirement was intended to allow participants to highlight their experiences and perceptions as community members and provide opportunity for a deeper discussion and assessment of top barriers in each area of need. Group members discussed two selected basic and service need priority areas. Facilitators use a structured protocol to explain the purpose, goals, confidentiality and informed consent and objectives of the focus group.

Recruitment.

Recruitment for the focus groups was conducted by the Burlington County Department of Human Services, based on the state's recommended types of individuals/organizations to be included. Due to the safety requirements necessary to avoid the spread of the novel coronavirus, all of this outreach was conducted via email. The staff member in charge of recruiting individuals for the focus groups sent a series of invitations to prospective participants every week starting June 22, 2020 and continuing through the end of July. This process not only included direct invitations to local leaders and service providers, but requests for the names of County residents who would be willing to

participate in the needs assessment process. In order to gather the necessary groups of people and meet the recommendations of the state, Burlington County not only needed service providers, but parents and young people. Through these email solicitations, a number of names were returned to the County for follow up. These individuals were then added to the next recruitment email that went out asking for participation in the needs assessment process. In total, the County reached out to 60 individuals for participation in the focus groups.

Focus groups were conducted by Walter Rand Institute staff via the video conferencing tool WebEx. Participants received an invitation to the focus group via email and a reminder on the day of the focus group through the WebEx application. Two Walter Rand Institute staff participated in each focus group; one acting as administrator and the other as note-taker. Administrators used the templates provided by the state to ask participants about the needs they considered to be most pressing in Burlington County and what barriers residents face when attempting to access services. Note-takers recorded participants' responses using word processing tools like Microsoft Word and Google Docs. These records of focus group responses are saved in an internal filing system the Walter Rand Institute maintains and entered into NVivo for analysis.

Due to the current public health crisis and state restrictions on public gatherings, the recruitment and participation process for focus groups was seriously hindered. Not only are community members experiencing turmoil in their personal lives, but access to reliable internet connections for virtual focus groups, experience with online video conferencing tools, expanded workloads due to furloughs, and childcare needs for the time allotted for participation in the focus group all created significant barriers for participation. In the incredibly challenging times that we find ourselves, people are focusing on their own needs and difficulties; securing participants for ten focus groups proved extremely difficult. Parents served by the Department of Child Protection and Permanency, young people, local business owners, and community members served by community based providers were especially difficult to recruit. Another, albeit less dire, result of having to conduct virtual focus groups rather than in person is that often times participants can be convinced to take part in focus group by being offered incentives like free food and refreshments, which is obviously impossible to do for groups being held online.

There was a total number of 8 focus groups conducted for the needs assessment, totaling 29 participants, and the groups consisted of the following categories: Community members served by Children's System of Care; Youth/Young Adults; Community Based Organizations; Public Service Organizations; Community Members at large, and Community Leaders.

Focus Group Participants. A total of 8 focus groups were conducted in this county as part of this needs assessment. These focus groups were conducted from July 2, 2020 to July 29, 2020. There was a total number of 29 participants. The number of participants in each focus group ranged from a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 6 participants. During the focus group sessions, a total of 23 surveys were completed.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted to gather additional feedback from County Human Services Directors and other identified individual selected by the HSACs regarding considerations for addressing the needs and concerns that were highlighted in the data profiles and focus group sessions. Facilitators use a structured protocol to explain the purpose, goals and objectives of the focus group.

Recruitment.

Recruitment for key informant interviews was also conducted by the Burlington County Department of Human Services. Due to the safety requirements necessary to avoid the spread of the novel coronavirus, all of this outreach was conducted via email. A list was compiled by Human Services staff of individuals who would be able to offer important perspectives on a variety of local concerns. Educators, social service providers, individuals working in the criminal justice system, and health officials were the type of key informants that the County invited to participate. The staff member in charge of recruiting participants sent a series of invitations to prospective interviewees every week starting June 22, 2020 and continuing through the end of July. In total, the County reached out to 15 individuals for key informant interviews.

Key informant interviews were conducted by Walter Rand Institute staff via WebEx. Interviewees received an invitation to the interview via email and a reminder on the day of the interview through WebEx. Two staff participated in each interview; one acting as administrator and the other as note-taker. Administrators used the template provided by the state to ask interviewees about the needs they considered to be most pressing in Burlington County and what barriers residents face when attempting to access services. Note-takers recorded interviewee's responses using word processing tools like Microsoft Word and Google Docs. These records of key informant interviews are saved in an internal filing system the Walter Rand Institute maintains and entered into NVivo for analysis.

Due to the current public health crisis and state restrictions on public gatherings, the recruitment and participation process for key informant interviews was seriously hindered. Not only are community members experiencing turmoil in their personal lives, but access to reliable internet connections for virtual key informant interviews, experience with online video conferencing tools, expanded workloads due to furloughs, and childcare needs for the time allotted for participation in the interview all created significant barriers for participation. In the incredibly challenging times that we find ourselves, people are focusing on their own needs and difficulties; securing participants for key

informant interviews proved extremely difficult. A number of informants needed to reschedule due to personal or work issues, all of which were spurred by the public health crisis. Despite these challenges, most of the key informants that the County reached out to were able to set aside time and participate in these interviews, providing important information to the County about the needs of its residents.

There was a total number of 12 interviews conducted for the needs assessment, along with an additional one who wrote up answers to the questions versus being on video. The individuals interviewed consisted of stakeholders from the following categories: law enforcement, mental health, general social services, County employees, education, local non-profits, and employment/career services.

Key Informant Interview Participants. A total of twelve interviews were conducted in this county as part of this needs assessment. The total number of participants included was twelve. These interviews were conducted from June 25, 2020 to August 5, 2020. There was a total of twelve surveys completed during the interview sessions.

Participant Demographics

As described in the above sections, both focus group and interview participants completed the needs assessment survey. Below we combine information for all participants to provide an overview of the participant demographics.

Role in the Community (not mutually exclusive)	Number of Participants
County Resident	135
Staff or Volunteer with a Community-Based Organization (e.g., Health and Human Services providers, Planning Board Participants)	42
Staff or Volunteer with a Public Service Organization (e.g., paramedics, fire fighter, police officers, air force, judges)	16
Local Business Owner in the County	2
Community leader and advocate in the county (e.g., hold a volunteer office, clergy, activist)	4
Other	16

Age	Number of Participants
Under 18	N/A
18-24	6
25-34	32
35-44	49
45-54	53
55-64	56
65 and over	20

Gender	Number of Participants
Female	156
Male	55
Non-binary, third gender/transgender	0
Prefer Not to Say	4
Other	0

Race	Number of Participants
American Indian or Alaska Native	2
Asian	4
Black or African-American	34
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1
White or Caucasian	156
Multi-Race (2 or More of the Previous)	13
Other	2

Ethnicity	Number of Participants
Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origins	11
No Hispanic Latino or Spanish Origins	195

Education Level	Number of Participants
Grades Preschool-8	1
Grades 9-12-Non-Graduate	6
High School Graduate or GED	36
High School/GED <u>and</u> Some College/Trade	37
2 or 4-Year College/Trade School Graduate	60
Graduate or Other Post-Secondary School	75

Employment Status	Number of Participants
Employed: Full-Time	120
Employed: Part-Time	25
Unemployed-Looking for Work	13
Unemployed-Not Looking for Work	12
Retired	11
Student	3
Self Employed	6
Unable to Work	26

Years of Community membership	Number of Participants	Range
How many years have you been a member of this community?	210	1-81 years

Services Accessed by a Household Member within the last 2 Years	Number of Participants
Yes	112
No	91

Household Member History of Involvement with NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency	Number of Participants
Yes	31
No	178

Participants represented the following municipalities

Beverly, Bordentown Township, Cinnaminson, Delanco, Delran, Eastampton, Edgewater Park, Evesham, Hainesport, Lumberton, Mansfield, Maple Shade, Medford Lakes, Medford Township, Moorestown, Mount Holly, Mount Laurel, Palmyra, Pemberton Borough, Pemberton Township, Riverside, Riverton, Shamong, Southampton, Springfield, Tabernacle, Washington Township, Westampton, Willingboro, Woodland Township, and Wrightstown

Additional Data Collection Methodologies

Prior to being contracted by Burlington County to conduct the human services needs assessment, WRI had already been working in the County. One project, ending in December, 2019 is a Community Needs Health Assessment for the South Jersey Health Collaborative; and the other is a juvenile delinquency prevention effort. Since both of these projects collected and analyzed data about the County, relevant data points from these projects were added to the County data profile and presented to the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team, specifically in the areas of domestic violence, health care access, and housing.

The data methods used to collect information about the needs of Burlington County families are the same methods laid out in the state's guiding documents. These include the distribution of a survey, and conducting focus groups and key informant interviews to assess the needs and barriers with which the Burlington County residents are dealing. The New Jersey DCF/HSAC County Needs Assessment survey was transcribed by Walter Rand Institute staff into the online survey platform Qualtrics to make the survey more accessible to residents. This online survey version was distributed by Burlington County Human Services Department staff to service providers, residents, and other interested parties. A link to the online survey was posted on the County's Department of Human Services' website, as well as sent out through the County's LINCIS, in an effort to increase participation during the current public health crisis. The Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team further distributed the survey via email and pre-printed post cards to their contacts and constituents. The Walter Rand Institute also distributed the survey via email to the roughly thirty-eight municipal clerks in the County and the librarians at each of the Burlington County Library System's branches.

As described in the "Approach for Prioritizing Needs" section, the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team recognized two additional need areas: services for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDDs) and substance use disorder and prevention services for children. Based on their experience, the Team thought these important needs of Burlington County residents and wanted to better understand them. These needs were included in the survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews alongside the other Basic and Service Needs provided by the state. When adding these topics to the online survey, Walter Rand Institute staff took special care to define intellectual and developmental disabilities for respondents. The questions about these

additional services are worded in the exact same manner and order as the state constructed the survey. They were added to the Service Needs section of the survey following the legal and advisory/advocacy services questions.

While the Team wanted to understand the specific needs of young people dealing with substance use disorder, they recognize that for continuity of this report, the findings for this additional need will be combined with the findings of the substance use disorder and prevention services (adults and adolescents). Because there is no report section for the information collected about the needs of families dealing with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the County decided to include it in this section, as it is an additional form of data collection.

A couple of limitations of the survey results worth noting are survey respondent fatigue and potential lack of representative sample of the County. Respondent fatigue occurs when survey participants become tired of the survey and the quality of the data they provide begins to deteriorate. This is evident in the number of responses in the later needs sections, such as in the legal and advocacy/advisory services and services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities sections, where there are between 208 and 213 responses. Additionally, survey respondents skewed older, white, employed, and educated, which may not be the slice of County population most in need; however, over half did indicate they accessed services in the past two years. Interestingly, the survey received the most responses from residents of Maple Shade, Evesham, and Willingboro.

- Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities -

Scope of Need: Though there is no information provided in the county data profile about this service area, it does appear to be a serious need in Burlington County. In 10 out of 20 focus groups and interviews, participants identify services for the intellectually and developmentally disabled as a top Service Need. Both community members and the Needs Assessment Team consider this to be a prevalent issue in the County that deserves attention. Participants in the data collection process did identify some subgroups of people as having extra challenges when it comes to receiving these kinds of services. First, there are issues when it comes to age. Both very young children and older adolescents have difficulty accessing services because the way the current supports are designed. For children between the ages of 3 and 5, there are no services available because the child is too old for “early intervention” services, but has not yet started kindergarten and so is unable to access services through their school district. Young adults between the ages of 16 and 19 should be learning life skills and beginning to look for employment, but a number of focus group participants reported that there are not sufficient services in place to help individuals with these needs successfully transition to adulthood.

According to focus group participants, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are Black also experience challenges and subpar treatment when trying to access services. One parent passionately spoke about how “DD (Developmentally Disabled) Black men are often perceived as aggressive; they’re restrained without reason and without justification and no one is held accountable for those incidents. The abuse level is intense, in the schools, in CSOC (Children’s System of Care), it’s systemic across the state.” Continuing on, she said “I don’t think white families have the same struggle to get access (to services).” A participant in a different focus group points out that there are documented structural barriers for Black people when it comes to receiving proper health care, and intellectual and developmental disabilities services are no different.

Lack of services for high need individuals is also an issue in Burlington County. According to focus group participants, if a person with an intellectual and developmental disabilities becomes violent during the course of an interaction with a service provider, they can be denied services in the future. There are few options for people with high needs or combative tendencies to receive treatment in Burlington County according to the focus group and interview responses. One recommendation is to expand parent training services so that guardians can be more prepared to handle the outbursts of their children and not need to involve the care system as often.

Nature of Need: Survey respondents are less informed about intellectual and developmental disabilities than interviewees and focus group participants. For all of the survey questions about these services, the “Don’t Know” answers make up at least 33% of responses. When asked about the quality of facilities in Burlington County that provides services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the “Don’t Know” answer make up over half of all responses. Considering that 81% of survey respondents report lack of awareness being a barrier to addressing these needs, it would appear that residents do not know what kind of supports exist for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or what the quality of these services are like. When asked about the quality of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, focus group participants gave responses indicating that staff need better training and should be paid more in order to retain quality caregivers.

When asked if there are enough services in the County, 58% of survey respondents selected the “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” options. Focus group participants and key informants report the same thing; that there is a serious lack of services in Burlington County when it comes to families with intellectual and developmental disabilities needs. Many of the child care options available to other parents are not realistic for the parents of a child with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and children with high needs are especially difficult to find care for. Private day cares facilities are not required to make accommodations for these families and asking a friend or relative is often just not feasible. During one interview, a manager of an agency that helps connect families with children who have mental health issues, emotional challenges, behavioral issues, or developmental disabilities to

care said, “There’s only really one outlet they (families) can go to and that’s applying for developmental disability services and that can take years to go through. Even as an agency, it’s a long arduous process. I just went through it last month with one of our kids - they were in a hospital and needed services and the child is severely autistic and it took 3 months for him to receive services. He was in the hospital for 3 months.”

When prompted to “Agree” or “Disagree” with a statement about the accessibility of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Burlington County, survey respondents are roughly split, with 32% indicating they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” and 30% reporting they “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”. During focus groups; however, parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities report feeling overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork they are expected to complete in order to access services and frustrated by the eligibility requirements their families have to meet. These individuals report feeling alone and like the system is designed to prevent them from accessing services. Long wait lists and transportation are the other significant barriers that came up during focus groups, interviews, and the survey. When talking about improvements that can be made to the current system, parents served by the Children’s System of Care recommend creating patient navigator positions or a program connecting parents to peers who understand the system, streamlining the application process for the Division of Developmental Disabilities, better training for staff at the Care Management Organization, and expanding in-home and in-patient services for high need individuals.

PART 2



Key Findings Across Needs

-Top Needs- Burlington County's needs assessment consists of hundreds of survey responses, over a dozen interviews with key informants, and eight focus groups. These participants rank the top Basic Needs in the County as: (1) Housing; (2) Health Care; and (3) Food. When asked to prioritize Service Needs, survey respondents differed from focus group participants and interviewees. Survey respondents rank the top Service Needs as: (1) Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Adults; (2) Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Youth; and (3) Substance Use Disorder and Prevention Services for Adults and Adolescents. However, focus group participants and interviewees rank them as: (1) Services for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (which is a service that Burlington County added); (2) Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Adults; (3) Substance Use Disorder and Prevention Services for Adults and Adolescents; and (4) Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Youth. Using their expertise as Burlington County employees and stakeholders, the Needs Assessment Team selected: (1) Housing; (2) Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Adults; (3) Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Youth; and (4) Substance Use Disorder and Prevention Services for Adults and Adolescents as the four Prioritized Needs. These needs are considered the most pressing and require action in the next one to three years.

-Lowest Ranked Needs- On the other end of the rankings, some needs are considered less pressing in Burlington County. Among survey respondents, the needs that are considered lowest priority are: (6) Community Safety; (5) Child Care; (4) Employment and Career Services; (3) Services for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; (2) Legal and Advocacy Services; and (1) Services for Families Caring for a Child of a Relative. Among focus group participants and key informants, the needs that are considered lowest priority are: (5) Community Safety; (4) Child Care; (3) Employment and Career Services; (4) Parenting Skills Services; and (5) Services for Families Caring for a Child of a Relative.

-Trends in Need Areas- Analyzing the Burlington County information gathered throughout the needs assessment reveals a few trends across the 13 need areas: 1). The County is near the middle of New Jersey's twenty-one counties when it comes to most of the assessment need areas. Nearly all of the statistics in Burlington County's data profile show a County that has been remarkably stable over the past five years. It has the eighth highest annual median income in the state (\$82,839), one of the lowest rates of uninsured children in the state (2.5%), and while housing is identified as a Prioritized Need, the data shows that Burlington County has one of the lowest rates of severe housing cost burden in New Jersey (14%). There are some areas in which Burlington County could improve, like the percentage of people reporting mental distress (15.8%), suspected overdose deaths (161 in 2018, an 8% increase from the previous year), and cost of living, which is near the median for New Jersey counties but surpasses the median household income by over \$12,000. 2). The disconnect between official statistics and the lived experience of Burlington County residents and stakeholders. During the initial Burlington County Needs Assessment Team meeting for instance, most team members indicated that food was a serious issue in the County. They are concerned with the ability of residents to access and afford healthy foods. However, the data provided by the state shows that Burlington County has middling rates of food insecurity, SNAP

participation, and children receiving free or reduced lunches. The same is true of housing. Key stakeholders report a serious lack of affordable housing stock in the area, but the county data profile shows Burlington County doing exceptionally well with one of the lowest rates of severe housing cost burden in the state and a (low) relatively stable percentage of housing with severe problems. These discrepancies are worth investigation for a number of reasons. Perhaps SNAP usage is down due to strict eligibility requirements, not fewer people who need food supports. It also could be possible that the cost of housing in Burlington County is not necessarily the issue, but the amount of available safe and affordable housing makes finding a home difficult. The state and County should work together to understand how it is that residents could hold one perception of a need while official statistics paint a very different picture. 3). The last trend to note is that the Burlington County Human Services Advisory Council is aware of the County's need areas and either has already begun or plans on addressing them in the next three to five years. County officials and service providers alike are cognizant of and open to the fact that there are real challenges that the County needs to address. Focus group participants and interviewees report that the County has made real strides in a number of need areas and project confidence that they should continue this work. The Housing Hub, Hope One, and Straight to Treatment Program operated through the County Prosecutor's Office were brought up as quality programs that address the needs of County residents.

-Barriers- While the County has the will to make changes to improve service delivery and accessibility, there are persistent barriers that residents face when attempting to receive services. The barriers most reported by survey respondents, focus group participants, and key informants are: (1) Lack of Awareness of Services; (2) Transportation; (3) Services Do Not Exist; (4) Wait Lists; (5) Stigma Causes Avoidance of Services; and (6) Cost of Services. Based on what is known about the County, some of these barriers are not surprising. For instance, the cost of living exceeds median family income, so spending any money on additional services is a challenge for lots of families. The County is also geographically the largest in the state and half of it is very rural, making transportation a serious issue for families. In fact, transportation was mentioned 66 times during the 20 focus groups and interviews. A lack of services can also contribute to longer wait lists, so it is possible that these two barriers are tied together. For example, when there are only a few child psychologists in the County, the wait lists for these services naturally get longer. The same is said of housing supports; a family could be on a wait list for months before getting the help they need because there just are not enough supports available to help everyone looking for assistance. The lack of awareness about programs and services in the County is widespread among service providers and residents. This is the top barrier reported by survey respondents for every single need area. Multiple focus group participants report that even after working in the County for years, they are still finding out about services in the area. In fact, lack of awareness was mentioned 99 times during the 20 focus groups and interviews. This is especially concerning because residents often rely on County employees and local service providers to make referrals. Residents report that trying to get connected with service providers can be extremely confusing and frustrating since they are not aware what services exist or have trouble getting in touch with providers due to outdated information or difficult to navigate websites. Many brought up the need for a more centralized list of programs/services that include program/service descriptions, eligibility criteria, and up to date contact information. Although there

are multiple information and referral sources in the County, like Resource.net, Aunt Bertha, and 211, many families either do not know about them or do not utilize them when looking for assistance. It appears that Burlington County needs to work on marketing its programs to residents and connecting service providers with one another to address the pervasive lack of awareness of services available in the County.

-Subgroup Impact-There are a number of subgroups of the population that experience disproportionate levels of need or face additional challenges when accessing services in Burlington County. Some of these include: A). Black Families; B). Women; C). Adolescents; D). Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; E). Families Living in the Eastern Part of the County; F). Low Income Families; and G). Homeless. Black residents report being diagnosed with depression almost a full 5% more than their white counterparts. This disparity also came up during focus groups as well, with multiple different individuals pointing out that Black families are disadvantaged by the system when it comes to receiving mental and behavioral health care. Black individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities also face additional challenges; during focus groups with parents served by the Children's System of Care, multiple parents report that Black children are often perceived as being more threatening than white children, leading them to be restrained at higher rates, which can be traumatic. Between 2013 and 2017, there were 66 homicides in Burlington County and the majority of these victims were Black despite the County being 76% white. The homicide rate for white, non-Hispanics is 1.8, while the rate for Blacks is 10.2. This is troubling and indicates that as a subgroup, Black individuals are more at risk of being victims of violence. Women in the County earn \$12,000 less annually than their male counterparts. Women are the primary victims of domestic violence and report experiencing mental distress at a rate nearly three times that of males in the County. Outside of domestic violence services, no other specific female-oriented services came up during focus groups and interviews. Based on what is known about their mental health and earnings, it would seem that the County should be investing in programs designed to support women. The same could be said for children and adolescents who have a relative dearth of services available to them. During focus groups and interviews, participants report that especially when it comes to substance use and mental health, there are not enough programs designed to address the specific and unique needs of this subpopulation. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities also face this; there are relatively few programs designed with their needs in mind and those that do exist have long waiting lists or strict eligibility requirements. Traveling in the eastern part of the County necessitates a car, as there are very few transportation services available in these rural townships. The cost of maintaining a car in the County is roughly \$14,000 per year, which is a real burden for families who are low income. An issue raised frequently during focus groups is how challenging it is for a person to receive services when most providers are far away and do not have extended hours. Low income families and the homeless face the difficulty of dealing with wait lists, eligibility requirements, and the challenges that come with not having a stable home environment or way to be reached. When speaking about career services, one service provider made it clear that without stable access to the internet and a phone, it is exceedingly difficult to find work in Burlington County. Needs assessment participants believe the County has access to a fairly large constellation of services that are capable of addressing the identified needs; however, participants did indicate a need for more support from the state. Currently, existing

services cannot fully address the needs of County residents due to a lack of funding and support that would allow for the expansion of services. Further, some participants worry that if services are not being accessed for a variety of the barriers discussed, their funding could get cut, which would only put more strain on the remaining services, as well as families in need. Additionally, expanding transportation services is high priority, but is not something the County can do on its own. The same is true for housing; there are some services available, but to fully address the needs of County residents and eliminate wait lists, the County could greatly benefit from additional funding and support from the state.



Need Area: Housing

Status: Prioritized Need Area

Housing includes the availability of affordable, stable, permanent and acceptable living accommodations. This need area seeks to assess the sufficiency of housing in the county and the degree to which residents are homeless or threatened with eviction, as well as the existence of community supports (e.g., subsidy, vouchers, etc.) and services aimed at ensuring housing for all (e.g., Homelessness Prevention Program, Housing Resource Center, community shelters, County Board of Social Services, Section 8, affordable housing, housing authorities, etc.)

In Burlington County, 14 percent of household income was spent on housing in 2017. This percentage is less than the percentage for the state of New Jersey (American Community Survey; *see County Data Profile for Additional Source Information*). In 2019 the latest year of data made available in the county profile packet, 16 percent of households experienced at least one of four housing problems: 1.) overcrowding determined by high person-per-room, persons-per-bedroom, or unit square footage-per-person; 2) severe cost burden, 3) lack of kitchen facilities, or 4) lack of plumbing facilities (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy; data compiled by HUD; *see Data Profile for Additional Source Information*). Additional data for this need area may be available in the county profiles.

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

As mentioned in the County description, the annual cost of living in Burlington County outpaces the median family income by over \$10,000. Housing is the second highest monthly expense for families in Burlington County according to the data profile provided by the state. When it comes to households with severe cost burden for housing, though, Burlington County has one of the lowest rates (14%) in the state. Since 2014, the percent of households with severe housing problems (defined as overcrowding, severe cost, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities) has remained steady at 16%. While the housing needs of Burlington County residents may not be extreme, they certainly do exist. Less than one third of people who took the New Jersey DCF/HSAC County Needs Assessment survey report that they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the statement that there are enough housing services available in Burlington County. At the Human Services Needs Assessment Team County Profile Review Meeting, access to safe and affordable housing was one of the top five needs identified by the group of County stakeholders and during the course of the data collection process, housing emerged as one of the County’s Prioritized Needs. Further, the most recent estimate of the homeless population in the County (2019) indicates that 518 people comprising 313 households are experiencing homelessness.

When survey respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with the statement “Anyone in the County is able to access (housing) services,” half of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly

Disagree”, indicating the need for housing services is widespread. When asked whether housing services in Burlington County are known and widely advertised, 71% of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”. Out of the eight focus groups conducted, seven identify housing as a top Basic Need. This need was similarly prioritized during the key informant interviews, being selected as a top Basic Need in ten of the thirteen conducted. The analysis of the qualitative information collected shows that housing came up more than any other Basic Need, being referenced 56 different times. The next most referenced Basic Need is health care, with 24 mentions across the interviews and focus groups. All of this points to housing being a need for many people in the County.

When asked about barriers to getting housing services and subgroups that are more impacted by this need, a few main points arose. First, people that are unhoused face significant barriers to receiving services. According to our key informant interviews, there are no homeless shelters in Burlington County, although according to the HUD.gov website, there are 4 shelters in Burlington County. Often times people in need of housing are put up in motels for a few nights, but this does not resolve their long term housing problem. They also may not have access to the necessary electronic devices or telephones needed to apply for services. Second, there are individuals who cannot access services because of eligibility requirements that stipulate how much money a person can earn while receiving services. Though these people are living at or barely above the poverty line, they cannot access housing services. Third, individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities have incredibly limited options for supportive housing in Burlington County. The focus groups included a number of parents of children with these kinds of disabilities and they shared the very serious challenges they face in trying to secure proper housing for their loved ones. There does appear to be at least one agency in Burlington County, Community Options, Inc., which helps people with disabilities find housing in the community.

Summary: Nature of the Need

According to roughly one third of survey respondents, housing services do not exist in Burlington County. Since some supports do exist, this indicates a serious lack of awareness of the housing services in Burlington County. Lack of awareness of service is selected as a barrier to housing by 66% of people who took the survey. When talking about housing, 71% of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that services are widely advertised and known in Burlington County. Asked if they agree or disagree with the statement “Anyone in the County is able to access services,” 34% of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” and 48% “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”.

The Housing Hub, Providence House, the 2-1-1 Information and Referral line, and the Christian Caring Center are the supports most utilized by people struggling to meet housing needs in Burlington County according to focus group participants and interviewees. When it comes to the quality of housing services in Burlington County, survey respondents mostly agree that the housing services and staff are satisfactory. Forty-two and forty-eight percent of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly

Agree” that facilities aimed to meet this need are of good quality and staff are well trained and provide good customer service, respectively. One thing to note; however, is that the number of people selecting the “Don’t Know” answer went up significantly (roughly 15%) for the questions regarding quality of services, discriminatory practices, and staff knowledgeability. This may indicate that the individuals responding to the survey do not have personal experience utilizing these services so reports of their quality may be less reliable. During focus groups and interviews, participants had positive things to say about the quality of services these supports provide, but frequently brought up barriers that stop people from having their needs fully addressed.

Some of the barriers identified most often are affordability of housing, access to services, access to long term housing, transportation services that connect housing to job opportunities, eligibility requirements, wait times for assistance, and navigating the process as a person in crisis. Transportation and affordability seem to be linked as significant barriers. Fifty-four percent of survey respondents identify transportation as a barrier and many focus group participants reported that the most affordable housing in the County is in areas with the least access to public transportation. One focus group participant stated that this is an issue because what money a person may be saving on rent, they then end up spending on a personal vehicle because of their inability to access public transit systems. When discussing wait lists, one key informant indicated that one of the only programs in the County, Keeping Families Together, frequently has a wait list of ten or more families and some people could be waiting up to six months to receive assistance.

A number of focus groups participants shared that many of the services in Burlington County will help a person only in the short term, and longer term housing supports do not exist. One participant said “Some of these services are a band-aid – families are put up for a month and then they’re right back where they started afterwards.” The idea of providing wraparound services and addressing the root causes of housing insecurity was brought up by many interviewees and focus group participants. An individual with housing issues may also be dealing with unemployment, a mental health diagnosis, or a substance use disorder, which not only means it is challenging for them to navigate the process of applying for services, but that providing them with housing without addressing these other challenges may not solve the problem in the long term. This is exacerbated by long wait times (identified as a barrier by 63% of survey respondents) and eligibility requirements. If parents lose custody of their children or are cited for not living up to certain standards for receiving housing, they can lose access to services they desperately need. One interviewee told a heartbreaking story about a family that did not qualify for housing assistance because they made less than fifty dollars more than the eligibility requirements stipulated. A focus group participant from Burlington Township also mentioned that there is a significant amount of people in the community who fall into this ‘grey area’ of needing help, but not qualifying because of these kinds of requirements.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Based on the information collected from the focus groups and interviews, housing has been selected as a Prioritized Need in Burlington County and should be addressed in the next one to three years. Considering how many people identified it as one of the top Basic Needs (85% of focus groups and interviewees), the County should immediately begin working to address the housing needs of its residents. The majority of interview and focus group participants reported that Burlington County could address housing at the County level if it continues to prioritize it. Most participants also reported that the County does have organizations and programs that focus on housing, so access to these kinds of supports is not the main issue, but adjustments to how these services are advertised, structured, and distributed could have major results for families.

The Housing Hub, the Board of Social Services, and the 2-1-1 Information and Referral Helpline were mentioned as solid resources that help individuals get referred to housing service providers, but knowledge of services is still a serious issue. The Housing Hub is relatively new and nearly all of the participants who identified housing as a top need mentioned the fact that people often do not know where to start when looking for help. There were also repeated mentions of how confusing the process for applying for services can be. Navigators and case managers came up frequently during discussions with service providers, who recognized that while they may be able to refer a person to an agency for help, having a person familiar with the system taking a client through each step would streamline services. Wait times, eligibility requirements, and affordability barriers could all be partially mitigated by providing people looking for services with a person not only to help them understand their options, but help them advocate for themselves when running into issues with the system.

Most of the interviewees and focus group participants said that increased visibility of housing services would make a big difference in how well utilized they are, as evidenced by the lack of awareness of housing services being mentioned fourteen different times. When talking about the existing constellation of services, people are mostly satisfied with the amount of access Burlington County residents have to supportive services, but are more concerned by the fact that people do not know about them and the wait times people face when receiving services. Increasing awareness and addressing the lack of funding needed to fully meet the housing needs of residents are ways participants mentioned in which New Jersey Department of Children and Families could collaborate with Burlington County. Allowing the existing service providers to expand their services and couple clients with case managers/service navigators are recommendations that numerous community leaders, services providers, and Burlington residents made.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Some of the recurring themes across focus groups are the fact that housing is a longstanding issue in Burlington County, the lack of a dedicated shelter for unhoused people, the cost of housing in the County, the issue of transportation, and the difficulty in navigating the various programs & bureaucracies regarding housing services. Many of the interviewees have been County residents upwards of ten years, which gives additional weight to these themes. Multiple people reported that a person working a minimum wage job could not afford housing in Burlington County without some kind of assistance. There simply is not enough affordable housing stock in the County for those who need it. During focus groups and interviews, the perception that blue collar and low income residents in Burlington County have been priced out of homeownership for years was brought up over and over again. Even renting is not necessarily an option, as there is also a lack of affordable rentals in the County.

Housing costs are high and transportation compounds this issue because lower cost housing in the County is further from public transportation. Transportation also is a challenge because often to access services a person must go to the service provider's office to receive assistance. A recommendation made in some of the focus groups is to expand services in such a way that programs could meet people where they are, rather than requiring people in crisis to come to an office. One participant suggested a mobile response similar to the Hope One service that the County provides for individuals dealing with substance use disorders.

Part of the difficulty for people navigating services is knowing what services exist. Lack of awareness is a consistent barrier mentioned across all need areas and housing is no different. This came up in every focus group and interview - that most people only become aware of these services when they are in need and it is unclear how to navigate the system to receive these supports. There are limited programs, long wait lists, and eligibility requirements that make it so getting support is not simple enough to effectively navigate on your own. Multiple key informants mentioned a solution might be to create a navigator position who would help people access housing services, as well as other services needed to maintain housing.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	305	23 %	36 %	22 %	4 %	16 %	74 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	301	16 %	34 %	31 %	3 %	16 %	73 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	302	24 %	47 %	20 %	3 %	6 %	73 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	303	7 %	20 %	38 %	6 %	30 %	74 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	303	7 %	22 %	36 %	6 %	29 %	74 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	302	7 %	17 %	37 %	11 %	27 %	2 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	280	177	63%
Services do not exist	280	94	34%
Transportation	280	151	54%
Cannot contact the service provider	280	74	26%
Too expensive	280	77	28%
Lack of awareness of service	280	184	66%
Cultural Barriers	280	71	25%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	280	112	40%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	280	99	35%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	280	53	19%
Other (explain below)	280	22	8%

Need Area: Food

Status: General Need Area

Food security is the availability and ability to acquire nutritionally adequate and safe foods. This area of need seeks to assess the level to which residents throughout the county have adequate food and the existence of community services and supports to address unmet food needs (e.g., food banks, soup kitchen, local pantry, community-based organization, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), food stamps, Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition Program, etc.)

In **Burlington County**, the food insecurity rate for households was approximately 9.3 percent in **2017**, the most recent date of available data (U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey and U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service; see *County Data Profile for Additional Source Information*). This percentage is **less than** the percentage rate for New Jersey.

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

According to the County data profile provided by the state, it appears as though food insecurity in Burlington County is decreasing. However, the following reduced numbers could be more a reflection of application barriers and eligibility requirements versus actual need. In 2015, 10.5% of Burlington County residents experienced food insecurity, but by 2017 it fell to 9.3%. This decrease runs parallel to New Jersey's rate of food insecurity, which went from 10.8% to 9.6% over the same time period. Between 2013 and 2017, 1,191 less Burlington County residents received SNAP benefits. Participation in SNAP fell during the same time period by 1,119 people, a roughly 17% decrease. Children receiving free or reduced lunch also fell from 14,839 in 2013 to 13,720 in 2017 (a 7.5% decrease). All of these data points are pre-COVID 19 and may not reflect the current need for food in the County.

Results from the County Needs Assessment Survey show that 48% of survey respondents "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that there are enough food services in Burlington County, while 35% "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" with that statement. When asked if they agree or disagree with the statement that anyone in the County can access food services, 53% of survey respondents "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" and 32% "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree". This information is in conflict with the expertise of the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team and a good portion of focus group participants. The Needs Assessment Team identified food as one of the County's top needs during its initial planning meeting. Out of the twenty focus groups and key informant interviews, six selected food as one of their top Basic Needs. The only Basic Needs that participants prioritize above food are health care and housing.

This discrepancy between the Burlington County Needs Assessment Team's perception of food insecurity and the County data profile is worth investigating. One question to ask is if SNAP, WIC, and free/reduced lunch participation numbers are falling because there is less food insecurity in Burlington

County, or if people are not accessing these supports due to lack of information or eligibility requirements. Focus group participants and interviewees report that families with lower incomes are hit hardest by food needs. Unhoused people also face additional barriers to receiving food assistance because of their inability to find out about resources and lack of transportation to get to the services that exist.

Summary: Nature of the Need

When discussing the availability and accessibility of food supports in Burlington County, most people agree the County is doing well. Most focus group participants and interviewees are able to identify services available in the County by name, mentioning the mobile farmer's market operated by Virtua, numerous food banks, the Catholic Christian Caring Center, and the SNAP program. During an interview, a County employee said, "I've never had a family that we weren't able to help with food." Burlington County has plenty of supports when it comes to food; the challenge appears to be connecting those in need with the available services.

Sixty-three percent of survey respondents report transportation being a barrier to accessing food services, 60% report lack of awareness as a barrier, and 35% report stigma being a barrier. When asked if services are widely advertised and known in the County, 56% of respondents "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree". Focus group participants and interviewees confirm these barriers, reporting that though there are ample services in the County, but actually accessing the services requires individuals in need to know where to go. For instance, a person without a home or internet access is less likely to be aware of a local church holding a food drive and if they were to find out about it, may not have the transportation necessary to get there. Other comments made in focus groups indicated a need for healthier options (including fresh produce) at food banks and the need for residents to receive more education about the importance of eating healthy foods.

Though there are barriers to accessing services, the quality of food services in Burlington County is high. When asked about discriminatory practices, over half of survey respondents "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that services in Burlington County take race, age, gender, and ethnicity into account during service delivery. Similarly, 53% of people "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that the facilities providing food services are of good quality. When asked if staff at food service programs are knowledgeable and well trained, 56% of survey respondents indicate that they are. These numbers are some of the highest in all of the survey results. Overall, there are numerous high quality food supports available to Burlington County residents, but there appear to be challenges connecting people with these services.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Throughout the pandemic, Burlington County offered new; as well as continued, food services for residents. A few, but not all, creative ways the County has ensured their residents are food secure at this time are:

(1) The County repurposed, with the state's permission, funding for Missing/Abused/Neglect Children for the DCP&P two local Food Pantries. Normally, the grant would be used for training, and due to the pandemic and state restrictions on gathering, no trainings were scheduled, but the funding needed to be exhausted. So, the County was able to use a portion of this funding to fill the Pantries with nonperishable items for DCP&P families.

(2) As part of his ongoing commitment to address food insecurity, Senator Troy Singleton kicked-off "Food Truck Fridays" in the summer 2020, and provided 1,150 meals to children and families in need throughout Burlington County. The Senator hired the "Wanna Pizza This?" food truck; a local Burlington County based small business, to provide lunches to hundreds of residents in his district. Each Friday, in the summer, the Senator distributed meals that consisted of a 10" hoagie, chips, ice pops, and a beverage. The Senator partnered with school districts so they could promote the effort to families who receive free/reduced lunches. In all, the food truck stopped in 9 towns throughout the 7th Legislative District: Willingboro, Florence, Beverly, Burlington City, Cinnaminson, Bordentown, Riverside, Delran, and Palmyra. Additionally, Burlington County representatives attended the Food Truck events so families could learn about Burlington County Human Services' programs, and also to remind them to complete the 2020 Census. The Senator also invited BookSmiles, a South Jersey based book bank, to come and distribute bags of age appropriate books to children. Food Truck Fridays is part of Senator Singleton's ongoing commitment to tackling hunger in his district. Additionally, he collaborated with the Food Bank of South Jersey to host a pop-up food bank in Riverside. As a result, Burlington County residents received 1,920 gallons of milk, 2,500 pounds of chicken fingers, 900 whole chickens, 500 boxes of produce, and 500 boxes of pantry items. This effort provided food to 934 people and 245 households.

(3) The Family Support Organization, FSO, continues to sponsor its Harvest Program, distributing food to Burlington County families in need and operates 5 days a week, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

(4) Oaks Integrated Care operates the Burlington County Food Pantries program whose goal is to reduce food insecurity by providing food assistance to low-income residents in need. In addition to providing food supplies, the Pantries also periodically distributes food during times of increased food instability, like during the COVID 19 pandemic. Every Thanksgiving, the Pantries collect and distribute Thanksgiving meals; as well as helps families in need during the summer months when children do not have access to schools' free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs (Our Hunger

Doesn't Take a Vacation). This Thanksgiving, the Pantries distributed a record 2,250 meals compared to 1,600 last year, a 41% increase.

The Mount Holly Food Pantry, serves an average of 827 unique individuals a month providing food, toiletries, baby formula and diapers and other household necessities. Oaks Integrated Care additionally conducts outreach to homeless, underprivileged, and mentally ill individuals in the County, referring individuals in need to the Food Pantries and continuum of services. Pantry hours are 10:00 AM-Noon Monday through Wednesday, and 1:00 PM-3 PM Thursday through Friday. Due to the pandemic Pantries visit limitations were lifted and Oaks Integrated Care saw an almost 50% increase in new consumers, more than doubling its distribution rates.

(5) One of the more exciting innovations in the County is the Mobile Grocery Store. On September 9, 2020, Virtua Health announced the latest component of its food access initiatives: Eat Well Mobile Grocery Store. This year-round, 40-foot store-on-wheels is the newest addition to Virtua's portfolio of programs that position food as a form of medicine. According to Feeding America's 2020 projected food insecurity data, an estimated 12% of Burlington County residents do not know where their next meal will come from. The Mobile Grocery Store will offer fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant foods at below-market prices to residents of Burlington (and Camden) County – particularly food-desert communities that experience higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related diseases. The Mobile Grocery Store serves to enhance Virtua's current food services in Burlington County, like its Mobile Farmers Market, which during the height of COVID-19, temporarily converted into a mobile food pantry to better meet the needs local residents in distress. The Mobile Farmers Market provides access to produce year-round with the goal of improving health and ensuring good nutrition in underserved areas. Currently, the Mobile Farmers Market operates in Burlington County on Thursday at two locations in Westhampton and Willingboro. The Market also offers 50% off for SNAP/EBT card holders.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	270	8 %	27 %	39 %	9 %	18 %	66 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	270	9 %	23 %	47 %	6 %	15 %	66 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	270	14 %	42 %	28 %	4 %	11 %	66 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	267	5 %	17 %	46 %	5 %	27 %	65 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	269	3 %	13 %	46 %	6 %	32 %	65 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	266	4 %	12 %	47 %	9 %	28 %	65 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	222	49	22%
Services do not exist	222	41	18%
Transportation	222	140	63%
Cannot contact the service provider	222	36	16%
Too expensive	222	20	9%
Lack of awareness of service	222	134	60%
Cultural Barriers	222	37	17%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	222	70	32%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	222	80	36%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	222	29	13%
Other (explain below)	222	11	5%

Need Area: Health Care

Status: General Need Area

Health care service providers deliver medical care, including health promotion, disease prevention and diagnosis and treatment services, to children and adults. This need area seeks to determine the level of residents in the county with health care needs, the availability of insurance coverage, and the existence of community services and supports that address health and wellness (e.g., doctors and clinics, hospitals, Medicaid Services, Home Visiting Programs, Family Success Centers, etc.)

In **Burlington County**, the estimated proportion of children under 18 years old (minors) with no health insurance coverage was 2.5 percent in 2017. This percentage is **less than** the estimated percentage of minors with no health insurance for New Jersey in the same year (ACS; see Data Profile for Additional Source Information).

In Burlington County in **2018**, there were 300 reports of lack of or no prenatal care. This was **increase** of 54 reports from the previous year (Center for Disease Control and Prevention; see *Data Profile for Additional Source Information*).

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

Focus group and interview participants consistently identify health care as a serious need in Burlington County. Health care is also prioritized by survey respondents, 24% of which identify health care as one of the County's top three Basic Needs. According to the county data profile, residents of Burlington County appear to have adequate access to health care. The percentage of minors without health insurance (2.5%) is significantly lower than the New Jersey average (4.4%) and has been dropping steadily since 2013. The Burlington County minors without health insurance primarily reside in the municipalities of Eastampton, Bass River, Edgewater Park, Bordentown Township, Pemberton, and Woodland Township, all of which have rates ranging from 5 – 11%. When looking at Medicaid participation, Burlington County ranks near the middle of New Jersey's twenty-one counties, with 16,303 children and 4,262 adults utilizing the Non-ABD service. Despite these positives, there are health care challenges facing the residents of Burlington County.

Particularly troubling are the child immunization rates and the prenatal care data. Burlington County lags the state when it comes to immunization rates and has gotten worse since 2013 (dropping from 96% of children being immunized to 93.5%). Burlington County is in the bottom half of New Jersey counties when it comes to prenatal care as well, with 300 reports of late or insufficient prenatal care in 2018, a 47% increase (96 additional reports) since 2016. During a 2018 community health needs survey conducted by the Walter Rand Institute at Rutgers University - Camden, the top three resources community members reported needing were free/low cost medical care, free/low cost

prescription drugs, and low-cost dental care. Thirty-two percent of these individuals reported not getting essential health care for themselves because of cost. During the data collection process for this Human Services Needs Assessment report, focus group participants and interviewees were asked if issues surrounding health care access and utilization were new, most report that these are longstanding issues in the County.

Participants from multiple focus groups (community members, service providers, and youth) report that health care is a widespread issue in Burlington County, especially when considering lower income families. According to information provided by the Economic Policy Institute, families in Burlington County are spending over \$1,000 per month on health care expenses. The expenses associated with health care, and the lack of insurance for many families, came up frequently in focus groups, with one participant sharing that often people will go to emergency rooms for help since they think it is “their only real option, because they can’t be turned away.” When asked if certain subgroups of the population experienced greater challenges in receiving health care, key informants frequently mentioned low income families and families from different cultures that either do not speak English as their primary language or have uncertain immigration status. The lack of translation services available and worries that undocumented individuals experience when seeking health care were both brought up in multiple interviews.

Summary: Nature of the Need

Asked to agree or disagree with the statement that there are enough health care services available in Burlington County, the majority of respondents (48%) “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”. Survey respondents are roughly split when it comes to whether or not people in Burlington County have access to health care services, with 44% saying services are widely available and 43% disagreeing with the statement. When survey respondents were asked about the quality of services, knowledgeability of staff, and the cultural competence of service providers, the number of individuals who responded “Don’t Know” rose significantly. While only 9% of respondents said they did not know if health care services are widely advertised in the County, 28% responded that they did not know if health care services take race, age, gender, ethnicity, and more into account during delivery. Response rates for questions about cleanliness and staff professionalism were similar. On the whole, the perception is that these services are of good quality, but a large portion of people appear to be inexperienced when it comes to accessing these services themselves.

Another trend that emerged is a lack of knowledge when it comes to services available in the County. Health care is no different than the other needs in this regard, with survey respondents reporting dissatisfaction with the amount of outreach the County is doing. Fifty-eight percent of people who took the survey “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” with the statement that health care services are widely known and advertised in Burlington County. As might be expected, the most frequently identified barrier to receiving services is lack of awareness of service. Focus group participants and

key informant interviewees echoed this as well, reporting that many times people do not know what their options are for receiving health care. Insurance came up as a factor in these discussions too, with individuals reporting that there are serious disparities in terms of the number of service providers in the County who accept private insurance versus Medicare or Medicaid. While cost was not one of the top three barriers identified by survey respondents, it did come up in focus groups.

Transportation is another major issue, with 53% of survey respondents reporting that it is a barrier to service. One longtime Burlington County resident spoke about this, saying transportation has been an issue for decades and that, “Burlington County is fairly large with towns spread out... our services are typically localized in one place - if you live in the outskirts, it’s hard to get there.” The Browns Mills area was brought up by a few different participants as a specific place that has difficulty accessing services because of a lack of public transportation. Survey participants identify wait lists as the third most serious barrier to receiving services, but they do not rise to the same level of seriousness that the lack of awareness and transportation do in focus groups and interviews.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	256	15 %	33 %	34 %	7 %	12 %	62 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	255	14 %	29 %	37 %	7%	13 %	62 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	254	15 %	43 %	28 %	6 %	9 %	62 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	255	7 %	19 %	42 %	4 %	28 %	62 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	257	4 %	18 %	44 %	7 %	28 %	63 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	253	7 %	15 %	45 %	9 %	25 %	62 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	216	89	41%
Services do not exist	216	62	29%
Transportation	216	115	53%
Cannot contact the service provider	216	61	28%
Too expensive	216	79	37%
Lack of awareness of service	216	122	56%
Cultural Barriers	216	63	29%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	216	82	38%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	216	64	30%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	216	24	11%
Other (explain below)	216	10	5%

Need Area: Community Safety

Status: General Need Area

Community safety is the ability to be and feel safe from crime or violence in one's community and public spaces. This need area seeks to assess the level to which residents throughout the county are safe from crime or violence and the existence of community services and supports to assist residents with being and feeling safe in their community (e.g., local police, DCF's Child Protection and Permanency, Family Success Centers, security companies, neighborhood watch, safe havens, hospitals, etc.)

In Burlington County there was a total of 719 violent crimes in 2016 and the *violent crime* rate per 1,000 was 1.6 percent (NJ Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of NJ State Police, Uniform Crime Reports, Updated 8/15/19; see Data Profile for Additional Source Information). Of the *non-violent* crimes committed there was a total of 33 arson, 298 motor vehicle theft, 4,941 larceny and 1,342 burglary in Burlington County (NJ Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of NJ State Police, Uniform Crime Report, Updated 8/15/19; see *Data Profile for Additional Source Information*).

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

Burlington County's violent crime rate (which includes murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) is near the median for New Jersey counties, with 1.6 violent crimes per 1,000 residents. Hunterdon has the lowest in the state, with .4 per 1,000 residents and Essex has the highest, with 5.7 violent crimes per 1,000 people. The most common violent crime in Burlington County is aggravated assault. Burlington's non-violent crime rate (which includes burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson) is 14.6 per 1,000 residents. The most common non-violent crime in Burlington County is larceny, which is defined as when a person deprives another of their property rights, and usually does not involve force.

In 2017, New Jersey had a homicide rate of 4.1 per 100,000 people, but Burlington County had so few homicides (13) that the rate is cut in half to 2.9 per 100,000 people. While the 2017 rate is low, that does not mean homicides do not happen; between 2013 and 2017 there were 66 homicides in Burlington County. Of these homicide victims, 49 were men and 17 were women. The majority of these homicide victims were Black, despite the County being 76% white. The homicide rate per 100,000 people for white, non-Hispanic people is 1.8, while the rate for Blacks is 10.2. This is troubling and indicates that as a subgroup of the overall County population, Black individuals are more at risk of being victims of violence.

The Burlington County juvenile arrest rates in 2016 match the New Jersey rate, with 10 arrests per 1,000 youth. This is a significant drop from their high of 16 per 1,000 in 2012, implying the County is

making strides in the juvenile justice space. The Stationhouse Adjustment (SHA) directive of the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General is an underutilized resource in the County, especially in municipalities with higher numbers of juvenile arrests. SHA is a diversion effort to prevent juveniles from being formally processed in the courts, leading to a record, while also holding them accountable through community service and other restorative practices assigned. Research on diversion efforts such as SHA shows a lower recidivism rate (further delinquency and criminal involvement) than for formally processed and detained youth. According to the survey data, 54% of respondents feel there are enough community safety services available to them. Focus groups and interviews told the same story, with only five of the twenty selecting community safety as one of their top Basic Needs.

Summary: Nature of the Need

Fifty-five percent of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that anyone in Burlington County can access community safety services. Residents are broadly happy with the community safety services provided by the County; 48% of individuals “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that services take race, age, and gender into account when delivering services, 56% of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that facilities providing community safety services in Burlington County are of good quality, and 57% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that community safety staff are well trained and provide good customer service. Due to the wording of the survey; however, there is some ambiguity as to how respondents are defining community safety services. The term “Community Safety” could mean access to police officers for some people or access to community based organizations or neighborhood associations for others.

The O League, Providence House, Faith in Action, and local police departments are the organizations focus group participants and interviewees identify as providing community safety services in Burlington County. Some of these providers assist clients in preparing for and attending court cases, while others provide outlets to young people, like sports and other youth activities, as a form of prevention. One subgroup of young people, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, was identified by focus group participants as needing additional services. Based on focus group responses, the training of local police officers is lacking when it comes to understanding and interacting with children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. One interviewee who works for the local law enforcement system said when the County wants to invest in public safety, it should be thinking about more than just police services:

“Working with the community organizations that are really investing in prevention, so with juveniles and gang violence. They can go into the community and resolve issues before they escalate. We (law enforcement) are reactive, we’re not proactive. We’re (the County) not putting dollars into the issues that could abate and could prevent issues from coming on later. So when someone overdoses or when there’s gun violence in the community. If there could be dollars put into the hands of the individuals dealing with this to minimize the big things we see, it could make a difference. It’s easy to

calculate how many people call 9-1-1, but it's not as easy to calculate 'Oh, we gave these person services in the community 8 years ago and now they're not involved in gangs or on drugs.' You can't calculate that. You can provide services to people and be in the community, but at the end of the day, it's a very complicated issue. They're all intertwined, but I think community safety goes back to strong resources within the community. We're in this vicious cycle dealing with people in this crisis moment instead of seeing that 'person A' was dealing with these issues 10 years ago and we could have helped them then."

When it comes to barriers Burlington County residents face when accessing community safety services, the responses from survey participants varied. Lack of awareness of services (63%) was the number one barrier to services by far, but the issues of stigma leading to avoidance, transportation, cultural barriers, and services being one-size-fits-all each received roughly 30% of responses. Focus group participants report wanting police officers to receive more training and information about local services available because of how often they are called upon to make referrals. Interviewees and focus group participants also report wanting more transparency and community outreach from their local police departments.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If Applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	247	9 %	19 %	45 %	9 %	18 %	60 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	244	7 %	23 %	47 %	8 %	16 %	59 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	247	13 %	30 %	39 %	6 %	12 %	60 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	243	5 %	21 %	42 %	6 %	25 %	59 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	246	4 %	11 %	48 %	8 %	30 %	60 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	246	5 %	11 %	46 %	11 %	26 %	60 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	155	23	15%
Services do not exist	155	40	26%
Transportation	155	50	32%
Cannot contact the service provider	155	22	14%
Too expensive	155	21	14%
Lack of awareness of service	155	97	63%
Cultural Barriers	155	47	30%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	155	44	28%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	155	49	32%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	155	9	6%
Other (explain below)	155	5	3%

Need Area: Employment and Career Services

Status: General Need Area

Employment is the condition of having paid work or an alternate ability to earn a living. This need area seeks to determine the employment status (e.g., full or part-time, permanent or temporary) of county residents and the employment opportunities within a county, as well as the existence of community services and supports to assist in ensuring employment (e.g., unemployment services, career development, County One-Stop Centers, Family Success Centers, County Board of Social Services, etc.)

A year ago (May 2019), unemployment in Burlington County (2.8%) was slightly lower than the New Jersey rate (3%) and there were only seven counties in the state with lower rates. Although this rate was the lowest in the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metropolitan Statistical Area, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, looking ahead a year, after COVID 19 hit, the County's unemployment rate has significantly increased to 13.7%, according to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. This compares with New Jersey's rate of about 16.6%, which is higher than the United States as a whole (11.1%), likely because New Jersey was one of the states hit hardest by the pandemic early on.

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

As of 2017, Burlington County households have the eighth highest median income in the state, bringing in \$82,839 annually. This has increased noticeably (5.6%) since 2013, when the median household income for County residents was \$78,446. The annual cost of living in Burlington County for a two parent, two child household is \$95,493. Weekly wages, in whole dollars, increased slightly between 2016 and 2018, going from \$1,037 to \$1,143, representing a slightly greater than 10% increase. The Burlington County municipalities with the lowest median income (under \$60,000) in 2017 are Wrightstown, Beverly City, Burlington City, Southampton, and Maple Shade.

The difference in pay between male and female wage-earners in Burlington County is stark. The median annual wage of a man in Burlington County is \$64,865, while the median annual wage of a female worker in the County is \$52,550, a difference of over \$12,000 and nearly 23% lower. This gender gap is larger than the gender wage gap in both New Jersey and the United States at large. Considering the fact that women are an incredibly important part of the economy, the County should consider this to be a serious issue to be addressed. Seven of twenty focus groups and interviews identified employment and career services as one of their top Basic Needs, driving home the fact that while it may not be a Prioritized Need, residents of Burlington County consider these services (or lack thereof) to be very important.

In addition to women, there are other subgroups in the Burlington County population that experience noticeable difficulties when it comes to employment. Individuals without access to transportation or

internet connected devices face challenges applying for and following up with jobs. County residents with criminal histories are often passed over for positions because of their record. According to focus group participants, young people with intellectual or developmental disabilities do not currently have the kind of supports they need to transition into the workforce, and when they do get assistance, they are pigeon-holed into one or two low paying industries.

Summary: Nature of the Need

In seven out of the twenty focus groups and interviews, participants report that employment and career services is one of their top Basic Needs. One quarter of survey respondents reply that they “Don’t Know” whether there are enough services in Burlington County to address this need. Of the respondents that answered, 37% “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that there are enough employment and career services, and 33% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. When asked if anyone in Burlington County could access these services, the responses were slightly more positive, with 39% indicating they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” and 36% reporting they “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”.

The One Stop Career Center in the Burlington County Human Services building was mentioned in focus groups and interviews as a useful resource for residents. Libraries and local colleges were also mentioned as providing important services to job-seekers, specifically internet access and resume help. These supports are vital because while access to technology was not identified as a top barrier to individuals receiving assistance, as one focus group participant put it, “There are a lot of unfortunate circumstances that put people in a position where they can’t afford to have a phone or a laptop, so even if they are in the process of having a dialogue with an employer somehow, they can’t follow up.” The fact that most job postings have moved online also contributes to the importance of reliable internet access for job-seekers. When asked about the quality of services available in Burlington County, 45% of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that employment and career services are of good quality. Forty-four percent of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that staff of these services are knowledgeable and well trained.

The top three barriers survey respondents report facing are a lack of awareness of services, transportation, and wait lists. Increasing the public’s knowledge of County programs is a recurring theme in this needs assessment. As it stands, many Burlington County residents admit that they do not know what kind of services are available to them, where these services are located, or how to apply for the needed services. In order to address the needs of its residents, the County must do a better job connecting residents with information about the services they need. Transportation is another longstanding barrier for residents that impacts employment. Without access to quality public transportation, many County residents are unable to attend job fairs and job training sessions the County helps orchestrate.

Survey respondents rank wait lists as a serious barrier, but during focus groups and interviews eligibility requirements came up more frequently. According to one interviewee, a County resident must be a client of the Board of Social Services before they can access the One Stop Career Center. Whether this is true or not, the perception exists and could be widespread throughout the County. This particular eligibility criterion limits the services available to individuals needing employment assistance, in particular those who are employed but looking to change careers. Such limitations are worrisome when considering what a key informant who works in the career services field said about the skills gap in Burlington County. According to this service provider, there is a noticeable difference in the skills local employers are looking for and the skills job-seekers in the County currently possess.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	243	9 %	33 %	29 %	4 %	25 %	59 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	241	8 %	29 %	36 %	3 %	24 %	59 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	242	10 %	44 %	23 %	1 %	22 %	59 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	242	5 %	19 %	41 %	2 %	33 %	59 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	241	2 %	17 %	41 %	4 %	37 %	59 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	240	3 %	18 %	38 %	6 %	35 %	58 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	168	48	29%
Services do not exist	168	45	27%
Transportation	168	96	57%
Cannot contact the service provider	168	29	17%
Too expensive	168	11	7%
Lack of awareness of service	168	114	68%
Cultural Barriers	168	40	24%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	168	46	27%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	168	34	20%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	168	14	8%
Other (explain below)	168	3	2%

Need Area: CHILD CARE**Status: General Need Area**

Child care services include agencies that provide care and supervision to children; as well as, before- and after- school care programs. This need area seeks to assess the level to which residents throughout the county need child care and before and after school care and the existence of community services and supports that address the need for child care (e.g., licensed daycares providers, subsidized and unsubsidized childcare, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, Family Success Centers, County Board of Social Services, etc.)

In Burlington County in 2017 the median monthly center-based child care cost for an infant was greater than the median monthly cost for NJ. The median monthly center-based child care cost for a toddler was greater than the median monthly cost for NJ. Median monthly center-based child care cost child care cost for Pre-K in Burlington County was greater than the median monthly cost for NJ.

Need Assessment Key Findings**Summary: Scope of the Need**

Child care in Burlington County is a need with which many families struggle. According to the County data profile provided by the state, child care is the largest monthly expense for families in Burlington County. Every month, (for a two parent, two child family) \$1,527 is spent to care for children; surpassing the amount of money individually spent on transportation, housing, health care, or food costs. When it comes to infant care, Burlington County has the sixth most expensive care in the state (\$1,216/month). The rankings for toddler and pre-kindergarten care are similarly high; the median toddler care in Burlington County costs \$1,120 per month and for pre-kindergarten aged children, Burlington County residents pay a median of \$860 per month. In a County where the median household income is significantly less than the cost of living, these high expenses can pose serious issues for families.

During seven of the twenty focus groups and key informant interviews, participants brought up child care services in Burlington County. Despite some participants wanting to talk about the child care needs of Burlington County residents, no focus group or interviewee selected child care as one of their top Service Needs. This is somewhat surprising, as there are 93,897 children under the age of 18 living in Burlington County. Thirty percent of these children are under the age of six, which is when children need the most supervision.

When discussing families that are most in need of child care services, focus group participants and interviewees report that children with intellectual and developmental disabilities need more supports, as do low income families. Parents in the focus group composed of families served by the Children's System of Care in particular are adamant that services should be expanded for these

populations. Financial support for families and programs designed specifically to address the needs of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities are some of the recommendations offered by these parents.

Summary: Nature of the Need

When asked to respond to a statement about there being enough child care services in Burlington County, 39% of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”. Individuals who “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the statement only make up 24% of the survey responses, indicating a perceived lack of available child care services in the County. Survey respondents rate the accessibility of child care services in Burlington County similarly, with 37% saying they “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that anyone can access services, and 25% reporting they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. Cost is the most significant barrier for families trying to access child care, as evidenced by the fact that 53% of survey respondents identify the cost of child care as a barrier for families in the County. Many of the focus group participants and interviewees agree; cost is a serious issue for families looking for child care. When a child has special needs, the problem is compounded.

Several focus group participants report that the options available for children with special needs are few and far between. Discussing the challenges of getting care for a child with intellectual or developmental disabilities, one parent put it this way, “There are a lot of financial barriers to parents getting the child care they need, especially when parents need to pay for one-on-one support staff for their children in a child care center. It forces parents to quit their jobs to be able to just take care of the kids on their own.” Most private child care facilities are not required to make accommodations for this population, which puts extra strain on families needing this kind of support.

County residents who have children with special needs are not the only people impacted by the high cost of child care. When discussing workforce development and skills training programs available to County residents, one interviewee reports that a significant number of people who want to take part in job training seminars or skills trainings are unable to because of their childcare needs. This can hinder a family’s earnings during a child’s developmental years and a parent’s ability to enter the workforce. Mothers are especially impacted because of societal expectations to be caregivers for children.

While more survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” (29%) than “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” (19%) that services in Burlington County are of good quality, the biggest issue appears to be cost. It is also worth noting that for the three survey questions dealing with the quality of child care facilities and staff, the number of people who answer that they “Don’t Know” rises up significantly to nearly or just above half of respondents (which is at least 10% higher than the three questions dealing with availability and access to services).

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	238	13 %	26 %	21 %	3 %	38 %	58 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	237	13 %	23 %	22 %	3 %	38 %	58 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	237	12 %	32 %	19 %	2 %	34 %	58 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	238	7 %	14 %	29 %	3 %	48 %	58 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	236	5 %	14 %	26 %	3 %	52 %	57 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	235	6 %	14 %	25 %	4 %	51 %	57 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	143	66	46%
Services do not exist	143	36	25%
Transportation	143	70	49%
Cannot contact the service provider	143	18	13%
Too expensive	143	76	53%
Lack of awareness of service	143	72	50%
Cultural Barriers	143	35	24%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	143	32	22%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	143	20	14%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	143	18	13%
Other (explain below)	143	6	4%

PART 3

Results: Specialized Service Needs



Need Area: Services for Families Caring for a Child of a Relative

Status: General Need Area

Kinship services are supports for caregivers who have taken on the responsibility of caring for kin, including financial assistance, support groups, navigation of government benefits and assistance, and more. This need area seeks to assess the level to which residents require kinship services and the existence of community services and supports to support caregivers' ability to care for their kin (e.g., Kinship Navigator Program, DCF's Division of Child Protection and Permanency, Family Success Centers, County Board of Social Services, etc.)

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

Burlington County ranks in the middle of all New Jersey counties when it comes to children under the age of 18, with 93,897. Of those children, 2,058 (just slightly more than 2%) are involved with the Department of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P). Of these DCP&P involved children, 87% remain in their home, with only 259 children (13%) being removed from their home and living elsewhere. The total number of children being placed in homes as a result of DCP&P involvement has dropped every year since 2014 (45%). DCP&P data show that in 2018 (latest year data is available), 37% of out of home placement children were placed with family members, while the rest were placed with non-relatives (non-kinship placements include placements with non-kinship resource families, congregate care, and independent living). Kinship placements in Burlington County dropped by nearly 33% (143 to 96) from 2017 to 2018. A number of services exist in Burlington County to help these families, including two Family Success Centers, two legal guardianship service providers, court appointed special advocacy, the Center for Family Services, and the Burlington County Community Action Partnership.

Only one focus group participant indicated kinship services as a top Service Need in Burlington County. Survey responses, on the other hand, indicate that kinship services are in need of attention; only 12% of people "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that services are widely advertised and known by County residents. Likewise, only 17% of survey respondents "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that there are enough services to help everyone with this need in the County, and 21% "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that anyone can access these services. The most common barriers to accessing kinship services are lack of awareness of the available services, lack of transportation, absence of services, long wait lists, and cultural barriers. Focus group participants also suggest that children are disproportionately affected by the lack of these resources and services.

Summary: Nature of the Need

According to survey respondents, kinship services are in need of refinement in the County. One respondent indicates that “The communication (by the) family court, DCP&P, CMOs, and the various providers is terrible”. Other issues that warrant attention are a general shortage of staff to provide assistance, lack of community presence, and lackluster relationship-building between service providers and families. As noted previously, “a lack of awareness of service” was the most frequently cited barrier to accessing kinship services and only 21% of survey respondents indicate that anyone in the County can access services. In focus groups, participants report a lack of clear organizational structure and points of contact as major hindrances to accessing services, noting that, “Families and individuals get overwhelmed by the lack of clarity and resources,” surrounding these services.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	230	9 %	23 %	15 %	2 %	51 %	56 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	230	7 %	21%	20 %	2 %	50 %	56 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	229	11 %	30 %	10 %	2 %	47 %	56 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	228	4 %	18 %	19 %	2 %	57 %	55 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	229	4 %	12 %	20 %	3 %	61 %	56 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	228	4 %	14 %	20 %	3 %	59 %	55 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	117	34	29%
Services do not exist	117	38	32%
Transportation	117	39	33%
Cannot contact the service provider	117	25	21%
Too expensive	117	22	19%
Lack of awareness of service	117	86	74%
Cultural Barriers	117	32	27%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	117	25	21%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	117	21	18%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	117	7	6%
Other (explain below)	117	3	3%

Need Area: Behavioral/Mental Health Services for Children

Status: Prioritized Need Area

Child behavioral/mental health services are services designed to assess, address and support the emotional, psychological and social well-being of children. This need area seeks to assess the level to which children throughout the county have behavioral/mental health disorders, their ability to cope and function, and the existence of community services and supports to address children's behavioral/mental health needs (e.g., hospitals, in/out-patient therapy, individualized counseling, medication management, PerformCare, DCF's Children's System of Care, Family Support Organizations, etc.)

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

Behavioral and mental health services for children in Burlington County is determined to be a Prioritized Need based on responses from community members and the Human Services Needs Assessment Team. This decision is well supported by data. It was mentioned in twelve of the twenty focus groups and interviews conducted and was the second most selected Service Need by survey respondents. These are not just perceptions; Burlington County residents have some of the highest rates of mental health distress in the state. While the average rate of mental health distress for the state is 12.1%, in Burlington County 15.8% of residents reported having fourteen or more "not good" mental health days out of the past thirty. This is the fourth highest rate in the state, and represents a spike in the number of poor mental health days from the previous years. In 2016, Burlington County's rate was 8.5% and for the three years prior it hovered around 11%. Considering the recent impact of the novel coronavirus on residents' lives, it is being predicted that mental health services will be in higher demand in the coming months and years. Black and white residents have similar rates of mental health distress, but women in Burlington County experience significantly more mental health distress than men. Twenty-four percent of women in the County reported experiencing health distress as compared to only eight percent of men.

When it comes to diagnosed depression, Burlington County fares much better. Its rate of 14.7% is very close to the average for New Jersey (14.8%) and is near the middle for the twenty-one counties. Further, this rate is down from the County's 2015 high of 15.7%. Again, there is a significant difference when looking at gender; 8.6% of men in Burlington County are diagnosed with depression, whereas 21.5% of women suffer from the same issue. Some racial differences emerge for depression diagnoses. Black residents of Burlington County report being diagnosed with depression almost a full 5% more than their white counterparts. This came up during focus groups as well, with multiple different individuals pointing out that Black families are disadvantaged by the system when it comes to mental and behavioral health. One participant speaking about young Black boys with mental or

behavioral issues said plainly, “They're less likely to get an accurate diagnosis, they're much more likely to be segregated off to out of district programs, much more likely to be restrained or suspended, and that’s done without going back and getting proper behavioral supports in place.”

According to data provided by the state, there are twenty-six different services available in Burlington County that can help with mental health distress. Of particular importance are the four supportive housing locations, two self-help centers, five residential service facilities, the integrated case management service, and two outpatient service centers. Despite the presence of these services, the vast majority of survey respondents do not agree that Burlington County has enough services. When asked about the availability of these supports, 58% of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” with the statement that there are enough services. Children were brought up a few times as a group that faced additional difficulty receiving services. According to residents and service providers, there is a serious lack of services for children under the age of nine, and inpatient services in particular are nearly impossible to access because of long wait times and a limited number of providers.

Summary: Nature of the Need

When considering the nature of the need for behavioral and mental health services for children in Burlington County, the data indicates that there are some gaps in services that the County should work to address in the coming years. Nearly 60% of survey respondents indicate that there are not enough behavioral and mental health services for young people in Burlington County. When asked if they agree with the statement that behavioral and mental health services for young people are accessible to County residents 41% of respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” while only 32% “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”. Lack of awareness is the most frequently identified barrier from survey respondents, which lines up with the fact that 55% of survey respondents do not think that Burlington County does a good job advertising its behavioral and mental health services for children.

During focus groups and interviews, community members and service providers alike report a lack of behavioral and mental health services for children and a lack of knowledge about the services that do exist as major barriers. Multiple times when asked what people currently do to try and meet their behavioral and mental health needs, participants indicate that if a person is not already familiar with County services they either go through their child’s school or frantically try to search the internet for supports available to them. School districts could be a useful resource for children to get help, but staffing and staff knowledge are identified problems. Focus group participants report that it is not uncommon for an entire school to be served by one counselor. This is a real issue for high needs children and according to the parent focus group participants, some schools have not yet gotten up to speed on how the referral process works and what services are available in the County. This can lead to a child’s behaviors being punished rather than being seen as an issue to work through collaboratively. An example was given about a child going into crisis while at school and that the most

common reaction is to call Mobile Response, which leads to the child being restrained and taken from school, a jarring experience not only for the child but for their classmates and teachers as well.

PerformCare was mentioned as a resource, but multiple people report that the application process is arduous for working parents and further, once a family is approved for assistance, the help given is limited in scope. Survey respondents report that the services in Burlington County for young people dealing with behavioral or mental health issues are of good quality. While the number of “Don’t Know” answers did noticeably rise for this set of questions, more people “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that services take race and ethnicity into account when providing services and that staff are well trained. Focus group participants and interviewees were less supportive of staff in the County, reporting that they could be trained better. Part of the issue, according to parents served by the Children’s System of Care, is the low pay for these positions, which does not attract the kind of qualified candidates needed.

After lack of awareness of services, the two largest barriers reported by survey respondents are wait lists and avoiding care because of stigma. The issue of pay also came up with focus group and interview participants. Multiple participants say that service providers like child psychologists in Burlington County simply do not make as much money as they could in less expensive counties, leading to a lack of providers. With less providers available, wait lists get longer and families get frustrated by the lack of support. Stigma is an ongoing challenge, but one key informant offered some hope on this subject, telling data collectors that the internet has helped empower young people struggling with mental health to search for answers about how they are feeling.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Based on its status as a Prioritized Need, the issue of behavioral and mental health services for children should be considered an urgent need in Burlington County. When considering the long term impact of the novel coronavirus on children and their support systems, this is even more apparent. Families are struggling economically and are disconnected from important supports like school counselors and extended family, none of which bodes well for the health of children with these kinds of needs. In the next few years, it is likely that demand for these services will increase.

When asked if County residents have enough access to programs and resources for these kinds of needs, responses varied. Some interviewees felt that with the proper prioritization the current systems in place would be able to support the behavioral and mental health of Burlington youth. Mobile health is considered a bright spot for the County, but it needs to be maintained and expanded. Streamlining the application for services and expanding the services available through PerformCare would be a major step that the County could take. A barrier to access that came up during focus groups is that unless parents already know how to navigate the behavioral health system or use certain “key words and phrases” a parent is unlikely to get the help they need for their child.

Working on expanding access is something, in addition to better advertisement of available services, the County could work on without necessarily making drastic changes or incurring huge costs.

Other key informants report that without additional funding and support from the state, the programs that do exist will not be sustainable in the long-term. Burlington County itself has no control over the minimum wage and apparently does not currently have the funding necessary to pay its mental and behavioral health workers the kind of wages necessary to attract qualified applicants or retain the service providers that families need. When asked what the County and state could do to address the barriers to receiving services, one interviewee replied that additional funding and expanding services are what Burlington needs most. “I think trauma based counseling is huge, especially with the pandemic. Our crisis units are bursting at the seams. They screen upwards of 200 people per night. And there’s nowhere for them to go. They (staff at crisis units) should get paid more to do the job. We’re not paying them nearly enough to do the job.” The interviewee continued, saying that state contracts could help bring in more child psychiatrists, which the County is sorely lacking at the moment. “We have two contracted providers in our area and both of them are filled to the brims with patient and waitlists. Mental health and psychiatry and counseling are the next biggest things (after trauma based counseling) I would pour my money into.”

Based on what the focus groups and key informants reported, the County is capable of making certain tweaks to its services that would help people, but additional support from the state will be instrumental in addressing these needs long term. There is not currently enough access to resources or service providers and while the County has been creative in finding low cost ways to address certain barriers, partnerships with the state would make a world of difference.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

A few trends emerged throughout the needs assessment. Burlington County residents and service providers in both survey responses and focus groups maintain that the County simply does not do enough to make their services known to the public. Lack of awareness is listed as one of the top three barriers in every single need area. The survey question about whether or not County services are well known in the County almost always has the largest proportion of “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” responses, in this case 55% of respondents. During key informant interviews, it came up frequently that many County residents simply do not know where to go to get assistance.

Another consistent trend is that when asked about the quality of services provided by the County, survey respondents are mostly uninformed. When asked about the quality of services and staff, no less than 39% of survey respondents indicated that they “Don’t Know”, which hinders the reporting on this aspect of service delivery. Due to the way the survey was distributed, it is possible that people with more direct experience utilizing behavioral and mental health services were not reached. Due to the current pandemic, the survey was distributed exclusively in an online format by County agencies

and local partners. This type of distribution may have led to the experiences of certain County residents not being included. During a more typical survey distribution process, paper copies would also have been available in the lobbies of service providers for County residents to complete, but given the current public health crisis, that was impossible. This may explain why the individuals who took the survey were less informed about the knowledgeability, professionalism, and quality provided by behavioral and mental health service staff. Without more information on the quality of staff and services, the state and County will not be able to address concerns or celebrate successes regarding these items.

Third, transportation and cost are consistent issues for people living in Burlington County. When discussing going to therapist appointments, many focus group participants lamented the difficulty of traveling with a high needs child for at least an hour. Some mentioned telehealth as a way to address this barrier, which is on the rise, but as it currently stands, transportation is still an issue in Burlington County. This hits lower income families and families living in more rural areas especially hard. Cost is a barrier that did not come up as much in the survey responses, but during the focus groups and interviews, it was apparent that not only do these services cost money, but also cost a significant amount of time. For some parents, a choice ends up being made about whether it is more reasonable to work and spend that money on services for their child, or simply stay home and provide the care themselves. Navigating the system is difficult and can be incredibly taxing for a person who has already worked a full day. Taking hours to fill out applications and call service providers is not an option available to all parents.

Finally, a trend that emerged in this need area, but also has appeared in others, is the desire for peer to peer and patient navigator services. Parents report feeling like they are not being understood by providers and when they connect with parents of children who have similar needs having an “Aha!” moment where they finally felt supported. Family Support Organizations were mentioned as a great resource, but they cannot serve everyone in the County. Having a navigator available to assist parents in filling out the proper documents, connect families with behavioral and mental health needs with service providers, and advocating for these families in difficult moments was brought up multiple times. Lastly, having the navigator being a peer of the parents seeking help was mentioned as a surefire way of easing stress and ensuring quality support.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	230	25 %	28 %	14 %	5 %	27 %	56 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	227	19 %	22 %	28 %	4 %	28 %	55 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	228	23 %	32 %	20 %	2 %	22 %	55 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	226	9 %	17 %	28 %	6 %	39 %	55 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	227	8 %	14 %	29 %	4 %	45 %	55 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	227	10 %	11 %	30 %	9 %	40 %	55 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	126	65	52%
Services do not exist	126	42	33%
Transportation	126	57	45%
Cannot contact the service provider	126	32	25%
Too expensive	126	38	30%
Lack of awareness of service	126	86	68%
Cultural Barriers	126	39	31%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	126	42	33%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	126	59	47%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	126	12	10%
Other (explain below)	126	3	2%

Need Area: Behavioral/Mental Health Services for Adults

Status: Prioritized Need Area

Adult behavioral/mental health services include services designed to assess, address and support the emotional, psychological and social well-being of adults. This need area seeks to assess the level to which adult residents throughout the county have behavioral/mental health disorders, their ability to function and the existence of community services and supports to address adult behavioral/mental health needs (e.g., hospitals, in/out-patient therapy, individualized counseling, medication management, Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, PerformCare, etc.)

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

Behavioral and mental health services for adults in Burlington County is determined to be a Prioritized Need based on responses from community members and the Human Services Needs Assessment Team. This decision is well supported by data. It was mentioned in nine out of twenty of the focus groups and interviews conducted and is the top Service Need identified by survey respondents. These are not just people's perceptions; Burlington County residents have some of the highest rates of mental health distress in the state. While the average rate of mental health distress for the state is 12.1%, in Burlington County 15.8% of residents reported having fourteen or more "not good" mental health days out of the past thirty. This is the fourth highest rate in the state, and represents a spike in the number of poor mental health days from the previous years. In 2016, Burlington County's rate was 8.5% and for the three years prior it hovered around 11%. Considering the recent impact of the novel coronavirus on residents' lives, it is being predicted that mental health services will be in higher demand in the coming months and years. Black and white residents have similar rates of mental health distress, but women in Burlington County experience significantly more mental health distress than men. Twenty-four percent of women in the County reported experiencing health distress as compared to only eight percent of men.

When it comes to diagnosed depression, Burlington County fares better. Its rate of 14.7% is very close to the average for New Jersey (14.8%) and is near the middle for the twenty-one counties. Further, this rate is down from the County's 2015 high of 15.7%. Again, there is a significant difference when looking at gender; 8.6% of men in Burlington County are diagnosed with depression, whereas 21.5% of women suffer from the same issue. Based on this information, women should be considered an especially impacted subgroup of the population. Some racial differences also emerged when looking at depression diagnoses. Black residents of Burlington County report being diagnosed with depression almost a full 5% more than their white counterparts. This came up during focus groups as well, with multiple different individuals pointing out that Black families are disadvantaged by the

system when it comes to mental and behavioral health. Members of the LGBTQIA community also are identified as an impacted subgroup by focus group and interview participants. Transgender individuals especially face real stigma when it comes to expressing their identity, which can have negative impacts on mental health.

According to data provided by the state, there are twenty-six different services available in Burlington County that can help with mental health distress. Of particular importance are the four supportive housing locations, two self-help centers, five residential service facilities, the integrated case management service, and two outpatient service centers. Despite the presence of these services, the vast majority of survey respondents do not agree that Burlington County has enough behavioral and mental health services. When asked about the availability of these supports, 53% of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” with the statement that there are enough services in the County.

Summary: Nature of the Need

According to survey respondents, behavioral and mental health services for adults in Burlington County are somewhat accessible, but almost entirely unknown to most people. When prompted to “Agree” or “Disagree” with the statement that anyone in the County could access services, 43% of individuals report that they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”, and 44% indicate they “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”. This split was apparent in the focus groups and interviews as well. Many people report that there are behavioral and mental health services available in the County for people to access, but just as many report serious barriers that stop individuals from accessing services related to their mental or behavioral health.

Asked about how widely advertised and known these services are, survey respondents overwhelmingly found the amount of outreach lacking, with 56% indicating that the behavioral and mental health services in Burlington County are not well known. During focus groups and interviews, a number of services like Catholic Charities, the County Human Services ‘one-stop’ style building, local clergy, and Oaks Integrated Care were mentioned as places to receive assistance, but knowledge of them is apparently limited. When asked where people currently turn to meet their behavioral and mental health needs, the majority of focus group participants said that other than going to the County Human Services building, they were not sure. Some mentioned that people are more willing to ignore their issues and let them get to a breaking point or self-medicate than reach out for help. That may be unique to this particular need or because County residents do not know who to turn to for assistance.

When asked about the quality of behavioral and mental health services in Burlington County, survey respondents answered positively. Most people “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with statements about Burlington County services being culturally competent, clean, well-staffed, and having knowledgeable

staff. During interviews and focus groups, the perception is the same. People are of the opinion that the organizations doing this work are of good quality and the staff working at them are competent. The barriers to receiving service, though, are substantial.

The barriers that were mentioned most frequently by survey respondents, focus group participants, and interviewees are lack of awareness of services, wait lists, difficulty navigating the system, and stigma. One interviewee described issues with navigating the system, saying, “I don’t think people know which resources are out there and which organizations to call. There are several organizations that are all doing the same thing, and sometimes if you call them they’ll direct you or tell you to call someone else. So you’re not sure if the number you’re going to call is a hotline or just a bounce call to another line. And again with general health care, the services are local in one part of the County and not another, so that’s transportation as well.” This illustrates the challenges that people have trying to first find these behavioral and mental health services and then actually access them.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Behavioral and mental health services for adults has been identified as a Prioritized Need by the Human Services Needs Assessment Team. This decision was made based on the data collected from focus groups, interviews, and the needs survey. Based on the responses given through the survey, focus groups, and interviews, there is an urgent need to expand and advertise these kinds of behavioral and mental health services in Burlington County. Considering the impact the novel coronavirus has had and will continue to have on people's employment, ability to access services, and ability to take advantage of their informal support systems, it is likely that mental and behavioral health services will become even more important in the next three years.

The community does have access to a limited amount of services, but participants of the focus groups and interviews are not convinced that there are enough providers to meet the needs of Burlington County residents. When asked if they felt it was feasible for the County to address this gap in behavioral and mental health services, most thought that the County would need support, financial and otherwise, from the state to make the necessary changes. Increasing advertisement of the currently available services is something the County may be able to do on its own, however. Even if the existing services are more widely advertised, focus group and interview participants felt that the state would still need to step in and provide assistance to the County. Increased funding and partnerships designed to bring in new service providers are two ways that the state could assist behavioral and mental health providers in Burlington County. Transportation has long been an issue in the County and the lack of providers in the eastern half of the County is something that came up frequently. If the state could help bring in and retain more service providers, wait lists (identified as a barrier by 50% of survey respondents) would get shorter and prevent residents of more rural communities from having to travel so far to receive assistance. Expanding telehealth services is another recommendation made by focus group participants, which would address the same barriers.

Another gap in services that the County could use help addressing is the lack of sustained services. Focus groups participants pointed out that behavioral and mental health issues are not like other problems that can be solved with a one-time surgery or course of antibiotics. These services are most effective when they are received consistently and sustained in the long term. According to focus group participants, it is difficult to find behavioral and mental health services that will take patients that are not in crisis, and even if a person is admitted because they are experiencing a crisis – there is no guarantee that person will receive the longer term support they need. Additional funding and support from the state could help to rectify these issues in Burlington County.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

A few trends emerged throughout the needs assessment. Burlington County residents and service providers in survey responses and focus groups maintain that the County simply does not do enough to make their services known to the public. Lack of awareness is listed as one of the top three barriers in every single need area. The survey question about whether or not the County services are well known in the County almost always has the largest proportion of “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” responses, in this case, 56% of respondents. During key informant interviews, it came up frequently that many County residents simply do not know where to go to get behavioral and mental health assistance.

Transportation and cost are also consistent issues for people living in Burlington County. Millions of people nationwide have lost their health insurance due to losing work because of coronavirus related shutdowns and Burlington County is no different. For residents who are already struggling to make ends meet in a County where the median income is eclipsed by the cost of living, losing health insurance coverage could mean forgoing these kinds of services. As one focus group participant put it, “If someone has an elbow that hurts them you don’t hesitate to send them to a doctor, it’s the same with mental health.” But because of the mostly invisible ways that these particular needs manifest themselves, people tend not to prioritize them until it reaches a breaking point. Introducing low cost or free resources could mitigate this issue.

Transportation challenges also hit lower income families and families living in rural areas especially hard. As mentioned previously, the best way to address behavioral and mental health issues is in a sustained way, which means a person may have to travel for a therapist or psychiatrist appointment twice a week. Burlington County is the largest County in the state, so for some residents it could be an hour drive to their appointment. When it comes to transportation, some focus group participants mentioned telehealth as a way to address this barrier, which has seen increased usage since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Whether it is expanding the public transportation system, adding service providers, or connecting people with reliable internet so they can take advantage of telehealth, people want to see the County address the fact that receiving behavioral and mental health services can sometimes depend on a person’s location within the County.

Stigma was also identified as one of the top three barriers by survey respondents, but was mentioned less during the focus groups and interviews. It seems that the service providers and community leaders participating in the needs assessment feel that the County has been doing well in reducing the amount of stigma around receiving these kinds of services, but survey respondents report feeling the opposite. It is unclear what this could indicate, but it was also clear from the information collected that individuals in Burlington County want these types of services advertised more widely. So while there may not be consensus about how stigma impacts people deciding to seek behavioral and mental health help, more information about what services exist would be a good thing.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	227	23 %	30 %	23 %	7 %	17 %	55 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	226	21 %	23 %	36 %	7 %	14 %	55%
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	226	19 %	37 %	26 %	5 %	12 %	55 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	226	10 %	19 %	38 %	8 %	27 %	55 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	225	9 %	16 %	35 %	8 %	32 %	55 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	226	9 %	15 %	38 %	9 %	29 %	55 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	173	86	50%
Services do not exist	173	60	35%
Transportation	173	86	50%
Cannot contact the service provider	173	41	24%
Too expensive	173	60	35%
Lack of awareness of service	173	117	68%
Cultural Barriers	173	49	28%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	173	53	31%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	173	95	55%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	173	22	13%
Other (explain below)	173	6	3%

Need Area: Substance Use Disorder and Prevention Services (Adults and Adolescents)

Status: Prioritized Need Area

Substance use treatment services includes services that provide a range of assessment and supportive treatment for substance use disorders. This need area seeks to gauge the substance use needs and the existence of community services and supports to address substance use disorder needs throughout the county (e.g., detoxification, short- and long-term inpatient treatment services, outpatient treatment services, medication management, Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, NJ 2-1-1, etc.)

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

Substance use disorder and prevention services was been identified by the Human Services Needs Assessment Team, County residents, and local service providers as a Prioritized Need. Based on the survey responses, it was the third most prioritized Service Need for people in the County, with more than double the responses of the fourth most selected Service Need. It was only surpassed by behavioral and mental health services for adults and children, the first and second most selected Service Needs (and are also both Prioritized Needs). During focus groups and interviews, substance use disorder and prevention services were referenced twenty-one different times, not far behind the behavioral and mental health services for adults and children, which were each referenced twenty-eight times. Looking at the data, it is not surprising that Burlington County residents are concerned about substance use disorder and prevention services. Suspected overdose deaths in Burlington County rose 8% between 2017 and 2018. This translates into 13 more people dying in 2018 than in 2017, a total of 161 overdose deaths. This number has increased every year since 2014, when it was only 75.

During focus groups and key informant interviews, participants report that there is not a particular subgroup of the population that is struggling more with this issue than any other subgroup. The need for substance use disorder and prevention services in Burlington County touches all types of individuals and has gotten noticeably worse over the past few years. A local service provider attested during their interview that substance use disorder has been an issue for Burlington County for a long time, but in recent years there has been an “escalation in substance use,” particularly opioids. According to the County data profile, heroin and alcohol were identified as the main drugs of choice among residents entering substance abuse treatment centers. Forty-four percent of people seeking help report using heroin and 27% report abusing alcohol. None of the other substances (opiates, cocaine, marijuana, other drugs) were identified by more than 10% of people entering treatment as the root of their substance use issues. Based on the data profile, interviews, focus groups, and survey responses, substance use disorder and prevention services are of great importance in Burlington County.

Summary: Nature of the Need

According to 39% of survey respondents, there are not enough substance use disorder and prevention services in Burlington County. When asked about substance use disorder and prevention services, 43% of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that services are widely advertised and known in Burlington County. The accessibility of services scored better than the availability of services, with 36% of survey respondents indicating that they “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” and 33% stating they “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree”.

Project Hope, the availability of Naloxone, straight to treatment services, and Operation Helping Hand were identified during focus groups and interviews as positive supports for people dealing with substance use disorder in Burlington County. When it comes to the quality of services, survey respondents mostly agree that the services and staff are satisfactory. Thirty-eight percent “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that services are provided with the proper considerations being made for clients of different races, ethnicities, ages, and genders. Thirty-one percent and thirty-five percent of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that facilities designed to meet this need are of good quality and staff are well trained, respectively. One caveat is that the number of people selecting the “Don’t Know” response rose significantly (by at least 10%) for the questions regarding quality of services, discriminatory practices, and staff knowledgeability as opposed to questions about availability and accessibility of services. This may indicate that the individuals responding to the survey do not have personal experience utilizing these services and so reports of these services’ quality may be less reliable. During focus groups and interviews, participants had positive things to say about the quality of services these supports provide, but frequently brought up barriers that stop people from having their substance use disorder needs fully addressed.

The top three barriers identified by survey respondents are lack of awareness (69%), stigma leading to avoidance (50%), and wait lists (49%). Lack of awareness is one of the biggest barriers for all need areas and substance use disorder and prevention services are no different in this respect. Lack of awareness is significant for the general population and people working in community based organizations who help make referrals for people in need. During one focus group, a member of local law enforcement brought up Operation Helping Hand as a way to connect people to services while another participant, a social worker with decades of experience in Burlington County, said s/he had never heard of that program. One thing that came up as a recommendation for the County is creating and maintaining an up to date and easily accessible repository of information for people in the County who have these kinds of needs. Faith leaders were mentioned multiple times in interviews as a resource that many individuals take advantage of; preferring to seek help from someone they already have a connection with before going to a treatment center. However, unless these faith leaders are made aware of the kinds of substance use disorder services that are available in the County, they cannot connect people who need help with the proper services. Increasing the amount of information available to the public would also help address the stigma surrounding substance use

disorder. A lack of information coupled with stigma means that many people suffer in silence rather than seek help, which may hide the true scope of this issue in Burlington County.

The issue of wait lists was often brought up in conjunction with a lack of service providers. During focus groups and interviews, only a few service providers were mentioned by name – Catholic Charities, Delaware House, and the Hope One mobile unit. Not having enough providers means that people seeking assistance for their substance use disorder often face long wait times. One of the interviewees succinctly pointed out this problem, saying, “Timing is so important, because when you’re ready, you need the help right now.” Making people wait for days or weeks at a time increases the chances that they have a change of heart and no longer want to receive treatment. Many people internalize their issue as a personal failing, not a physical health issue, which is a challenge Burlington County should meet head on. The importance of being able to offer help to those that ask for it right away becomes that much more important when considering the fact that the stigma surrounding this issue stops people from seeking help in the first place.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Expanding substance use disorder and prevention services is an urgent need in Burlington County. More than one of our interview and focus group participants shared emotional stories about people they knew who died from overdoses. This loss of life is preventable and there are concrete steps the County and state can take to address the lack of awareness, lack of services, and lack of access when it comes to this issue. Focus group participants are confident that the County can make big strides in addressing this need.

The County has some, but not enough, access to organizations and programs that focus on the needs of people dealing with substance use disorders. Wait lists are a big issue for people and part of that is because there just are not enough services to meet the demand in the County. Expanding existing programs or starting new ones, especially straight to treatment services, peer to peer services, and services designed for adolescents would put Burlington County residents in a much better situation. The need for more funding came up often as well, with some people pointing out that low income individuals need help paying for treatment and others lamenting the lack of advertisement for the services that do exist in the County.

The County could use additional funding and organizational support from the state to increase their capacity for delivering much needed substance use disorder and prevention services. A more coordinated push to codify all the available resources and get residents familiar with the treatment options should be possible in the near future. Funding to create or expand individualized treatment services for adolescents, straight to treatment services, and peer to peer services would make getting help easier and more accessible for residents. In the same vein, increased funding for programs that address longstanding barriers in the County, like transportation, would allow for more people to be served. Hope One's mobile unit, for instance, was brought up in focus groups as an innovative way to bring services to people who need them, rather than put the onus on those who need help to get themselves to a treatment center that might be thirty minutes or more from their home.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

In the focus groups and interviews, a few trends became clear. First, some of the people doing the most work in the County are faith based organizations. The Rancocas Valley Clergy Association distributes information about where to get help for substance use disorder in the County, and multiple people reported that individuals in need often turn to their faith leaders before public health officials or programs. This may be a consequence of the lack of publicly available information about substance use disorder and prevention services and the stigma that people face. Rather than trying to get connected to services they have never heard of, people look to faith and trusted community leaders. This ties in with recommendations that focus group participants made about peer to peer

services. Because of the stigma associated with this issue, it would go a long way to making people feel comfortable if they were able to connect with someone who has experienced the same struggle.

The second trend that arose during focus groups is the fact that part of the reason people do not know where they can get services is because they only look for services when they are in dire need of help. Having the County provide this information and make it accessible to people before they are experiencing a crisis would not only de-stigmatize this issue, but streamline the process of receiving services for people who need them.

Third, transportation is a real barrier for people who want to receive substance use disorder and prevention services, as is the time it takes to actually receive services. Since transportation is a longstanding barrier in all of Burlington County service provision, especially in the eastern Browns Mills area, mobile response is something the County should work with the state to expand. Hope One was brought up as a bright spot in Burlington County because it removes the transportation barrier for people seeking substance use disorder services. Focus group participants reported that they would like to see its hours and area of service expanded, but that it was a step in the right direction. One criticism that was brought up about Hope One is that police officers are often part of the response, which may scare off people who need help but are currently using narcotics.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	222	16 %	23 %	23 %	5 %	32%	54%
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	222	14 %	19 %	31 %	5 %	31%	54%
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	221	13 %	30 %	26 %	5 %	26%	54%
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	219	7 %	13 %	33 %	5 %	42%	53%
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	222	8 %	14 %	26 %	5 %	48%	54%
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	222	6 %	13 %	29 %	6 %	46%	54%

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	140	68	49%
Services do not exist	140	45	32%
Transportation	140	69	49%
Cannot contact the service provider	140	29	21%
Too expensive	140	47	34%
Lack of awareness of service	140	97	69%
Cultural Barriers	140	31	22%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	140	36	26%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	140	70	50%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	140	8	6%
Availability of Substance Use Disorder Services	140	42	30%
Availability of Substance Abuse Prevention Programs	140	37	26%
Other (explain below)	140	0	0%



Need Area: Domestic Violence Services

Status: General Need Area

Domestic violence is violence or other forms of abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, e.g., husband and wife, child and parent, sibling and sibling, etc. This need area seeks to assess the level to which domestic violence impact residents throughout the county and the existence of community services and supports that will keep families safe from physical, sexual, financial, digital, mental and emotional forms of domestic violence (e.g., shelter services, victim services, batterers intervention services, DCF's Office of Domestic Violence Services, domestic violence liaisons, domestic violence hotline, Family Success Centers, etc.)

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

New Jersey had 63,420 domestic violence incidents in 2016, 3,821 of which came from Burlington County. The County has the eighth highest number of reported domestic violence incidents in the state; and three focus groups and interviews out of twenty indicate that domestic violence is a top Service Need in Burlington County. Reported incidents increased for the two years following the low of 3,450 reported in 2014 (6.3%). Many of these reports come from a few municipalities with extraordinarily high rates of domestic violence. While Fieldsboro only had one incident in 2016, Pemberton Township had 599 reports of domestic violence. This may be explained by the fact that this township strictly follows the state reporting/arrest guidelines for domestic violence incidents. Evesham, Mount Holly, Maple Shade, Mount Laurel, and Willingboro (in this order) are the other areas with concerning statistics, all having over 200 reports of domestic violence each in 2016; with Evesham trailing Pemberton Township by only 80 incidents. Further, Evesham has seen a dramatic increase in reports since 2010 (up by 44.6%), while Willingboro has seen a substantial decrease (52 less incidents).

Looking at specific charges within domestic violence incidents, it appears that assault and criminal mischief have stayed relatively flat from 2012 to 2016; and criminal trespassing and burglary have decreased by just slightly more than 3%. Unfortunately, homicides increased by nearly 37% (14 additional domestic violence related homicides); and sexual assaults increased by almost 15%. Reports of stalking, kidnapping, criminal restraint, and harassment have dropped in the same time period. Arrests do not match incident numbers; sometimes in extreme ways (there were 27,222 reports of domestic violence assault in 2016, but only 13,705 arrests), which is disheartening.

The victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and the issue is not contained to a specific group of women (e.g. military spouses, white women, or low income women). During the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team meeting, one County employee shared

that based on her experiences, women in affluent neighborhoods call the police for domestic issues just as often as women living in lower income areas.

Summary: Nature of the Need

According to roughly one third of survey respondents, domestic violence services do not exist in Burlington County. Since some supports do exist, this indicates a serious lack of awareness of domestic violence services in the County. Lack of awareness of service is identified as a barrier to accessing domestic violence services by 73% of survey respondents. When asked about domestic violence services, 42% of survey respondents “Don’t Know” if there are any available in the County and 33% “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that there are enough available services. Asked if they agree or disagree with the statement “Services are widely advertised and known by the County,” 39% of survey respondents “Don’t Know” and 43% “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree.”

During focus groups and interviews, participants identify Catholic Charities’ Providence House as being the support most utilized by people dealing with domestic violence needs in Burlington County. When it comes to the quality of domestic violence services in the County, survey respondents agree that the domestic violence services and staff are satisfactory. Thirty-nine and thirty-six percent of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that facilities aimed at meeting this need are of good quality and staff are well trained and provide good customer services, respectively. One thing to note, however, is that the number of people selecting the “Don’t Know” answer went up significantly (by at least 9%, including over half of survey respondents) for the questions regarding quality of services, discriminatory practices, and staff knowledgeability. This may indicate that survey respondents do not have personal experience utilizing these services or knowledge about these supports and so reports of their quality may be less valuable.

Survey respondents identify the most serious barriers as being transportation, the stigma attached to receiving domestic violence services, and the lack of awareness of the available services. Forty-six percent of survey respondents identify transportation as a barrier and many focus group participants shared that agencies in the County are located in areas with the least access to public transportation. Several focus group participants report that there is a significant gap in awareness of available domestic violence services in the County. One participant said, “I don’t really have enough information to answer” while another said, “I honestly just don’t know.”

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	214	9 %	25 %	21 %	3 %	42 %	52 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	215	6 %	19 %	33 %	3 %	39 %	52 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	215	11 %	32 %	18 %	3 %	36 %	52 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	215	5 %	13 %	27 %	6 %	51 %	52 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	214	3 %	9 %	27 %	2 %	59 %	52 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	215	4 %	7 %	30 %	7 %	53 %	52 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	119	22	18%
Services do not exist	119	30	25%
Transportation	119	55	46%
Cannot contact the service provider	119	13	11%
Too expensive	119	6	5%
Lack of awareness of service	119	87	73%
Cultural Barriers	119	39	33%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	119	24	20%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	119	63	53%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	119	4	3%
Other (explain below)	119	5	4%



Need Area: Parenting Skills Services

Status: General Need Area

Parenting skills services are programs that aim to enhance parental capacity and skills, improve parenting practices and behaviors, and teach age appropriate child development skills and milestones. This need area seeks to assess the level to which residents require parenting skills services and the existence of community services and supports which address parenting skills (e.g., Home Visiting Program, Nurse-Family Partnership, Family Preservation, Family Success Centers, Family Service Organizations, Parents Anonymous, Parent Mentors, SPAN, etc.).

Need Assessment Key Findings

Summary: Scope of the Need

No specific data was provided in the County profile from the state about parenting skills services, so in considering the scope of this need, the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team had to rely on responses from surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups. The County data profile does include information about the overall number of children served by the Department of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P). In Burlington County, 2,058 families were served by DCP&P in 2018, which ranks in the middle of all New Jersey counties. This number may be a useful indicator for the number of families who could benefit from parenting skills services; it would be beneficial for future County data profiles to consider collecting information about the parenting skills services available in the counties and their utilization rates. As previously noted, a number of services exist in Burlington County to help families, including two Family Success Centers, Center for Family Services, and Burlington County Community Action Partnership.

Only one focus group out of eight selected parenting skills services as a top Service Need. Survey responses did indicate that parenting skills services are in need of expansion; more than half of respondents with knowledge about parenting skills services (those who did not respond with “Don’t Know”) “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that there are enough services in the County to help those in need. Only 16% of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that these services are widely advertised and well-known. When asked if anyone in the County could access these services, roughly equivalent proportions of people “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” and “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” with the statement (27% and 30%, respectively). The most common barriers to accessing parenting skills services are lack of awareness of the available services, lack of transportation, absence of services, cultural barriers, and stigma surrounding the use of these services. Focus group participants also indicate that children are disproportionately affected by the lack of these resources and services.

Summary: Nature of the Need

It is clear from survey responses that parenting skills services are valued and beneficial, but that more work must be done to deliver these services to Burlington County families in need. Survey respondents note a general lack of parenting skills services, especially on a township-by-township basis. There is also a misconception that most existing programs require Department of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) involvement, which may contribute to the stigma surrounding accessing these services. As one participant pointed out, “There are great programs in Burlington County, but they are not advertised enough. There is also a stigma attached to it, when in reality, anyone can use these services,” this reflects the sentiment present in a few survey responses that involvement with DCP&P is necessary to access parenting skills services. More persistent and thorough messaging may help to correct this misunderstanding and increase the County usage of these services.

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	213	11 %	21 %	21 %	3 %	44 %	52 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	214	8 %	22 %	23 %	4 %	43 %	52 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	211	17 %	28 %	14 %	2 %	39 %	51 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	213	7 %	12 %	21 %	5 %	55 %	52 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	213	4 %	8 %	24 %	6 %	59 %	52 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	212	4 %	8 %	24 %	8 %	56 %	52 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	110	20	18%
Services do not exist	110	40	36%
Transportation	110	44	40%
Cannot contact the service provider	110	14	13%
Too expensive	110	13	12%
Lack of awareness of service	110	89	81%
Cultural Barriers	110	32	29%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	110	15	14%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	110	36	33%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	110	6	5%
Other (explain below)	110	2	2%



Need Area: Legal and Advocacy Services**Status: General Need Area**

Legal and advisory services include legal assistance, advocacy and support in various types of legal matters, including child support, child custody, paternity, immigration, domestic violence, housing and eviction, criminal, etc. This need area seeks to assess if the level to which residents throughout the county have unresolved legal issues for which they need assistance and the existence of legal and advisory services to meet those needs (e.g., Legal Aid, pro-bono attorneys and clinics, court system, ombudsman, etc.)

Need Assessment Key Findings**Summary: Scope of the Need**

Since only a list of pro bono legal and advocacy/advisory service agencies is provided in the County data profile, the Burlington County Human Services Needs Assessment Team has to rely on information from surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups to determine the scope of this need. The surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups lack in providing any useful information as to the percent of the population in need of legal and advocacy/advisory services or how the County has performed in this area over time; however, one focus group and two interviewees identify this as a top Service Need in the County. In addition to this, roughly half of survey respondents share that legal and advocacy/advisory services do not exist in Burlington County. The qualitative data also lack in information on whether legal and advocacy/advisory services are more prevalent for any subgroups of the County population.

The agencies listed in the County data profile include free and low cost legal services specializing in immigration, disability, education, intimate partner violence, military, LGBTQ, and children. Four of the service agencies provide general advocacy and legal work, while the other fifteen specialize in the previously listed topic areas.

Summary: Nature of the Need

According to roughly half of survey respondents, legal and advocacy/advisory services do not exist in Burlington County. Given that the County data profile provides a list of 19 agencies providing pro bono legal/advocacy services in 8 topic areas, the lack of awareness of these types of services is troubling. Further, 72% of survey respondents report lack of awareness of services as a barrier to receiving legal and advocacy/advisory services in the County. When asked about these types of services, 32% of survey respondents “Don’t Know” if services are available in the County to help individuals and 38% of survey respondents “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that there are services available in the County. Prompted to agree or disagree with the statement “Services are widely

advertised and known by the County,” 25% of survey respondents “Don’t Know” and 53% “Disagree” or Strongly Disagree.”

Lawyers and counselors were identified during focus groups and interviews as being the support most utilized by people when it comes to legal and advocacy/advisory services in Burlington County. Seventy-three percent of survey respondents “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that facilities providing services to meet this need are of good quality and staff are well trained and provide good customer services. One thing to note; however, is the number of people selecting the “Don’t Know” answer went up (roughly 14%) for the questions regarding quality of services, discriminatory practices, and staff knowledgeability. This may indicate that survey respondents do not have personal experience utilizing these services or knowledge about these supports and so reports of their quality may be less valuable. During focus groups and interviews, participants had positive things to say about the quality of services these supports provide, but frequently brought up barriers that stop people from having their needs fully addressed.

Focus group participants and interviewees report that the two most serious barriers keeping County residents from accessing legal and advocacy/advisory services are transportation and cost. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents identify transportation as a barrier and many focus group participants report that agencies in the County are in areas with the least access to public transportation. Several focus group participants share that the cost of these services is unreachable for people in Burlington County. One participant said, “Unless the person is involved in the criminal justice system, there is nothing locally accessible to lower income families.” Another participant added, “These services are just not affordable.”

Summary: Local Considerations for Addressing the Need for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

If applicable: Additional Notable Focus Group Trends for County Prioritized Need Area

Not a Prioritized Need.

Need Area: Survey Results

Item	Total Number of Respondents	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
1. There are enough services available in the county to help those who have this need.	208	13 %	25 %	25%	3 %	33 %	51 %
2. Anyone in the county is able to access services.	208	14 %	19 %	29%	4 %	33 %	51 %
3. Services are widely advertised and known by the county.	208	18 %	36 %	18%	3 %	25 %	51 %
4. Services take race, age, gender, ethnicity and more into account.	208	6 %	13 %	30%	6 %	44 %	51 %
5. Facilities that provide service to meet this need are of good quality (e.g., clean, well supplied).	207	5 %	8 %	30%	4 %	52 %	50 %
6. Staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and provide good customer service.	208	7 %	7 %	33%	7 %	47 %	51 %

Key Barriers

Barrier	Total Number of Respondents	Number of Times Identified	Percentage of Responses
Wait Lists	118	34	29%
Services do not exist	118	32	27%
Transportation	118	41	35%
Cannot contact the service provider	118	17	14%
Too expensive	118	36	31%
Lack of awareness of service	118	85	72%
Cultural Barriers	118	24	20%
Services provided are one-size fits all, and don't meet individual needs	118	16	14%
Stigma Leads to Avoidance	118	16	14%
Eligibility Requirement (explain below)	118	4	3%
Other (explain below)	118	2	2%