

CHAPTER 8: HUMAN SERVICES

Human services are vital to the health of every community. Timely delivery of an array of human services is an important component of the City of Fort Worth's vision of a future with strong neighborhoods, a sound economy, and a safe community. The City, Tarrant County, the State of Texas, secular nonprofits, faith-based nonprofits, and for-profit providers have a strong history of community initiatives and collaborations in the delivery of human services in Fort Worth.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Numerous nonprofit and governmental agencies provide various human service programs for Tarrant County residents. City departments along with umbrella organizations such as United Way, Area Agency on Aging, Catholic Charities, Tarrant County Youth Collaboration, and Mental Health/Mental Retardation of Tarrant County ensure efficient delivery of services by providing information and referral, and soliciting and leveraging funds.

In 2009, the United Way of Tarrant County completed a countywide community assessment of health and human service needs. Using an approach that combined secondary data, community discussion groups and interviews with key stakeholders, the findings of the assessment were organized in three main topic areas: education, income and health. Priority issues for the community include early care and education, school drop-outs, economic self sufficiency, chronic and disabling conditions particularly for older adults, and violent and abusive behavior particularly of children and the elderly. United Way, in conjunction with many partners, will be working to improve community conditions in these areas in the coming years.

The human service issues discussed in this chapter fall into the categories of children and youth, families, seniors, health, homelessness, crisis relief, and anti-discrimination. Many human service agencies and organizations provide services in more than one of these categories.

Children and Youth

Youth services are targeted toward youth at risk for behaviors such as school dropout, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, etc. Tutoring, pregnancy prevention, sports and recreation, and self esteem programs are a sample of the range of youth services available. Some agencies providing these services are Big Brothers Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Child Care Associates, Communities in Schools, United Community Centers, YMCA, YWCA, Fort Worth After School, and the City's Parks and Community Services Department.

Families

Family support can include child care, programs on parenting skills, self-support training, personal and family counseling, adoption, support for neighborhood associations (please see Chapter 9: Neighborhood Capacity Building for more information) and initiatives to help build communities, immigration assistance, and job training and placement. Some agencies providing these services are the

Volunteer Opportunities in Fort Worth



The City of Fort Worth encourages volunteers to improve our communities and help our neighbors. The Cowtown Brush Up program, shown above, is a City-initiated neighborhood revitalization program where volunteers add a fresh coat of paint to deteriorating houses. (Source: *Housing and Economic Development Department, 2009.*)

American Red Cross, Catholic Charities, Jewish Federation, Lena Pope Home, Northside Inter-Church Agency, The Parenting Center, The Women’s Center of Tarrant County, the Fort Worth Housing Authority, the Parks and Community Services Department, Tarrant County Department of Human Services, and many area churches. The City’s Early Childhood Matters program has established six Early Learning Resource Centers to help families prepare their young children for success in kindergarten.

Seniors

Senior services are designed to serve those over 60 years of age. Such services can include delivery of daily meals, transportation, social programs, guardianship services, advocacy for nursing home residents, and respite care for Alzheimer’s caregivers. Major providers of these services include the American Red Cross, Area Agency on Aging of Tarrant County, Guardianship Services, Mental Health/Mental Retardation of Tarrant County, Senior Citizen Services of Greater Tarrant County, Meals on Wheels, Texas Department of Aging and Disabled Services, Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, Visiting Nurse Association of Tarrant County, and the Parks and Community Services Department.

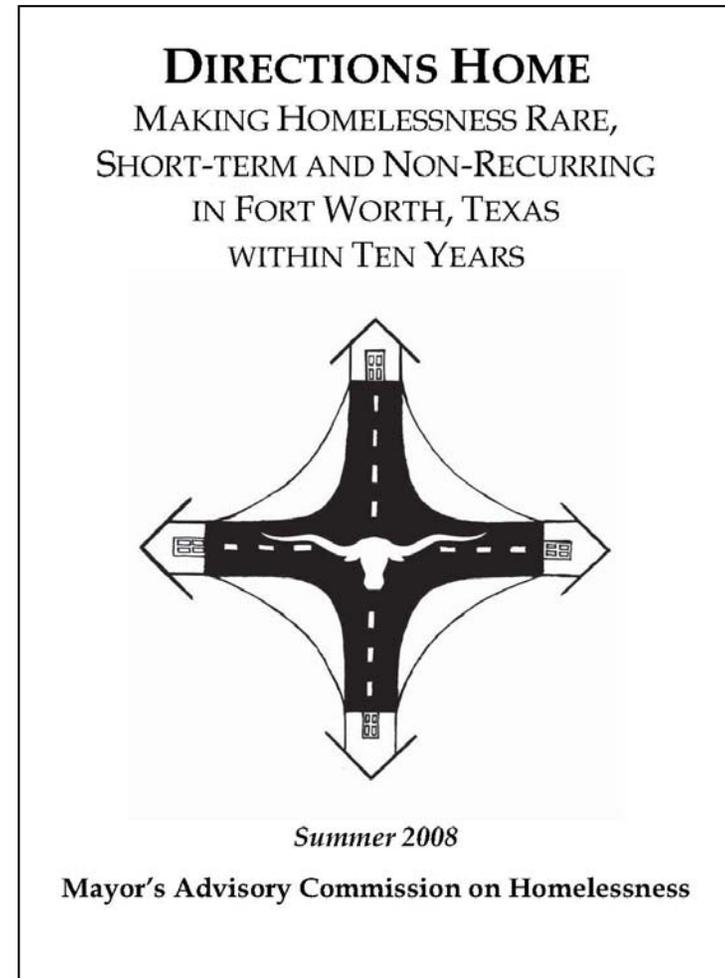
Health

Health-related human services assist people who are mentally or physically ill, have disabilities, or are caregivers. Services range from immunizations to long-term case management. Agencies providing these services include the AIDS Outreach Center, the Arc of Greater Tarrant County, Cancer Care Services, Child Study Center, Day Resource Center, Mental Health/Mental Retardation of Tarrant County, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Sickle Cell Disease of America, Recovery Resource Council, AA, AlAnon, Tarrant County Challenge, EasterSeals of Greater NW Texas, Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas, and Tarrant County Public Health Department. In addition, United Way’s “FitFuture” coalition strives to address the obesity epidemic; in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, nearly 66 percent of residents are considered overweight or obese.

Homelessness

The City works closely with a number of community partners to end chronic homelessness in Fort Worth. A January 2011 census showed a 30 percent decrease in the unsheltered homeless population since 2009, as more people move off the streets into stable housing. The census, a volunteer effort spearheaded by the Tarrant County Homeless Coalition (TCHC), identified 136 individuals living unsheltered and homeless. Other findings from the Homeless Count include:

- The number of chronically homeless, unsheltered persons decreased by 40 percent.
- Nearly 100 additional persons moved to stable transitional housing.
- The number of women living on the streets decreased by 45 percent.
- The number of children living in emergency shelters was reduced by 10 percent.



The City of Fort Worth and its partner agencies are working to make homelessness a rare, short-term, and non-recurring experience in Cowtown by 2018 through the *Directions Home* program. (Source: City of Fort Worth, 2011.)

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Promote unbiased and efficient access to needed human services, thereby providing equitable support to all residents of our diverse community.

- Provide fair housing and fair employment outreach and education to other City departments, industry professionals, and residents.
- Develop, coordinate, or participate in educational programs, outreach events, community meetings, and collaborations that celebrate our city's diversity, promote cooperative efforts, increase communication with the community, reduce disparities, encourage prejudice reduction, and promote tolerance.

POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The following policies and strategies will help to achieve the City's human service goal and objectives:

Policies

- Work with Directions Home partners to provide services that enable individuals to become self-sufficient.
- Ensure that the residents of the City of Fort Worth have equal enjoyment of all rights, privileges and freedoms; without regard to race, sex, religion, color, national origin, age, disability, housing and familial status, and sexual orientation, transgender, gender identity or gender expression.
- Support the provision of quality, affordable child care and early education opportunities.
- Provide leadership to increase and improve after-school programs that keep children safe, provide academic enrichment, and help working families.
- Support efforts to provide child development training to help families ensure children have social, emotional, and cognitive skills needed in kindergarten.

Strategies

- During City Council incentive contract negotiations, such as those related to tax abatements, incorporate the best possible employee and human services benefits (e.g. health care, livable wage, job training, child care, mass transit options, etc.) to accommodate special groups that are in need of and would not otherwise have accessibility to such benefits.
- Through the Early Childhood Resource Centers, work with FWISD and non-profits to help parents and caregivers prepare young children under age five for success in kindergarten.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Directions Home

The City of Fort Worth and its partner agencies are working to make homelessness a rare, short-term, and non-recurring experience in Cowtown by 2018 through the *Directions Home* program. Currently, only a third of the more than \$30 million in private and public funds spent each year on homelessness are responding in a

Chapter 8: Human Services

Southside Community Center



The Southside Community Center at 959 East Rosedale is an example of a “one-stop” facility. This community center houses the Fort Worth ISD Adult Learning Center and Child Care Associates. The Center also features a neighborhood police storefront, and a Community Action Partners site, as well as providing social, cultural and recreational activities for youth, adults, and seniors. (Source: *Parks and Community Development, 2009.*)

proactive manner. *Directions Home* seeks to focus efforts countywide to respond in the most economically prudent and compassionate way possible by:

- Increasing the supply of permanent supportive housing
- Expanding opportunities and service linked with accountability
- Developing and operating a central resource facility
- Coordinating and expanding homelessness prevention initiatives
- Supporting and strengthening existing public, private and faith-based efforts
- Mitigating the negative community impacts of homelessness
- Leading, educating, and advocating for change

Fort Worth Community Action Partners

The Parks and Community Services Department receives Community Services Block Grant funds and Comprehensive Energy Assistance funds through Community Action Partners (CAP) to serve as the Community Action Agency for Tarrant County. CAP provides comprehensive services to economically-disadvantaged individuals, families, and the elderly residing in Tarrant County. The program strives to empower participants to become and remain self-sufficient. CAP programs include:

- Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program
- Emergency rent and mortgage assistance
- Water assistance
- Families in Transition (FIT)
- Cowboy Santas
- Silver Stars

CAP services are provided at these community centers: Andrew “Doc” Session, Como, Far Northwest, Far Southeast, Martin Luther King, Northside, North Tri-Ethnic, Southside, and Worth Heights. Many of the City’s community centers also serve as emergency shelters and safe havens for the children of the community.

Early Childhood Matters

Early Childhood Resource Centers help families learn how to develop their children's social, emotional and pre-literacy skills so that they are successful when entering kindergarten. Programs are designed for parents and other adults who care for children up to five years old.

Cowboy Santas

The City collaborates with corporate and private donors in the Cowboy Santas Program to provide holiday assistance to low income households.

Fort Worth Housing Authority

- Established in 1995, the Family Investment Center (FIC) is the “one stop” center that provides public and assisted housing residents with resources to enable them to attain self-sufficiency. Services are provided through collaborative partnerships with area service agencies. Some of the services offered include: adult and remedial education and GED preparation, case management, crisis intervention, self-empowerment skills, on-the-job training, small business

AMAKA Child Care Center



The AMAKA Child Care Center at 1501 Stephenson Street is located within Butler Place. It has the capacity to provide child care for 100 children. (Source: Fort Worth Housing Authority, 2009.)

development, vocational education and training activities, information and referral services, utility assistance, transportation services and volunteer services.

- The AMAKA Child Care Center provides affordable childcare on a sliding tuition scale and accommodates up to 100 children. The Center is operated in collaboration with the YMCA.
- The Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) is designed to help Housing Choice Voucher families and Public Housing residents become economically self-sufficient. Families and FSS Specialist establish five-year goals that are unique and may include furthering education, obtaining vocational training, opening a small business, and homeownership. FSS Specialists also guides the family to supportive services, resources in the community and employment assistance. An added incentive of the FSS program is the FSS Escrow account which is established for the family. After the family has successfully completed the FSS program, they are eligible to receive the escrow money.
- FWHA, in collaboration with the Fort Worth Public Library, administers COOL and BOLD (satellite libraries of the Fort Worth Public Library located in the Cavile and Butler public housing communities) through which GED preparation, literacy classes, tutoring, children's story times, and resource information from other libraries are offered.
- The "I Have A Dream" Foundation is an organization located in the Butler community that provides a comprehensive daily academic mentoring and tutoring program for youth in the 2nd - 5th grades.
- The Boys and Girls Club, located in the Butler and Cavile communities, provides educational, recreational, cultural and leadership programs.
- In collaboration with Tarrant County College, FWHA provides on-site computer, medical and clerical training for public housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) clients.
- FWHA purchases monthly bus passes for public housing residents who are employed, enrolled in training/school, or actively searching for a job.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Programs

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) furnishes temporary financial assistance to families with needy children who are deprived of parental support.
- Through Medicaid, HHSC facilitates access to Medicaid programs for recipients of TANF, the elderly, and the disabled.
- Texas Workforce Commission helps people identify barriers to employment and find resources that will help them along the road to economic and social self-sufficiency.
- The Food Stamp Program helps low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to buy nutritionally adequate food to supplement their diets.
- Nutrition programs include the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program, National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, Special Milk Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.
- Food distribution programs provide USDA-donated commodities to low-income individuals and families, public and private schools, summer food-service programs, food banks, and soup kitchens.

Satellite Library



The Butler community has an on-site satellite library that opened in 1997 and is open five days a week. (Source: Fort Worth Housing Authority, 2009.)

- Children's health insurance programs include CHIP and Children's Medicaid. Both programs provide health insurance for children at flexible rates, based on the number of people in the family and the family's income and expenses.

Community Collaborations

- Mental Health Connection is a county-wide collaboration to improve the delivery of mental health services to those in need.
- Fort Worth ISD established four Family Resource Centers at three middle school and one elementary campus to improve families' access to mental health services.
- Healthy Start Initiative, headed by Catholic Charities, addresses the infant mortality rate, especially in African-American communities.
- The Early Childhood Matters Initiative is focused on ensuring every child will enter kindergarten ready to succeed.
- Planned Parenthood of North Texas, Inc. is dedicated to the achievement of parenthood by choice by ensuring the provision of voluntary reproductive health care and sexuality education and by advocating the right of every person to receive these services.
- The Tarrant County Family Violence Council coordinates law enforcement, corporations, and social service providers in addressing domestic violence.
- Together in Texas, organized by The Parenting Center, coordinates grants and local initiatives aimed at promoting healthy marriage and strengthening families.

United Way and Community Partners

Nonprofit organizations and their volunteers have played an important part in addressing human service needs in Fort Worth. Beginning in 2010, Tarrant County United Way began to focus on making a measurable impact in three areas that are tied together by United Way's interest in increasing personal and economic self-sufficiency:

- Education: Getting Children and Youth Ready to Learn, Ready to Earn
- Income: Helping Families Become Financially Stable and Self-Sufficient
- Promoting Health: Healthy Aging and Independent Living for Seniors and People with Disabilities

The three impact issues were selected because they are topics that address local high-priority needs and are areas where United Way believes its strengths and resources will be able to make a significant, measurable improvement in lives and community conditions.

The Area Agency on Aging of Tarrant County (AAATC) is part of United Way of Tarrant County and receives funding from the Texas Department of Aging and Disabled Services. The agency's mission is to be the visible leader and advocate in the creation and delivery of services that promote empowerment, independence and dignity for older citizens, persons with disabilities and caregivers.



Working with 43 community partners and other local organizations, United Way helps seniors and kids, strengthens families, provides crisis relief, and promotes health. A comprehensive list of agencies serving the Fort Worth area and United Way's impact initiatives can be found at the United Way website: www.unitedwaytarrant.org. (Source: *United Way of Metropolitan Tarrant County, 2009.*)

