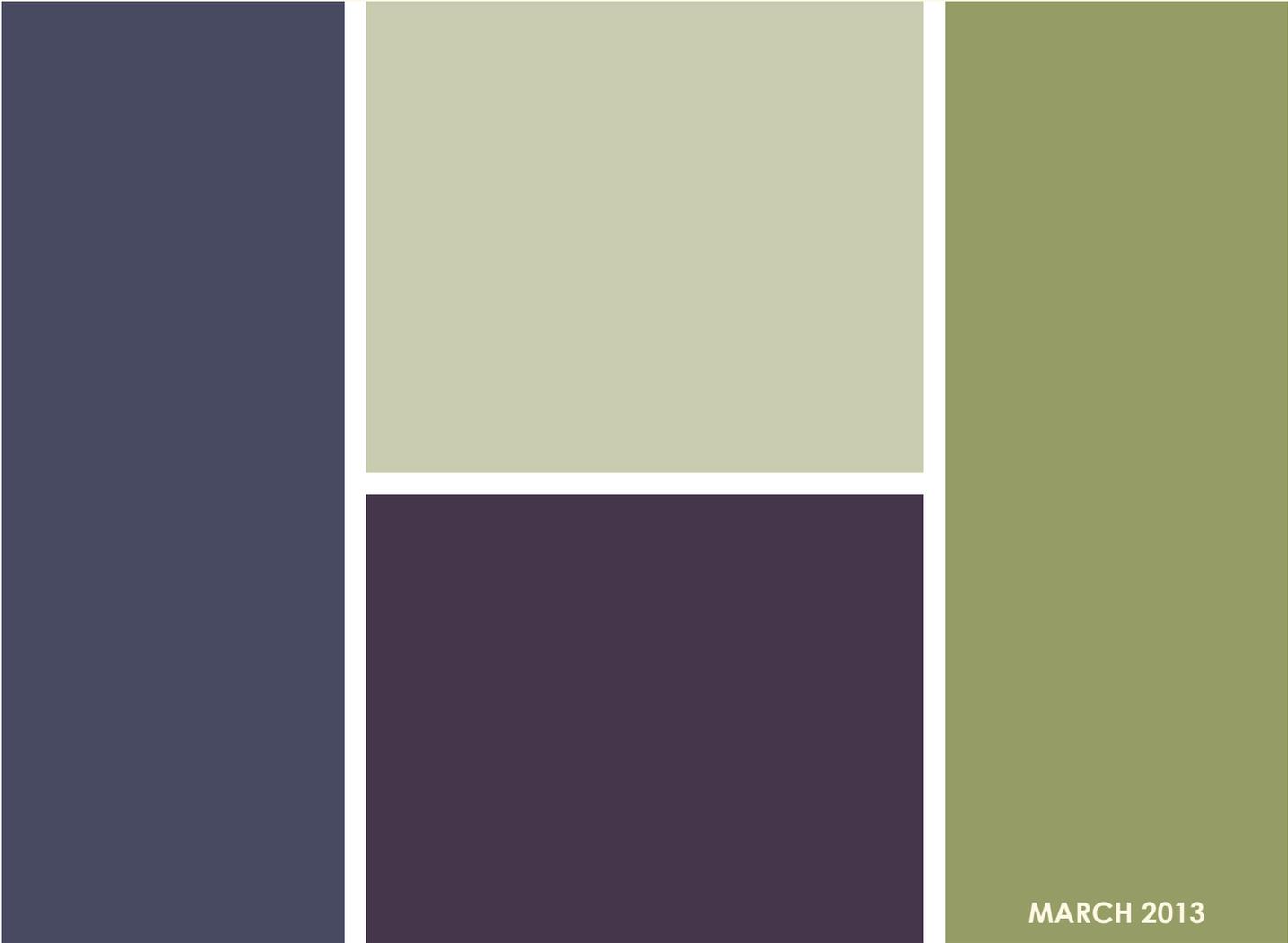




BASIC NEEDS

2012 Community Impact Report

Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service
Research & Planning Division



MARCH 2013

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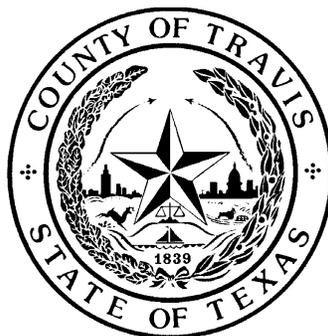


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Introduction

The Travis County Commissioners Court, through Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service Department (TCHHS/VS), annually invests over \$11 million in community-based social service programs. These Department investments align with and supplement our direct services to meet the critical needs of local residents. Community-based organizations are frequently geographically and culturally embedded in the communities they serve and are often best positioned to provide needed services.

Purpose of Report

The annual Community Impact Report provides an overview of TCHHS/VS investments in health and human services. The *2012 Community Impact Report* offers highlights of community conditions most pertinent to the services purchased within each issue area in 2012. The report also details investment, programmatic, and performance information on the Department's social service contracts. This information provides a foundation for policy makers, program managers, and others to better understand these investments, recognize and celebrate accomplishments, identify areas for improvement, disseminate lessons learned, and highlight areas warranting further research.

Readers should also consider this report in conjunction with other local analyses and reports^a in order to obtain a more complete picture of the community. *The Travis County Snapshot from the American Community Survey 2011*, in particular, provides complementary contextual information around current demographics and local conditions.^b

Organization of Report

This report addresses nine issue areas plus a summary of Planning and Evaluation investments. (A tenth issue area, Restorative Justice and Reentry, had no investments in 2012.) Each issue area section begins with community conditions information about the issue area and then provides performance highlights about the programs included within that issue area.

Community conditions impact social service providers and the individuals they serve. Economics, demographics, as well as social structures and systems, all influence the level of need within a community

a Data products from the 2010 Census, including a *Travis County Trend Profile* and *Travis County Map Books*, are available at: http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/research_planning/documents_CensusData.asp.

b The *Travis County Snapshot from the American Community Survey 2011* is available at: http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/pdfs/ACS2011.pdf.

and the resources available to successfully address community needs. Community conditions help determine service delivery approaches that are most effective in addressing community needs and issues. These conditions also inform public stakeholders of progress toward community goals and can help correlate particular program contributions and value in advancing those goals.

Although this report highlights community conditions for individual issue areas separately, each issue area must be considered in a broader context. Community conditions related to a single issue area may have similar or related root causes and broad-level consequences. Current economic conditions also have a global impact on community conditions.

Performance highlights contribute to local knowledge about some of the Department's contracted community-based programs. This report provides detailed information about each program covered by an issue area, including an overview of program goals, services provided, eligibility criteria, and funding. Client demographics and ZIP codes are summarized for each program. Also captured are each program's performance results, compared to its contractual performance goals, and explanations of notable variance (+/- 10%) between the performance results and goals.

An issue area encompasses those programs with goals most aligned with the goals of that issue area. While each program is included in only one issue area, a program may promote the goals of several issue areas. For example, a workforce development program may primarily include work readiness services but also include a small educational component. The principal goals of the program promote the workforce development issue area goals, so the program is categorized in the workforce development issue area rather than the education issue area.

Report Summary

Most social service programs described in this report serve Travis County residents who are in or near poverty. Some programs assist vulnerable populations, such as those experiencing abuse and neglect, irrespective of their income. Current conditions elevate the need for social services for Travis County residents:

- The Travis County population continues to grow rapidly. According to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau population estimates available, 1,063,130 people lived in Travis County in 2011. The county's growth rate of 30% since 2000 (reflecting the addition of 242,203 residents) is faster than the state overall (Texas grew 23% between 2000 and 2011). The county population in areas outside the city of Austin has grown even more rapidly, up 66% since 2000. In 2011, more than one-quarter of county residents (26% or 279,935 people) lived in a city or village other than Austin or in an incorporated area, compared with 21% of residents (168,627 people) in 2000.¹

- The most recent poverty data were collected in 2011. These data estimate that about 18% of Travis County residents (192,436 people) lived in poverty. The 2011 rate is not statistically different from the 2010 poverty rate of 19%. These two most recent poverty rates reflect an increase in poverty in Travis County over what had been a fairly stable rate of 15% during 2006-2008 and 16% in 2009.²
- The poverty rate among children is higher than the overall poverty rate for Travis County. 2011 data indicates that 25% of Travis County children under 18 (63,680 children) lived in poverty.³
- In December 2012, there were 50,458 SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) cases in Travis County with 113,664 people (about 11% of all Travis County residents) receiving benefits. The number of SNAP cases appears to be leveling off, following a steady increase between 2008 (29,448 average monthly cases) and 2011 (50,970 average monthly cases).⁴
- Close to 159,000 households in Travis County experience a housing cost burden, which is defined as spending 30% or more of household income on housing costs; approximately 77,000 of those households experience a severe housing cost burden (i.e. spending 50% or more on housing costs).⁵ Renters are more likely to be cost burdened than owners.⁶
- A point-in-time snapshot of the Austin area homeless population reported a total of 2,244 homeless individuals, 61% of whom were sheltered (either emergency, transitional, or Safe Haven), and 39% of whom were unsheltered. Almost one-third (30%) of the homeless population is comprised of individuals in households with dependent children.⁷
- National, state and local unemployment rates all follow an improving trend line, with the Austin-Round Rock MSA and Travis County consistently outperforming the state and nation. The unemployment rate for the Austin-Round Rock MSA began the year at 6.5% in January 2012, but dropped to 5.0% in December.⁸ The unemployment rate for Travis County is slightly lower than the MSA, starting at 6.4% in January 2012 and ultimately falling to 4.9% in December. These are the lowest unemployment rates for Travis County and the Austin-Round Rock MSA since November 2008 and remain lower than the state (6.0%) and national (7.6%) rates.⁹
- In 2011, an estimated 19.8% of the Travis County population (209,348 people) lacked health insurance. Travis County's proportion of uninsured residents is higher than that of the U.S. (15.1%) but lower than that of Texas (23.0%).¹⁰
- Between 2000 and 2010, the Austin-Round Rock metropolitan area had the fastest growing "pre-senior" population (age 55 to 64) in the nation, with a 110% change from 2000 to 2010. The Austin-Round Rock metropolitan area was ranked second in senior (age 65 and older) population growth over the same time period, with a 53% change.¹¹ In 2011, there were 79,573 adults aged 65 and older living in Travis County, comprising 7.5% of the population¹² by 2020, a projected 124,750 older adults will make up 10.4% of the county population.¹³

Client Demographics

Service providers collected client demographic data, when possible.^c Overall, demographic data were provided for 67% to 86% of clients, depending on the demographic category. Of clients with known demographics, 55% were female and 45% were male. In terms of race, 64% of these clients were White, 24% were Black or African American, and the remainder were of another race. In terms of ethnicity,^d 41% of clients were Hispanic or Latino. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of clients were ages 25 to 39, and 22% were between 40 and 59 years of age. Children and youth ages 17 and younger accounted for 32% of clients. Close to one-half (43%) of clients had incomes below 50% of the Federal Poverty Income Guideline (FPIG) level, and 25% of clients had incomes between 50% and 100% of FPIG.^e

Client Location by ZIP Code

When possible, the contracted service providers also documented the ZIP code where clients resided when they entered the program.^f Service providers collected residential information for 84% of all clients, including clients with ZIP codes within Travis County (75%), clients with ZIP codes outside of Travis County (3%), and clients who were homeless at entry into the program (7%); the remainder (16%) represent clients with unknown ZIP codes. Of clients with known ZIP codes within Travis County, 19% of clients resided in the East area. The Northeast and Southeast areas also had sizeable shares of clients in residence, each with 18% of clients.^g

c Client demographic data may be unreported for reasons such as protection of client privacy and difficulty obtaining data (e.g., due to services delivered via outreach or at large-scale events). Further, two contracted service providers used different age and/or income categories that did not allow for aggregation with the larger set of demographic data. Clients enrolled in programs that do not collect income information were classified as “unknown” in the income level category.

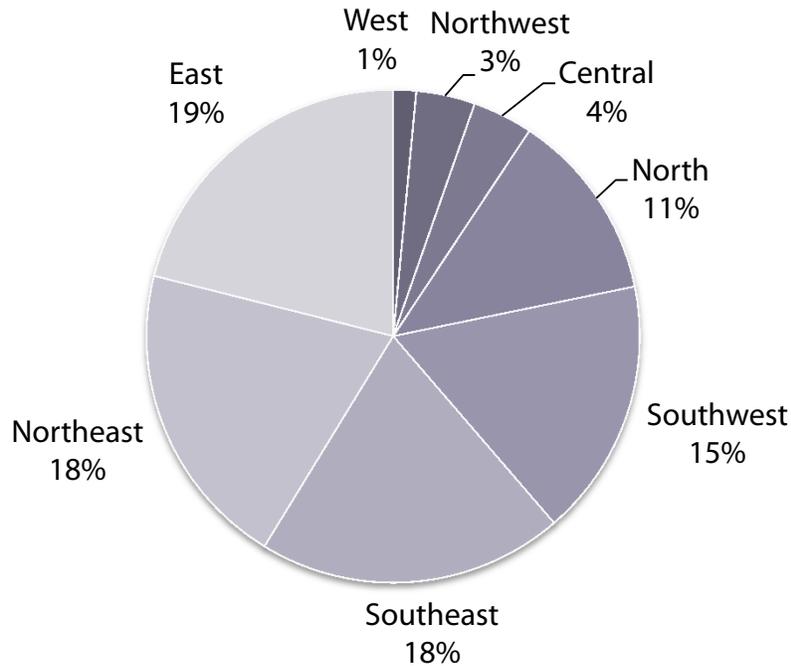
d For the purposes of tracking reported client data, TCHHS/VS has adopted demographic categories used by the U.S. Census Bureau. The U.S. Census Bureau considers race and Hispanic origin to be two separate and distinct concepts. Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race. Therefore, clients reporting their race, such as White or Black or African American, may also be Hispanic or Latino.

e Client demographic data were not reported for Basic Needs investments, due to the nature of services provided in these programs. For specific income guideline levels, please see Appendix A in any of the other 2012 issue area reports.

f Client ZIP code data may be unreported for reasons such as protection of client privacy and difficulty obtaining data (e.g., due to services delivered via outreach or at large-scale events).

g Client ZIP code data were not reported for Basic Needs investments, due to the nature of services provided in these programs. For ZIP code classification map, please see Appendix B in any of the other 2012 issue area reports.

Areas of Client Residence, 2012

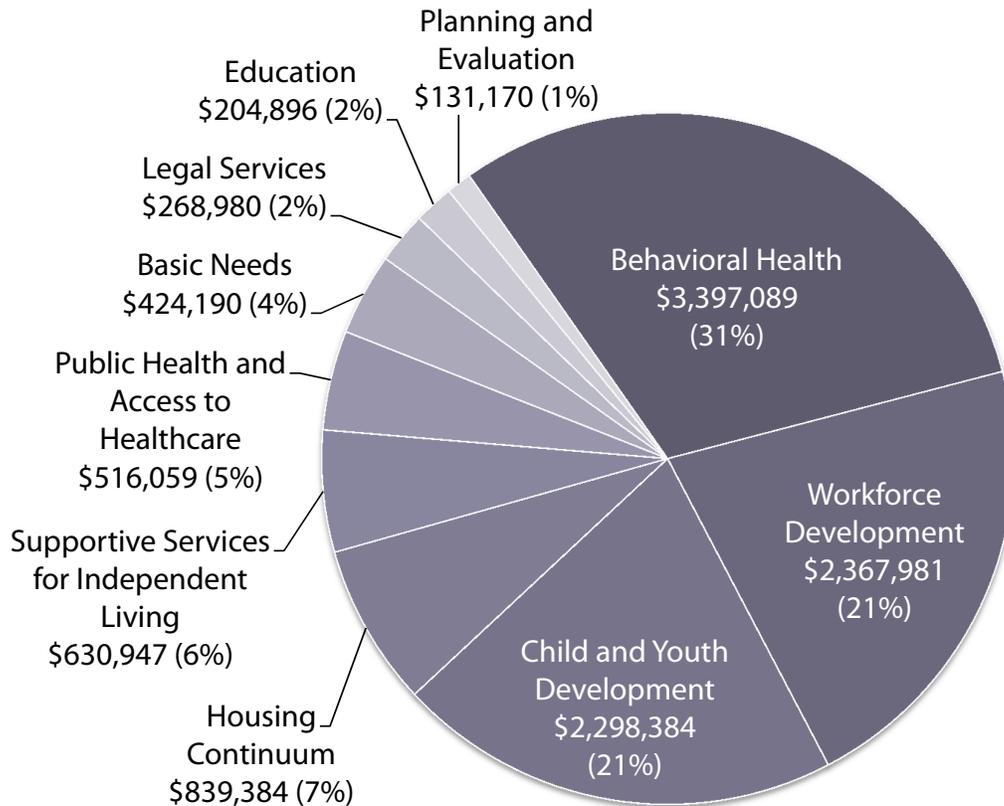


Investment by Issue Area

The following chart does not represent total TCHHS/VS investments and services. It only shows the percent of funding devoted to each issue area for the social service contracts included in this report. These contracts are a subset of the Department’s broader investments of general funds in both purchased and direct services. The Department also makes grant-funded program investments.

Behavioral Health contracts accounted for the greatest share (nearly one-third) of the TCHHS/VS investment reflected in this report, followed by Workforce Development and Child and Youth Development contracts (each comprising 21% of the total investment). The Department’s investments represented varying percentages of each contracted program’s total budget. Investment percentages ranged from 0.6% to 100%, constituting an average of 23.5% of a program’s total budget. Actual investment percentages for each social service contract are provided on each program’s page.

Investment in Issue Areas for Social Service Contracts, 2012



Performance

The social service contracts included in this report have a wide range of goals, objectives, services, and performance measures. In 2012, most programs met the targeted range of performance across both output and outcome measures. Meeting the targeted range of performance means that the performance measure meets or exceeds at least 90% of the contractual performance goal.

Programs falling short of performance goals were often the result of basic operational issues, such as staffing shortages and turnover or funding cuts. Changes in client populations also impacted performance, including clients requiring additional time in a program, thus reducing new client enrollments. Also, for programs serving smaller numbers of clients, even minor changes can lead to highly volatile performance results. Economic conditions have, in many cases, increased demand but may also create challenges in achieving goals. Significant programmatic or performance measure and methodology changes that occurred in 2012 also contributed to unexpected performance variance. Please note that performance measures reflect the entire program's performance, and not the share of the program funded by TCHHS/VS.

Goals and Services

DEPARTMENT PURPOSE

Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service strives to maximize quality of life for all people in Travis County by:

- Protecting vulnerable populations
- Investing in social and economic well-being
- Promoting healthy living: physical, behavioral, and environmental
- Building a shared understanding of our community

BASIC NEEDS GOALS AND SERVICES

Programs and services within the Basic Needs issue area are intended to meet urgent, short-term food, housing, clothing and transportation needs. Some examples of services provided by programs within this issue area include: provision of adequate and healthy food; financial assistance for rent, mortgage, or utilities; clothing; and other assistance, including transportation, to meet specific public health or safety needs.

Community Conditions

Current Conditions and Trends

In a modern industrialized society, food, shelter, utilities, and transportation are some basic necessities needed for overall physical and psychological health and well-being. A 2002 study that controlled for the influence of housing type, maternal distress, and stressful life occurrences (e.g., abuse) found that severe childhood hunger was a significant predictor of chronic illness and that it was linked to higher reported anxiety and depression among school-aged children.¹⁴ However, children don't have to personally experience severe hunger to be impacted by the adverse effects of food insecurity on a household. Research has found that children who are not technically food insecure still endure the negative emotional, psychological, and physical effects when their mothers are food insecure (going without food in order to feed their children).¹⁵ Low-income families with high utilities spend less money on food and health care, forgo paying rent or mortgage payments to pay utility bills, and resort to alternative heat sources that jeopardize child health and safety.¹⁶ Another study demonstrated that adults age 65 and older who felt that their basic needs were not being met also experienced greater risk of death, signs of depression, and decline in function.¹⁷

The Role of Income and Poverty

Income is a primary determinant of whether one can meet basic needs. Poverty statistics are often used as a proxy measure to describe the number of people or share of the population who, because of income level, may face challenges meeting their basic needs. Poverty thresholds are used for calculating all official poverty statistics and are updated annually by the U.S. Census Bureau^h (in 2012, the poverty threshold was \$11,945 for a single adult and \$23,283 for a household of two adults and two children).¹⁸ In 2011, about 18% of Travis County residents (192,436 people) lived in poverty.¹⁹ The 2011 rate reflects a decrease of about one percentage point from the previous year (19% in 2010), although this is not a statistically significant difference. However, the poverty rates in 2010-2011 reflect an increase over what had been a fairly stable rate of 15% during 2006-2008 and 16% in 2009.²⁰

Poverty statistics likely underestimate the number of people who face economic hardship. The methodology for establishing the poverty threshold was created in the 1960s and assumes food costs account for one-third of essential household expenses. Although the poverty threshold is adjusted

^h The term poverty threshold is often misused interchangeably with the term poverty guidelines, also known as the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG), which will be described in more depth later in this report. While the poverty threshold is a statistical tool issued by the U.S. Census Bureau used to calculate the number of people in poverty, the poverty guidelines are a simplified version of the poverty thresholds issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and used to determine financial eligibility for certain programs.

annually for inflation, threshold updates still only consider the cost of food and don't account for the significant shift in household expenses that have occurred since the 1960s, including the increase in the cost of housing as a share of household income and rising out-of-pocket healthcare costs. The current methodology for establishing the poverty threshold also does not account for the variation in the local cost of living.²¹

There have been growing concerns about the methodology used for calculating the poverty threshold, which is still considered to be the "Official Poverty Measure." In response to these concerns, the U.S. Census Bureau released the first set of statistics using the "Supplemental Poverty Measure" starting in 2011 and subsequently the second set was released in 2012.²² The supplemental measure is based on expenses for clothing, shelter, and utilities in addition to food, and also considers: geographic differences in the cost of housing; benefitsⁱ that families use as a resource to meet their basic needs in addition to cash income; and other expenses.^{j,23}

On a national level, the supplemental measure indicates an overall higher number and rate of people living in poverty: Using the SPM there were 49.7 million people (16.1% of the U.S. population) living in poverty in 2011 compared with 46.7 million (15.1% of the population) according to the official measure. For most demographic subgroups (i.e. according to race, age, and geographic region) the SPM rates are also higher than the official poverty rates, but there are some exceptions.²⁴ In 2012, the SPM was available by state, using three-year averages calculated from the Current Population Survey for 2009-2011.²⁵ Texas was one of 26 states with SPM rates lower than the official poverty rates (16.5% of the population).²⁶ While the supplemental poverty measure is still considered experimental, it provides a more comprehensive lens for considering the number and demographics of those who face challenges meeting their basic needs, and provides a way to measure how government benefit programs and tax policies or credits can help keep households out of poverty.²⁷

The Center for Public Policy Priorities has developed a comprehensive methodology for estimating the basic cost of living in their Family Budgets Tool. An interactive online calculator, it estimates that households in the Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos metropolitan area typically need incomes of at least

i In-kind benefits considered include: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); National School Lunch Program; WIC; Housing Subsidies; and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP).

j Additional expenses considered in the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) include: expenses related to work; out-of-pocket medical costs; taxes; child care expenses; child support paid.

double the poverty threshold to make ends meet.^{28,k} Using this standard to consider economic hardship, in 2011 more than one-third (36%) of Travis County residents (373,270 people) lived in households with incomes below 200% of the poverty threshold.²⁹

Basic Needs: Food

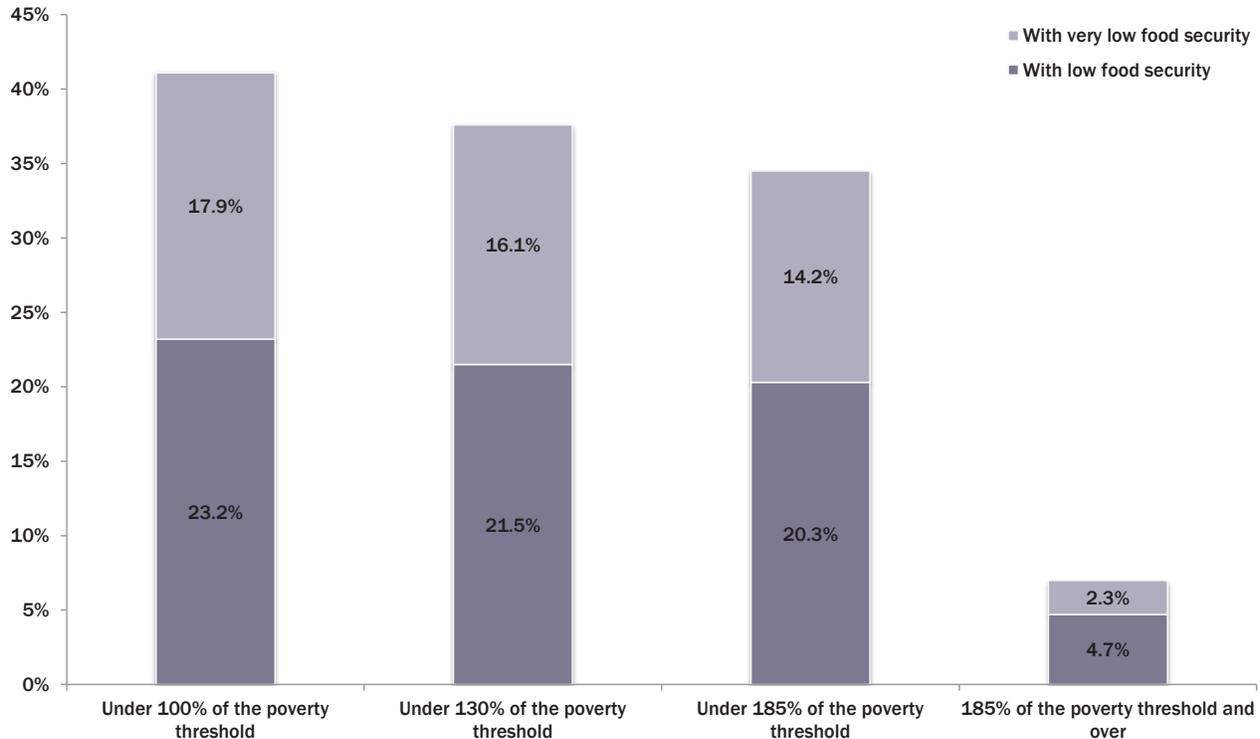
Poverty has a significant impact on food security, which is the ability to ensure access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. In 2011, 14.9% of U.S. households were food insecure—a rate essentially unchanged from 2011 (14.5%), 2009 (14.7%) and 2008 (14.6%).³⁰ These most recent figures reflect a leveling off at a higher rate than in the past; the next highest rate (11.9%) was reported in 2004.³¹ In Texas, 18.5% of households were food insecure during 2009-2011.³² Locally, in 2010 an estimated 16% of Travis County residents (about 158,270 people) were food insecure.³³

National data from the 2011 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement indicates that about 41.1% of households with incomes below the poverty threshold are food insecure,^l and 34.5% of low-income families with incomes somewhat above the poverty threshold (up to 185%) also lack food security.³⁴

k The tool calculates expenses based on the cost of housing, food, child care, medical insurance, medical out-of-pocket expenses, transportation, taxes less tax credits, and other necessities. Figures vary according to family size, type, and health insurance status. In 2012, the tool estimates that those with employer-sponsored insurance likely require incomes equivalent to 185% to 219% of the poverty threshold; for example, a single person would need an income of about \$21,608 (185% of FPIG in 2011) to meet basic expenses, while a family of four with two children would need about \$50,023 (219% of FPIG in 2011). Those without employer-sponsored insurance likely need incomes of 241% to 276% of the poverty threshold to cover the costs of necessities including medical insurance.

l The USDA defines low food security as “reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet (with little or no indication of reduced food intake)” and very low food security as “reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.”

Share of the Population with Low or Very Low Food Security by Household Income-to-Poverty Ratio U.S. Households, 2011



Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013
Source data: Economic Research Service/USDA, Economic Research Report-141, 2012

Basic Needs: Transportation

Housing, jobs, and services are increasingly decentralized and widely dispersed. Access to transportation is a necessary expense and is needed for essential functions such as maintaining a job or buying food, yet the cost can be an additional strain for those with limited incomes. A study on commuting in the United States found that the working poor spend 6.1% of their income on commuting, compared to 3.8% for other workers.³⁵ The working poor who drive to work spend even more (8.4%).³⁶ Travis County is largely a car-dependent region, with 78% of workers driving alone to work and only 4% using public transportation.³⁷ Although public transportation may be an affordable option for individuals with limited incomes, it may not be available or reliable. Focus group participants for a local community health assessment in Travis County identified several problems with public transportation, including long wait times for the bus and having to walk over a mile to the nearest bus stop.³⁸ Focus group participants also noted that residents who live or work outside of central Austin don't have access to the public transportation system because it doesn't extend to outlying areas.³⁹

Basic Needs: Utilities

Energy is a basic need, required for heating, cooling, refrigeration, and basic electricity. Energy costs in Travis County are becoming increasingly burdensome. On October 1, 2012, Austin Energy raised electricity costs by implementing a 7% system-wide average rate increase. According to Austin Energy, the rate increase will add an additional \$8 to \$113 to a typical home's monthly bill.⁴⁰ In addition to the rate increase, Austin Energy adopted a tiered residential rate structure, meaning the cost of electricity rises the more electricity is used. The tiered system is intended to encourage conservation of energy, but it is unclear how the new tiered system will impact low-income households who cannot afford energy-efficient appliances or who live in rental homes that are energy inefficient.^{41,m}

In addition to electricity rates, water costs are also rising. Austin's water rates have risen 100% since 2000 and Austin Water Utility plans to raise rates another 19% by 2016.⁴² Travis County residents in areas serviced by other water utilities may also face increases considering the growing presence of large multistate private water companies in Texas, which often bring higher water rates to the communities they serve. As an example, on April 10, 2012, the City of Pflugerville avoided an anticipated 60% increase in water bills for 15,000 Pflugerville residents after signing an agreement with SouthWest Water Company which temporarily froze rates for 12 months.⁴³ The agreement provides more time to allow SouthWest and the city to negotiate a solution over a complicated situation with the ownership of the utility.^{44,n}

Ability to Meet Basic Needs: Costs

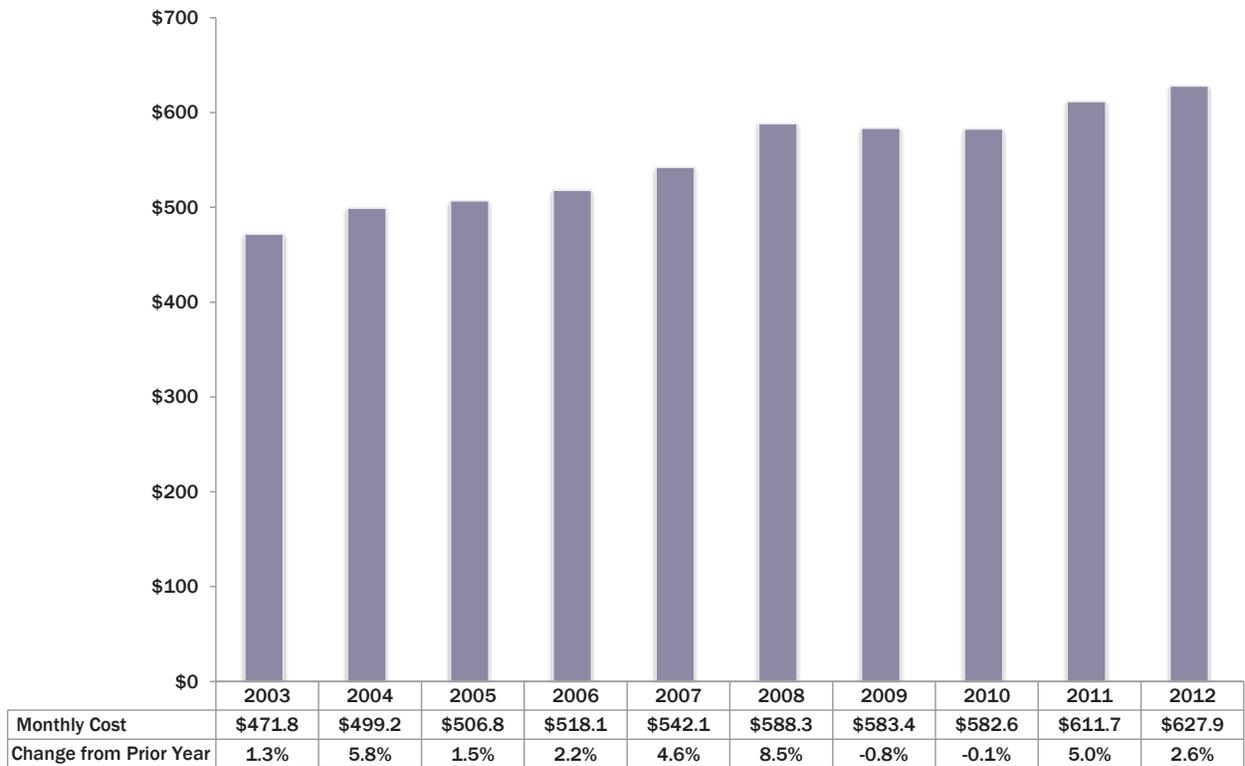
The cost of living also affects the ability to meet basic needs. The following chart shows monthly food costs for a family of four according to the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan, which serves as the national standard for a nutritious diet at minimal cost and is used as a basis for food stamp allotments. Overall, the cost of food has increased by about 33% over the past ten years and has outpaced overall inflation.^o In 2003, a family of four could manage on a food budget of about \$472 per month, compared to \$628 in 2012. Trends in food costs do fluctuate and appear to be rising again—the cost of food rose in 2007 and 2008, leveled off in 2009 and 2010, and is increasing based on 2011 and 2012 figures.⁴⁵

m Information about Austin Energy's rates and tiered system is available at <http://www.austinenergy.com/About%20Us/Rates/index.htm>.

n Information about the City of Pflugerville's agreement with SouthWest Water Company and interactions with Windermere Utility is available at: <http://pflugervilletx.gov/index.aspx?NID=1572>.

o Inflation in the overall cost of goods and services was about 29% between 2003 and the first half of 2012 based on analysis of the Consumer Price Index for the South Urban area.

Monthly Cost of Food, Thrifty Food Plan Family of Four, with Two Children 6-8 & 9-11, U.S., 2003-2012



Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013
 Source data: United States Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Nutrition, 2003-2012

A final note about income and costs is that while the overall cost of living has risen (as should be expected due to inflation), household income has not. In looking at trends over the past five years, the reported median household income in Travis County remained virtually unchanged between 2007 and 2011^{46,47} while the cost of goods and services as reported by the Consumer Price Index^p rose by about 9%.⁴⁸

^p The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is a measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services.

Change in Income and Costs, 2007 - 2011

	<i>Cost of Goods/Services</i>	<i>Median Income</i>
	Consumer Price Index All Items Annual Average South Urban Area	Annual Household Median Income Travis County
2007	200.4	52,937
2011	218.6	53,036
Percent Change	9%	0.2%

Created by: Travis County HHS/VS Research & Planning Division, 2013. Source data: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index; 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, B19013.

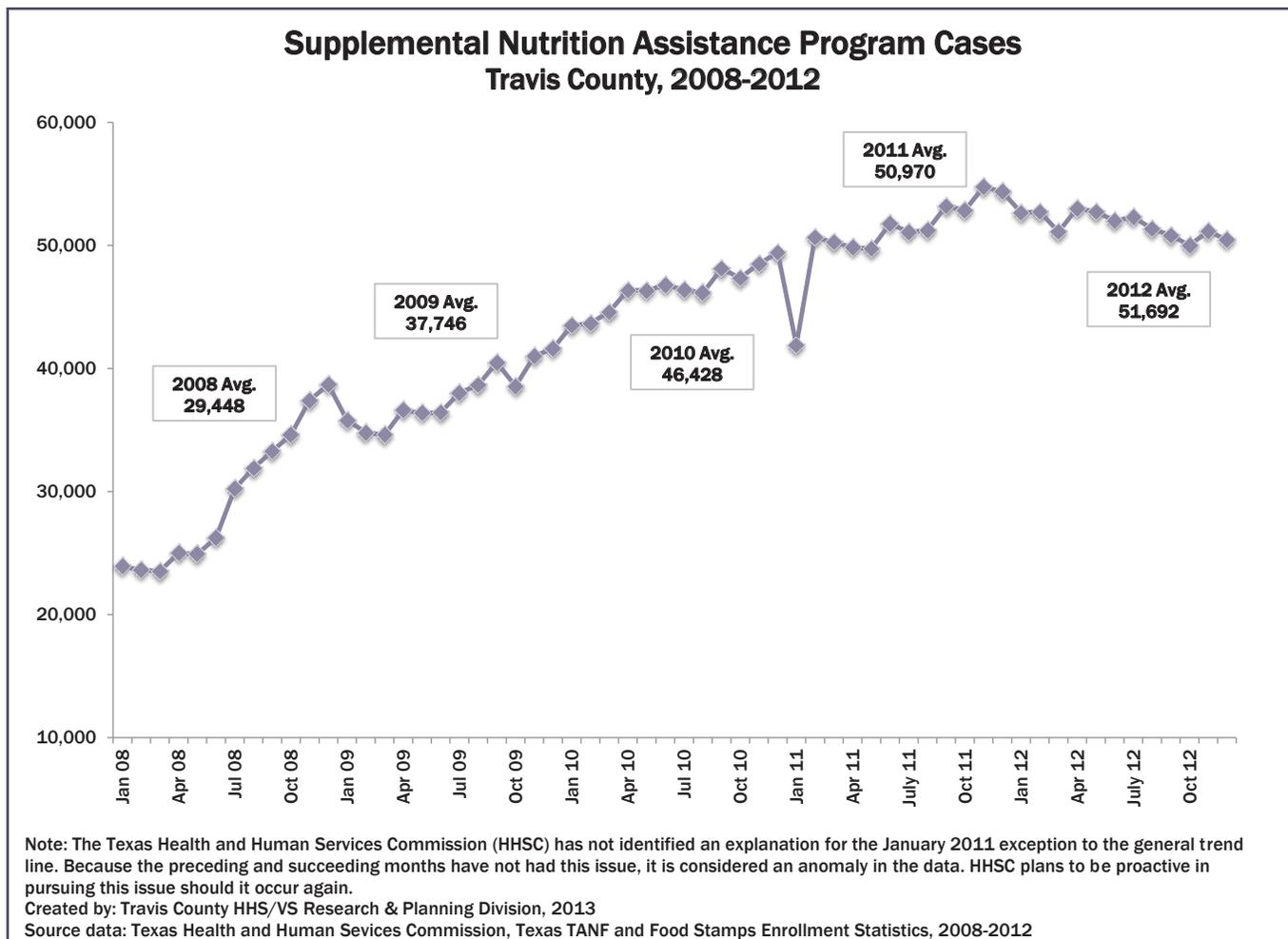
Basic Needs Assistance: Trends in Demand for and Use of Safety Net Services

The goal of a safety net is to help low-income individuals and families bridge the gap between available income and the cost of meeting basic needs. The safety net includes federally-funded, state-administered benefits and a local network of nonprofit agencies, faith-based organizations, and city and county agencies that fund and/or provide services for a combination of emergency food, rent, mortgage, utility, and clothing assistance to residents in need.

Calls to 2-1-1 Texas for the Greater Austin Texas region continue to suggest a significant demand for basic needs services. In 2012, callers most often needed help applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program), accounting for 25,729 calls. Requests for assistance with electric service payment and rent payment accounted for 13,879 and 13,659 calls, respectively. In 2012, calls for food pantries increased by 55% from 2011, representing 10,650 calls.⁴⁹ Referrals to services do not guarantee that callers will secure needed resources. Of the callers who received follow-up calls after they contacted 2-1-1, 53% did not receive assistance from the referred agency. Callers who did not receive assistance reported that the main reasons included waiting to hear back or being placed on a wait-list (30%), the referred agency was out of funds (20%), and callers were unable to reach referred agency (17%).⁵⁰

Food-related statistics show both an increased need for and use of safety net services. Increased enrollment in SNAP suggests that more individuals and families are in need of or are seeking assistance to meet their food and nutrition needs. As shown in the following chart, the number of SNAP cases in Travis County has leveled off at higher numbers than years prior. In December 2012, there were 50,458 SNAP cases in Travis County with 113,664 people (about 11% of all Travis County residents) receiving benefits.⁵¹ These local trends mirror national trends; nationally SNAP enrollment is at an all-time high. Historically, SNAP enrollment trends closely track changes in poverty rates, and after unemployment insurance, SNAP is the

most responsive federal program during times of economic downturn. Caseload growth in Travis County and across the country reflects that during a recession, more households qualify for SNAP assistance and a larger share of eligible households participates in the program.⁵²



Utilization of Austin Energy’s Customer Assistance Programs suggests a similar need for assistance in meeting utility costs. Austin Energy offers several Financial Support Programs, including discounts, for those facing long-term financial difficulties and serious medical problems. In 2012, Austin Energy made changes to the Customer Assistance Program (CAP) policies in order to reach a larger number of customers who need utility bill financial assistance.⁵³ The changes included new utility bill discounts (effective October 2012) and expanding utility discounts for customers who receive assistance through Medicaid, SNAP, the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the Telephone Lifeline Program.⁵⁴ Although data reporting the number of customers enrolled in a discount program during 2012 was unavailable at the time of this writing,⁵⁵ the need for assistance is apparent when looking at the number of financial assistance requests made. In FY 2011, Austin Energy received 13,110 requests for financial

assistance and 1,969 households were served through the financial support program.⁵⁶ In FY 2012, Austin Energy received 8,867 requests for financial assistance and served 2,246 households.⁵⁷ The unexplained decrease in the number of financial assistance requests from 2011 to 2012 could be linked to changes with the new billing system (see the Emerging Issues section.)

Basic Needs Assistance: Gaps in the Safety Net

Despite the availability of the aforementioned services, there are gaps in the safety net. In order to be eligible for federal safety net benefits, families must meet income eligibility guidelines typically set at or slightly above the poverty level.⁵⁸ Eligibility for SNAP requires a gross monthly income at or below 130% of FPIG,⁵⁹ and income eligibility for utility bill assistance through the Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) is typically set at 125% of FPIG.⁶⁰ However, as the cost of living in Travis County has been estimated to require an income of at least twice the poverty level,⁶¹ many families may be ineligible for assistance yet not earn enough to fully cover their basic expenses. Some families may meet income guidelines for benefits but still be ineligible for other reasons or face barriers to obtaining them. For example, even with legal status, most immigrants are not eligible to receive SNAP benefits until they have lived in the United States for at least five years. Also, while U.S.-born children living in immigrant families may be eligible for SNAP benefits, they are less likely to receive them, perhaps due to parents' misperception about eligibility or their fear of interaction with government agencies.⁶²

Emerging Issues

Many local residents have had recent additional and unanticipated challenges with utility costs. In outlying areas of Travis County, deregulation of water has created additional burdens for low-income residents. In the City of Austin, Austin Energy customers have been affected by numerous technical glitches following the implementation of a new billing system by IBM Corp. in October 2011.⁶³ Roughly one in four customers have experienced a problem with the system, such as customers not receiving bills, or being charged multiple times, and discounts for some low-income customers being unexpectedly canceled.⁶⁴ About 39,000 customers were forced to repay their \$200 deposit after Austin Energy refunded deposits too early, leaving customers with higher than normal monthly bills that were noted as past due.⁶⁵ (Billing problems also occurred for large corporate users, some of which were overbilled by thousands of dollars.⁶⁶) Although late fees, which were initially suspended to ensure the kinks were worked out, were reinstated in July 2012,⁶⁷ Austin Energy didn't send delinquent notices to customers with past due bills until the week of January 14, 2013.⁶⁸ This marked the first time delinquent notices were sent since October 2011, and the collections department expected to mail out up to 4,000 collection notices per day⁶⁹ and Austin Energy anticipated being flooded with calls.⁷⁰ While these issues have touched customers across

the economic spectrum, it is particularly concerning for low-income households. Some social service providers are seeing clients with utility bills ranging from \$375 to \$12,000, with most in the \$3,000 to \$5,000 range.⁷¹

At the time of this writing, both state and federal lawmakers were convening to address a spectrum of issues which could impact Texas residents' ability to meet their basic needs. Funding streams for many assistance programs that impact low-income households—such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)—are vulnerable to cuts after federal budget negotiations failed to avoid sequestration. The impact on local programs is currently unknown.

Further Resources

Community conditions discussed elsewhere in this report, particularly workforce and housing trends, also impact the ability to meet basic needs. Families facing unemployment or with limited earnings may need to rely on supports and services to bridge the gap between income and costs; those with a high housing cost burden may have less financial resources available to meet other basic necessities.

Below are selected resources that provide more information on research and data related to food security and poverty:

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

<http://frac.org/>

The Food Research and Action Center is the leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and under-nutrition in the United States.

The Texas Hunger Initiative, Baylor University School of Social Work (THI)

<http://www.baylor.edu/texashunger/>

The Texas Hunger Initiative is a capacity-building and collaborative project with many state and federal partners. THI works to develop and implement strategies to end hunger through policy, education, community organizing, and community development.

Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) Better Texas Family Budget Tool

<http://www.familybudgets.org/>

The Center for Public Policy Priorities evaluates public policy as it affects low- and moderate-income Texans through independent research and policy analysis, public education, advocacy, coalition-building, and technical assistance. The CPPP Better Texas Family Budget tool is an online public education tool that uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other public sources to measure what families have to earn to cover basic expenses in 27 metropolitan areas of Texas. Its methodology includes housing and utilities, food, medical care, child care, transportation, and other necessities.

United States Poverty Bureau—Poverty Pages

<https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/>

The United States Census Bureau is a leading source of quality data about people and the economy. The Census Bureau Poverty pages include reports on poverty data from several major household surveys and programs, including the American Community Survey. Information also includes research on the Supplemental Poverty Measure.

Focus on Poverty in Travis County: Snapshot from the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/research_planning/publications/acs/acs_focus_on_poverty_2011.pdf

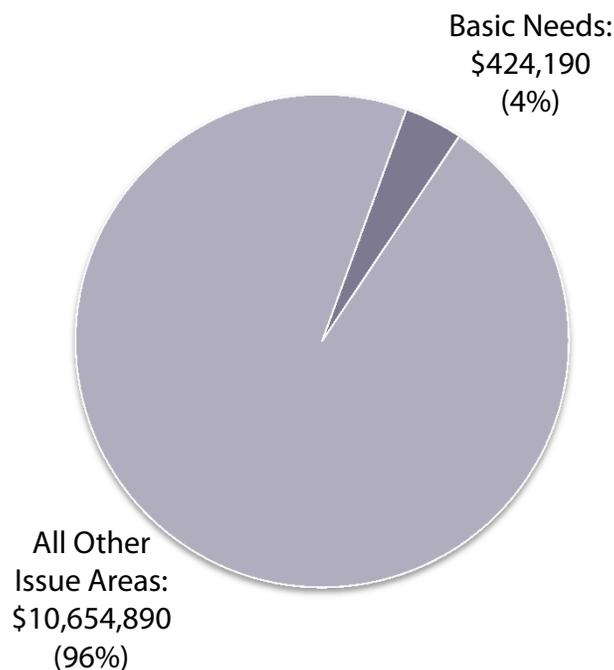
This report was researched and written by the staff at the Travis County Department of Health and Human Services & Veterans Service, Research & Planning Division. The report uses American Community Survey 2005-2009 5-Year Estimates to look at how demographic, social, and employment characteristics, as well as geography, interact with poverty.

Performance Highlights

OUR INVESTMENT

TCHHS/VS has departmental and contracted programs that offer services to address residents' basic needs. This service area includes contracted services that provide food to avert hunger, and offer transportation assistance to meet specific public health or safety needs. These contracted services work in tandem with services provided directly by the TCHHS/VS Department. The Department is a major provider of basic needs assistance for individuals and families within Travis County. The Family Support Services division provides an array of basic needs and housing services across seven community centers.

INVESTMENT IN BASIC NEEDS AND OTHER ISSUE AREAS, 2012



The Department's Basic Needs investment includes the following agencies: Capital Area Food Bank of Texas, Inc.; Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS); and Caritas of Austin.

CAPITAL AREA FOOD BANK OF TEXAS, INC.

Food Bank

Program Description

The Capital Area Food Bank of Texas, Inc. is the primary source of donated food and grocery products for other non-profit organizations. The Food Bank's primary mechanism of distributing food is through its network of 350 partner agencies. These human service agencies stock their pantry shelves with food from the Food Bank and then, in turn, directly provide the food to their clients, either as bags of groceries to fix and eat at home or as prepared meals served on-site at the agency.

The Food Bank serves as a clearinghouse that solicits, transports, and stores truckloads of donated food and other grocery products and then distributes the food and grocery products in manageable quantities to human service agencies that help people in need.

Funding

The total TCHHS/VS investment in the Food Bank program for 2012 was \$57,766. This investment comprised 0.6% of the total program budget.

Eligibility Criteria

Central Texas non-profit human service agencies serving the unemployed, low-income families and the working poor, homeless people, families whose Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits have been cut, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and/or high-risk teens are eligible to receive food.

Client Demographics and Client ZIP Codes

The Capital Area Food Bank of Texas, Inc. does not directly provide food to clients; therefore, no client demographic data or client ZIP code data are collected.

CAPITAL AREA FOOD BANK OF TEXAS, INC.: FOOD BANK

Performance Goals and Results

The Food Bank program fell short of performance targets across most measures. The program served 156 unique client agencies (see the first output), and most agencies were served throughout the year. The second output measure and first outcome measure are based off of the total pounds of donated food provided to Travis County (see the third output). Staff members report that the pounds of donated food was lower than expected partly because of a decrease in food received through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), a federal program which purchases excess inventory from American food producers for distribution to social service programs. They note that TEFAP distributions are now increasing, and distribution in 2013 is expected to increase over 2012 levels. The Partner Agency satisfaction survey was not conducted in 2012, due to a change in the timeline of when the survey is distributed (see the second outcome). The survey will now be distributed at the beginning of the new calendar year.

Performance Measure	Total Program Performance Results	Total Program Performance Goals	Total Program Performance Goal Achieved
Outputs			
Number of unduplicated Travis County client agencies provided with cost savings	156	168	93%
Number of meal equivalents provided in Travis County	4,643,891	6,000,000	77%
Pounds of donated food provided to Travis County	5,804,864	7,500,000	77%
Outcomes			
Number of dollars saved by Travis County agencies	\$9,636,075	\$12,450,000	77%
Percentage of unduplicated Partner Agencies satisfied	N/A	90% (126/140)	N/A

CAPITAL AREA RURAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (CARTS)

Job Access/Reverse Commute (JARC)

Program Description

CARTS provides public transportation services to residents who live in rural Travis County outside of the Capital Metro service area. The JARC route is called the Del Valle Flex and operates Monday through Friday. The route helps families access services at the Children’s Wellness Center, located at Highway 71 and Ross Road, and assists Del Valle ISD employees who travel from Austin to work. Finally, the route allows people with disabilities to travel into and through the Capital Metro service district more frequently and during more hours of the day.

Funding

The total TCHHS/VS investment in the Job Access/Reverse Commute program for 2012 was \$75,000. This investment comprised 2.1% of the total program budget. TCHHS/VS also funds the Public Transportation Rural Travis County program, which is described later in this report.

Eligibility Criteria

CARTS does not require an age or income level for eligibility. Transportation is provided to the public in Precinct 4 according to the Capital Metro bus schedule. The most frequent users of this service are low-income workers and people with disabilities who live outside of the Capital Metro service district and want to access full-time employment opportunities in the urbanized Austin area.

Client Demographics and Client ZIP Codes

Individual client demographics and ZIP codes are unavailable.

CARTS: JOB ACCESS/REVERSE COMMUTE

The JARC program surpassed the expected number of trips provided. Please note that CARTS provides services in nine rural counties and operates on a regional basis, moving persons in other communities and throughout Central Texas. However, for the purposes of this contract, CARTS is reporting only those trips provided to Travis County residents.

Performance Measure	Total Program Performance Results	Total Program Performance Goals	Total Program Performance Goal Achieved
<i>Outputs</i>			
Number of total trips provided	60,528	45,000	135%

CAPITAL AREA RURAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (CARTS)

Public Transportation Rural Travis County

Program Description

CARTS provides public transportation services to residents who live in rural Travis County outside of the Capital Metro service area. A variety of public transportation services are provided: General Public Dial-A-Ride services schedule rides as needed according to the published schedule. Reduced fares are available to adults over 60 years of age and to people with disabilities. Veterans traveling to any VA clinic or hospital are not charged a fare for the trip. The Senior Nutrition Program transports seniors to and from nutrition sites for meals and special programs. Transportation is also available for residents receiving services from Austin/Travis County Integral Care. Trips are scheduled in advance or as needed, and transportation is provided to and from programs and appointments.

Funding

The total TCHHS/VS investment in the Public Transportation Rural Travis County program from October 1, 2011 to December 31, 2012 was \$163,444. This investment comprised 4.6% of the total program budget. TCHHS/VS also funds the Job Access/Reverse Commute program, which is described earlier in this report.

Eligibility Criteria

CARTS does not require an age or income level for eligibility. Transportation is provided to the public according to the Travis County schedule and depending on availability.

Client Demographics and Client ZIP Codes

Individual client demographics and ZIP codes are unavailable.

CARTS: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION RURAL TRAVIS COUNTY

Performance Goals and Results

The Public Transportation Rural Travis County program exceeded goals on both performance measures. Please note that CARTS provides services in nine rural counties and operates on a regional basis, moving persons in other communities and throughout Central Texas. However, for the purposes of this contract, CARTS is reporting only those trips provided to Travis County residents.

Performance Measure	Total Program Performance Results	Total Program Performance Goals	Total Program Performance Goal Achieved
<i>Outputs</i>			
Number of unduplicated clients served	1,019	553	184%
Number of total trips provided	28,657	23,000	125%

Basic Needs—Community Kitchen

Program Description

The overall goal of Caritas of Austin's basic needs program is to assist low-income residents with basic nutrition needs. The Community Kitchen provides lunch to anyone who is hungry. Lunch consists of a hot entrée or soup and sandwich; vegetables and/or fresh fruit; milk; and dessert. The Community Kitchen also offers respite from the heat or inclement weather.

Funding

The total TCHHS/VS investment in the Basic Needs—Community Kitchen program for 2012 was \$127,980. This investment comprised 66.7% of the total program budget. TCHHS/VS also funds the Best Single Source Plus program, which is described in the Housing Continuum issue area report.

Eligibility Criteria

The Caritas Community Kitchen serves a nutritious meal to anyone who is hungry. This well-balanced lunch meets the nutritional needs of many homeless individuals, as well as unemployed or underemployed workers.

Client Demographics and Client ZIP Codes

Individual client demographics and ZIP codes are unavailable.

CARITAS OF AUSTIN: BASIC NEEDS—COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The Basic Needs—Community Kitchen program met or exceeded both performance targets. Program staff attribute the higher number of responses and satisfaction with the meals (see the outcome measure) to both the quality of meals served and the quality of volunteers and interns who staff the Community Kitchen. The Community Kitchen Survey of Patrons was conducted twice in 2012.

Performance Measure	Total Program Performance Results	Total Program Performance Goals	Total Program Performance Goal Achieved
Outputs			
Number of hot meals served	84,642	85,000	100%
Outcomes			
Percentage of unduplicated clients provided a meal, who were satisfied with the meal, as measured in an annual survey	97% (385/398)	85% (192/225)	113%

Appendix A

Methodology

Community conditions discussed in this report reflect the most recent information available at the time of writing (November 2012 through February 2013). Terminology used in the report is based upon the terms used by the original data source. Therefore, terminology may differ within or across issue areas. For example, one data source may use the term “African American” while another may use “Black.” Finally, estimates from the American Community Survey have been tested at a 90% confidence level for reliability. In some cases, all noted, estimates were unreliable due to small sample sizes.

Most data included in the *2012 Community Impact Report* cover calendar year 2012^q and are drawn from contracts and reports provided by contracted service providers. Each contract is classified into the issue area most closely aligned to its central goals and objectives.

Considerations When Reading This Report

Performance results provide only a starting point for understanding the impact of these programs. These summary statistics are not necessarily an indication of the programs’ overall performance, but rather a snapshot and general gauge of their performance over a one-year period. Readers are encouraged to locate the particular programs of interest in each issue area report and review the detailed programmatic and performance information. Within these reports, service providers offer explanations for variance in performance. This information, in particular, is critical to providing context and meaning to these summary results.

These performance results do not reflect the programs’ full value to and impact on the community, which would require formal program evaluations, qualitative studies, and a review of other research. Therefore, it is also important to keep the following considerations in mind when reviewing program performance.

Participant characteristics can significantly influence a program’s performance results. For example, performance results may be lower for programs with clients who face considerable challenges (e.g., serious mental illness or addiction issues) and have little social support. Readers should therefore use caution when comparing output and outcome results across programs.

^q The report covers calendar year 2012 because the majority of the social service contracts included in the report follow a calendar year schedule.

Many additional factors beyond the program's control may also impact the program's performance. For example, if jobs become scarce, an effective workforce development program may experience lower client employment rates, regardless of the quality of training and support provided to their clients. Similarly, if jobs become abundant, a workforce development program may experience higher client employment rates, even if the program provided training that was not marketable. Without controlling for these factors, the true impact or efficacy of the program on outcomes cannot be discerned.

Readers should also use caution when examining outcome results for programs with less than 30 clients. For such small programs, the outcome of just a few clients can greatly affect the program's total outcome result. In these instances, examining percentages may be less helpful than examining raw numbers.

Finally, this report captures a narrow set of performance measures, which may not reflect the program's full impact on participants and their families, peers, and neighborhood. For example, though an individual was unable to obtain employment within the time period analyzed, a program may have increased the readiness and capacity of the individual to succeed on the job once eventually employed. Additionally, performance measures may not all be equal in importance or value to the community. Also, some agencies may have negotiated performance measure goals that were more difficult to achieve than others.

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