



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Social Services
Department No.: 044
For Agenda Of: 9/10/13
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Tme: 60 Minutes
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Daniel Nielson, Director (805) 681-4451
Director(s)
Contact Info: Daniel Nielson, Director (805) 681-4451

SUBJECT: Poverty Report: A Snapshot of Poverty in Santa Barbara County

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

- A. Receive and file the Poverty Report: A Snapshot of Poverty in Santa Barbara County;
- B. Receive a presentation by Insight Center for Community Economic Development and County Social Services on the results of the coordinated, communitywide, poverty impact assessment;
- C. That the Board of Supervisors direct the CEO to work in conjunction with appropriate departments to utilize data, assess findings and focus areas, and incorporate information as appropriate in program and budget development processes; and
- D. Determine under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b) (3) that this activity is exempt from review on the basis that it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity may have a significant effect on the environment.

Summary Text:

On January 17, 2012, the Board of Supervisors directed Social Services staff to hire a knowledgeable consultant to partner with the department to conduct a countywide poverty assessment, known as the Poverty Initiative. This assessment was a collaborative effort with the Santa Barbara Foundation.

Based on the original guidance of the Board of Supervisors, the Poverty Initiative's primary objectives were to:

- Access the community needs and identify geographic pockets of poverty;
- Provide an in-depth look at the characteristics of those in living in the pockets of poverty to get a better sense of service gaps, causes, and impacts of poverty;
- Complete a service inventory and determine gaps in services; and
- Recommend targeted priorities on how the County, other government agencies, community based organizations and foundations can better partner to enhance our critical social safety net infrastructure and reduce the effects of poverty.

Key findings and service gaps from the report include:

- High poverty areas: Santa Barbara County's high poverty areas (18 census tracts in which 20% or more residents are living below 100% of the Federal Poverty Thresholds) are located in clusters of census tracts in the City of Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Isla Vista.
- High poverty areas have 24 percent of the County residents but 53 percent of all County residents living in poverty.
- High poverty areas have 61 percent of all County children who are in poverty. The Santa Maria high poverty area has 33 percent of all County children living in poverty.
- Affordable housing, child care availability, education, family-sustaining wages, access to transportation and health care are major needs and barriers for those living in high poverty areas.
- Research findings suggest significant service gaps in Lompoc and North County.

The overall purpose of the assessment was to analyze how resources and services in the county are, or are not, strategically aligned to areas and populations of greatest economic need. The Insight Center for Community Economic Development was hired to conduct the poverty assessment. Insight and the Department of Social Services are pleased to return to the Board to present the results of this community effort.

This report can be utilized as a tool to develop new strategies by all community providers that serve low income individuals and families including: City and County agencies; non-profits; foundations and other funders. In order to facilitate and coordinate County planning, the Department of Social Services is recommending that the Board of Supervisors direct the CEO to work in conjunction with appropriate departments to utilize data, assess findings and focus areas, and incorporate information as appropriate in program and budget development processes.

Background:

The US Census estimates that in 2010, 18% of Santa Barbara residents were living below the federal poverty level (up from 11.9% in 2007). Twenty-two percent of the County's children were living in poverty (up from 13.5% in 2007); 18.9% of children in North County, 20.8% of children in Mid County, and 12.9% in South County. This compares to 15% of County adults and 7.1% of seniors. Regionally, South County has the highest percent of adults in poverty at 17% and North County seniors have the highest poverty rate at 8%.

The Poverty Report: *A Snapshot of Poverty in Santa Barbara County* is a geographically-based, multi-methodological study that combines quantitative and qualitative data to provide a broad yet detailed depiction of the where areas of high poverty exist and the gaps in services that exist within them. Through data collection, a Service Provider and Funder Survey, GIS mapping, and stakeholder interviews, the purpose of the study was to analyze how well county resources and services are strategically aligned to areas and populations in greatest economic need and to make recommendations. The focus areas contained in the Report are based on the research findings from the study and best practices nationally.

The report includes the following components:

- An overview of Santa Barbara County's population and geography (Section I);
- Data analysis and mapping of 44 indicators in the areas of: poverty, employment, income, education, public benefits, housing, transportation, childcare, and health (Sections II, III, and the Appendix);
- A survey distributed to 460 local public agencies, foundations, service providers, and public officials to understand how well services, resources, and program capacities align to meet greatest needs; challenges faced by low-income residents and providers who serve them; and recommendations for helping more residents move out of poverty (Section IV);
- Stakeholder interviews of 16 public and non-profit leaders to enrich and explain the data findings (Section V);
- Recommendations to improve service delivery, resource alignment, and—ultimately—outcomes for Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable residents (Section VI).

The report also provides a baseline of data and identifies community needs and service gaps to build upon in the future. Based on the assessment findings and best practice research, seven focus areas were identified:

- Pursue holistic approaches.
- Establish poverty reduction goals and track progress using standardized data collection.
- Improve service delivery infrastructure and efficiency.
- Address unmet needs in North County and Lompoc.
- Improve allocation of existing resources.
- Expand targeted, impactful public programs.
- Address affordable housing, economic, and workforce development and public transportation.

The report findings and focus areas are attached and can be used to initiate community discussions, build upon local and national best practices, and provide a tool to develop new strategies to help Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable communities climb out of poverty.

Special Instructions:

After execution by the Chair, please return one (1) certified copy of the minute order to Jennifer Lock, Department of Social Services.

Attachments:

Executive Summary
A Snapshot of Poverty in Santa Barbara County Report
Power Point Presentation

Authored by:

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cc: