

Summary

Top Identified Issues Across Groups

- Access to health care was identified as an important issue among all groups.
- Child development & care was identified as an important issue by business leaders and household survey respondents.
- Hunger assistance was identified as an important issue among health and human service leaders as well as household survey participants.
- Affordable housing was identified as an important issue among health and human service leaders as well as business leaders.

Issues of Concern by Specific Groups

- Youth development and family support & education were elevated issues among business leaders.
- Older adult support & independence and services for persons with disabilities were elevated issues among household survey respondents.
- Emergency assistance and emergency & transitional housing were elevated issues among health and human service leaders.
- Household survey respondents stated the following issues as the top items they would like the community to solve in the next three years: drug abuse, affordable housing, access to health care, older adult services, hunger assistance and homelessness.
- Rural respondents were more likely to list hunger and transportation as elevated issues and identified older adult support & independence, services for persons with disabilities, substance abuse, emergency assistance and mental health as important issues.

Next Steps

The Community Assessment is only the first step in creating sustained community change. United Way of East Central Iowa will be using the Assessment results, which are based on individuals' perceptions, and other research data to develop an Agenda for Action. This action plan will focus its attention on several of the identified critical needs in our communities. United Way will align investments and priorities based on this plan. Results will be evaluated to assure United Way investments are having the greatest impact to truly strengthen our communities.

If you have questions regarding the Community Assessment or would like more extensive information about the research, please contact:

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Strengthening Our Communities

United Way of East Central Iowa thanks the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation for supporting the costs of conducting the Community Assessment.

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The Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation *for good. for ever.*



what matters.™



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Dear Community Partners,

The United Way of East Central Iowa is continually evaluating its organizational practices to effectively serve and strengthen our community. One critical process in evaluation is the collection of research data.

In September 2005, United Way of East Central Iowa, in partnership with the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, contracted with research firm Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc. to conduct a Community Assessment. The Assessment results measure perceptions of identified issues that people feel are the most critical community needs.

These results are a valuable tool for the entire community. It is our hope that you can use this information to stimulate partnerships, enhance programs, apply for grants and develop other activities that will address critical needs.

United Way of East Central Iowa will use the results along with other community data to develop an Agenda for Action. This action plan will be used to align investments and priorities over the next several years to create sustained community change.

Thank you for joining us in our mission to strengthen our communities.

Sincerely,

Lois Buntz
President & CEO

Katie Oberbroeckling
2006 Board Chair

United Way of East Central Iowa: Strengthening Our Communities

The collaboration and expertise from many community partners were key components in conducting the Community Assessment. United Way of East Central Iowa thanks the 186 individuals from nearly 100 organizations who participated in the focus groups and the United Way Research and Information Services Committee for its oversight of the Assessment.

Assessment Process

United Way of East Central Iowa contracted with Frank N. Magid Associates, Inc. in September 2005 to complete the Community Assessment. There were two phases of the Assessment. The first phase consisted of conducting informational sessions while the second component included gathering survey information.

First Phase – Informational Sessions

Service Provider Focus Groups – In September 2005, 14 focus groups were held with 160 service providers and social service experts. Each of the focus groups convened to discuss one of the 14 issues (see Issue Areas section).

Second Phase – Survey Information

Household Survey – In November 2005, over 1,000 persons were surveyed by telephone. Respondents were asked questions regarding their perceptions of the importance of 14 community issues. The results were weighted to represent the composition of the United Way of East Central Iowa service area.

Business/Health and Human Service Leader Focus Groups – In February 2006, three focus groups were held with 26 health and human service leaders and business leaders comprised of United Way donors and volunteers.

Issue Areas

The following issues were the main areas of discussion for the focus groups and the household survey participants.:

- Access to Health Care Services
- Affordable Housing Programs
- Child Development and Care Programs
- Community Violence Programs
- Emergency Assistance Programs
- Emergency & Transitional Housing Programs
- Family Support and Education Programs
- Hunger Assistance Programs
- Mental Health Services
- Older Adult Support & Independence Services
- Programs for Minorities
- Services for Persons with Disabilities
- Substance Abuse Programs
- Youth Development Programs

* Issues are listed in alphabetical order

Community Assessment Results

Perceptions of Strengths/Barriers

The findings from the Community Assessment indicated several strengths of our communities' ability to help those in need. These strengths included:

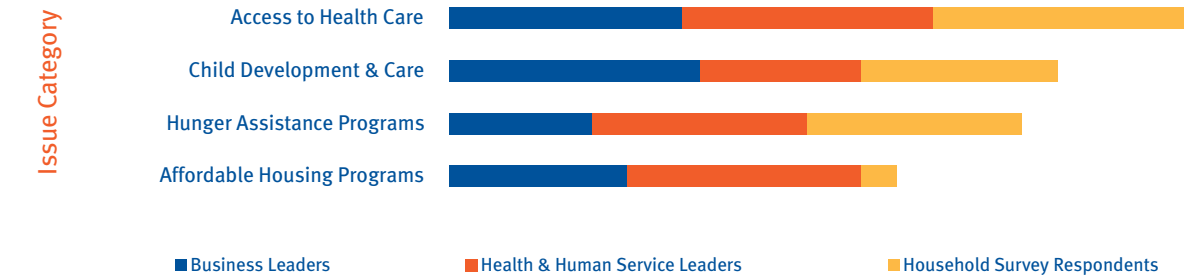
- There are many social services available.
- The services provided to clients are of high quality.
- There is excellent collaboration among service providers.

Respondents cited the following as barriers to receiving services:

- Difficulty in accessing services due to lack of transportation and not being able to locate services.
- Not being able to afford services.
- There are waiting lists for services due to the high demand.

Ranking the Issues

After compiling the results from the Household Survey respondents and the Business/Health and Human Service Leader Focus Group participants, the 14 issues were ranked in order of importance. The chart below compares the issues and findings from these groups.



Note: The length of the bars on the graph indicates the level of each group's perceived importance on the respective issues.

Other Issues

Other topics in the 14 issue areas were identified as important but had less consistency in rankings among all groups. These included:

- Mental Health Services
- Substance Abuse Programs
- Community Violence Programs
- Programs for Minorities

Finding Common Themes

Below are the top five issues from the respondents of the surveys and focus groups.

Business Leaders	Health & Human Service Leaders	Household Survey Respondents
1. Child Development & Care	1. Access to Health Care	1. Access to Health Care
2. Access to Health Care	2. Affordable Housing	2. Older Adult Support & Independence
3. Youth Development	3. Hunger Assistance	3. Hunger Assistance
4. Family Support & Education	4. Emergency Assistance	4. Child Development & Care
5. Affordable Housing	5. Emergency & Transitional Housing	5. Services for Persons with Disabilities

* The highlighted issues indicate topics that are repeated in multiple groups.

Top Identified Issues Across Groups

- 1) Access to Health Care
- 2) Child Development & Care
- 3) Hunger Assistance
- 4) Affordable Housing