

A dynamic community
planning process focusing
on human services in
Johnson County



UNITED COMMUNITY SERVICES
OF JOHNSON COUNTY

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE:

JUNE 2007

Setting the Course 2007-2011

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction.....	4
Guiding Principles	6
How to Use this Guide	7
Key National Trends	8
Strategic Action Priorities	10
Community Life	14
Human Service Delivery Cross-System Issues	22
Contributors to the Plan.....	25
Funders	27
About UCS	28

Navigating the Future

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Navigating the Future is an optimistic name for Johnson County's on-going community planning project. While we know we can't predict the future, we chose this lofty title because we do know we can impact it.

For the past 40 years, community planning projects led by United Community Services (UCS) have influenced and shaped human service response in Johnson County. These efforts have resulted in a better future for thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds.

Our latest initiative – *Navigating the Future: Setting the Course 2007-2011* – is the result of a community-wide endeavor to look at issues, prioritize the most immediate concerns and identify opportunities to improve the quality of life in Johnson County. UCS is committed to leading efforts to achieve measurable improvements and influencing others to use this report as a guide to action.

A Leadership Committee of respected community members guided the *Navigating the Future* process. Through the input of more than 160 service providers and advocates, five guiding principles emerged: **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS; EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES; INCLUSION; PROACTIVE RESPONSE** and **STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS**. These principles informed the selection of strategies, which are highlighted in this document and can result in significant improvement in our community.

Thank you to all of the dedicated individuals who contributed their time, talent and energy to this plan. It is our hope that everyone who reads *Navigating the Future* will find a way to become engaged in the implementation of recommended strategies to make Johnson County a better place to work and live.

Regards,

PAM PERILSTEIN
Board President

KAREN WULFKUHL
Executive Director

Executive Summary

The availability of human services reflects a community's commitment to the unique needs of its residents. Regardless of age, income, race or gender, health and human services touch all people at different times and places, and in various ways.

The *Navigating the Future: Setting the Course 2007-2011* plan is the result of a community-wide effort to study the most pressing human service issues facing Johnson County. The plan prioritizes the most immediate concerns and identifies opportunities to improve the quality of life for those who work and live in the community.

Initiated by United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS), the plan was developed by a community Leadership Committee with the input of more than 160 service providers and advocates. The plan is offered to the community as a blueprint for action that can result in measurable improvements.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The *Guiding Principles* introduced in *Navigating the Future* were used by the Leadership Committee as a foundation for subsequent decisions. The five core *Guiding Principles* are: **community connections, evidence-based practices, inclusion, proactive response** and **strategic investments**.

STRATEGIC ACTION PRIORITIES

A key component of *Navigating the Future* is the *Strategic Action Priorities*. By using the *Guiding Principles* as criteria, the *Navigating the Future* Leadership Committee selected priorities that they believed offered the greatest potential to create positive outcomes for persons and families who are most in need of help. The committee offers the following four *Strategic Action Priorities* as tools to address specific trends observed in Johnson County:

ACCESS AND ASSETS FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY

GOAL: Low-income households access benefits that encourage employment, reduce financial stress and safeguard economic security.

BANK ON CHANGE

GOAL: Low-to-moderate income households are connected to financial products and develop the financial management skills that build economic security.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY TRUST FUND

GOAL: Quality housing opportunities are available for the low-to-moderate income workforce and special needs households.

QUALITY PRE-K FOR SCHOOL READINESS

GOAL: Young children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school.

The Leadership Committee encourages new efforts by both community and professional leaders to help achieve the goals set forth in the *Strategic Action Priorities* by implementing programs that support them. UCS has committed to oversee efforts to implement the four strategic action priorities.

HUMAN SERVICE DELIVERY CROSS-SYSTEM ISSUES

The human service delivery system is the collection of programs and activities designed to protect, promote and/or restore the well-being of an individual or family. Through the planning process, strategies that could address common organizational challenges were identified. The three *Human Service Delivery Cross-system Issues* introduced in the plan are:

RESPOND TO CHANGING CULTURAL DYNAMICS

GOAL: Human service organizations embrace and develop approaches to cultural competence.

MAKE SERVICES ACCESSIBLE

GOAL: Human service providers improve service accessibility by reducing barriers to service.

HUMAN SERVICE STORYTELLING

GOAL: Human service providers raise awareness of human service needs by describing program successes.

STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR EACH COMMUNITY LIFE CATEGORY

Navigating the Future also features key data and information on human service issues in four major community life categories:

1. ECONOMIC WELL-BEING
2. HEALTH AND WELLNESS
3. LIFELONG LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
4. SAFETY

Each category represents an area of community life where the human service sector plays a significant role. In addition, the Leadership Committee adopted a *Strategic Focus* for each community life category: The *Strategic Focus* is a guide for decision-makers to use in selecting future human service action and/or setting funding priorities.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

STRATEGIC FOCUS: **Invest in efforts that build economic self-reliance** for families and individuals – especially families with young children and young adults – to meet their basic needs.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

STRATEGIC FOCUS: **Concentrate on physical and mental health services** for underserved, vulnerable populations.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

STRATEGIC FOCUS: **Expand the community's capacity to provide quality early learning opportunities** in the first five years of life.

SAFETY

STRATEGIC FOCUS: **Strengthen prevention and other human service responses** as an effective means to protect personal and community safety.

CONCLUSION

With human welfare and human service directly linked to overall community health, the future of Johnson County depends upon leadership that will take action to ensure a positive future for all who live and work here. *Navigating the Future: Setting the Course 2007-2011* raises awareness about human service needs and provides community leaders with a decision-making tool that they can use as a catalyst for an even better quality of life in Johnson County.

Introduction

Johnson County has a proud tradition of responsiveness to human needs in our community. *Navigating the Future: Setting the Course 2007-2011* is a dynamic community planning process that identifies a set of strategic goals that have the greatest propensity to strengthen response into the future.

United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) invited a 21-member Leadership Committee to lead the *Navigating the Future* process. Composed of community leaders from organizations with histories of contributing to the quality of life in Johnson County, the Leadership Committee researched and developed the new strategic action plan for human services found in this report.

The UCS board first initiated *Navigating the Future* in 2001 to raise awareness about human service needs and provide community leaders with a strategic action plan. Published in June 2003, the plan set lofty community goals and substantial progress was achieved as many community stakeholders used the plan as a guide for action within specific areas. **NOTE:** *The 2001 Navigating the Future Report and the 2005 Update are available at www.ucsjoco.org click on Resources.*

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE: SETTING THE COURSE 2007-2011

In 2006, the UCS board of directors committed to renew the *Navigating the Future* community planning process. While building upon the framework and vision of the original project, *Navigating the Future: Setting the Course* takes a fresh look at community conditions in Johnson County to ensure that human service response is relevant for changing community needs.

PROJECT GOALS

The same *Navigating the Future* project goals used in the original report guided this project:

- Raise awareness about human service needs and issues by building on our understanding of the ways Johnson County is changing;
- Influence the planning and delivery of human services by creating a consensus about community needs and areas that need strategic attention; and
- Guide the investment of resources to make effective choices about both the allocation of dollars and community action.

PROCESS METHODOLOGY

Key planning tools used by the Leadership Committee include:

- **2006 STATE OF CARING SUMMIT:** On June 13, 2006, more than 160 human service professionals and advocates contributed their insights regarding what they felt were the most important human service issues to address over the next three to five years. At the State of Caring Summit, which was hosted by UCS and United Way of Johnson County, participants commented on both the existing services most needed by vulnerable Johnson County residents, as well as those human services that must be strengthened to meet current and emerging demand. The Leadership Committee actively reviewed this input as the starting point for developing this plan.
- **COMMUNITY INDICATORS:** Demographic and human service indicators at both the national and Johnson County-specific levels were examined by the Leadership Committee to track trends that could point toward future challenges and impetus for action.
- **PROMISING APPROACHES:** To determine where strategic action could make the most difference, the Leadership Committee examined evidence-based approaches that are demonstrating results in other communities when tackling human service challenges.
- **AGENCY LEADERS:** Human service professional leaders were assembled by UCS to consider cross-sector human service delivery challenges. Their input was sought to prioritize ways that human service providers could collectively and individually improve human service delivery by addressing common challenges.

ON DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLAN

Convened in June 2006, the Leadership Committee actively considered over the next nine months where to recommend strategic action. Each step of the way, we asked ourselves to prioritize where the Johnson County community and its leadership should focus more attention.

From the outset, we wanted this plan to complement – not duplicate – other planning efforts. We recognize that there are many wonderful things currently happening to enhance human service delivery in Johnson County.

In particular, we found significant action plans already in place on issues related to **aging** and **health care access** – two areas currently demanding greater attention across the United States. Throughout the report, other human service strategic plans or collaborations that set action goals for the community, are highlighted. **Note: If other efforts that could or should be featured in the human service arena are not included in this report, it is an oversight.**

PRIORITIES FOR STRATEGIC ACTION

The centerpiece of the *Navigating the Future* plan is a small number of specific strategic action priorities. As a planning group, we recognize that these are not the only areas where action is needed to strengthen the human service response in Johnson County. We used the input from the 2006 State of Caring Summit as a starting point for examining where action should be taken. A set of *Guiding Principles* served as the criteria for selecting action opportunities: **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES, INCLUSION, PROACTIVE RESPONSE AND STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS.**

In the end, the *Strategic Action Priorities* were chosen that we think hold the greatest potential to advance positive outcomes for individuals and families with limited resources to help themselves. In each instance, our hope is to measure results into the future that demonstrate it is possible to reduce human challenges and suffering and build successes for a brighter tomorrow.

Navigating the Future Leadership Committee
JUNE 2007

Brad Stratton, Chair	Merrill Lynch
Lorrie Bezinque	Social & Rehabilitation Services
Dr. Robert Clark	University of Kansas Edwards Campus
Doug Davidson	CERI
Becky Fast	U.S. Representative Dennis Moore, District Office
Mary Lou Jaramillo	Hispanic Economic Development Corporation, ElCentro, Inc.
Jennifer Kennally	United Way of Johnson County
Frank Lenk	M.A.R.C.
Greg Maday	Village Presbyterian Church
Dr. Marie McCarther	Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership – UMKC
Brent McCune	Compass Financial Resources
Mitzi McFatrigh	Foundation on Aging
Tracey Osborne	Overland Park Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Johnson County Board
Elaine Perilla	Volunteer Center, Johnson County Community College Board
Rev. Nanette Roberts	Grace United Methodist Church
Dr. Ann Sanders	League of Women Voters, Olathe School District
Brenda Sharpe	REACH Healthcare Foundation
David Sosland	Jewish Community Relations Bureau/American Jewish Committee
Judge Steve Tatum	Tenth Judicial District
Hannes Zacharias	Johnson County Government
Corey Ziegler	Community Foundation of Johnson County

Guiding Principles

Through the input of more than 160 service providers and advocates, five guiding principles emerged and were used to inform the selection of strategies:



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: Everyone has a stake in the community's ability to deliver the services people need to live safe, productive lives. Link human service strategies within and across sectors to leverage resources, engage new partners and better connect people to the services and community.



EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES: Knowledge about the programs and practices that work has dramatically increased over the last decade. For the best opportunity for success, advance and fund those programs and practices that research shows to be the most effective.



INCLUSION: Culture is constantly changing and evolving. Build capacity in this community to respectfully and effectively respond to and work with people of diverse cultures and backgrounds.



PROACTIVE RESPONSE: Monitoring trends and community conditions is an important tool for building a healthy community. Adapt programs and align resources to meet the changing needs of community members and prevent problems from escalating.



STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS: There are many compelling issues that compete for funding from public and private sources. For long-term impact, invest in human service interventions that have the potential to lower or eliminate future costs – relating to both human suffering and service needs.

How to Use this Guide

Navigating the Future is intended to be a tool for action. Human services play an essential role in contributing to the quality of life in Johnson County. You are invited to use this report to identify ways to make this community's future response to human needs even stronger.

Navigating the Future – KEY ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS:

The key components of the Leadership Committee's action recommendations include:

- **STRATEGIC ACTION PRIORITIES:** Four specific action strategies with consumer goals and outcome targets were chosen. Based upon promising approaches adopted in other communities, the Leadership Committee seeks to advance these priorities as tools to address specific trends observed in Johnson County. The Leadership Committee urges new efforts by both community and professional leaders to put these action priorities in place. UCS will play a leadership role to ensure that implementation steps are taken for each of the four action priorities. UCS will also be responsible for measuring whether or not system improvements are put into place that will advance these strategies.
- **STRATEGIC FOCUS:** The strategic focus is offered to the community as a guide for decision-makers in selecting future human service action and/or setting funding priorities. Based on Johnson County-specific indicator trends and key human service issues identified at the 2006 Summit, the Leadership Committee recommends to community decision-makers each strategic focus as a statement of where greater human service response is needed.
- **CROSS-SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS:** Cross-system recommendations put forward ways to strengthen human service delivery across the human service sector. Prioritized by human service professional leaders and augmented with Leadership Committee input, these recommendations recognize steps that individual providers can implement to improve human service programs. The strategies could also be advanced collaboratively to maximize their impact.

Navigating the Future – INFORMATION FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER ACTION:

The report features information on human service issues in four community life categories:

1. ECONOMIC WELL-BEING
2. HEALTH AND WELLNESS
3. LIFELONG LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
4. SAFETY

VISION: Each category represents an area of community life where the human service sector plays a significant role. For each community life category, the Leadership Committee affirmed a vision of the desired future for Johnson County. Also defined is how both individuals, as well as society as a whole, benefit from effective, accessible human services.

Other components of the action plan include:

- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION:** The Leadership Committee vigorously considered multiple strategic action opportunities and their relevance with current conditions in Johnson County. While implementation is not currently planned by UCS, these other strategic action ideas are presented as opportunities for other groups to address.
- **COLLABORATIONS OR OTHER ACTION PLANS IN PLACE:** Other human service plans or collaborations that set goals for Johnson County are also included. The Leadership Committee chose to recognize, but not duplicate, these other planning efforts.
- **KEY HUMAN SERVICE ISSUES:** Each community life category includes a list of critical human service issues. Developed by over 160 human service professionals and advocates at the 2006 State of Caring Summit, these key issues were identified as both the most important existing services, as well as those that need attention over the next three to five years in order to improve the response to vulnerable Johnson County residents.

Community planning produces focused, strategic change that positively improves the quality of life for all of us.

Key National Trends

Every community must grapple with an ever-changing environment and its influence on human well-being. Below are the key national trends that resonated with the *Navigating the Future* planning process. Some reflect broader trends in the economy that hold implications for the human service response. Others are research findings that demand attention or demonstrate results. In every case, these trends challenge us to put new action into place to ensure a vibrant, responsive Johnson County into the future.

GROWING SUBURBAN POVERTY

A majority of poor persons nationwide called the suburbs home for the first time in 2005. Census Bureau estimates found that the number of suburban poor outnumbered the urban poor in their neighbor cities by about 1.2 million persons nationwide.(1) Other facts include:

- 2005 poverty rates remained higher in large cities (18.8 percent) than in suburbs (9.4 percent).
- Growing suburban poverty reflects the long-term decentralization of jobs in the United States – creating economically integrated neighborhoods, which could result in greater economic security and other positive outcomes for significant numbers of Americans.

ECONOMIC COSTS OF CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty and its link to the gross domestic product (GDP) – this topic is not where dialogue about childhood poverty typically goes. The usual focus is on the unfairness of child poverty and the value we place as a society on equal opportunity. But the economic impact of childhood poverty is well-known – from lower earnings and productivity as adults, to poorer health and a greater propensity to engage in crime. Recent studies put the cost at \$500 billion per year, or nearly four percent of the GDP. Other facts include:

- The first half of the early 2000s saw poverty rise nationwide to one in eight persons (13 percent) and nearly one in five children (18 percent) – rates higher than mid-1970s poverty levels. (2)
- Child poverty rates rose the fastest between 2000 and 2005. And single parent families with children are among the households most likely to face poverty.

YOUNG CHILDREN AND THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF EARLY EDUCATION

A higher rate of return than traditional “bricks and mortar” economic development initiatives, such as sports stadiums or office towers – the evidence from multiple early education cost-benefit analysis demonstrate the benefits of investing in our youngest children. (4) With science documenting that 90 percent of brain development occurs before age 5, new momentum nationwide is being placed on getting children ready for school. Children that start school behind, too often

stay behind. The research is clear: even children who face challenges to positive child development such as poverty can overcome barriers to success through quality early care and education. Key facts include:

- Increasing reading and math performance by 9-year-olds is attributed to significant expansion of quality pre-kindergarten programs during 1990s.(5)
- At-risk children unable to attend quality pre-kindergarten programs are five times more likely to grow up to commit crimes than children who participate in pre-kindergarten programs.(6)

DROWNING IN DEBT

American consumers’ use of debt increased more than sevenfold between 1980 and 2005. With over 691 million cards issued, credit card usage is considered a factor in the expansion of household debt, growing from \$59 billion in 1980 to \$830 billion in 2005. (7) Another set of consumers is snared in debt by the rapid growth in payday lenders and check cashing outlets. Growing in number by 100 percent over the past five years, payday lenders collect 90 percent of their revenue from borrowers who cannot pay off their loan when due – loans that carry annual interest rates in the range of 400 percent. (8) The market for check cashing and other non-bank financial services is expected to increase due to the stagnating or declining incomes of moderate- and lower-income households. (9)

These trends challenge us to put new action into place to ensure a vibrant, responsive Johnson County into the future.

Other facts include:

- Nearly half of low- to middle-income households (households making 50 to 120 percent of median income) used credit card debt in 2005 to cover basic living expenses, such as rent, groceries, utilities and car repairs.
- Average credit card debt for low- to middle-income households in 2005 was \$8,650. Demonstrating that rising debt affects households across the life-span, the average credit card debt for households with members 65 and older was \$7,382.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES

Housing affordability challenges are widespread and growing for both renters and homeowners. (11) Severely cost-burdened households – those paying more than half their incomes for housing – grew by 2 million to a record 15.8 million between 2001 and 2004. Nearly half (46 percent) of households in the bottom income quartile (incomes below \$22,540) paid

half their income for housing, setting a new record in 2004. Demonstrating that housing affordability challenges are moving into the middle-class, households with incomes of \$22,540 to \$75,700 that paid over half their incomes on housing grew by 29 percent between 2001 and 2004 to 3.1 million. Other facts include:

- Nearly 50 million Americans suffer with a disabling or chronic condition, with seniors the most likely demographic group to have disabilities. Persons with federal disability income often pay more for rent than they receive in support.
- The growth in low-wage jobs is a major contributor to housing affordability challenges. Low-income working families with children and high housing costs spend one-third less on food, half as much on clothing and nothing on health care, as compared to similar families with affordable housing.

END NOTES:

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- (2) Harry Holzer, Georgetown University; Diane Whitmore Schanzenback, University of Chicago; Greg Duncan, Northwestern University; and Jens Ludwig, National Bureau of Economic Research; “The Economic Costs of Poverty in the United States: Subsequent Effects of Children Growing Up Poor” (Washington DC: Center for American Progress, January 2007). Retrieved 4/11/07 from: http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/01/pdf/poverty_report.pdf
- (3) U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Poverty Tables – Current Population Survey, Table 5, Retrieved 4/10/07 from: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/histpov/histpovtb.html>
- (4) James Heckman, University of Chicago; Rob Grunewald, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis; and Arthur Reynolds, University of Minnesota; “The Dollars and Cents of Investing Early: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Early Care and Education” (Washington DC: Zero to Three, 2006)
- (5) 2006 Child and Youth Well-Being Index, coordinated by Kenneth C. Land and John Franklin Crowell, Duke University (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2006). Retrieved 4/10/07 from: <http://www.soc.duke.edu/~cwi/>
- (6) Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Early Education, Retrieved 4/10/07 from: http://www.fightcrime.org/issue_earlyed.php
- (7) Credit Cards: Increased Complexity in Rates and Fees Heightens Need for More Effective Disclosure to Consumers, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO-06-929), September 2006.
- (8) Uriah King, Leslie Parrish and Ozlem Tanik; “Financial Quicksand: Payday lending sinks borrowers in debt with \$4.2 billion in predatory fees every year” (Durham, NC: Center for Responsible Lending, November 2006) Retrieved 4/11/07 from: http://www.responsiblelending.org/pdfs/rr012-Financial_Quicksand-1106.pdf
- (9) Jean Ann Fox and Patrick Woodall, “Cashed Out: Consumers Pay Steep Premium to ‘Bank’ at Check Cashing Outlets” (Washington DC: Consumer Federation of America, November 2006).
- (10) Tamara Draut, Ansel Brown, Lisa James, Kathleen Keest, Jabrina Robinson, and Ellen Schloemer, “The Plastic Safety Net: The Reality Behind Debt in America, Findings from a National Household Survey of Credit Card Debt Among Low- and Middle-Income Households” (Durham, NC: Center for Responsible Lending and Demos, A Network for Ideas & Action, October 2005).
- (11) “The State of the Nation’s Housing 2006,” Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, June 2006.

Strategic Action Priorities

ACCESS AND ASSETS FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY

GOAL:

Low-income households access benefits that encourage employment, reduce financial stress and safeguard economic security.

WHY IS THIS GOAL A PRIORITY FOR ACTION?

- More than 26,700 residents fell below the official federal poverty level in 2005. Corresponding with the national trend of growing suburban poverty, this represents a 75 percent increase just since 2000 in the number of poor Johnson County residents.
- The working poor are a significant group in today's suburban poverty populations. In Johnson County, almost two in three (63 percent) or more than 12,000 poor adults over age 16 worked full- or part-time in the previous 12 months.
- Almost 9,700 Johnson County residents received Food Stamps in 2006. Yet only an estimated 40 percent of those eligible are participating in the Food Stamp nutrition program, which helps put food on the table. More than half of those receiving this nutritional assistance are children.

WHY THIS STRATEGY?

Many families and individuals try to make ends meet on low-paying jobs and without seeking public assistance. National research indicates that connecting people to existing publicly supported benefits creates multiple positives. For example, research shows that improving access to benefits can bolster employment retention by narrowing the gap between income and living expenses. Yet many households may not know they are eligible. Recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) research found that in Johnson County, only 40 percent of those eligible receive Food Stamps. Statewide, 65 percent of those eligible are participating.

Furthermore, communities across the country actively organize 'prosperity' campaigns to link low-income workers to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the Food Stamp program and other federal and state assistance programs. A plus for this strategy is that major strides are underway to strengthen online screening and application tools that facilitate enrollment.

WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Financially struggling households can benefit from additional resources to meet critical needs. For example, the average annual nutrition assistance for a family of four through the Food Stamp program is \$4,000. For modest-income working households with two or more children, the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit could raise annual household income by more than \$5,000. The economic impact is not just on families and individuals; USDA estimates that every \$5 in new Food Stamp benefits generates \$9.20 in total community economic activity. UCS will work with community partners, such as the Johnson County Continuum of Care on Homelessness and SRS, to identify new outreach strategies.

HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS?

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT INDICATOR:

- Number of organizations that agree to implement policies or practices that improve benefit outreach and enrollment.

CONSUMER INDICATOR/S:

- Number of additional persons receiving federal and state human service benefits, such as Food Stamps.
- Number of new households filing for Earned Income Tax Credit.

“Contrary to popular belief, there are tens of thousands of uninsured, poor people living right here in Johnson County. They need our help.”

Mark Parkinson
Kansas Lieutenant Governor

BANK ON CHANGE

GOAL:

Low-to-moderate income households are connected to financial products and develop the financial management skills they need to build economic security.

WHY IS THIS GOAL A PRIORITY FOR ACTION?

- Poverty is increasing rapidly among Johnson County's young working-age adults. Three in five adults living in poverty are under age 35.
- One in four single parents (28 percent) with children under age 5 lives in poverty.
- Nearly half of low-to-middle income households used credit card debt in 2005 to cover basic living expenses including rent, groceries, utilities and car repairs.

WHY THIS STRATEGY?

Lower income families often pay more for essential household expenses than do families with higher incomes. People without banking accounts are particularly vulnerable to the high cost of the financial services provided by check cashers and payday lenders. New models are emerging that help lower-income households increase their buying power. Financial and other community leaders around the country are collaborating to identify those new products that remove barriers and create opportunities for these consumers to successfully enter and participate in the financial mainstream.

WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Heads of lower-income households can be connected with financial services and gain financial literacy to build a more economically secure future and alleviate or prevent poverty. Lower-cost financial services, such as banking products that meet the needs of unbanked consumers, can be developed. UCS will convene community stakeholders to identify action models appropriate for Johnson County. For example, partnerships with nonprofit groups can be developed to identify those consumers ready to strengthen their financial management skills and work toward asset building opportunities — such as post-secondary education or homeownership — that help to shape a better financial future.

HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS?

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT INDICATOR:

- Financial institution leaders agree to explore models and implement new approaches and products for lower income households.

CONSUMER INDICATOR/S:

- Number of households that participate with new financial services and products.
- Number of participants that demonstrate new financial management skills.

“By empowering low income households with basic financial management skills, fewer money management mistakes are made and more money can be directed to personal savings and daily needs.”

Brad Stratton

Vice President, Merrill Lynch

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY TRUST FUND

GOAL:

Quality housing opportunities are available for low-to-moderate income workforce and special needs households.

WHY IS THIS GOAL A PRIORITY FOR ACTION?

- An increasing number of low-to-moderate income Johnson County workers and persons with special needs – both homeowners and renters – spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing, the national standard of affordability.
- Cost-burdened homeowners increased from one in six (18,800) in 2000, to more than one in five (31,600) in 2005. Similarly, cost-burdened renters increased from three in 10 (14,504), to two in five (22,154) in 2005.
- One in three housing units in Johnson County was built prior to 1970 – an age when rehabilitation needs can be expected to rise.
- Changing demographic trends place new demands on the housing market, such as growing numbers of seniors and single person households.

WHY THIS STRATEGY?

Across Johnson County, housing challenges are garnering attention in new ways – from addressing rehabilitation as a tool to prevent neighborhood decline to ensuring that affordable, appropriate housing options are available for today's workforce. In addition, efforts to address the growing number of seniors and persons with disabilities who live on fixed incomes are also gaining momentum. Homeownership opportunities are a challenge in new ways, such as for young people who want to live in the communities where they grew up.

Research shows that housing is more than just a roof overhead. A quality, income-appropriate place to live becomes the foundation for positive individual and family well-being. Documented outcomes include increased student achievement, lifelong independence, plus stability and safety among individuals and families.

WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Benefits accrue to those communities that proactively identify and implement strategies that address housing challenges. State and local governments across the United States create and use housing trust funds as a flexible, innovative way to address local housing challenges without federal mandates. Successful models from other communities, such as mixed income development or homeowner repair, could be advanced as part of this strategy.

A Johnson County housing trust fund could target resources to preserve, rehabilitate or create new workforce or special needs housing – especially for those with limited resources to keep a roof over their heads. Quite simply, a housing trust fund is a dedicated pool of public dollars that, typically through low-interest loans or grants, invests in a community's priority housing activities.

Johnson County Commission Chairman Annabeth Surbaugh has formed an Affordable Housing Task Force. This communitywide effort was convened to conduct a comprehensive review of current housing needs in Johnson County and to prepare a future action plan. UCS will work with this task force to advance the creation of a housing trust fund. Such a fund could become a positive, flexible tool that can leverage other public and private resources to address the present and future challenges relating to housing quality and opportunity in Johnson County.

HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS?

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT INDICATOR:

- Local policy makers actively consider and implement a housing opportunity trust fund.

CONSUMER INDICATOR:

- Number of special needs or lower-income workforce households that attain income appropriate, quality housing options through new housing activities.

“The affordable housing issue is not going away. A significant percentage of people working in Johnson County today earn incomes that are insufficient to pay the rent on an average two-bedroom apartment in this community, much less purchase a home.”

*Honorable Annabeth Surbaugh
Chair, Johnson County Board of County Commissioners*

QUALITY PRE-K FOR SCHOOL READINESS

GOAL:

Young children enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school.

WHY IS THIS GOAL A PRIORITY FOR ACTION?

- More than 35,000 children are under age five; 90 percent of core brain development occurs before age 5, making these years critical to get a good start in life.
- Nearly 3,000 or 40 percent of all poor children were age 5 and under in 2005 – a striking 182 percent increase over the number (1,039) found in 2000.
- One in 20 third graders received an academic warning of incomplete comprehension in reading testing in 2005-06. An additional one in 10 had reading scores that demonstrated only partial comprehension. Demonstrating that socio-economic status affects academic achievement, one in four (26.7 percent) economically disadvantaged third graders – defined as those that qualify for a free or reduced-cost school lunch – had reading scores in the range of incomplete or partial comprehension.

WHY THIS STRATEGY?

Across Kansas, an estimated one in three young children arrive at school without the basic skills they need to achieve academic success. As evidence that this gap is hard to close, national estimates indicate that 88 percent of the children who have trouble reading in the first grade still have problems reading in the fourth grade. In other words, children who start school behind typically stay behind. Access to quality early learning can help close this gap. Studies consistently show that young children with access to high-quality, pre-kindergarten programs enter kindergarten ready to learn.

WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Communities across the nation are starting to recognize that advancing high-quality, pre-kindergarten opportunities are the best way to strengthen K-12 public education. The link between educational success and pre-kindergarten participation is well-documented -- from less grade repetition and reduced need for special education to better results on standardized tests.

In Kansas, The Coalition for School Readiness is a new advocate voice for young children – championing the call for greater investment to expand quality pre-kindergarten programs and services. UCS will partner with the Coalition to advance excellence in pre-kindergarten efforts within this community. The result will be access to opportunities that prepare children for success in school and ultimately in life.

HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS?

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT INDICATOR:

- Number of community stakeholders engaged in advocacy and capacity building to strengthen quality pre-kindergarten opportunities in Johnson County.

CONSUMER INDICATOR:

- Increased number of at-risk children under age five that benefit from quality pre-kindergarten programs.

“...school readiness starts long before a child enters the classroom. Children who attend quality early childhood programs are far more likely to enter kindergarten ready to learn.”

*Dr. Marjorie Kaplan
Superintendent, Shawnee Mission
School District*

Economic Well-Being

NAVIGATING ACTION RECOMMENDATION

STRATEGIC FOCUS:

Invest in efforts that build economic self-reliance for families and individuals – especially families with young children and young adults – to meet their basic needs.

WHY WAS THIS STRATEGIC FOCUS CHOSEN?

- More than 26,700 residents fell below the official federal poverty level in 2005 – a rapid increase over the 15,323 persons in 2000. This represents 5.3 percent of the County's population, or about one in 20 people.
- Over 7,200 children under age 18 live in poverty, representing a 68 percent increase over 2000. About three in four poor children are under age 12 – years that the science of early child development tells us are critical for school and later life success.
- One in four single parents with children under age 5 lives in poverty.
- Three in five adults ages 18 to 64 living in poverty are under age 35.
- Poverty levels are set nationally by family size and adjusted annually for inflation. The 2007 poverty level for a family of four is \$20,650 annual income.

VISION: People are able to contribute to their fullest potential in creating a healthy, vibrant economy and community which, in turn, aids and protects vulnerable residents.

SOCIETY BENEFIT: A strong economy depends upon a community and business environment that encourages every resident to reach their full, productive potential– including participating in the workforce.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT: For individuals facing the inability to maintain life sustaining basic needs, human service programs provide help with food, clothing, utilities, shelter and other essentials. Self-reliance is promoted through job or skills training, employment, supportive services and permanent housing. Such assistance aids individuals to reach their fullest potential.

NAVIGATING - FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER ACTION

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION:

- **Develop more opportunities that connect economically vulnerable families to the community.** In particular, trained volunteer mentors could provide the emotional support to overcome the enormous stresses low-income families face to overcome present challenges and pursue future successes.

COLLABORATIONS OR OTHER ACTION PLANS IN PLACE:

- *Foundation on Aging – Community Preparedness for Aging:* An action plan for meeting the challenges of aging in metropolitan Kansas City, including specific recommendations to address the effect of the lack of appropriate transportation and housing options on senior well-being.
- *Johnson County Continuum of Care on Homelessness:* A collaboration of organizations and individuals committed to improving the response to poverty and homelessness in Johnson County.

“Most people are surprised to learn that poverty is growing faster in Johnson County than in neighboring counties.”

Corey Ziegler

Executive Director, Community
Foundation of Johnson County

- **POVERTY IS GROWING** rapidly across the lifespan.
- Many low-income **ADULTS WORK IN LOW-WAGE JOBS** with few benefits or skills to advance.
- Increasing numbers of **SENIORS NEED TO WORK PAST RETIREMENT AGE** – raising the need for addressing age bias in the workplace.
- More capacity is needed in programs that **HELP LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS SET GOALS AND PURSUE SELF-SUFFICIENCY**, such as case management or financial education.
- Youth lack access to **MONEY MANAGEMENT SKILLS** and other basic financial education.
- Low-income working households often do not use banks and too often **RELY ON PREDATORY LENDERS**.
- Very few households are able to **ACCESS ASSET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**, such as Individual Development Accounts (IDAs).
- Increased capacity of **SAFETY NET EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SERVICES** – such as food, rent and utility assistance – is needed to address the growing number of poverty-level households.
- **OFFENDERS FACE GREAT DIFFICULTY** in securing employment and housing when seeking to successfully re-enter community life.
- **LACK OF AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE** and/or health care coverage results in other economic emergencies.
- More **AFFORDABLE WORKFORCE HOUSING** (both homeownership and rental) is needed.
- Affordable, appropriate **HOUSING OPTIONS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS**, such as low-income seniors, persons with disabilities and homeless households.
- Unique housing challenges exist for **HOMELESS OR NEAR-HOMELESS SINGLES**, especially those with disability income.
- **HOUSING REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE** challenges exist for both low-income homeowners and multi-family rental units serving low-income populations.
- A shortage exists of **AFFORDABLE “STARTER HOME” OPPORTUNITIES** that traditionally helped households become homeowners for the first time.
- Low-income **SENIORS NEED HELP TO RETAIN EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOMES** due to issues – such as accessibility challenges, property taxes and major/minor home repair needs.
- **HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS ARE INCREASING** due the growing numbers of seniors and persons with disabilities.
- **CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY** is a challenge for low-income, working parents.
- **VOCATIONAL COACHING** options for individuals with disabilities are inadequate.
- **CULTURAL COMPETENCY** needs to be strengthened and growing diversity embraced in new ways, such as recognizing that translation is only one step to better serving non-English speakers.
- **LACK OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS** affects both low-income workers trying to get to work and a range of other vulnerable households seeking transportation to health and human service appointments.
- **LEVERAGE VOLUNTEER ASSETS** (skills, knowledge and time) of growing senior population to help address poverty and other key human service needs.

NAVIGATING ACTION RECOMMENDATION

STRATEGIC FOCUS:

Concentrate on physical and mental health services for underserved, vulnerable populations.

WHY WAS THIS STRATEGIC FOCUS CHOSEN?

- Approximately 35,000 residents (7.5 percent) face fear and uncertainty each day because they have no health insurance. Uninsured children account for 7,000 of the uninsured, or about one in 20 children (5.9 percent).
- Over 10,200 crisis calls were placed to the Johnson County Mental Health Center in 2006. National studies indicate that in any given year, five to seven percent of adults have a serious mental illness. Typically, three in five of those adults did not seek or receive treatment.
- One in seven youth (14 percent) and one in eight (12.5 percent) of adults self-reported regular tobacco use. Although on the decline over the past seven years, tobacco use remains the single greatest cause of preventable death and disease.
- More than one in six youth (17.5 percent) reported binge drinking in the 2005-06 school year. The highest rate (37.8 percent) is found among high school seniors. Binge drinking among youth is associated with permanent neurological damage and with alcohol dependence in adulthood.

VISION: People of all ages reach their maximum capacity for physical and mental well-being and lifelong independence.

SOCIETY BENEFIT: Individual and community health are inseparable. As a result, both individuals and the community must do their part to promote wellness and good health. A healthy community encourages personal responsibility for the choices that foster physical and emotional well-being.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT: Health and human services aid all residents on a range of issues, including maintaining wellness, health promotion, disease prevention, plus a full continuum of services that address illness. For residents with unique health challenges, such as physical or mental disabilities, health and human services provide the means for them to reach their highest potential of independence. Through a broad range of service options, health and human services help older adults remain active and independent and they also assist persons with substance abuse addictions.

NAVIGATING - FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER ACTION

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION:

- **Address workforce development to more effectively serve the needs of our rapidly growing senior population.** Plans and policies should be put into place now that recruit, retain and/or retrain professionals on the unique needs of seniors.
- **Expand efforts that address child and youth obesity.** Existing models, such as the Kid Power curriculum, should be expanded to all Johnson County schools so that children and youth gain the life-long health benefits and lower health costs of decreased rates of obesity.
- **Develop collaborative response to uninsured residents.** With multiple risk factors and a history of emergency room visits to improve health care delivery, reduce duplicative services and provide more cost-effective care.
- **Encourage neighbors to know each other.** Neighbors can watch out for and address the needs of vulnerable residents, particularly the growing number of seniors in our community.

COLLABORATIONS OR ACTION PLANS IN PLACE:

- *Foundation on Aging – Community Preparedness for Aging:* An action plan for meeting the challenges of aging in metropolitan Kansas City, including specific recommendations to support family or friend caregivers responsible for the care for an older adult. Transportation initiatives are also identified due to the effect of lack of transportation on the physical health, mental health and nutrition needs of seniors.
- *Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City:* A three-year, bi-state Nurse Shortage initiative focused on nurse shortage issues and solutions that specifically impact access to quality health care of indigent and underserved populations.
- *Johnson County Children's Coordination Council, a project of UCS:* A community collaboration of child-serving organizations with the goal of addressing cross-system issues for at-risk children and youth, including access to physical and mental health care.
- *Johnson County League of Women Voters:* A study performed by the League of Women Voters of Kansas looked at mental health care in Kansas to examine the multi-decade shift from state mental hospitals to community-based care. The group adopted a position on recommended improvements at their state convention in 2007. The position is endorsed by the Johnson County League of Women Voters.
- *Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) – Kansas City Metropolitan Health Access Project:* Study with a set of specific recommendations targeted to improving the effectiveness of the safety net system for the uninsured and indigent and increasing the number of residents with coverage.
- *REACH Healthcare Foundation – Oral Health Initiative:* Comprehensive initiative targeted to linking every child with a dental home.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS - KEY HUMAN SERVICE ISSUES

- Access to **AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE OPTIONS FOR THE UNINSURED** exceeds current capacity in the following areas: dental, mental, physical, substance abuse and victims of abuse. At-risk populations experience excessive delays in obtaining services.
- Uninsured and underinsured persons need **PRIMARY HEALTHCARE**, as well as specialty and hospital care, to pick up where services from free clinics stop.
- **CONTINUITY OF HEALTH CARE FOR THE UNINSURED** is a problem due to the lack of follow-up care.
- Families with children need **AFFORDABLE MEDICAL INSURANCE OPTIONS**, including outreach to ensure those eligible are connected to public insurance coverage, such as HealthWave.
- Prevention education and effective intervention on **CHILD AND YOUTH OBESITY** needs to be strengthened.
- Prevention and early intervention to **PROMOTE HEALTHY AGING** is an area to strengthen in response to seniors living longer, often with chronic conditions that require significant care and treatments.
- The supply of **AFFORDABLE, LONG-TERM CARE** options for seniors and persons with disabilities is limited – especially affordable assisted living options.
- More affordable, appropriate **HOUSING OPTIONS ARE NEEDED FOR LOW-INCOME SENIORS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.**
- More bilingual **EDUCATION ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES/COMPETENCY** for health professionals and providers to improve the quality of health care services.
- **INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH CARE CAPACITY** is needed to serve at-risk populations, such as adolescents and seniors. The relationship between primary care physicians and the mental health service network needs to be strengthened to better respond to mental health needs.
- **SERVICE COORDINATION FOR CONCURRENT DIAGNOSIS**, such as mental illness and developmental disabilities (MH/DD), needs to be strengthened.
- Outpatient and residential **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR ADOLESCENTS** are inadequate in supply.
- **PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY**, especially to serve low-income persons.
- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE** is an important health issue in Johnson County, especially its link to poverty and to co-occurrence with mental health needs.
- **WELLNESS AND PREVENTION ACTIVITIES** – including nutrition education, fitness and dental care – should be accessible to all residents, including subsidies or sliding fee scales to encourage participation by low-income persons.
- **HEALTH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES** need to be strengthened.
- Senior health issues include **PROVIDERS TRAINED TO SERVE THE AGING POPULATION.**
- **WELLNESS SERVICES FOR SENIORS** should be promoted as a tool to preserve independent living and postpone or prevent institutional care.
- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICE TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE INADEQUATE** for current demand, including available beds for in-patient substance abuse treatment.
- More early intervention services are needed at preschools for **YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS** to prevent or reduce special education services.
- More provider education on **CULTURAL COMPETENCY** to improve service delivery and quality.
- **LACK OF APPROPRIATE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS** impedes access to health services for some vulnerable populations, including across state lines.

“When people have unique health challenges, they are better able to reach their highest potential for independence when human services are readily available and easily accessible.”

Brenda Sharpe
President/CEO, Reach Healthcare Foundation

Lifelong Learning and Development

NAVIGATING ACTION RECOMMENDATION

STRATEGIC FOCUS:

Expand the community's capacity to provide quality early learning opportunities in the first five years of life.

WHY WAS THIS STRATEGIC FOCUS CHOSEN?

- Over 35,000 children are under age 5. Research shows that 90 percent of a child's brain development occurs before that time, yet kindergarten starts after age 5.
- Three in five children under age 6 (57 percent) live in households where all parents work.
- 3,350 public school students were enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in 2005-06—nearly triple the 1,241 ESL students found in 2000-01. Two in three ESL students (2,269) were elementary ages.
- One slot is available for every three young Johnson County children (ages 3 to 5) who are eligible for Head Start's comprehensive early learning program for low-income children. Statewide, more access exists with roughly two slots available for every three children eligible.

VISION: People of all ages achieve and maintain personal potential through life-long learning and development opportunities.

SOCIETY BENEFIT: Life-long learning across the lifespan is a key factor to ensure that a community's residents are able to lead positive, self-reliant lives. There is value to society in an educated population that is well prepared for work and participation in community life.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT: The health and human service system provides opportunities across the life-span that advance learning and development. This results in knowledge, marketable skills, self-esteem, personal dignity and lifelong independence. For families with children, multiple efforts contribute to lifelong learning and development such as quality early learning programs; family support activities; parenting information and resources; mentoring for children and youth; and quality youth development programs that are attractive to youth. For non-English speakers and persons with limited literacy or other workplace skills, human services offer the programs or make the connections that empower these persons to achieve educational goals. For older adults, human service activities keep seniors active and engaged in community life.

NAVIGATING - FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER ACTION

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION:

- **Strengthen skills and job training opportunities for low-income individuals**, including both unemployed, as well as low-wage incumbent workers. Successful models used in other communities encourage low-skilled adults to gain skills by pursuing a career path over a series of jobs within a particular employment sector.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT - KEY HUMAN SERVICE ISSUES

COLLABORATIONS OR ACTION PLANS IN PLACE:

- *Foundation on Aging – Community Preparedness for Aging:* An action plan for meeting the challenges of the aging in metropolitan Kansas City, including specific recommendations to encourage the ongoing spiritual, physical, emotional and mental development for older adults.

- Access to **ADULT EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING** needs to be strengthened – especially for young adults with earned income at or near the poverty level – to aid employability at higher, life-sustaining wages.
- **OLDER ADULTS NEED RETRAINING** as their skills become outdated, or when they stay in the workforce past their physical ability to continue in jobs.
- **NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS NEED GREATER ACCESS TO ADULT EDUCATION** programs, including language skills, literacy and basic life-skills.
- Greater access to and awareness of the importance of **HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS** are needed, including expansion of the Quality Rating System (QRS).
- Promote and **FUND SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT** programs to meet the need.
- More early intervention services are needed at preschools for **YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS** to prevent or reduce special education services.
- **PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SKILL-BUILDING** programs should be strengthened to promote effective parenting, improve early child development and prevent child abuse and neglect.
- Capacity of **PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR HIGH-RISK AND FIRST-TIME PARENTS**, as well as single parents, should be strengthened.
- More **OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAMS** (summer and after school) are needed that are affordable and accessible to low-income working parents.
- More **OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAMS ARE NEEDED THAT TARGET AT-RISK YOUTH**. Particular focus/capacity is needed for middle-school age programs.
- Engagement by **SENIORS IN LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** reduces isolation, stimulates the brain and contributes to positive senior health.

“ This community highly values education. We should extend that commitment to the early years, because children who attend high-quality early childhood programs are more likely to graduate from high school or even college. ”

Robert M. Clark

Ph.D., Vice Chancellor,

University of Kansas Edwards Campus

NAVIGATING ACTION RECOMMENDATION

STRATEGIC FOCUS:

Strengthen prevention and other human service responses as an effective means to protect personal and community safety.

WHY WAS THIS STRATEGIC FOCUS CHOSEN?

- Nearly 2,000 domestic violence cases were filed in District Court in 2006 – making up 35 percent of total crime case filings that year. The Victims Assistance Unit provided information to 930 victims; children were present at the time of abuse in three out of five of these cases.
- Child abuse and neglect case filings more than doubled over the last decade – growing from 143 cases filed by the District Attorney's office in 1996 to 405 cases filed in 2006. Since 2000, the rapid filing increase subsided with cases fluctuating between 321 and 405 in number.
- Adult abuse and neglect reports for adults over age 18 are on the rise – more than doubling from 434 reports in 2000 to 1,127 reports in 2006. Part of the increase can be attributed to a broader definition of abuse. While current information is not available on how many investigations confirmed abuse or neglect, roughly one in five reports resulted in substantiations in 2003.
- Overall juvenile offender crime is falling from 3,010 cases filed in 2000 to 2,574 in 2006. The rate of juvenile offender cases filed per 1,000 youth ages 10-17 fell from 55 cases per 1,000 youth in 2000 to 45 cases. As cause for concern, person crimes such as assault, as well as alcohol and other drug cases are not declining.

VISION: People are safe and feel secure both physically and emotionally in their families and in the community.

SOCIETY BENEFIT: Communities are safer when individuals and families can successfully face the challenges of everyday life. A safe, nurturing and supportive environment protects people from harm by family, friends, or others. Residents that feel safe in their neighborhoods are also more likely to be active and involved in the community.

INDIVIDUAL BENEFIT: Individual and community safety is strengthened by human service responses – from aiding crime prevention to providing the investigation and support that protects adults and children victimized by abuse and/or assault. Individuals and families benefit from efforts that extend a safe environment and/or offer other rehabilitating services during times of crisis for persons experiencing family violence. Human service interventions also play a role in reducing recidivism and returning offenders to productive community life.

NAVIGATING - FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER ACTION

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION:

- **Reduce substance use and abuse among teens and young adults** by increasing awareness among community stakeholders about the risks associated with alcohol and other substance use. Develop and implement policies that discourage substance abuse among young people.
- **Address child and youth mental health needs earlier to prevent negative consequences** such as the on-set of youth violence or later involvement in the juvenile justice or corrections systems.

- **Build greater community engagement on behalf of children** in the child welfare system to keep children in their home community.
- **Establish a family resource center to connect at-risk children**, youth and their families to effective early intervention services, such as intensive case management.

COLLABORATIONS OR ACTION PLANS IN PLACE:

- *Community Violence Action Council of Johnson County (COMVAC):* Community collaboration focused on safety issues, such as the safety of children, prevention of domestic violence and efforts to address elder abuse.
- *Johnson County Children's Coordination Council, a project of UCS:* A community collaboration of child-serving organizations with the goal of addressing cross-system issues for at-risk children and youth, including child welfare and juvenile justice issues.

“Family well-being encourages family stability and reduces the risk of violence in the home.”

Chief Judge Steven Tatum
10th Judicial District

SAFETY - KEY HUMAN SERVICE ISSUES

- **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE SYSTEM ISSUES AND GAPS** are affecting both court-involved offenders and victims in multiple ways.
- More **MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY** are being seen. Many parents of children with serious emotional disturbance (SED) are overwhelmed about how to help their children.
- **CULTURAL COMPETENCY IS A SAFETY ISSUE.** For example, recent immigrants from other cultures may not understand or accept Kansas law on family violence and child safety, or may fear contact with law enforcement due to immigration status.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on **PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT** and on strengthening prevention and early intervention programs for children and youth, especially early in young lives.
- No Child Left Behind Law has taken resources and **ATTENTION AWAY FROM ADDRESSING FAMILY CONFLICT OR YOUTH BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS** in the schools.
- Many parents are not involved in meaningful ways with their children. **PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORTS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED** to improve the response to at-risk youth.
- More affordable, family-oriented **PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LIFESTYLES** are needed, including more services that target the whole family in court-involved families.
- More positive **YOUTH SKILLS' BUILDING** is needed, especially during the hours of 3 to 8 p.m.
- More independent living skills, housing options and positive adult relationships are needed by **YOUTH AGING OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM.**
- **MORE FOSTER HOMES IN JOHNSON COUNTY ARE NEEDED**, especially those that accept older children.
- **COOPERATION ACROSS STATE LINES** should be improved in child abuse and neglect cases.
- Service intervention with **ABUSED AND NEGLECTED ADULTS**, including seniors and persons with disabilities, needs to be strengthened. As the number of older adults increases – especially those in institutional settings – the potential for senior abuse escalates.
- Efforts to **STABILIZE FINANCIALLY FRAGILE HOUSEHOLDS** – such as affordable housing, child care subsidies and affordable health insurance/health services – promote community safety.
- **HOUSING POLICY CAN PROACTIVELY ADDRESS POVERTY AND SAFETY ISSUES**, such as preventing the concentration of poverty or neighborhoods becoming blighted.
- **MORE CAPACITY IS NEEDED FOR SERVICES THAT HELP OFFENDERS** (both juvenile and adult) to successfully reintegrate into the community – services such as job skills and placement, affordable housing and substance abuse treatment.
- **PERMANENT AND EMERGENCY HOUSING OPTIONS** are needed for single individuals (both women and men), especially persons with disabilities.
- **CHILD AND YOUTH BULLYING** is an issue that is related to youth violence. More early, effective responses that identify and aid bullying victims are needed.
- **SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SLOTS ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY** (both inpatient and outpatient) with a typical wait time of two to four weeks to access.
- Substance abuse treatment needs a new emphasis on **PRE-TREATMENT, CASE MANAGEMENT AND AFTERCARE** to keep clients engaged and motivated to overcome addiction.
- Johnson County **YOUTH ARE FREQUENT USERS OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCES** at a higher rate than youth statewide. Parents too often enable negative behaviors by purchasing alcohol or hosting parties.
- **THE LACK OF TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS** make it difficult for court-involved youth or adults to get to court-ordered services. The lack of public transportation options after 5 p.m. is particularly challenging.

Human Service Delivery: Cross-System Issues

Building and sustaining the human service delivery system is critical to addressing current and emerging human needs. The human service delivery system is the collection of programs and activities designed to protect, promote and/or restore the well-being of an individual or family. Human services are provided by government agencies as well as nonprofit, for-profit and the voluntary sector, including faith-based organizations.

The cross-system action recommendations identified below were developed by a small group of human service professionals convened by UCS to discuss strategies that could address common challenges. The Leadership Committee also reviewed, endorsed and added their input.

RESPOND TO CHANGING CULTURAL DYNAMICS:

GOAL: Human service organizations embrace and develop approaches to cultural competence.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY FOR ACTION?

Johnson County has traditionally been a predominantly white community. Although people of color and multiple ethnic backgrounds have always lived here, they often seemed invisible because their numbers were small. However, the cultural landscape of the county is in the process of substantial change. Today, one in eight residents is nonwhite, as compared to one in 20 in 1990. There is mounting pressure for community organizations to develop new approaches to cultural competence to ensure effective delivery of human services.

WHAT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED?

From an organizational point of view, cultural competence means that an agency is able to respond sensitively and effectively to people whose cultural background and/or language is different from the dominant culture. By embracing cultural competency, human service effectiveness and positive outcomes for non-majority individuals and families with human needs would be enhanced. Positive actions include:

- examining diversity within organizations by looking at the diversity of leadership and staffing;
- using employment practices, personnel policies and procedures that encourage and support staff diversity;

- making services accessible through bi-lingual employees or interpreters;
- developing, supporting and adapting services to meet culturally unique needs of the populations being served; and
- improving outreach to new immigrant residents.

HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS?

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT INDICATORS:

- Number of organizations that adopt new policies and/or practices that support cultural competency.
- Number of organizations that measure cultural competency through client satisfaction surveys and use results to improve practices.

MAKE SERVICES ACCESSIBLE

GOAL: Human service providers improve service accessibility by reducing barriers to service.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY FOR ACTION?

Often, people do not get the help they need because of barriers to accessing services, or because they do not know where to turn. Barriers range from cost and office hours, to location. To effectively reach those who need help, service providers must consider consumers' ability to access and use the services as they design human service delivery strategies. Failure to do so can result in delays in seeking assistance, which may cause worsened conditions that require more intensive and expensive intervention or treatment.

WHAT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED?

Successfully connecting individuals and families to services when needed can lead to positive, short-term outcomes. In the long-term, this can reduce costs for the human service and public sectors. Positive actions that impact service accessibility includes:

- making services available during times of day that fit lifestyles of those who need them; using technology to connect consumers to services/benefits;
- offering services where people go in the course of everyday life;

- locating programs at sites that are close to the target population, can be accessed by public transportation and are free from physical barriers;
- placing complimentary services at the same location;
- basing fees for service on ability to pay; and
- enhancing information and referral networks, such as United Way 2-1-1.

HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS?

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT INDICATORS:

- Number of organizations that adopt new policies and/or practices that reduce or eliminate barriers to services.
- Number of organizations that measure client satisfaction with accessibility and use results to improve access.

HUMAN SERVICE STORYTELLING

GOAL: Human service providers raise awareness of human service needs by describing program successes.

WHY IS THIS A PRIORITY FOR ACTION?

An effective human service delivery system requires a public who understands the human needs that touch significant numbers of Johnson County residents and, in turn, actively supports efforts to adequately fund and improve the system. While facts will always be essential to support the need, telling stories about how lives are improved by the human service response is an effective way to educate and persuade people to act. Success stories that link the benefits of human services to overall quality of life can promote public and private investment of human and financial resources.

WHAT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED?

With a clearer understanding of current human service issues and effective intervention, elected officials and other decision-makers could make wise choices about how to use public funds. A better informed general public could play a more active role in supporting human services, such as holding elected officials accountable for policy choices, increasing volunteerism, participating on nonprofit and public boards/commissions and making charitable donations.

HOW TO MEASURE RESULTS?

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT INDICATOR:

- Number of organizations with public awareness presentations that include client success stories.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION:

RESPOND TO GROWING POVERTY:

Rapid growth in the number of persons living in poverty in Johnson County calls for new, cross-sector attention to this issue. Providers must develop an understanding of the dynamics of poverty and the interconnection between multiple service needs. To have long-term impact, resources must be strategically aligned with proven-effective strategies that help improve economic stability and ensure that poor children overcome poverty's barriers to school and life success.

FOCUS ON PREVENTION:

An effective human service delivery system should provide an adequate range of services to meet residents' needs, especially for those most vulnerable. An emphasis should be placed on preventing problems before they escalate and require more intensive and expensive intervention or treatment.

ADDRESS HUMAN SERVICE STAFFING ISSUES:

Human service organizations face serious staffing issues that can lead to high turnover, such as under-trained personnel and gaps in necessary expertise. Low pay scales, on-the-job safety concerns, changing client demographics and language barriers make it difficult to recruit and retain frontline, as well as management, personnel. Agencies would benefit from cooperative approaches to a range of issues including training, i.e., building practices that promote safety, wage enhancement and employee benefits. Outreach is needed to attract more students to human service professions. In particular, new and/or bi-lingual residents should be encouraged to consider careers in human services.

EXPLORE TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES:

Transportation is repeatedly identified as a barrier to human well-being in Johnson County, both in terms of accessing services and getting to-and-from employment. In addition to improved public transportation, other transportation strategies should be explored or expanded, such as expanded taxi service, volunteer and /or employer programs, or car purchasing strategies such as low-cost car loans.

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ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED

American Stroke Foundation	Johnson County Park and Recreation
Cancer Action	Kansas Children's Service League - Healthy Families
CASA of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties	Kansas Dept. of Social & Rehabilitation Services
Catholic Community Services	KVC Behavioral HealthCare
Children's Mercy Hospital - Social Work Department	League of Women Voters
City of Lenexa	Marillac
City of Olathe	MarketPlan
City of Overland Park	Maternal and Child Health Coalition of GKC, Inc.
Community Foundation of Johnson County	Medical Society of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties
Compass Financial Resources, LLP	Mid-America Regional Council
Congressman Dennis Moore's Office	Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership
County Economic Research Institute	Midwest Hospitality, P.A.
Court Services 10th Judicial District	Mr. Goodcents Foundation for Senior Citizen Independence
De Soto Parents as Teachers	Olathe School District
El Centro, Inc.	Olathe Youth Services
Embarq	Overland Park Chamber of Commerce
Foundation on Aging	Overland Park Planning Department
Friends of Johnson County Nursing Center & GERTI, Inc.	Oxford House
GKC American Red Cross	Partnership for Children
Grace United Methodist Church	REACH Healthcare Foundation
Harvesters	SAFEHOME, Inc.
Head Start of Shawnee Mission, Inc.	Saint Luke's South
Health Partnership Clinic of Johnson County	Shawnee Mission School District
Heart of America United Way	Spofford
Hispanic Economic Development Corporation	Sunflower House
Intensive Family Counseling	The Family Conservancy
Interfaith Hospitality Network	The Salvation Army
Jewish Community Relations Bureau	TLC for Children and Families
Jewish Heritage Foundation of Greater Kansas City	UMB Bank
Johnson County Administration	United Way of Johnson County
Johnson County Area Agency on Aging	United Way of Wyandotte County
Johnson County Board of County Commissioners	University of Kansas Edwards Campus
Johnson County Community College	Village Presbyterian Church
Johnson County Community Development	Volunteer Center of Johnson County
Johnson County Department of Corrections	
Johnson County Developmental Supports	
Johnson County Health Department	
Johnson County Housing Coalition	
Johnson County Human Services & Aging	
Johnson County Library	
Johnson County Mental Health Center	

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About United Community Services

United Community Services is a unique resource for leadership in community-based planning and mobilization of resources to ensure that the human service system meets the needs of residents in Johnson County, Kansas.

UCS acts as a catalyst for positive community change by: providing information on the current and emerging needs in our community; bringing diverse organizations and interests together to improve the human service response; and overseeing grant making for United Way of Johnson County and local governments.

UCS provides leadership for community action in three areas: families and children, poverty and homelessness and substance abuse. Key partners include human service providers, policymakers, funders and community leaders.

Founded in 1967, UCS is a nonprofit organization. Primary funders are United Way, Johnson County Government, municipal governments, foundations and individuals. Contributions are tax-deductible.



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