



United Way of
Western Connecticut

Community Results Center

2008 Stamford Community Needs Assessment

62 Palmer's Hill Road
Stamford, CT 06902



Letter to the community:

In these challenging economic times, United Way of Western Connecticut is working harder than ever to have the most effective long-term impact on our community. The United Way focuses its efforts on creating opportunities for a better life for all. We invite you to be part of the change. Together, united, we can inspire hope and create opportunities for a better tomorrow.

United Way focuses on the most pressing needs of our community and provides the resources -- human, financial and technical -- to get to the heart of problems. In recent years, our efforts have centered on affordable housing, early childhood education and ensuring access to health care and basic needs. We want to continue to identify the key issues facing our community to improve the lives of our residents.

The United Way of Western Connecticut, with the generous support of the Stamford Human Services Planning Council and the City of Stamford has completed a Community Needs Assessment for Stamford. Information was gathered from residents, community leaders, publicly available data sources, and from the United Way 2-1-1 information and referral service. A summary of the needs assessment is presented in this report. This research will help us determine the best way to distribute funding throughout the community and will serve as a resource to help us build partnerships within the social services community.

For your convenience, a downloadable version of the Community Needs Assessment containing additional detail is available at www.uwwesternct.org.

We wish to offer our special thanks to all those who participated in the survey, interviews and focus groups. We could not have completed this process without you! We look forward to your continued support as we work to help improve the lives of those in our community.



Michelle H. James
President, Stamford Office
United Way of Western CT



William Callion
Director Public Safety & Health
City of Stamford

We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their participation in the development of this report.

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- **City of Stamford**
- **Human Services Planning Council**
- **United Way of Western Connecticut Board of Directors and the Stamford Community Council**
- **United Way of Western Connecticut – Stamford Staff**

Michelle H. James
President
Jennifer Hallissey
Director of Community Impact
Anda Cabrera
Administrative Assistant

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United Way of Western Connecticut – Stamford Office and the Stamford Human Services Planning Council conducted a community needs assessment in order to help determine the best use of its resources to impact the lives of the residents of Stamford. The needs assessment was completed by the Community Results Center (CRC) of the United Way of Connecticut. In order to ensure that the perceptions and opinions of many segments of the community were included in the research, data were gathered from residents, community leaders, publicly available data sources, published reports, and from the United Way 2-1-1 information and referral service.

This report includes a Portrait of Stamford which presents information about the demographics, economics, and poverty rate of Stamford and a review of the major issue areas discussed during the focus groups and interviews and raised by the surveys. These areas include:

- Basic Needs
- Children and Youth
- Health Care
- Older Adults

It should be noted that the information for this report was gathered prior to the dramatic downturns in the economy during the last quarter of 2008. It is uncertain what the impact on participant and respondent input would have been had information been collected during that time.

This is a summary report of the Stamford Community Needs Assessment. The full report can be obtained by contacting the United Way of Western Connecticut or by visiting their website at www.uwwesternct.org.

Housing

In interviews with senior service providers, it was commented that there is a need for more senior housing in Stamford. It was said that there is at least a 6 month wait for senior housing. Several seniors said that current senior housing needs to be equipped with social service support to provide assistance for older adults who may not have family support available.

In terms of housing affordability, half of renters and 43% of those who own their home and are age 65 and older are paying more than 30% of their income on housing. For older renters, white non-Hispanic residents have the highest incidence of housing cost burden, while for owners, close to two-thirds of Hispanics experience a housing cost burden.

Transportation

Older adults in focus groups commented on the changes they have seen in Stamford. Many are life-long residents of the City, and said one of the biggest changes is the challenge in getting around. They said that increased traffic is making Stamford a harder city to traverse on foot. They would like to see more attention paid to making the City pedestrian friendly, including supplying benches at frequent intervals in the downtown area. They also said that vouchers for the City's subsidized taxi program need to be easier to access.

General Support for Older Adults

While the needs assessment survey found that close to 40% of older respondents say their town offers support for older adults seeking to maintain their independence, focus group discussions offered insight into other issues that some older adults in Stamford also face:

- Adult day care – There are currently no adult day care centers in Stamford. It was thought that adult day facilities are needed to help limit the need for institutional care.
- Support for Grandparents – In Stamford, close to 30% (approximately 700) of grandparents are caring for grandchildren. Senior service providers said that grandparents often need assistance finding the support they need to care for their grandchildren.
- Food/Utility Assistance – Similar to the needs cited for the general population, older adults expressed concern over the rise in the cost of food, gas and heating oil. Social service providers said they expected to see an increase in the number of older adults seeking food and utility services.
- Access to Medical Services – Social service providers suggested that the number of doctors who take Medicare is decreasing, causing more older adults to use clinics that provide services to both the insured and uninsured and are sometimes overburdened.
- Comprehensive List of Senior Services – Several seniors indicated that it is hard to know what services are available to seniors unless you have access to the Internet. They suggested that Stamford publish a list of available senior services.

Access to Health Care

The needs assessment survey found that 40% of respondents rated access to health services excellent or good. Discussions within the focus groups centered on the same health care issues that are affecting communities around the country. The issues include the numbers of those uninsured or underinsured, the rising cost of delivering healthcare and the reductions in reimbursement rates that continues to decrease the number of available health providers.

In 2006, close to 78,000 residents of Fairfield County were uninsured. Those ages 19 to 29 have the highest risk of being uninsured. Twenty-two percent of this age group statewide is uninsured. Nearly three-quarters of these are employed full-time.

Children through age 18 qualify for the State's healthcare plan, HUSKY A, if their families have incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. HUSKY B extends this coverage to children in families with incomes between 185 and 300% of the federal poverty level, with premiums and co-payments based on income. In Stamford, approximately 9,000 children and youth are enrolled in HUSKY A and B.



Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth

Health Services

Comments heard during focus groups and interviews suggested that the City needs to expand its health care capacity, especially for those who are uninsured or underinsured. Interviews and focus groups provided the following suggestions for expanding health care access:

- Hire more community health nurses to provide direct patient health services including outreach to seniors, new mothers, and vulnerable populations, such as undocumented immigrants.
- Open more satellite clinics that focus on preventive approaches.
- Hire a public health educator to develop public health education programs.
- Increase walking and bike paths.

Undocumented Immigrants

One challenge with the undocumented population is that since no one knows the size of this population, it is not possible to fully understand the scope of its health care needs. It was suggested that the City needs to get a sense of the level of health literacy among both legal and undocumented immigrants. One suggestion was to create a health literacy program that could be included in ESL (English as a Second Language) curricula. This type of program could help determine how well people understand health issues and the health care options available. It could also help to educate them about healthy living.

Methodology

Several data collection methods were used for this needs assessment to ensure that the perceptions and opinions of many segments of the community were included. Focus groups and interviews sought to provide an understanding of the main issues faced by Stamford residents. The needs assessment survey sought to further understand perceptions of those who live and work in Stamford. Specifically, the data collection methods included:

- Focus groups – In all, over 70 people participated in 7 focus groups held with social service providers, residents of the homeless shelters, students of Literacy Volunteers, residents from various neighborhoods and older adults.
- Interviews – Fifteen interviews were conducted with community leaders that focused on basic needs, children and youth, health care and older adults.
- Survey – A web-based survey was completed by those who live or work in Stamford. A paper version of the survey was distributed to various social service agencies in Stamford for completion by staff and clients. In all, 700 people completed the survey.
- Data from publicly available sources and published reports – Data from these sources provide information on population trends, economic conditions, education, health, and healthcare. Data from United Way 2-1-1 is also included.

Portrait of Stamford: Population

- Stamford is the State's 4th largest city with a population of 118,000. The City contains a mix of inner city, urban and rural areas. The daytime population of Stamford swells by approximately 60,000.
- Stamford's racial and ethnic composition has shifted somewhat from 2000 to 2006. The percent of Hispanic and Asian residents has increased, while the percent of those identifying as white or black has decreased. Population projections suggest that the Hispanic population will experience the largest increases, while the white and black segments of the population will show slow declines between now and 2030.
- Stamford has the highest percent of foreign born residents when compared to Connecticut's other cities and to the State as a whole. Thirty-two percent of those living in Stamford were foreign born compared to 13% statewide. Stamford is experiencing an influx of undocumented immigrants, although estimates of the size of this population are not available.

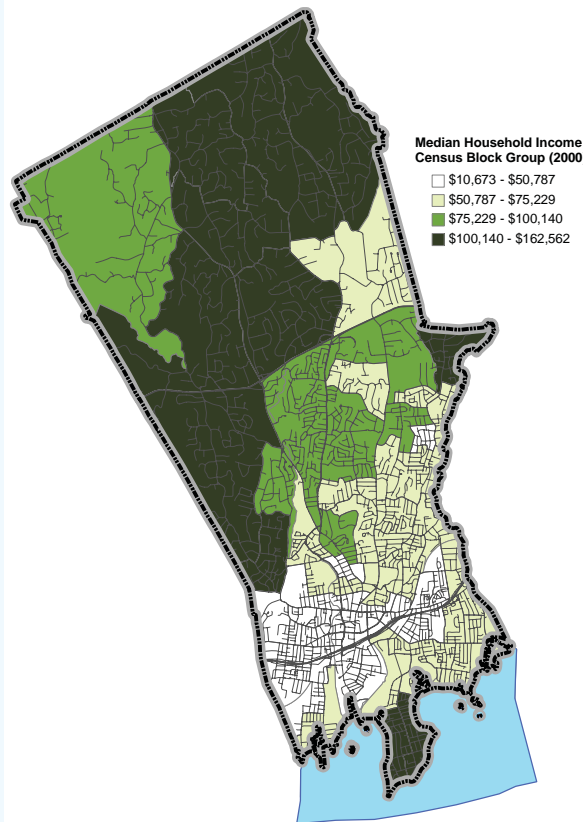
Economics

- In 2006, Stamford's median family income was \$88,492, at least twice as high as the median family income in Connecticut's comparably sized cities.
- In 2006, 5.8% of families and 8.3% of individuals were living below the federal poverty level (FPL), similar to statewide poverty levels. Stamford's poverty rate is lower than Connecticut's other cities; however, the cost of living in Stamford is among the highest in the state.
- The self-sufficiency standard (which includes expenses for housing, child care, food, transportation and healthcare) for two adults and two school age children in Stamford is \$57,174 annually. This means that a family of four would need to earn over two and a half times the federal poverty level (\$21,200) to maintain self-sufficiency. A third of households earn less than \$60,000 annually.

Employment

- Stamford's unemployment rate was 5.6% in December 2008, lower than the State average of 6.6% but higher than last year's average of 3.7%.
- Stamford's workforce decreased 9% from 2000 to 2007, numbering 76,000 in 2007 compared with 83,000 in 2000. Average wages in 2007 were just over \$117,000.
- In 2007, the leading industries in Stamford were Finance and Insurance (16%) and Professional, Scientific, and Management (12%). The sector that saw the largest increase was Finance and Insurance, and the sector that saw the largest decrease was Management of Companies and Enterprises.

Median Household Income



Annual Self-Sufficiency Standard for Connecticut Cities, 2005

	One Adult, 1 School Age Child	Two Adults and 2 School Age Children
Stamford	\$41,527	\$57,174
Bridgeport	\$31,136	\$46,602
New Haven	\$29,845	\$43,447
Hartford	\$28,387	\$42,690
Waterbury	\$31,627	\$49,263

Source: Connecticut Office of Workforce Competitiveness

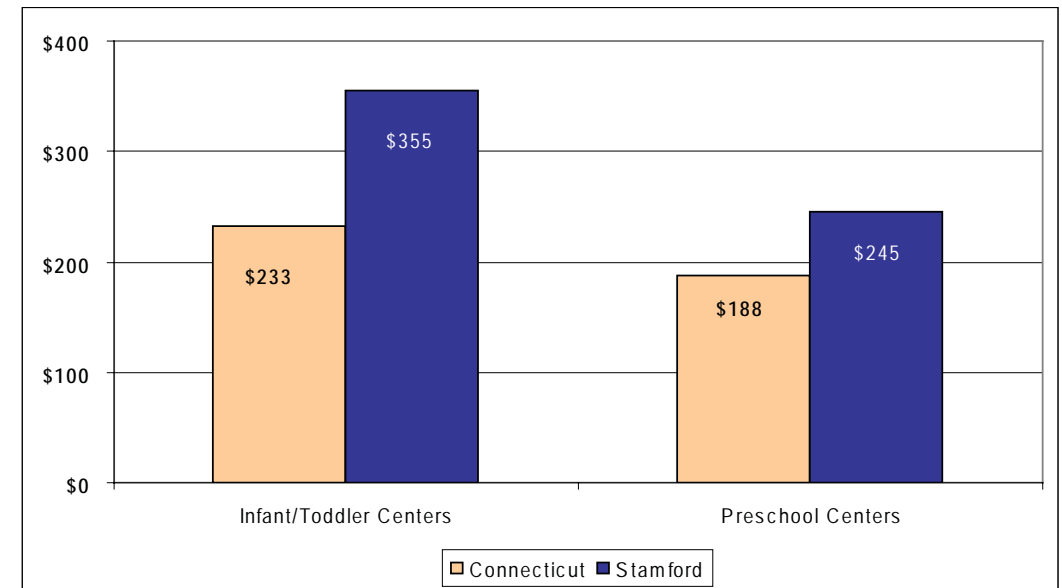
Education

Forty percent of fourth grade students in Stamford scored at or above the State's reading goal level, compared with 56% statewide. Thirty-five percent of tenth grade students scored at or above the state goal on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) for Reading Across the Disciplines, compared with 46% statewide. There is a wide disparity in test scores when reviewing 4th grade reading scores by race and ethnicity. Students who are white or Asian far surpass state averages, while black and Hispanic students fall below average scores for the state.

Recreation/After School Programs

Thirty-five percent of survey respondents cited the need for after-school programs as a top five need. Parents in the focus groups felt that more after-school programs that are free are essential to keeping children off the streets. They said there are not enough programs nor are there adequate playground facilities for children. It was said that there is especially a need for after-school programs that offer support for children with mental health and emotional issues. Programs are also needed for older teens.

Average Child Care Costs, 2008

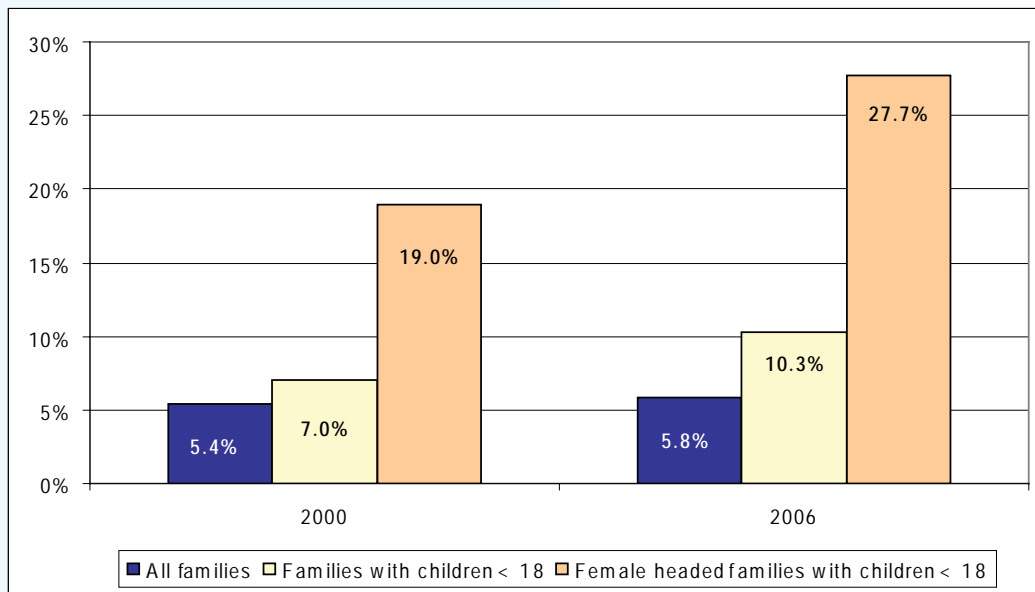


Source: 2-1-1 Child Care

Childhood Poverty

Research has found that children who grow up poor tend to have lower levels of academic achievement throughout their school years. In Stamford, close to 6% of families live below the federal poverty level (FPL). However, many more families may experience economic insecurity because the FPL is low considering the high cost of living in Stamford.

Percentage Living Under Federal Poverty Level in Stamford



Source: 2000 U.S Census, 2006 American Community Survey

School Readiness

Stamford has begun a comprehensive process aimed at improving services for children ages birth through 8. One of the goals of the initiative is to ensure that all children are prepared to enter kindergarten. In 2007, 82% of Stamford kindergartners had preschool experience. The 18% without experience translates into an estimated 270 children.

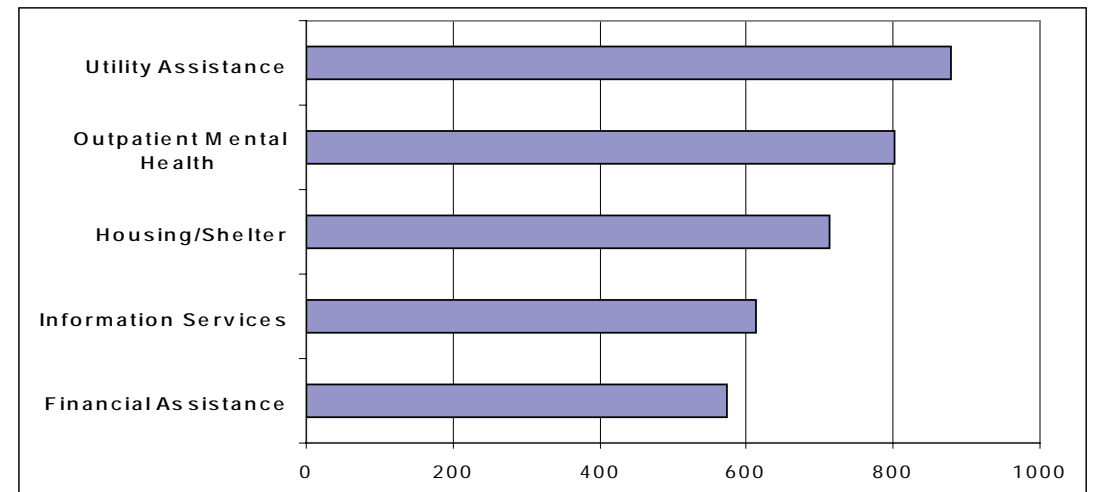
Stamford has among the highest costs for child care in the State. The average cost of a preschool center is \$245 per week, while the cost for an infant/toddler center averages \$355 per week. On an annual basis, the cost of care ranges from \$12,700 to \$18,400.

Approximately half of the school readiness population is Hispanic. It was suggested that teachers need to be trained on early learning strategies for children who grow up in non-English speaking households.

Health and Human Services Requests

United Way 2-1-1 is the statewide information and referral service for health and human service issues. In 2008, callers in Stamford made over 8,800 service requests. The top five requests for information concerned utility assistance, mental health, housing and shelter, general information and financial assistance.

Top 2-1-1 Service Requests for Stamford 2008



Source: United Way 2-1-1

TOP 5 NEEDS RANKED IN THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

The needs assessment survey asked respondents to identify the top five needs in Stamford. The top need identified was the need for the availability of affordable housing, followed by job training and workforce development. An analysis by various demographic segments found housing to be the top need identified by all of the segments. In fact, there is a great deal of similarity in the top five needs chosen by all demographic segments.



1. Affordable housing
2. Job training & workforce development
3. Safe, crime-free neighborhoods
4. Financial assistance / After-school & recreation programs*
5. Childcare / Fuel/utility assistance*

* Items had equal number of replies

Affordable Housing

Seventy percent of survey respondents identified affordable housing as the number one need in Stamford. Participants in the focus groups suggested that Stamford is undergoing gentrification, and that it is becoming increasingly difficult for lower and middle income residents and families to afford housing.

In 2007, 40% of owners with mortgages and 45% of renters spent 30% or more of household income on housing, an increase from 2000. A standard rule of thumb for housing affordability is that housing should cost no more than 30% of household income. Therefore, household income needs to be in the \$50,000 to \$65,000 annual range to meet average monthly rental costs of \$1,200 to \$1,600 in Stamford.

Stamford Residents Paying 30%+ on Housing

	2007	2000
Owners (with mortgage)	40%	35%
Renters	45%	36%

Source: 2000 U.S. Census, 2007 American Community Survey

Homelessness

The 2008 Point-in-Time count of homeless persons found 267 homeless adults in Stamford and Greenwich; an increase from 2007. Interviews with shelter administrators found that the shelters are often full and there are few places to send residents once they leave the shelter. Both shelters have programs that focus on education, job training and on helping residents transition to permanent supportive housing.

Food

Focus groups and interviews with social service providers indicate an increased demand for food at the food pantries. Person-to-Person, a Darien agency that provides food and other basic needs, has seen requests for food increase 41% in 2008, from the previous year. In 2008 they served over 20,000 people. The number of Stamford residents receiving Food Stamps has risen from 3,600 in 2007 to 3,800 in 2008.

Public Safety

Safe, crime-free neighborhoods was identified as a top five need in the needs assessment survey. A Stamford Police Department strategic plan reports that Stamford has a fairly low crime rate relative to other comparable American cities. However, the report suggests that maintaining a low crime rate will be a challenge as the City becomes more culturally and economically diverse. Recent crime statistics show that incidence of property crime decreased 21% and total crime decreased 14% between 2005 and 2007.

Undocumented Immigrants

Roughly 20% of survey respondents identified the need for the economic and social integration of immigrants as a top five need. Discussions during interviews and focus groups revolved around the perception that there has been an increase in the population of undocumented immigrants. There was a general feeling that Stamford is not hostile to its undocumented population; however, it was felt that the population is reluctant to come forward to seek services that it may need.

Number of Families Living in Poverty

