2015 Social Services Needs Assessment

Lake County, Ohio

Completed by:

Lifeline, Inc.

Lake County’s Community Action Agency
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Lifeline, Inc. History & Mission

Lifeline was founded on June 19, 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County’s low-income residents by providing assistance and life skills programming that was designed to increase self sufficiency. In 1980, Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County and in 1987 Lifeline was designated as Lake County’s Community Action Agency by the Ohio Department of Development. Most recently, in 2008, Lifeline, Inc. was certified as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health as a provider of other mental health and information and referral services.

Today Lifeline continues with much the same mission of helping families and individuals break the cycle of poverty and achieve self sufficiency. In 2012 the Lifeline staff and its Board of Trustees completed a strategic planning process for the agency’s future resulting in a new mission statement and programming goals. Lifeline’s new mission statement, “Lifeline strengthens the community by offering programs and opportunities for our residents to achieve self-sufficiency,” recognizes Lifeline’s diverse programming in the areas of emergency services and self sufficiency. Lifeline strives to help families in crisis and then teach them to become self sufficient.

Lifeline’s Board and staff strongly believe that self-sufficiency means something different to every consumer who walks through our doors. To some it might mean securing safe, affordable and stable housing so that they have a place to sleep, shower and call home. To others it might mean being able to access prescription medicine and other healthcare services so that they can maintain their physical and mental health. And to others it might mean furthering their education or learning an employable skill. In an effort to promote self-sufficiency in a variety of ways, Lifeline provides a wide array of programs in the areas of healthcare, housing and energy assistance, consumer education and information and referral services.

As a Community Action Agency, Lifeline also believes that it is uniquely poised to serve two distinct purposes in Lake County: to act as an advocate for our consumers and to ensure that as an agency, we are meeting critical community needs. Lifeline’s Board and staff feel that it is essential that our consumers have a voice. Lifeline, Inc. regularly advocates on behalf of our consumers, both by discussing poverty-related issues with our local legislators and providing seats on our Board to low-income representatives. Lifeline strives to fill gaps in services within Lake County and ensures that we are meeting critical and emerging needs through its regular needs assessment process and consumer satisfaction surveying.

Lifeline, Inc. is significantly funded by the Community Service Block Grant and the Home Energy Assistance Program, both via the Ohio Development Services Agency and through the Home Investment Partnership Program and Community Development Block Grant granted through the Lake County Board of Commissioners. Additional funding is allocated through the United Way of Lake County, and provided by the Lake County ADAMHS Board, the City of Mentor, the Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the Western Reserve Junior Service League and the Bikers Aiding Local Diabetics. Lifeline also hosts several of its own fundraising events each year and an annual campaign drive each fall.

Lifeline, Inc. 2014 Statistics

Lifeline, Inc., Lake County’s Community Action Agency, served 3,207 unduplicated low-income families, or 7,486 individuals through its community services and energy assistance divisions, in 2014 according to the agency year end report.

Of the 7,486 individuals served in 2014, 73% were Caucasian, 21% African-American and 6% represented other ethnicities. Fifty-nine percent of all individuals served were female.

Of the individuals served, 38% fell within the 0-17 age range; 45% fell within the 18-54 age range; 13% fell within the 55-69 age range; and 4% fell within the 70 years and older age range.

Of individuals age 24 and older, 44% had a high school diploma or GED; 24% had some post-secondary education in addition to a high school diploma or GED; 20% were non-graduates completing some high school; 9% had completed a two or four year degree; and 3% had only education levels through 8th grade.
Of the 3,207 households assisted in 2014, 40% were single person homes; 30% were single-parent households headed by a female; 14% were two-parent households; 9% were couple households; 2% was single-parent households headed by a male and 5% were other types of households.

Several notable shifts in customer trends were seen in 2014, possibly as a result of the changing economy and the changing face of need in Lake County. Since 2010, we’ve seen a dramatic decrease in the number of home owners and renters and a sharp increase in the number of homeless residents needing assistance. We’ve also seen an increase in the number of disabled residents seeking assistance. We continued to see a rise in the number of uninsured through 2013, but that number has decreased in 2014 due to Medicaid expansion in Ohio.

2-1-1 has also continued its trend of high call volume, logging 32,674 incoming call inquiries and 5,188 web inquiries during 2014.

**Lifeline, Inc. Needs Assessment Methodology**

The data for the 2015 Needs Assessment have been collected in three different ways.

**Focus Groups:** Four focus groups were held to obtain the input of service providers on the needs and gaps in services within Lake County. In total, there were 25 participants in attendance, representing 22 Lake County non-profit social service agencies and government entities.

The nominal group technique is a decision making process that encourages participation from all group members and allows for individual and group brainstorming, while also quickly making a determination for results. The process begins with individual group members silently writing their observations of the community needs. In a round-robin fashion, the observations are presented to the group for discussion and additional brainstorming. After all observations are presented and discussed, participants begin to rank the needs in order of greatness. The group results are then tallied by Lifeline’s staff facilitators.

We feel that the nominal group technique is advantageous because it allows for independent idea brainstorming followed by idea sharing, group discussion and ranking. We feel that this provides all participants an equal opportunity to have their opinions and observations presented to the group, which also spurs additional brainstorming during the group discussion. The ranking of the discussed needs allows Lifeline to easily evaluate the needs of our community as presented by the focus group participants.

**Customer Surveying:** We asked 15 of Lifeline’s collaborating agencies to survey consumers at their organization so that we could evaluate the needs of the consumers from their own point of view. In order to assess a variety of needs, these 15 agencies included health clinics, mental health agencies, faith-based organizations, government service providers, educational assistance facilities and emergency service providers. A total of 540 surveys were sent to 15 agencies and 347 surveys were returned by 13 of them. This is a 65% return rate.

Survey participants were asked to answer several demographic questions, including questions about their family and housing types, and their type of health insurance. We also surveyed to see if they fit any specific population groups, including veterans, mental health consumers, ex-offenders, physically disabled and victims of domestic abuse. These surveys were all completed anonymously and privately.

In addition, we also asked participants to answer questions about their specific needs. These included what services they were currently applying for assistance with, what barriers have prevented them from receiving assistance in the past and what the biggest concern is for their family right now. We also asked them to identify what services they are in need of that they cannot obtain right now and would like to see available in the future.

**Real Data:** In addition to surveying consumers and asking service providers for their observations and opinions, data was also collected from a variety of credible sources. This data includes demographics and statistics for Lake County and the State of Ohio. A resource listing of this data is in the back of this assessment.
Lake County Demographics & Statistics

Lake County, located in northeast Ohio along the shore of Lake Erie, boasted an estimated population of 229,230 in 2014, according to the Lake County Profile prepared by the Ohio Development Services Agency. This makes Lake County the eleventh most populous county in Ohio. While the population had steadily increased each year for the past ten years, it decreased by just over 350 residents from 2012-2014, a trend that is expected to slowly continue for the next decade.

The median household income for Lake County residents in 2014 was $56,018, up from $48,763 in 1999. However, 15.8% of the population made less than 150% of the federal poverty level in 2014. And, as a comparison, in 2010 78.7% of the population made more than 200% of the federal poverty level. That percentage has sunk to 75.5% in 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratio of Income in 2014 to Poverty Level</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 50% of poverty level</td>
<td>9,844</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% to 99% of poverty level</td>
<td>11,030</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% to 149% of poverty level</td>
<td>14,991</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150% to 199% of poverty level</td>
<td>19,703</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200% of poverty level or higher</td>
<td>171,303</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In early 2011, a coalition of partner agencies, led by the Lake County General Health District, assembled to begin the process of developing a Community Health Assessment for Lake County. Surveying was done throughout the winter of 2010 and the document was completed in summer 2011. The assessment shows the responses to up to 111 questions, answered by 2,568 respondents from a variety of income levels, geographic locations, ages and ethnicities throughout the county.

In the 2011 health assessment, respondents were asked to evaluate the top five community issues that have the greatest effect on the quality of life in Lake County from a list of 27 choices. The top responses overall and by income level are shown below. Additional top voted issues overall included immigration, homelessness, availability of positive teen activities, domestic violence and dropping out of school. These responses show that Lake County residents overwhelmingly see need in all areas including healthcare, employment, housing and education/child care.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Issues that Have the Greatest Impact on Quality of Life in Lake County</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>$0-$34,999</th>
<th>$35,000-$74,999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Unemployment (59.4%)</td>
<td>Unemployment (53.2%)</td>
<td>Unemployment (56.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Affordable Health Services (41.7%)</td>
<td>Low-income/Poverty (41.4%)</td>
<td>Affordable Health Services (40.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Low-income/Poverty (39.2%)</td>
<td>Affordable Health Services (37.5%)</td>
<td>Low-income/Poverty (34.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Inadequate Health Insurance (32.0%)</td>
<td>Inadequate Health Insurance (29.3%)</td>
<td>Inadequate Health Insurance (32.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Unsupervised Children/Youth (26.8%)</td>
<td>Homelessness (29.2%)</td>
<td>Unsupervised Children/Youth (28.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data provided by the Lake County Community Health Assessment 2011

Lake County has a rapidly aging population. According to the Lake County, Ohio Senior Citizens: Today, Tomorrow and in the Future 2015 study prepared for the Lake County Board of Commissioners & Senior Citizens Advisory Panel, the number of residents over the age of 60 in Lake County is projected to grow from 51,488 in 2010 to 70,781 in 2030. This means that one of every three Lake County residents will be 60 years of age or older. This has many implications for Lake County service provision, including food, housing and transportation. These projections are shown in the chart below.
Self-Sufficiency in Lake County

Lake County continues to be a very expensive place to live, particularly for low income individuals and families. According to the 2013 Ohio Self-sufficiency Standard, it takes an annual wage of between $20,623 and $74,464 to support various family types in Lake County. In one instance, when a household has one adult and one preschooler, the self-sufficiency standard for Lake County is the second highest in Ohio at $41,105 needed to maintain self-sufficiency. For families with one adult, one preschooler and one school age child, Lake County ranks the highest, with a wage of $52,632 needed to maintain self-sufficiency.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Lake County, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTHLY COSTS</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Adult + Preschooler</th>
<th>Adult + Infant Preschooler</th>
<th>Adult + Preschooler School age</th>
<th>Adult + School age Teenager</th>
<th>Adult + Infant Preschooler School age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>$626</td>
<td>$793</td>
<td>$793</td>
<td>$793</td>
<td>$793</td>
<td>$1,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$1,700</td>
<td>$1,360</td>
<td>$560</td>
<td>$2,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>$267</td>
<td>$404</td>
<td>$529</td>
<td>$607</td>
<td>$704</td>
<td>$714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$236</td>
<td>$245</td>
<td>$245</td>
<td>$245</td>
<td>$245</td>
<td>$245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>$166</td>
<td>$380</td>
<td>$390</td>
<td>$406</td>
<td>$435</td>
<td>$416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>$129</td>
<td>$262</td>
<td>$366</td>
<td>$341</td>
<td>$274</td>
<td>$470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>$295</td>
<td>$677</td>
<td>$1,013</td>
<td>$901</td>
<td>$574</td>
<td>$1,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Income Tax Credit (-)</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$-60</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Tax Credit (-)</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>-$53</td>
<td>-$100</td>
<td>-$100</td>
<td>-$55</td>
<td>-$100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Tax Credit (-)</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>-$83</td>
<td>-$167</td>
<td>-$167</td>
<td>-$167</td>
<td>-$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF-SUFFICIENCY WAGE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly</td>
<td>$9.76</td>
<td>$19.46</td>
<td>$27.09</td>
<td>$24.92</td>
<td>$18.76</td>
<td>$35.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>$1,719</td>
<td>$3,425</td>
<td>$4,769</td>
<td>$4,386</td>
<td>$3,303</td>
<td>$6,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>$20,623</td>
<td>$41,105</td>
<td>$57,224</td>
<td>$52,632</td>
<td>$39,631</td>
<td>$74,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Savings (month)</td>
<td>$47</td>
<td>$97</td>
<td>$150</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$111</td>
<td>$218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies’ 2014 State of Poverty Report, poverty is growing in suburban areas, of which Lake County is part. Although 36% of the City of Cleveland lives...
in poverty—compared to 11% in its suburbs—since 2000, Cleveland’s suburban poor population has grown six times faster than the city’s.

Healthcare in Lake County

According to the data found in the County Health Rankings reported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Lake County is in the top 20 of Ohio’s 88 counties in nearly every healthy outcomes category. Lake County ranks 15th for mortality rate, with a much lower than state average in premature deaths. Lake County ranks 9th in health behaviors, which include smoking, obesity, excessive drinking, physical activity, STD rate and teen birth statistics. Lake County also ranks 25th in clinical care, which includes a primary care physician/resident ratio, dentist/resident ratio, preventable hospital stays, diabetic and mammography screenings. The graphic below shows how Lake County compares to the other counties in Ohio.

Health Outcomes:
How healthy a county is now
Lake County 2014 Ranking = 17 out of 88

Health Factors:
How healthy a county will be in the future
Lake County 2014 Ranking = 14 out of 88

One of the early questions evaluated in the Lake County Community Health Assessment was what respondents viewed as the most important health problems facing Lake County. Respondents were able to choose five responses from a list of 28 issues. The top responses overall and by income level are shown below. Additional
top voted problems overall included alcohol addiction, heart disease/heart attack, cancer, teenage pregnancy and diabetes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Health Problems Facing Lake County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Adult Obesity (53.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Drug Addiction (44.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Mental Health (42.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Child Obesity (42.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Aging Problems (39.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data provided by the Lake County Community Health Assessment 2011

A key component of the Health Assessment asked respondents a series of questions about health insurance and access to health care services. Of those who answered, 86.9% said that they do have health insurance, while 13.1% did not. The chart below shows what types of insurance survey respondents said they have.

![What type of insurance do you have?](chart.png)

Data provided by the Lake County Community Health Assessment 2011

It is worth noting that the Lake County Health Assessment was completed in 2011, prior to the expansion of Medicaid in Ohio, so the types of insurance have likely changed significantly since that study was done.

Health Assessment survey respondents were asked what barriers to health care services they have encountered. Of those who answered, 33.6% said that they didn’t receive services because they didn’t have insurance. An additional 31% said it was because their insurance wouldn’t cover the cost of the needed service and 26.9% said that they couldn’t afford their medications. The chart below shows what types of services respondents were unable to receive. Again, the responses to the question of barriers should look different today, as a result of Medicaid Expansion in late 2013.
Respondents were also asked a series of questions about their access to prescription drugs. Of those surveyed, 62.8% said that they do take prescription medications daily. When asked if their prescriptions were covered by their insurance, 83.1% answered that they were. When respondents were asked if they had any problems filling any medically necessary prescriptions in the last 12 months, 13.6% replied that they had—this jumps to 20.1% in those respondents with income under $34,999. The majority of those who answered that they did have problems filling prescriptions overwhelmingly cited that they either lacked insurance, their insurance didn't cover what was needed or that their share of the cost was too high. When asked how much they spend out of pocket on prescriptions each month, 67.7% said they spend 0-$50/month; 11.7% said they spend $51-$75/month; 5.4% said they spend $76-$100/month; and 15.2% said they spend over $101/month.

**Employment in Lake County**

Historically, the unemployment rate in Lake County has been low. The chart below shows a historical perspective of the civilian labor force in Lake County and how it has grown since 2007, peaking in 2010. The unemployment rate has continuously decreased in the last four years, but has yet to reach traditional lower levels of below five percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lake County Civilian Labor Force</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Labor Force</td>
<td>134,400</td>
<td>134,700</td>
<td>134,000</td>
<td>133,600</td>
<td>129,100</td>
<td>128,600</td>
<td>125,600</td>
<td>126,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>127,200</td>
<td>126,600</td>
<td>122,700</td>
<td>122,300</td>
<td>119,800</td>
<td>120,300</td>
<td>117,600</td>
<td>119,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>11,300</td>
<td>11,300</td>
<td>9,300</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>7,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ohio Labor Market Information

In looking at the Ohio Labor Market's monthly data for 2015, the unemployment rate has remained very steady in Lake County over the last seven months. For August 2015, Lake County had a civilian labor force of 126,900, 121,600 of whom were employed and 5,300 of whom were not employed and an unemployment rate of 4.2. Comparatively, Lake County recorded an unemployment rate of 5.7 in August 2014, 6.2 in August 2012 and 7.0 in August 2011. Lake County’s unemployment rates are historically lower than the statewide and national rates. Ohio recorded an unemployment rate of 4.3 and the United States recorded an unemployment rate of 5.1 for August 2015. The map below shows comparative unemployment rates for the various counties in the State of Ohio in August 2015.
Major employers in Lake County continue to be manufacturing companies ABB, Inc., Avery Dennison Corp., Lincoln Electric, Lubrizol Corp. and STERIS Corp.; health systems, including Lake Hospital System; utility provider First Energy Corp.; and government entities, the Lake County government, the Mentor Exempted Village Board of Education and the Willoughby-Eastlake Board of Education.

**Housing and Homelessness in Lake County**

The Lake County Profile shows that in 2014, 92.9% of all housing units were occupied and that 75.0% of them were owner-occupied and 25.0% were renter-occupied. An additional 7.1% were vacant. Of owner occupied homes, 18.2% were valued at under $99,999; 31.1% were valued between $100,000 and $149,999; 42.0% were valued between $150,000 and $299,999; and 8.7% were valued at over $300,000. The median value of homes in Lake County is $151,300.

Home ownership continues to be a struggle for low-income residents as foreclosures have been on the rise in recent years. Since 2000, the number of foreclosure filings throughout Lake County has climbed consistently, nearly doubling between 2000 and 2006. In 2011, we began to see the numbers decline slightly. As the chart below indicates, the number of foreclosure filings surpassed 1,000 in 2006 and peaked at 1,728 in 2010.

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosures Filed</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>1,141</td>
<td>1,395</td>
<td>1,517</td>
<td>1,695</td>
<td>1,728</td>
<td>1,552</td>
<td>1,549</td>
<td>1,249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data provided by Lake Co. Continuum of Care Home Is In Sight Plan and the Lake County office of Planning & Community Development*

An additional concern for both Lake County home owners and landlords is the age of the housing stock and the high cost for home repairs and modifications. The Lake County Profile shows that there are 101,218 housing units in Lake County and 16.4% of those units were built prior to 1950. An additional 53.0% were built between 1959 and 1980. The median home value continues to decline and the need for repairs continues to rise, which is a challenge for owners to maintain, particularly senior citizen owners. Further compounding the problem of aging housing stock, is the aging infrastructure of many of the communities in Lake County. Aging infrastructure leads to widespread flooding, as we saw occur in July 2013 in Lake County. Many homes experienced sewer back up and flooding, which resulted in a high level of damage to many homes and expensive repairs and replacements for many residents.
Housing continues to be a challenge for many senior citizens in Lake County. As our population continues to age, and the over 60 demographic continues to rise, more Lake County residents are in need of assistance with maintenance and home modification. This is especially true due to the compounded issue of the aging housing stock. According to the Lake County Council on Aging’s 2014 Annual Report, a total of 3,902 hours of Homemaker Services were provided to 221 households in Lake County. The Homemaker Services provide light cleaning services and home maintenance services to seniors in an effort to help seniors maintain an independent lifestyle. The service makes it possible for seniors to continue to live in their homes or return to their own homes. Additionally, the Council on Aging provided for 570 home maintenance projects for 296 households in 2014, including grab bars, hand grips, hand rails, hand held showers and ramps.

Rental housing in Lake County is higher than the Ohio average, making it challenging for low-income residents to secure safe and affordable housing. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Fair Market Rent for a two bedroom apartment in Ohio is $735/month. In Lake County, the FMR is $764 for a two bedroom apartment. The average worker earning the Ohio minimum wage of $8.10/hour would have to work 54 hours per week to afford a modest one bedroom apartment at the Fair Market Rent in Lake County. According to Ohio’s Lake County Profile, the median gross rent in Lake County is $806/month, with the median gross rent as a percentage of household income at 28.8%. The annual income that is needed to afford the FMR in Lake County is demonstrated in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income Needed to Afford the FMR: 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Bedroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Bedrooms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data provided by the National Low Income Housing Coalition*

Further compounding the high cost of housing in Lake County is the current demand for both public housing and housing choice vouchers through the Lake Metropolitan Housing Authority. According to data from the Lake Metropolitan Housing Authority, currently Lake County has 265 public housing units, 261 of which are filled. There is a waiting list of approximately 782 households for public housing. Lake County has 1,293 residents receiving housing choice vouchers, with approximately 757 households on the waiting list. The waiting list for housing choice vouchers opened briefly in July 2014 for the first time since October 2009—1,000 households were added to the waiting list at that time. LMHA does not expect to re-open the waiting list again before July 2017. The map below shows the concentration of housing choice vouchers as distributed throughout Lake County.
Homelessness continues to exist in Lake County and the number of unsheltered homeless continues to climb. According to the January 2015 Point in Time study done by the Lake County Continuum of Care, 93 persons, including 19 children, were identified as homeless. Of those surveyed on the night of January 27, 2015, 64 were sheltered and 29 were unsheltered or living in a place not meant for habitation.

Of those surveyed, 69% were homeless with shelter, leaving 31% unsheltered. The overwhelming cause of homelessness, of those surveyed, was a combination of severe and persistent mental illness and chronic substance abuse. Contributing factors to homelessness and a history of the number of unsheltered homelessness are displayed in the charts below.

![Contributing Factors](chart1.png)

![Unsheltered Homeless -- 5 Year History](chart2.png)

The Lake County Continuum of Care's 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness, which was approved and submitted in October 2010, identifies five components of care and the gaps in services associated with each. These components include: outreach, prevention, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive services. Notable gaps in services related to housing included providing 24 hour emergency shelter, as opposed to the 12 hour shelter that is currently available; expanding current emergency shelter to include more than the current 35 beds; to provide separate emergency shelter for homeless families; to provide additional transitional housing programs for both men and pregnant women; provide payee services to the mentally ill; provide medication reminder calls to those with mental illness; increased transportation opportunities so that homeless have a means of getting to and from appointments and job opportunities; expanded day shelter or community center that can provide mailboxes, showers, washers/dryers, computers and daycare services to the homeless; and expanded dental and medical care for the homeless.
Food in Lake County

The need for additional assistance with food has continued to rise, particularly with referrals to food pantries and soup kitchens within the county—the number of referrals made by 2-1-1 has more than doubled in the last seven years. Lake County is fortunate to boast 39 food pantries, located throughout the County. The chart below shows referrals made by 2-1-1 Lake County for various food programs between 2007 and 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2-1-1 Lake County Food Referrals</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Food Pantries</td>
<td>4,533</td>
<td>5,297</td>
<td>5,427</td>
<td>5,193</td>
<td>4,474</td>
<td>6,387</td>
<td>8,342</td>
<td>8,695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Surplus Food</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>1,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Supplements/Baby Food</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Delivered Meals</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup Kitchen Meals</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food--Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL Referrals</td>
<td>4,953</td>
<td>5,934</td>
<td>6,033</td>
<td>6,018</td>
<td>5,028</td>
<td>7,441</td>
<td>10,123</td>
<td>10,870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data provided by 2-1-1 Lake County*

In October 2007, there were 11,764 recipients of food assistance through the Lake County Department of Job and Family Services. That number grew to 13,206 in 2008, to 18,677 in 2009, to 21,685 in 2010, to 22,818 in 2011 and to 23,238 in 2012. In 2013, that number surpassed 30,000—tripling the number of recipients in six short years. In 2013, 31,270 Lake County residents received SNAP benefits and in 2014 30,170 received benefits.

Additionally, many senior citizens receive meals, either at a Lake County Council on Aging nutrition site, or via Meals on Wheels delivery. According to the Council on Aging's 2014 Annual Report, a total of 188,684 meals were provided via the sites and delivery services combined in 2014, including 149,692 meals delivered to 964 home-bound seniors and 38,992 meals served at their nutrition sites.

A Hunger in America study produced by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, which serves six counties including Lake County, showed the choices that food pantry participants make every day. Of those who completed surveys at food pantries in their six county area, 64% reported choosing between paying for food and paying for utilities, up from 40% in 2010; 65% reported choosing between paying for food and paying for transportation; 63% reported choosing between paying for food and paying for medicine/medical care, up from 35% in 2010; and 54% reported choosing between paying for food and paying for housing, up from 27% in 2010.

Also reported in the Greater Cleveland Food Bank study were some indications of how the increased demand at local pantries was affecting pantry operation. Their study suggested that more than one in four (28%) pantries experienced a strain on their resources in the past year, resulting in cutting hours of operation, limiting the service areas and laying off staff.

In the Lake County Community Health Assessment, respondents were asked a series of questions about their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. In the initial question, respondents were asked whether they consumed fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Of respondents who had a household income of less than $34,999, 64.8% indicated that they did; of respondents who had a household income of between $35,000 and $74,999, 75.8% indicated that they did; and of respondents who had a household income over $75,000, 80.4% indicated that they did. This data leads us to believe that the higher the income level, the more likely one is to obtain and consume fresh fruits and vegetables.

Respondents were also asked what prevented them from eating fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Of those who responded, 39.8% indicated that they would spoil before they were eaten; 37.1% indicated that the cost prohibits them; 14.9% indicated that they do not like them; and 13.1% indicated that they lacked access and availability.

Lake County is fortunate to have several local farmers markets held weekly throughout the County. Survey respondents were asked whether they knew about them and 83.5% indicated that they did, while 16.5% indicated...
that they did not. Of those who answered that they did know about them, 80.1% indicated that they have visited one.

**Transportation in Lake County**

Laketrans is the regional transit authority for Lake County and was established as such in 1974. Laketrans’s primary funding source is a .25% local sales tax that comprises 60% of their agency budget. Laketrans strives to serve the people of Lake County with a special emphasis on meeting the transportation needs of senior citizens and people with disabilities and features a fleet of 124 buses. Laketrans’s three core services include six local routes, four Park-n-Ride routes to Cleveland and demand response, paratransit service known as Dial-a-Ride. Laketrans serves over 750,000 passengers each year.

Laketrans’s local routes are used frequently by Lake County’s low-income residents. Laketrans’s statistics show that of those who utilize the local routes, 57% use it between four and six times per week; 27% use it between two and three times per week; and 12% use it once per week. Their data shows that the most common use of the local route buses is to get to work (45%), followed by shopping and higher education (25% each), then healthcare (4%). Local Route data shows that 50% of riders were male. Of the male riders, 91% of them had a household income under $30,000.

Dial-a-Ride is used frequently by Lake County’s low-income population for getting to and from places that are not on the local route bus or for easier accessibility for seniors and people with disabilities. Laketrans’s statistics show that of those who utilize Dial-a-Ride, 33% use it between one and three days per month; 23% use it between four and eight days a month; and 24% use it more than nine days per month. Their data shows that the most common usage of Dial-a-Ride is to access employment (34%), followed by healthcare and recreation (13% each) and then shopping (11%). Dial-a-Ride demographics show that 65% of riders are female and that 67% of female riders are over the age of 65. Of the female riders, 73% of them have a household income of under $30,000.

What Laketrans provides, they do extremely well. However, due to funding reductions at both the federal and state level, their services have been limited beyond the needs of low-income residents. Both the local routes and Dial-a-Ride buses only operate Monday through Friday from approximately 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. only operating at two hour headways. No bussing is available late enough for those working second or third shift to get to and from work and there is no service on Sundays. While Laketrans provides six local routes, several key areas of the county are not included, including a large industrial area in Mentor, where many low-income residents look for factory work, one of the major local hospitals, and an adult vocational school.

**Information & Referral in Lake County**

Currently, Lake County has two primary information & referral sources—2-1-1 Lake County is a 24/7 I&R hotline operated by Lifeline, Inc. and the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) operated by the Lake County Council on Aging, which targets folks aged 60 and over, as well as adults with disabilities.

A more specialized service, the ADRC reported providing information and assistance referrals to 3,985 callers in their 2014 Annual Report. An additional 553 hours of face to face options counseling was provided to 252 unduplicated individuals, 694 hours of face to face benefits assistance to 820 unduplicated individuals and provided Medicare information, education and assistance to 2,534 individuals.

Based on annual reports provided by 2-1-1 Lake County, call volume steadily increased for many years, peaking in 2012. The number of inquiries continues to remain high, with an average of 728 inquiries/week in 2014. Actual numbers are shown in the chart below.

### 2-1-1 Lake County Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Inquiries</strong></td>
<td>30,097</td>
<td>36,570</td>
<td>36,378</td>
<td>39,225</td>
<td>39,634</td>
<td>40,970</td>
<td>40,150</td>
<td>37,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Inquiries/Week</strong></td>
<td>579</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Information provided by 2-1-1 Lake County Annual Reports 2007-2014*
The top needs of 2014, as shown in the graph below, included food assistance, housing and shelter, access to material goods like clothing and furniture and access to healthcare services.

**Percentage of Total Need: 2-1-1 Lake County 2014**

According to 2-1-1 data from 2014, the chart below shows the most common unmet needs of 2-1-1 callers, and the reasons needs went unmet.

**Top Unmet Needs of 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Number of Calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeless Shelter</td>
<td>2,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Food</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility Assistance</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent Assistance</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday Programs</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas Money/Transportation</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Deposit Assistance</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top Reasons for Unmet Needs:**

- Waiting list
- Ineligible for services
- Applied too late
- Received partial, but not full assistance
- Already served by available program
- No available program
2015 Lifeline Needs Assessment Focus Group Data

Top Social Service Needs:

1. Access to, or retention of, safe and affordable housing 52 votes *
2. Access to and expansion of transportation options 29 votes *
3. Increased opportunities for job training, employment and retention 17 votes *
4. Additional support for the seniors, elderly and homebound 5 votes *
5. Enhanced collaborations with faith-based and civic organizations 5 votes

* Recommended as a need in all four focus groups

Additional needs that received significant vote totals:

- Budget counseling and financial literacy education
- Increased marketing communications and publicity for social services programs and issues
- Increased substance abuse treatment options
- Volunteer guardians and payee services for seniors, mentally ill and disabled who reside independently
- In-county Weatherization Program administration
- Increased emergency financial assistance, specifically for adult populations who do not qualify for PRC
- Increased access to interpretation services
- Increased support and services for the re-entry/ex-offender populations

More details on top social service needs:

Access to and retention of safe and affordable housing encompassed many observations. Many of these included the need for more affordable rental housing units in Lake County, more funding for emergency rent assistance/prevention, additional transitional housing programs, additional senior housing, additional permanent supportive housing units, recovery housing for those exiting treatment and higher income guidelines for securing assistance. More specific areas of interest included basic housing/maintenance skills for tenants (budgeting, cooking, cleaning), renter education, housing mediation, housing rehabilitation and modification and assistance with the cost of moving. Housing also included additional beds and longer hours of availability at the homeless shelter.

Transportation included two specific needs, including public transit and private automobile assistance. In regards to public transit, two prominent needs were for expanded routes and hours of operation and assistance with the cost of paying for transit. Because of limited hours and routes, clients often struggle to utilize public transportation to and from medical appointments, job interviews and work. And, while Laketrans strives to keep fares low, clients often need help with bus tokens, particularly for the Dial-A-Ride program. Transportation also included votes for additional funding to help customers who do own vehicles with maintenance and repairs, as well as with gas voucher and drivers’ license fees and, for the first time, increased access to bike routes to jobs, recreation and housing developments.

Employment was a significant need that came up in every focus group. Specific concerns mentioned included additional job training programs, employment coaching and job seeking support services, and additional vocational guidance and training programs, as well as job retention efforts. Specific mentions included job opportunities for the re-entry population. Also included in this category was the need for increased income via higher paying jobs. Finally, at one focus group, transitional services were discussed as a need for folks who secure full-time employment, begin work and then lose their ODJFS benefits.

Lake County has a rapidly aging population and senior services are listed as a top social service need this year and were discussed in all four focus groups. Many of the discussions revolved around how to keep seniors in their homes and living independently longer. These include programs to assist with daily living (washing, cleaning, cooking, shopping), volunteer guardian and payee services for seniors living independently, home maintenance and repair programs and companionship programs.

Much discussion was had in the focus groups about the need for assistance for those who often fall through the
cracks in the system. Specifically, discussion revolved around adults without children who often struggle to make ends meet, as well as those who fall just slightly over the income guidelines for many of the traditional programs. Focus group attendees advocated for a safety net of some type for these residents.

The ex-offender population was also widely discussed at all four focus groups. Lake County currently has both a Re-Entry Coalition and the Citizens Circle to work to meet the needs of those re-entering Lake County from the prison system. The needs discussed for this population included expanded housing options (from homeless shelters to rental housing) for those with criminal backgrounds, job training programs with an emphasis on careers that will allow ex-offenders to work and access to legal services for record expungements.

More details on to Non-Profit Management needs:

The need for enhanced collaborations with faith-based and civic organizations was discussed in multiple focus groups. Lake County is fortunate to have a very active faith based community, as well as many civic organizations who do good work for the community. While much coordination and planning is done by many of the non-profit agencies through groups like the Continuum of Care, the Lake County ADAMHS Network of Care and the Coalition for Housing and Support Services, oftentimes the faith-based community isn’t a part of those discussions. It was recommended in several focus groups to try to better include these groups to better coordinate service delivery and meet the needs of our residents.

The need for increased marketing communications and publicity for social services programs and issues was also discussed in several focus groups. So many valuable services exist in Lake County and it is so hard to make our successes and issues and concerns known to both potential clients and the general public. It’s often difficult to get the attention of potential donors. Discussion around a comprehensive marketing plan, or publicity pieces was brainstormed.

Many agencies are experiencing a need for increased access to interpretation services. Lake County has a considerable Hispanic population, particularly in the central and eastern ends of the county and experienced, trained interpreters are necessary to provide quality services. Many agencies, Lifeline included, are fortunate to have translators on staff. Others continue to express a need for additional interpretation services.

2015 Lifeline Needs Assessment Consumer Survey Data
## 2015 Customer Survey Results (347 total surveys completed)

### Housing type:
- Rent: 222 (64%)
- Staying with someone: 33 (9%)
- Currently homeless: 26 (7%)
- Own: 100 (29%)
- **Total**: 358 (100%)

### Access to healthcare:
- Public insurance: 248 (69%)
- On insurance: 38 (10%)
- Private insurance: 101 (29%)
- **Total**: 387 (100%)

### Household type:
- Single: 172 (50%)
- Couple: 107 (31%)
- Single parent: 58 (17%)
- **Total**: 337 (100%)

### What type of service are you applying for today?
- Food: 70 (17%)
- Clothing: 66 (18%)
- Rent or housing assistance: 59 (14%)
- Mental health: 66 (16%)
- General health concerns: 38 (7%)
- Nutrition: 14 (3%)
- Drug & alcohol: 9 (2%)
- Utility assistance: 61 (15%)
- **Total**: 418 (100%)

### Please check: I am...
- A high school graduate: 108 (35%)
- A mental health consumer: 86 (14%)
- A domestic violence survivor: 46 (8%)
- Physically disabled: 65 (11%)
- A parent of a child with mental health issues: 43 (7%)
- A veteran: 20 (4%)
- Recently released from prison: 12 (2%)
- Homeless: 100 (18%)
- Struggling with substance abuse: 11 (2%)
- **Total**: 356 (100%)

### The Biggest Concern for My Family Right Now is:
- Medical needs / health care: 32 (15%)
- Housing and/or eviction: 69 (13%)
- Income / past due bills: 195 (47%)
- Transportation: 19 (4%)
- Mental health symptoms: 32 (7%)
- Help with child care or adult care: 11 (2%)
- **Total**: 312 (100%)

### Additional Services I'd Like to See Become Available in Lake County are:
- Day care for the elderly: 109 (21%)
- Extended transportation hours / cheaper rates: 98 (18%)
- More programs for the physically disabled: 57 (11%)
- Housing and other financial assistance for higher income families: 19 (4%)
- Diaper assistance programs: 7 (1%)
- Early childhood education programs (not FRC): 9 (2%)
- School clocks/hour care / activities: 5 (1%)
- Pet care: 9 (2%)
- Free dental care: 6 (1%)
- Respite care for parents: 3 (1%)
- Discounted utilities for senior citizens: 12 (2%)
- More senior housing: 15 (3%)
- Welcome center for immigrants: 3 (1%)
- Better CRA groups: 13 (3%)
- Bending alley in Madison: 2 (1%)
- Help purchasing a car: 12 (2%)
- Laundry: 5 (1%)
- Bed Bug free furniture bank: 3 (1%)
- All day drop in center: 1 (1%)
- Methadone center: 1 (1%)
- Budgeting services: 4 (1%)
- Assistance for parents not receiving child support: 2 (1%)
- Affordable programs at the YMCA: 3 (1%)
- Housing your eligibility not based on gross income: 1 (1%)
- Sex education in schools: 1 (1%)
- Cheaper affordable housing: 1 (1%)
- Student loan debt relief: 1 (1%)
- Drug counseling - rehab center: 1 (1%)

### What has prevented you from getting help in the past?
- My income was too high: 80 (23%)
- I didn't have transportation: 72 (21%)
- I needed help faster than the agency could provide it: 41 (12%)
- My background (felony record, citizenship, etc.): 18 (5%)
- I didn't have the correct paperwork: 11 (3%)
- Agency hours didn't fit my schedule: 13 (4%)
- They didn't speak my language: 6 (2%)
- **Total**: 349 (100%)
Resources

2-1-1 Lake County Caller Statistics—2005-2014


Faces of Laketrans: Prepared by LakeTran, March 2011, updates by Julia Schick September 2015

Home Is In Sight: Lake County’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness: Prepared by the Lake County Continuum of Care, Oct. 2010

Hunger in America 2014: Issued by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank

Lake County Community Health Assessment: Issued by the Lake County General Health District, August 2011

Lake County Council on Aging Annual Report 2014

Lake County Job & Family Services data: provided by Lake Co. JFS, September 2015

Lake County, Ohio Profile: Prepared by the Ohio Development Services Agency, Office of Policy, Research and Strategic Planning

Lake County, Ohio Senior Citizens: Today, Tomorrow and in the Future 2015: A study prepared for the Lake County Board of Commissioners & Senior Citizens Advisory Panel

Lake Metropolitan Housing Authority housing data: provided by Executive Director Melissa Winfield, September 2015

The National Low Income Housing Coalition: www.nlihc.org Out of Reach 2015: Ohio Report

Point in Time Count—January 2015, The Lake County Continuum of Care

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2015

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Ohio 2013: Prepared for the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies

The State of Poverty in Ohio: Understanding Economic Hardship 50 Years After the War on Poverty: Issued by the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies, May 2014

The United Way of Lake County: 2014 Community Needs Assessment
Special Thanks

The 2015 Needs Assessment wouldn't have been possible without the support of many of Lifeline's collaborative partners.

A particular thank you to Marian Norman and the Lake County Office of Planning and Community Development for their assistance in providing data, maps and graphics used throughout the 2015 Needs Assessment.

Thank you to the 25 individuals who participated in one of our focus groups—your professional opinions and observations are very valuable.

Thank you to the following agencies who distributed our consumer surveys to their participants so that we could get a well-rounded assessment of consumer needs.

- Beacon Health
- Birthright, Inc.
- Catholic Charities
- Crossroads
- Extended Housing
- Fairport Harbor Senior Center
- Forbes House
- Family Planning Association of Northeast Ohio
- Hope Chest
- Lake County Free Medical Clinic
- Lifeline, Inc.
- Madison Senior Center
- Salvation Army