



Winchester Community-Wide Needs Assessment

Chapter 2: Human Service Provider Interviews

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Health Resources in Action
Advancing Public Health and Medical Research

Background and Purpose

In the Fall of 2017, the Town of Winchester embarked on a Community-Wide Needs Assessment. The goal was to identify and prioritize the concerns of Winchester residents, particularly around social services, well-being, and civic engagement. This chapter (i.e. the Human Service Provider Interviews) is one of four chapters that make up the full Community Needs Assessment Report.

Seven interviews were conducted in May 2018 with a total of 15 interviewees. Sectors represented by interviewees included older adult services, affordable housing, schools, and the Chinese community. An environmental scan was also conducted during the interview process, looking at human services available to Winchester residents. The environmental scan will inform the development of a Winchester Resource Directory for residents.



Interview Findings

Four key themes emerged across interviews;

1. Behavioral health is a growing concern for Winchester residents, especially for youth and older adults.
2. Winchester's increasing racial and ethnic diversity is a strength but more needs to be done to support new immigrants and their families.
3. The cost of living in Winchester is rising and the supply of affordable housing is not meeting the demand.
4. Resources and services are available but more needs to be done to connect residents to them.



Theme 1: Behavioral health is a growing concern, especially for youth and older adults.

Interviewees perceived that there is an increasing demand for mental health services for youth and teens in Winchester.

- *“The youth mental health crisis is the single largest thing that I’ve ever seen. It doesn’t matter what other issues come, that is the largest on my table.”*
- *“Every year we add more behavioral health supports, but many of our families need more therapeutic services which our schools can’t really provide.”*



Theme 1: Behavioral health is a growing concern, especially for youth and older adults.

Interviewees also shared concerns about older adults' mental health, particularly related to issues of isolation and hoarding.

- *“The biggest issues with seniors is the transportation, mental health, and hoarding and we don’t have the resources to address them.”*
- *“Isolation – that can cause a lot of problems for us because they don’t reach out until the situation has spiraled.”*
- *“I think [mental health] is one of the biggest concerns for our program. Starting with elementary school right through the aging population. In the aging population, the recurring theme is depression.”*



Theme 2: Winchester's diversity is a strength but more needs to be done to support new immigrants and their families.

Interviewees shared that Winchester's growing racial and ethnic diversity is one of the community's strengths but perceived a need for more intention inclusion of immigrants and their families.

- *“A population of grandparents have come here with their adult children and they don't speak English...How can we get those grandparents to be more involved in town? [The Jenks Center] wants to bring in the Chinese grandparents but they're not going to come if there's not any Chinese staff.”*
- *“I think in general we don't have a way to bring together the Asian-American community and ask them what they need.”*



Theme 2: Winchester's diversity is a strength but more needs to be done to support new immigrants and their families.

Interviewees across sectors identified the need for a town translation service, so that resources could be accessible to all residents.

- *“It’s really important that we have resources translated but we really don’t have the budget for it. I think the town needs to offer more translation services.”*
- *“I think we need more people to help with the translation so that everything is accessible.”*
- *“We have a lot of people coming in to town that are different nationalities and it becomes a communication problem for all our services and getting things translated is [a challenge].”*



Theme 3: The cost of living is rising and the supply of affordable housing is not meeting the demand.

Interviewees shared that the cost of living, particularly housing costs, was increasing and that availability of affordable housing does not meet the demand.

- *“We want all of our teachers or fire fighters to be able to afford to live in town. So they’re not just employees but they’re community members. We want them to be a part of the community that they work in but it’s just not affordable.”*
- *“The waiting list [for affordable housing] for families – if you’re a Winchester resident, it’s 10 years. If you’re not, it’s forever.”*
- *“Supply [of affordable housing] is the lowest percentage demanded by the state. [Winchester] is next to the bottom in the state in terms of low-income housing.”*



Theme 3: The cost of living is rising and the supply of affordable housing is not meeting the demand.

Interviewees expressed specific concerns about older adults struggling to keep up with the cost of living

- *“People are living in these big beautiful houses by themselves and they can’t afford to live.”*
- *“We see some seniors who are in very prestigious homes who can’t afford to heat them or they’re on a very strict budget and that’s where we see a lot of the stigma.”*
- *“I’d like to see people stay longer...People get really high mortgages and do whatever they can to stay in the school system but as soon as they’re done, they’re out.”*
- *“I worry that in these big houses all over town there are people who are really hurting and we don’t see them. For people who use the Jenks Center, you’re connected...but if you’re not then you’re alone and potentially struggling and no one sees you.”*



Theme 4: Resources and services are available but more needs to be done to connect residents to them

Several interviewees identified the need for a town social worker to connect resident to services

- *“I think it would be great to have a social worker who could provide that bridge between the town, home, and school.”*
- *“We could use a town social worker for all age groups. We shouldn’t wait until things escalate.”*

Transportation to social services outside of Winchester is a barrier for older adults and low-income families

- *“[There isn’t] transportation to and from the food pantry so if you’re in Winchester and are trying to get to Woburn – there are public buses but then you’re lugging back 5 or 6 bags of groceries.”*
- *“I don’t want people who need [Jenks’ Center] service not to be able to get it. I think if we had a shuttle we could get so many people to come in.”*



Theme 4: Resources and services are available but more needs to be done to connect residents to them

Interviewees perceived that there could be improved communication about existing resources

- *“Communication of what resources are [in Winchester] needs to be done in every direction four times. Having it in multiple places, multiple times, including with all the churches. I think what you’re hearing from us is that there’s a need for communication so that people who are identified as points of resource in the community have what they need when people come to them.”*
- *“When I’m out in the community, talking to people who could benefit from our programs, they usually don’t know about them.”*
- *“I would even say that of the things I spend the most of my time on...people don’t know the depth and breadth of what we offer.”*
- *“The understanding of resources and the sharing of resources has been harder to come by.”*



Environmental Scan

A scan of health and social services available to residents in Winchester and surrounding communities found the highest number of services for older adults, followed services for children and families. The lowest number of services were identified for limited English proficiency and housing and financial assistance.

