

Cicero Neighborhood Network (CNN)
Needs Assessment: Executive Summary

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CNN Needs Assessment Executive Summary

The purpose of the Needs Assessment was to collect comprehensive, in-depth data on the strengths/assets and needs of Cicero residents in the areas of education, health, and employment. The data from the Needs Assessment will be used to identify resources and supports needed to improve and/or enhance education, health, and employment in the Cicero community.

The complete Needs Assessment Report is organized into 4 sections. In Section I, demographic, income, and housing data of the Cicero community is provided in order to provide the context for the data interpretation and conclusions. In Section II, all of the data that was collected via the CNN Listening Campaign and the Needs Assessment is explained. In Section III, the strengths and needs of the Cicero community in the areas of education, health, and employment are provided. Factors contributing to the needs are also explained. Finally, the report summary and recommendations are presented in Section IV. This executive summary presents main findings of Sections I-IV.

Section I: Community Context

Data regarding the community context indicated that the residents of Cicero face many challenges in earning an adequate income and obtaining and keeping housing to support their families. That is, most residents do not earn enough income to cover essential expenses such as housing, food, transportation, healthcare, and childcare. Furthermore, Cicero has a relatively larger number of residents who are undocumented. Residents who are undocumented face additional challenges when trying to get an education, obtain employment, and qualify for social services.

Given these challenges, it was important for the CNN to collect comprehensive data on the education, health, and employment strengths that can be maximized to enhance services as well as identify needs that must be addressed in order to improve the overall quality of life among the residents of Cicero.

Section II: Data Collection

The CNN Steering Committee and Data Collection Committee conducted a Listening Campaign and Needs Assessment during June 2016-October 2016 to identify the strengths and needs of Cicero's residents in the areas of education, health, and employment. During the Listening Campaign, CNN Steering Committee members conducted 1:1 interviews with representatives from a range of organizations in the Cicero community. Additionally, member organizations of the Steering Committee were asked to discuss their perspective on Cicero's strengths and needs. In addition to the Listening Campaign, the CNN Data Committee conducted a Needs Assessment to identify strengths and needs of Cicero as well as factors contributing to challenges in education, health, and employment.

Taken together, these data were collected through multiple methods and from multiple sources. That is, data were collected through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and

detailed reviews of existing documents and databases. Participants included Cicero adults (e.g., parents, community employees, etc.), youth (e.g., high school and college students), and town officials (e.g., police department).

In total, the Listening Campaign and Needs Assessment data represent the views of 163 interviewees across 30 organizations as well as 638 survey respondents, and incorporate data from approximately 20 existing data files such as the American Community Survey, Illinois State Board of Education Report Card, and the Community Health Status Assessment Findings (Suburban Cook County Health Data Profile 2016). Altogether, 801 residents of Cicero have contributed to the findings in this Needs Assessment report.

Section III: Community Strengths and Needs

Education

The needs assessment data indicated there are several strengths of education in Cicero. As reported by the community, the academic support, staff, and programs are the strongest aspects of the educational system. Moreover, the strengths are the same for residents who are US citizens and those who not US citizens. These strengths provide a strong foundation to improve upon education in Cicero.

Residents were also asked what aspects of education could be improved upon in Cicero. The educational needs of the residents in Cicero begin with access to and enrollment in early childhood education. The number of children 0-5 years old in Cicero has been around 8,000 each year since 2012. However, the number of childcare slots available has ranged from 1,236 to 1,347 each year. Thus, there are, on average, about 6,700 children each year who would not have a place to go for childcare. Despite having the need (i.e., number of children 0-5) exceed the number of slots available, many early childhood providers in Cicero have difficulty reaching capacity and do not have waitlists. Therefore, there is a need to increase enrollment in early childhood programs in Cicero. Increasing enrollment in early childhood programs is important because not only can children in need of social, educational, and/or medical supports can be identified; children who attend early childhood programs have better academic performance in K-12 education. Some of the underperformance of students in K-12 in Cicero may be explained by the low enrollment of children in early childhood education.

In general, the percent of students performing on grade level in reading and math in District 99 is below expectation. Ideally, ~80% of students should be performing on grade level; however, the average percent of students performing on grade level in math is 29% (based on MAP data) and 34% in reading (based on MAP data). By the end of 8th grade, ~22% of 8th graders are on grade level in math (based on MAP data) and ~36% of 8th graders are on grade level in reading (based on MAP data). Therefore, ~78% of students are entering 9th grade performing below grade level in math, and 64% of students are entering 9th grade performing below grade level in reading. Across all academic indicators, students who have limited English proficiency are performing well below expectation. The pattern of performance is consistent across K-12th grades. This underperformance in reading and math can also be seen in the students' ACT performance. On average, students

at Morton East are earning a score of 16.7 on the ACT. Students need to earn a score of 21 or higher in order to be deemed ready for college work. Only 5% of students at Morton East are meeting ACT benchmarks. Not meeting the ACT benchmarks increases the likelihood that a student will have to take remedial classes in college. In addition to the ACT scores, the graduation rate is also lower than the state average. The 4-year graduation rate for students in the state of IL is 85%. At Morton East, 73% of students graduated in 4-years. Students with limited English proficiency have the lowest graduation rate at ~50% for East and the District. The graduation rate for Black students at East is ~53%, the lowest of all racial/ethnic groups. Therefore, the academic difficulties that manifest during early elementary continue to manifest throughout high school.

During the focus group interviews with parents, curriculum directors, and students, they all had members who mentioned the disparity in how students who have academic difficulties are supported vs. those students who are high performing. This divide was particularly salient at the high school level, but it seems to start at the elementary/middle school level. To explain, participants explained that students with academic difficulties may not be as aware of resources or have as many opportunities as students who are high-performing. Curriculum directors noted how there are very few resources to support students who have academic difficulty in reading and math. In addition to this divide with supports and resources, some parents and students in the focus groups had difficulty identifying positive aspects of the educational system in Cicero while other parents and students had a lot of positive things to say about education. Furthermore, some parents feel very involved and heard while others feel marginalized and silenced in the educational system. Community organization members also noted that collaboration with the districts can be difficult and they sometimes feel that there is a lack of transparency when districts decide what agencies to work with thus creating inequity in how districts collaborate with community agencies. Taken together, there seems to be a divide in the community about the equity in quality of education. These data suggest that there is a divide in the resources and opportunities and there may also be a divide in how parents are treated in the educational system.

Health

The needs assessment data indicated there are several strengths in physical and mental health in Cicero, which means there is a strong foundation upon which to improve. More specifically, overall, many residents believe there are some good health care services in Cicero and nutrition as well as health fairs are a key component of the health system in Cicero. Moreover, mental health professionals believe their work in the schools and communities enhance health services in Cicero. With this foundation, we explored opportunities for improving health services in Cicero.

In analyzing all of the health data, one of the key needs is more doctors and clinics that can be accessed for free or low-cost. Residents and providers explained that accessing services in the community can be very challenging either due to lack of available doctors or clinics in the community. Further hindering this access is the fact that ~28% of residents are undocumented, and adults who are undocumented oftentimes do not have any health insurance. Moreover, even if their children have health insurance, parents who are

undocumented may be reluctant to seek out health services due to fears of being discovered. Improving access to health care is a central issue because coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death among Cicero residents. Data from the Needs Assessment also revealed that obesity and cardio health were major concerns among providers in Cicero. Relatedly, participants in the Needs Assessment reported the need for more education on nutrition, exercise, and health living.

In addition to the need for more doctors and affordable care, the need for mental health service providers and clinics in Cicero is especially acute. To explain, there are limited mental health services available in the community and schools. This limitation creates community-wide challenges such as individuals with mental health needs entering public spaces such as the public library or the police station. For children, most of the mental health referrals originate from the schools; however, providers noted the need to form better partnerships with school personnel to effectively provide those services. Not only is there a need for more mental health doctors and clinics, there is a specific need for bilingual psychiatrists who can work with children and adults.

Another key need in health is access to prenatal care for expectant mothers and campaign to reduce teen pregnancy birth rate. Based on the results of this analysis, only about 24% of expectant mothers in Cicero receive adequate prenatal care; therefore, there is a need to close this gap. In addition to ensuring expectant mothers receive adequate prenatal care, there is a need to reduce the teen pregnancy birthrate, which is significantly higher than that of Suburban Cook County.

A final key need in health is staff training on rights, resources, and supports for children and adults who are undocumented. Health providers noted that they have limited understanding of immigrant rights, in general, but rights and resources for individuals who are undocumented, more specifically.

Employment

The needs assessment data indicated there are several strengths in employment in Cicero. More specifically, jobs are available for adults and teens in the Cicero community. Moreover, efforts are in place to support workforce and economic development in Cicero. Despite these strides, improvements are needed to expand job opportunities for residents of Cicero.

The fundamental need in the area of employment is more jobs that pay higher wages for adults and adolescents in Cicero. One of the major contributors to the need for more jobs that have higher pay is the need for more industry/businesses in Cicero. In addition, there are a significant number of residents who are undocumented and therefore cannot be employed. Thus, even if there are jobs, some residents are not eligible to take them. Moreover, most residents in Cicero do not have a college-level education; therefore, they do not have the training/educational level for many of the higher paying jobs that are available. The lack of high paying jobs is evident in the fact that the median income for Cicero residents is lower than the surrounding towns. Furthermore, the percent of families living in poverty and also rent-burdened is also higher. Residents also reported that

parents have to work many hours or more than one job thus impacting their ability to attend their children's school activities or become involved in school-related activities. Therefore, the need for more higher pay jobs is significant in Cicero.

In addition to the need for more higher paying jobs, there is a need for more job training opportunities. As stated earlier, most residents do not have a college level education; therefore, more residents will need training in order to be prepared for jobs that required advanced skill sets.

Finally, there is a need for more structured, continual government support for business creation in Cicero. Participants in the Needs Assessment explained that there was no sustained government-business collaboration that could support job creation. Furthermore, there are limited connections between schools and businesses that could create a pipeline for job opportunities in Cicero.

Section IV: Recommendations

The needs assessment data regarding strengths and needs in the areas of education, health, and employment were analyzed to inform the development of the following recommendations. Context and details regarding each recommendation are provided in the needs assessment report.

Education

Recommendation I. Early Childhood Education

Recommendation I-A. Conduct a multi-agency, early childhood education campaign to increase awareness of and knowledge about early childhood education in Cicero.

Recommendation I-B. Provide cultural competency development training to all early childhood providers, especially regarding the use of center-based, early childhood programs among Latino families.

Recommendation I-C. Provide transportation for families to bring their children to early childhood centers.

Recommendation II. K-12 Education and College Preparation

Recommendation II-A. Increase the percent of students performing on grade level in reading and math, especially by 4th and 8th grade.

Recommendation II-B. Increase the number of students meeting ACT benchmarks.

Recommendation II-C. Offer course and/or workshop series for parents and students on selecting and entering college.

Recommendation II-D. Increase the high school graduation rate.

Recommendation II-E. Expand Evidence-Based Bilingual Training.

Recommendation II-F. Improve Home-School-Community Collaboration.

Health

Recommendation III-A. Create free and/or low-cost mobile mental & physical health clinics.

Recommendation III-B. Create school-based mental health centers or create a system for community mental health professionals to collaborate with school-based professionals to provide mental health services to students.

Recommendation III-C. Increase access to prenatal care and increase programming to reduce teen birth rates.

Recommendation III-D. Provide staff training on rights, resources and supports for children and adults who are immigrants and undocumented and/or living in mixed-status families.

Recommendation III-E. Conduct multi-agency training on how to recognize mental health difficulties and how to respond when you encounter a person with mental health difficulties.

Employment

Recommendation IV-A. Create small business innovation program that would be designed to stimulate ideas for small businesses in Cicero, provide seed money or grants to start the business, and support to start the business in Cicero.

Recommendation IV-B. Create a “grow your own program” by providing incentives to high school and college graduates to work and live in Cicero.

Recommendation IV-C. Create an employment pipeline in areas where it has been difficult to attract high school graduates.

Recommendation IV-D. Provide transportation support or expanded transportation services so that individuals can get to and from work.

Recommendation IV-D. Increase employment opportunities for adolescents in Cicero.