

**Human Services Needs Assessment  
Survey Results – 2016**

**Q. 1 - What are the greatest human services needs facing Palo Alto residents? Of these human needs, which five would you say are most important?**

Overall top 5 identified needs (as identified by service providers)

- Affordable housing
- Emergency financial assistance
- Affordable medical and dental care
- Disability Services
- Behavioral Health (for mental illness and substance use disorders)

**Q. 2 - What are the top three services that clients who are served by your agency need?**

*Top 3 (multiple responses:)*

- Affordable housing
- Behavioral Health (mental health, substance abuse)
- Employment /Case Management - tied

Top Needs - Single responses:

- Transportation
  - City shuttle service in South Palo Alto
- Elder issues
  - Legal assistance
  - Elder abuse
  - In home services
- Medical
  - Dental
  - Physical
  - Mental & behavioral health
- Homeless assistance
  - Day services
  - Respite care (after discharged from hospital)

- Children & Youth
  - Affordable childcare
  - High quality early learning experiences for children
  - Quality & affordable after school care
  - Early education teachers who can support quality care
  - After-school academic and mentorship support
  - Teen services
    - Mental health
    - Education services
- Information & Referral
  - General
  - Landlord Tenant issues
- Landlord Tenant
  - Mediation
  - Fair Housing
- Services for the disabled
  - Day support services
  - Afterschool school services
  - Respite
  - Therapy
- Parenting
  - Parent education & support
  - Returning to work services
  - Culturally sensitive adult education geared towards non-English speaking parents of school-aged children (and child care during meetings)
- Financial Assistance
- Help navigating programs & services
- Domestic violence resources
- Food assistance
- Affordable handyman/house cleaning services

**Q. 3 - Do you see any gaps in service that should be addressed?**

*Top 3 (multiple responses:)*

- Affordable housing
- Lack of funding to provide staffing to meet service need
- Affordable child care

Service Gaps - Single Responses:

- Child Care
  - Demand exceeds supply
  - Lack of Early Education teachers
  - More afterschool programming

- Health Care
  - Medical diagnostic/therapeutic care
  - Specialty medical care
  - Doctors willing to service Medi-Cal patients
- Transportation
  - Lack of public transportation options in South Palo Alto. Almost no shuttle service west of Middlefield or Alma in South Palo Alto
- Culturally appropriate programs
  - Not enough Chinese speakers in the human services sector
  - Cultural tailored services focused on diverse community (ethnic/race, gender, sexuality, faith)
- Seniors
  - Additional and affordable senior activities
  - Affordable Housing
  - Mental health service for older adults
- Agency staffing needs
  - Gap between employment needs and employers to hire
- Mental Health Care
  - Accessible, affordable and specialized mental health for children, teens and families
  - Case workers who follow up with their clients
- Financial Assistance
  - Safety net for middle income residents
  - Rental Assistance Program without a one-time benefit rule and includes application fees, deposits and moving costs.
  - A local community services agency
  - Tenant Relocation Ordinance
- Homelessness Assistance
  - Tenants Relocation Allowance Ordinance
  - Safe Parking program (vehicle dwellers)
  - Transitional shelter
- Support for low income students and their families
  - Childcare, tutoring, adult ed for parents, social-emotional support for middle school students
- Lack of help in navigating the system and/or lack of knowledge of how to access the services they need

**Q. 4 - What do you think are the causes of these gaps?**

*Top 3 (multiple responses:)*

- Cost of living
- Lack of Affordable Housing/Cost of Rent
- Lack of sufficient funding to operate program /Stigma - tied

## Gaps - Single Responses:

- Seniors
  - Senior funding has been de-prioritized at the same time as the senior population is increasing. Funding has not kept up with growth of population.
  - Not addressing senior needs thoroughly
  - Isolation
- Funding
  - Not a priority; limited resources/expertise
  - Most social service programs are funded by municipal/county/federal grants that set income limits too low or have other restrictive terms that do not match the needs of the community. Even mission statement/by laws and criterion of most nonprofits limit the scope of their programs and services.
  - Inadequate funding of program for the less advantaged and the disadvantaged due to a tax structure that favors the wealthy.
- Communication/Coordination
  - Lack of communication between agencies and organization
  - Challenges of coordination and collaboration between nonprofit, government, and community-based providers
- Lack of affordable child care for service workers
- Transportation
- Geography - Santa Clara County centralizes their services at Valley Medical Center and does not reach out to North County
- Lack of permanent space large enough for programs, staff, volunteer program
- Inadequate reimbursement for Medi-Cal physician services
- An overly complicated and broad mental health system of care that is not working well
- Lack of political will, open space, and finances
- Lack of clear understanding of the needs
- Affordable housing for teachers only
- Cost of services

## **Q. 5 - What, if any, are the barriers that your clients face in utilizing the services that are already available?**

Top 3:

- Cost
- Transportation/Stigma - tied

## **Q. 6 - Have you noticed any trends that may impact your agency or the clients that you serve?**

Top 3 (multiple responses:)

- Housing Cost
- Cost of Living - clients
- Cost of living - nonprofit employees – not able to live in the area or good employees leave to take jobs with for profits who pay more

## Trends – Single responses:

- Seniors
  - Seniors are the fastest growing segment of our population, yet the needs of seniors have been de-prioritized by many public and private funders resulting in stagnant or reduced funding for senior services countywide.
  - Clients living on limited fixed incomes with very limited options given the current cost of living. They are highly vulnerable and many are one crisis away from disaster if their public benefits are lost or reduced, if they are facing eviction or their affordable housing is in jeopardy, or if they are victims of elder abuse in particular by someone living in their home. They cannot afford a private attorney, so we expect to continue to experience a demand for free legal assistance to address such safety net matters.
  - Increased longevity and aging of the population requiring more care needs to be addressed; families with insufficient funds
- Housing
  - 6<sup>th</sup> year of escalating rent, no cause notices to vacate, cost of relocation every 12 months. – Repeated financial crisis
  - Reluctance of individuals to bring up “issues” with landlord as not to “rock the boat”
- Costs/staffing
  - Costs must continue to increase in order to provide quality services. This continues to exacerbate the problem of affordability, however we cannot recruit and retain qualified staff or provide low income options without raising fees unless we have increased financial support for the city, state or federal government as well as private entities who want to improve community services.
  - High costs makes it difficult to keep employees which results in cutting of services due to low staffing
  - Job market is better; agencies having a hard time recruiting qualified candidates
  - A lack of clientele's either ability and/or willingness to pay for services
- Behavioral Health
  - Changes in health coverage for behavioral health issues
  - Hard to get ahold of caseworkers
  - Anxiety & depression
- Funding
  - Lack of funding
  - Lack of consistent funding from state.
  - Costs must continue to increase in order to provide quality services. This continues to exacerbate the problem of affordability; however we cannot recruit and retain qualified staff or provide low income options without raising fees unless we have increased financial support from the city, state or federal government as well as private entities who want to improve community services.

- Decreasing level of individual philanthropic giving by community members to organizations that directly serve Palo Alto residents. Resident donors prefer to donate globally or nationally with perceived broader reach as well as increased visibility/recognition
- Increasing Diversity – Cultural & Language
  - A large influx of Asian population using services, primarily Chinese
- Transportation
  - No easy transportation access
  - No “on demand” service for transportation such as available in Menlo Park with two kinds of shuttles that come to home or very frequent stops. Traffic makes our clients late to clinic appointments all the time.
- Increase need for their services based on success of quality service model
- Agency seeing increased number of volunteers at high school and college level who are volunteering to tutor middle school youth
- Families living apart from each other; not as much local family help available
- The community support for ongoing day services to the homeless has been declining

**Q. 7 - Is there anything else that you would like to add about human service needs in Palo Alto?**

- Avenidas is the designated focal point for Palo Alto where essential senior services that are mandated by the Older Americans Act are offered, including La Comida and SALA’s services. This a best practice for service delivery because it reduces transportation barriers and offers services in a trusted, safe, and accessible location thereby also reducing the stigma of seeking services, especially for first time users. We thank the City of Palo Alto for recognizing this service delivery model and for supporting Avenidas and all of the services offered there.
- Teen wellness programs and activities should also be a continued focus. I listed case management services in the top 5 because if we can get people in need connected to the right services, it will tick so many of the other boxes. We need to make it as easy as possible for people to find and get connected to the services they need.
- Respite care when being discharged from a facility. You have a place to go instead of the streets (recovery.)
- Collaboration with the cornerstone organizations such as Stanford and Palo Alto Medical Foundation
- Palo Alto Mediation Program is a stellar example of services you provide and I am told over and over how glad people are that you do
- Hard to manage on fixed income
- Wider variety of senior activities
- More counseling needed
- We need affordable housing and child care
- Thank you for continued investment in this important work.
- Perception that certain agencies are “handling” certain issues. No one organization can adequately provide services without gaps.
- Having health coverage does not mean that one can easily use the coverage for mental health services locally. A high percentage of private practice therapists do

not accept insurance and Kaiser Permanente offers primarily group services for its members. Nonprofit providers provide a safety net, but the rates healthcare companies pay are less than the actual cost to deliver the service, so these organizations need support to continue to offer sliding fee scale services and to accept insurance.

**Q. 8 - FOR CURRENT HSRAP GRANTEEES: Are there any changes to the HSRAP process that you would like to see?**

*HSRAP*

- Thank you for enabling us to submit our proposal by email during the last process. While we understand that the process is handled through the Purchasing/Contract Administration, is there a possibility of streamlining of the application, such as a reduction of the number of supporting documents?
- Suggestion that the City of Palo Alto sponsor a convening of funding recipients to share news of their services so they can cross-refer and collaborate
- More exposure of committee and city council to mission and accomplishments of various groups applying-everyone should understand deeply what each agency allotted funding is doing for folks in the community
- Put us on the City's website, along with the other HSRAP recipients and solicit for volunteers and/or support from community members, as appropriate. It feels like there is some well of untapped volunteer/support reserve that could be found with multiple outreach efforts, and the City might be able to help.

*CDBG*

- HUD criteria is very onerous and makes CDBG funding unattractive in spite of need.