

Executive Summary

Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study – 2006

Research Overview:

This Report draws upon two separate and distinct sources of information; 1) the latest U.S. Census Bureau statistics regarding Nantucket County, and 2) responses to the most recent comprehensive survey of human needs on the Island (the Nantucket Community Survey – 2006). Together, these two sources provide both a broad and an in-depth “picture” of the needs of the year-round, resident population of Nantucket.

Latest U.S. Census Bureau Statistics:

These statistics draw heavily upon data compiled by the Census Bureau during the Census 2000 in the early part of the year 2000. These Census 2000 data have been updated to a minor degree by later official estimates of various statistics, including; total population count, poverty rates, median household income, and total housing count. However, in general, the Census 2000 data is the latest officially available information.

Future U.S. Census Bureau Statistics:

In the future, the Census Bureau plans to release updated statistics for Nantucket County which will derive from the Bureau’s new American Community Survey (ACS) research. The Census Bureau is expected to release ACS statistics for Nantucket County sometime prior to 2010.

Nantucket Community Survey – 2006 Statistics:

These locally-developed statistics draw heavily upon responses to Nantucket County’s own research. In April of 2006, one out of every two Nantucket households was randomly selected to participate in a new survey, entitled the Nantucket Community Survey - 2006. Over seven hundred year-round residents participated in this study, providing more than 270,000 pieces of information detailing their current healthcare and other human services needs. The Nantucket Community Survey - 2006 survey questionnaire is designed to dove-tail exactly with, complement, and supplement data from the Census Bureau’s up-coming American Community Survey.

Research Questions

The Nantucket Health and Human Services Needs Assessment Study - 2006 research set out to answer three fundamental questions:

1. *What Are the Human Needs?*
2. *How Serious Are The Human Needs?*
3. *Who Are The Needy?*

What Are The Human Needs? Human services encompass an extremely broad range of categories, ranging from public services like education, healthcare, mass transit, public and affordable housing, public safety, and financial assistance (Medicaid, Food Stamps, TAFDC), just to name a few. Human services are not simple “welfare” and other forms of public assistance. Human services touch all citizens in one way or another and to a greater or lesser degree depending upon our lifestyle, personal resources, our age, our level of health or disability, and degree of need. Individual need for human services varies from person to person and changes as we go through life. Human services are a part of every one’s life.

How Serious Are The Human Needs? We are fortunate in that most of our human needs are well taken care of here on Nantucket. Nantucket Island is home to some of the finest medical practitioners and healthcare facilities; myriad services for senior and elder citizens through the Council on Aging Saltmarsh Center are legendary. Specialized help in the areas of mental health, alcoholism and drug abuse counseling are available within the Cape and Islands region. But, as with any system of services, there is always room for improvement. Populations grow and diversify, age distributions change, children are born, families move on and off the Island the bottom line, needs do change.

Who Are The Needy? We are all needy to some degree. Fortunately for most of us, our needs are mostly met through our own resources (education, work, income, personal and family strengths and resources). Unfortunately, some individuals’ personal strengths and resources are limited or tragedies may befall them, and from time to time they are unable to completely provide for all of their individual and family needs. It is important on an on-going basis to identify those among us who are in serious need of our community resources and support services. The priority in services must be to provide for the neediest among us.

The “Most Needy” Islanders

To reiterate: We are all needy to some degree. But, who among the Nantucket population is the most needy? This is not a simple question. In recent years, researchers have taken on that challenge, and have developed a method of determining on a “scale” which of the households surveyed include the neediest Islanders. There are two primary ways to determine needs within a population. First, one can gather demographic information about a particular group of people, and then try to estimate (using someone else’s research findings) how needy these people *should be* as a result of their demographic characteristics. This method generally yields questionable results.

A second, and we believe better method, is to ask people directly about the types and severity of problems that affect members of their household, and then to categorize households according to the number and severity of those problems. We feel that this method yields the more valid information. This is the approach used by the Nantucket Health and Human Services Needs Assessment Study - 2006 researchers.

Nantucket Household Issue Groups

By statistically examining and analyzing the massive amount of information about household problems reported by respondents to the Nantucket Community Survey -2006, we have concluded that four groupings uniquely define all Island households. That is, every Nantucket household shares common difficulties and challenges with others in one of the four groups.

Briefly, these “household issue” groups that are characterized by the major issues and challenges which confront them can be described as follows:

Group #1 Households: (represents approximately 1,735 Nantucket residents in about 485 households)
(See also Appendix 2.B)

Thumbnail Sketch:

Very low-income, mostly: “working poor,” young-to-middle-age family households generally with multiple working adults and one child, who rent their home. Many Group #1 households have a history of at least brief homelessness, are cultural/-ethnic, linguistic, or racial minorities, include only one parent, receive MassHealth (Medicaid), include health uninsured adults and children, and reside in Census Tracts 9502 or 9504. Considerably fewer reside in Census Tract 9505.

Perceived challenges include a lack of money and mental health problems. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of Group #1 households report one or more serious barrier to obtaining needed human services. Perceived barriers include services too costly, work-related impediments, and inadequate health insurance coverage.

Group #2 Households: (represents approximately 675 Nantucket residents in about 175 households)
(See also Appendix 2.B)

Thumbnail Sketch:

Low-income, mostly “working poor,” larger, young family households with multiple children, who rent their home. Many Group #2 households have a history of at least brief homelessness, are cultural/ethnic, linguistic, or racial minorities, receive some financial assistance including MassHealth (Medicaid), include only one parent, include adults who are in only fair-to-poor health, include health uninsured adults), have at least some dental care coverage, and reside in Census Tract 9504. Considerably fewer reside in Census Tracts 9502 or 9505.

Perceived challenges primarily revolve around a lack of money. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of Group #2 households report one or more serious barrier to obtaining needed human services. Perceived barriers include services too costly, insufficient services capacity, work-related impediments, and a lack of information.

Group #3 Households: [defined as NOT All Adults “Retired”] (represents approximately 6,725 Nantucket residents in about 2,615 households)
(See also Appendix 2.B)

Thumbnail Sketch:

Moderate-to-high-income, working, smaller, middle-age, 2-adult family households generally with no more than one child, who own their home. Includes some retirees (but no household where all adults are retired). Household members are primarily white. Group #3 households generally have at least one adult working full-time, year-round, and reside in Census Tracts 9502 or 9505. By definition, not all adults in Group #3 households are retired.

Perceived challenges include mental health problems and a lack of money. (Note: While these challenges are similar to those of Group #4, they are somewhat more serious). Thirty-two percent (32%) of Group #3 households report one or more serious barrier to obtaining needed human services. Perceived barriers include; services too costly, insufficient services capacity, and work-related impediments. (Note: Perceived barriers to service are reported to be very low as compared to barriers reported by Groups #1 and #2.)

Group #4 Households: [defined as ALL Adults are “Retired”] (represents approximately 1,195 Nantucket residents in about 725 households)
(See also Appendix 2.B)

Thumbnail Sketch:

All “retired”, low-income, small, childless, older-adult (age 65+) family households, who own their home. Household members are primarily white and are generally covered by Medicare. Many are one adult households and reside in Census Tracts 9501 or 9503. Considerably fewer reside in Census Tracts 9502 and 9504. By definition, all adults in Group #4 households are retired.

Perceived challenges include; mental health problems, overweight persons, and a lack of money. (Note: Perceived challenges are similar to those of Groups #3 except somewhat less serious). Only nineteen percent (19%) of Group #4 house-

holds report any serious barriers to obtaining needed human services. Perceived barriers include insufficient services capacity, services not being convenient, and services too costly. (Note: Perceived barriers to service are reported to be extremely low as compared to barriers reported by Groups #1 and #2 and even quite low relative to those reported by Group #3 households.)

The Most Needy on Nantucket (in total, represents approximately 2,370 Island residents in about 645 households)

An analysis of the previous information concerning household issue groups on Nantucket shows that the “most needy” groups of individuals on Nantucket live in Group #1 and #2 households. (See also Appendix 2.B)

Specifically, respondents living in these two groups of households report encountering the highest levels of issues/problems and experiencing some of the most serious difficulties in overcoming barriers while attempting to access needed human services.

Thumbnail Sketch:

Low-income, mostly “working poor,” young-to-middle-age family, renter households with one or two children. Many most needy households are cultural/ethnic, linguistic, or racial minorities, include only one parent, receive some financial assistance including MassHealth (Medicaid), include adults in only fair-to-poor health, include health uninsured adults and children, and reside in Census Tracts 9502 or 9504. Considerably fewer live in Census Tract 9505.

Perceived challenges include a lack of money, mental health issues, overcrowded housing, and a lack of opportunities for skill building and advancement at work. Ninety percent (90%) of Nantucket’s most needy households report serious barriers to obtaining needed human services. Perceived barriers include the high cost of services, work-related impediments, insufficient services capacity, discrimination, and a lack of information about health and services.

