

Seniors

Focus Group Discussion Notes

March 30, 2009

The United Way of Monmouth County (UWMC) Seniors Focus Group Discussion was held on March 30, 2009 from 9:30 AM to 11:30 AM at the New Jersey Natural Gas Building, Conference Rooms C, D & E, 1415 Wyckoff Road, Wall, New Jersey.

Facilitator

Gary Engelstad, Director of Resident Life, Seabrook Village
Member, UWMC Health Impact Subcommittee

Participants

Betty Branch, Resident Seabrook Village
Carol Cohen, American Red Cross
Laurie Duhovny, Monmouth County Human Services Advisory Council
Jane Finton, Resident Seabrook Village
Rose Gerdes, Community Outreach Group
Joanne Glassoff, Director of Senior Nutrition / Ruth Hyman JCC of Greater Monmouth County
Tim Hearne, United Way of Monmouth County
Beth Maguire, Pleasant Valley Adult Day Care
Maureen Mulligan, Coastal Habitat for Humanity
Barbara Rutan, Monmouth County Division of Aging / Disabilities and Veterans' Interment
Jeff Schwartz, Monmouth County Human Services Advisory Council
Marge Wagenwood, Calico Cat Cupboard / Community Outreach Group, Inc.
Samantha White, Family & Children's Services

UWMC Staff

Kathy Bibby, Administrative Assistant
Christine Jagerburger, Director of Community Impact

Overview/Background

UWMC is hosting seven facilitated focus group discussions in support of our Community Impact Transformation process. The Seniors focus group is the fifth in the series. This focus group specifically examines:

- Data from the Population section of the Social and Demographic Report
- Responses to the Community Leaders Survey question concerning Seniors, Barriers to Service and Additional Information

Please refer to the attached PowerPoint presentation for an overview of Community Impact and for the Income focus group's agenda & outline.

Discussion Topics

- What are the most critical issues facing seniors
- What are the barriers to accessing services
- What are the "best practices" to address those issues

Attendees discussed these topics in the context of their personal, community and professional experiences and perspectives.

Personal Topics

- Social opportunities
 - Impact of isolation
- Affordability
 - Cost of taxes
 - Cost of living in home community
 - Cost of day to day expenses
- Transportation
 - For all activities-shopping, recreation, medical appointments
- Desire to remain independent in home
 - Need in-home supportive services that are affordable and reliable
- Adult day care
 - Benefits for both caregiver and participants
 - Need to offer sliding scale payment options
- Assisted Living
 - Issues of cost/affordability
 - Medicare issues
- Impact of current financial crisis
 - People using their retirement/savings for current needs
- Hospitalization
 - Need advocacy for patients during to stay
 - Usually family members/caregivers

Community Topics

- Recreation/socialization
 - Need to expand access to senior centers/activities throughout county
 - Level of activities/opportunities not consistent throughout county
 - Some towns do not have senior programs, others have very active programs
 - Need to provide services to more rural areas where there is no center of town
 - Need to connect with in-home services
 - Lack of people to administer programs
 - Need to work with the religious/faith-based communities to provide support/opportunities
 - Need leadership development training for retirees and volunteers to manage programs
 - Example-Middletown/Holmdel senior group disbanded due to lack of staff to manage the program
- Volunteer/community opportunities
 - Need to expand opportunities
 - Need diverse opportunities,
 - i.e. Skill-based opportunities; recreational opportunities
 - Desire to use leadership skills/employment experience in retirement
 - Lack of outreach to recruit seniors to volunteer
 - Need coordination to match opportunity/ position with volunteers
 - Increased need for volunteer resources for nonprofit agencies
 - Reduction of staff; need volunteers to provide services
 - Reduction of volunteer managers; not able to provide support to volunteers
- Impact of current financial crisis
 - More people choosing not to retire
 - Seniors going back to work to supplement income

- Returning to work for health benefits
- Reassurance calling to home bound persons
- Transportation
- Differences within senior population
 - Seniors are not a homogenous group; very diverse
 - Social isolation for younger seniors within senior communities/ housing developments as population ages/grows
 - Need to be engage differently
- Funding issues for senior programs
 - Meals on Wheels-additional funding will be available through American Recovery & Reinvestment Act funding (stimulus)
 - Overall state funding at risk due to budget issues

Professional Topics

- “Agism” among seniors
- Healthcare
 - High costs of long term care expenses
 - Pension/health insurance/retirement benefits tied to companies
 - Impacted by current financial crisis
 - Medicaid not able to support aging baby boomers long-term
 - Need emphasis on preventative healthcare
 - Funding for wellness programs
 - Keep people healthier longer
 - To support caregivers (approximately 23 million in US)
- Mental Health
 - Not addressing psychiatric issues
 - Lack of understanding between behavioral disorders and dementia/Alzheimer’s Disease
 - Lack of awareness for Alzheimer’s Disease
- Lack of information on available resources
 - For seniors
 - For professionals
 - Need to provide information on resources at community facilities, fairs, etc.
- Need for advocates
 - To access services/information
 - Seniors fearful of scams/misinformation
 - Need to establish trust
- Retirement planning
 - Not just for financial concerns, but all future needs
 - Need to plan before retirement
- Adult day care
 - Cost/affordability
 - Lack of coordinated transportation
- Growth in related industries/fields
 - Home Health Aides
 - Influx of people looking for employment
 - Need transportation for aides to services
 - Shortage of nurses to teach/train
 - Hospice
 - Growing field
- Support for caregivers
 - Many families taken on role of caregiver for aging parents, but not prepared

- Low-income seniors
 - Support to meet basic needs-food, housing, utilities
 - Impact of grandparents raising their own grandchildren
- Lack of access-technological divide
 - As technology changes, need training to utilize new advances
 - Affordability/cost of purchasing a computer
- Housing
 - Affordable housing stigma
 - Towns may look to build affordable senior housing instead of affordable individual/family housing to meet COA requirements

Best Practices

- Seabrook Village Intermissions program
 - A community-based functional activity program designed to provide the needed structure and stimulation for residents who suffer from memory loss, Alzheimer's disease, or other forms of dementia.
 - Caregivers also benefit in several ways, including knowing that their loved one is in a safe, structured environment; having some alone time; and seeing their loved one in an environment where they are socializing and engaging in meaningful, productive activities.
- Reassurance calling-Wall Township program
 - Cooperative arrangement between Wall police and senior center
- Volunteer opportunities
 - Family & Children's Services
 - Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) program
 - For 55 plus population
 - Over 600 active volunteers in Monmouth County
 - Kids Corps
 - Intergenerational programs
 - www.fcsmonmouth.org
 - UWMC Volunteer Center
 - Connects volunteers with opportunities
 - Go to www.uwmonmouth.org and click on Volunteer
- The SCAN Learning Center
 - The SCAN Learning Center is NJ's premier provider of continuing education for adults age 50+.
 - Courses include: Art * Computer * Fitness * Health * Languages * History * Music * Crafts * TV Production * Finance * and much more.
 - www.scannj.com