



Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

December 2017

Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

Key Area of Focus: Improve Access to Economic Services and Job Training

What the problem/issue is and why

While the unemployment rate has decreased, our hard-to-serve customers are continuing to have challenges in obtaining employment.

- Lack of relative skills,
- Lack of advanced education,
- Former offenders,
- Limited transportation options
 - living in rural area
 - living and working in two different region/zones/areas
- Childcare and financial responsibilities impact opportunities of customers to improve skills and education.

What we know about the cause of the issue

- Some Human Services clients cannot address their barriers to achieve optimal outcomes that lead to economic self-sufficiency.
- As an agency, we do not have the resources to provide the intensive one-on-one case management for the most vulnerable of our population.
- Often multiple resources (e.g., substance use and domestic violence counseling) must be accessed either simultaneously or sequentially to help address barriers.

Why it's important to address the issue

To achieve our community focused goals of moving individuals towards and into economic self-sufficiency we must work to help our clients navigate the available resources

Possible solutions for addressing the issue

- Develop capacity to assist and support our most vulnerable individuals - ensure they don't "fall between the cracks" by partnering with them to navigate the necessary resources to obtain their employment and training goals.
- Identify any gaps in available services and resources.
- Develop a strategy to address the gaps.

What elected officials might be able to do to address the issue

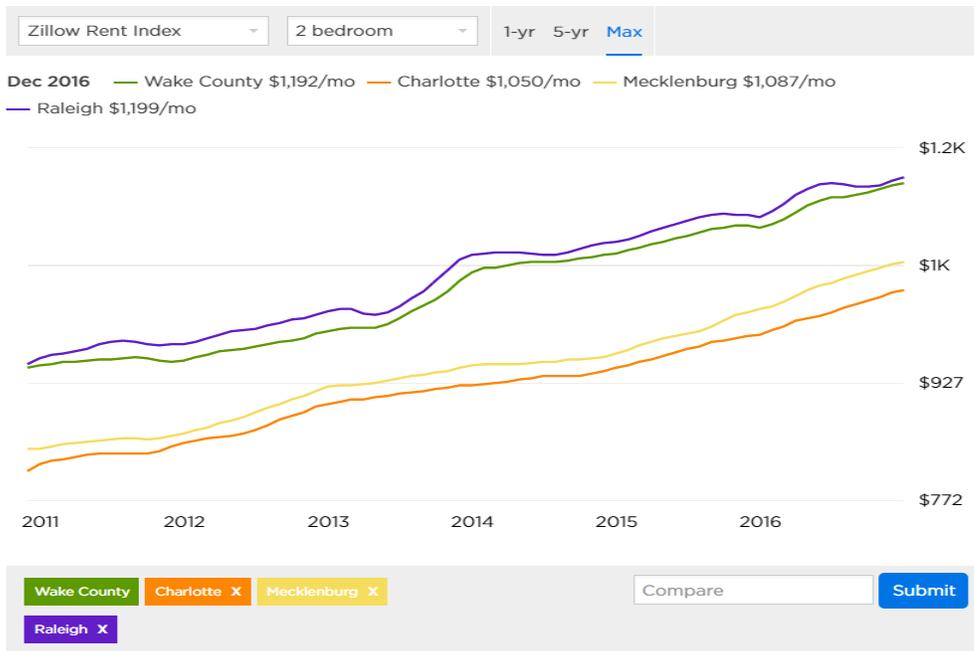
- Increase awareness that the availability of services and resources alone does not meet all the challenges of the most vulnerable citizens. Especially when multiple resources may need to be accessed simultaneously or sequentially.

Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

Key Area of Focus: Improve Access to Affordable Housing

What the problem/issue is and why

- Affordable housing has become unobtainable for low income residents.
- Having an affordable place to live is a basic necessity of any Wake County resident.
- Across Wake County, more than **100,000** households were identified as being cost burdened (2009-2013 HUD CHAS) (Rental and Homeowner)
- This is more than **a quarter** of the County's households (Total Households: 348,625)
- Of Renters, **42% or 51,525** households are cost burdened (2009-2013 HUD CHAS)
- HUD identifies Fair Market Rent for a 2 bedroom home in Wake County at \$900 a month
- A person making minimum wage (\$7.25) would need to work **103 hours per week** to afford this
- **But where are the \$900 units?** The reality is, the median rent for a two bedroom in Wake County is **\$1,200** a month (2016 Zillow)



- Rent in Wake County is higher than Mecklenburg County & Charlotte
- WITHOUT MORE SUBSIDIZED HOUSING IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY TO HAVE A STABLE HOME
- The drastic rise in cost is directly related to the decrease in available affordable inventory. The Development of affordable housing is not keeping pace with the number of people in need for housing in affordable price ranges.

Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

Improve Access to Affordable Housing, cont.

- **Average Development Statistics for County Subsidized Development (2011-2016):**
 - \$8.5 M per Development (\$7.6 M Construction & \$833,000 Land)
 - 60 Units, \$142,000 per Unit
- **Tax Credit Developments (largest production tool for new units):**
 - Subsidized Units with Expiring Subsidy (2017): 663
 - Units Approved for Construction (2017): 440
 - Net Community Loss: 223

What we know about the cause of the issue

- Wake County is growing rapidly; and to meet the growing demand on housing, rental development is being established at market rates higher than minimum wage earners can afford
- With the growing demand for rental property, landlords are less inclined to develop low income or subsidized housing.

Why it's important to address the issue

- Wake County has the potential to become a county of haves and have-nots, divided along socio-economic lines.
- Every Wake County Human Services client who has a desire to become self-sufficient should have the opportunity to find affordable housing.

Possible solutions for addressing the issue

- Financial and/or tax incentives for developers to build more low-income housing.
- Lobby to increase the minimum wage in NC in order to make housing more affordable.
- Additional strategies, policies and resources are needed to increase and preserve the stock of affordable housing or allow for low-income individuals to access available housing. Examples include:
 - Anti-Income Discrimination Policy – Prohibit property managers/landlords ability to refuse to rent to potential tenants who receive housing assistance, and reject them based solely on their form of payment
 - Low Barrier Housing - Housing where a minimum number of barriers are placed on people who wish to apply live there. (example: credit, criminal, etc.)
 - Mixed Income Developments - development includes diverse types of housing units, such as apartments, town homes, and/or single-family homes for a people with a range of income levels.
 - Mixed Use Development- urban development that blends residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, or industrial uses, where those functions are physically and functionally integrated, and that provides pedestrian connections.

Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

Improve Access to Affordable Housing, cont.

- Inclusionary Zoning/Fee in Lieu - municipal and county planning ordinances that require a given share of new construction to be affordable by people with low to moderate incomes.
- Increased Funding

What elected officials might be able to do to address the issue

- Create a forum in which landlords can discuss their opposition to developing more low-income housing.
- Create a forum to hear from low-income Wake County Human Services clients regarding the barriers they face in finding adequate housing and create strategic objectives to address these barriers.
- Lobby for a higher minimum wage for North Carolina workers; this would increase access to housing at the market rates.
- Commission a study to review effective strategies that have been established to address affordable housing in other counties around the country.

Wake County Human Services Board

Advocacy Talking Points

Key Area of Focus:

Improve Access to Care and Medical Homes (includes physical health, behavioral health and substance use disorder)

What the problem/issue is

Access to integrated health care, wellness, and prevention strategies impact: overall physical, social, and mental health status; prevention of disease and disability; detection and treatment of health conditions; quality of life; preventable death; life expectancy. According to a 2007 Harvard University study medical expenses account for 62 percent of personal bankruptcies in the US.¹ Disparities in access to health services affect individuals and society.

What we know about the cause of the issue

Barriers to health care include: lack of service availability, high cost, lack of insurance or Medicaid coverage, affordability of co-pays/co-insurance or high deductibles, and lack of health literacy (understanding how to appropriately use insurance). Lack of adequate coverage makes it difficult for people to get the health care they need and, when they do get care, burdens them with large medical bills. Current policy efforts focus on the provision of insurance coverage as the principal means of ensuring access to health care and medical homes among the general population. Integrated care, wellness and prevention strategies improve health outcomes and reduce medical cost.

Why it's important to address the issue

In Wake County, 10-15% of residents are uninsured. People with a usual source of care have better health outcomes, fewer disparities and lower health care costs. Having a primary care provider (PCP) as the usual source of care is especially important, as PCPs can develop meaningful and sustained relationships with patients. PCPs also assure improved integration and coordination of care.

Wake County Human Services (WCHS) provides a medical home option to children, pregnant women and adults with HIV. Medicaid represents close to 50% of total revenue for WCHS clinics, and helps to defray a significant portion of the county funds budgeted annually for both mandated and safety net services.

Possible solutions for addressing the issue

- Expansion of Medicaid for working poor
- Enhance safety net capacity to care for un/underinsured
- Expand Federally Qualified Health Services – Community Health Centers in Wake County
- Assure integrated medical/ behavioral care health link for opioid addicted individuals

¹ http://www.pnhp.org/new_bankruptcy_study/Bankruptcy-2009.pdf

Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

Improve Access to Care and Medical Homes, cont.

What elected officials might be able to do to address the issue

Advocacy opportunities:

- Support Medicaid expansion
- Enhance reimbursement for safety net providers to offset costs of uncompensated safety net care
- Enhance communicable disease and prevention funding at state and federal level
- Opioid abuse prevention and treatment funding
- Support additional Public Health primary care services to ensure local capacity for un/under insured
- Support integration of behavioral health and primary care.
- Incentives to address need for more PCPs to provide services to under-served populations

Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

Key Area of Focus: Address Food Insecurity and Hunger

- 131,800 Wake County residents are food insecure
- 44,681 Wake County youth are food insecure
- With over 1 million residents, Wake County is the second fastest growing county in the nation. If the rates of food insecurity remain the same, the number of those facing food insecurity will also grow.

Coordination of Food Security Resources is an Important for Wake County

Results from in-depth interviews and community surveys in Wake County by the Community Food Lab revealed the importance of connecting and aligning resources, increasing visibility of services and programs, and establishing centralized systems or collective impact initiatives around shared targets and common goals.

Wake County is home to many organizations and programs working to solve these problems, however they are not well linked. A 2015 report on Wake County food insecurity found that “the myriad organizations (providing emergency food services) all work independently. One of the Food Security Plan’s goals is to bring them together.

Childhood Food Insecurity

- 1 in 4 youth struggle with hunger, and children are among those who suffer most from food insecurity. The effects of childhood hunger, including poor developmental progress and educational gaps, can last a lifetime.
- Data shows that eating breakfast has a significant positive benefit over a child’s lifetime and models such as Universal Breakfast are being piloted in Wake County.
- In Wake County Public Schools in September of 2016, only 64% of eligible children ate federally-reimbursed free and reduced price (FRP) lunch, and only 33% ate federally reimbursable breakfast.
- Summer nutrition programs and food programs for weekends and school breaks are supported by solid evidence, and have found momentum in Wake County without yet finding widespread implementation and impact. In 2017, the Summer Food Program Service provided 235,575 free meals to youth in Wake County. A full time VISTA employee within 4-H Youth Development is focused on efforts to increase participation.
- New resources to increase the number of school pantries, as well as resources to implement innovative strategies to increase the participation in existing programs such as universal free breakfasts would be beneficial.
- WIC eligibility is not decreasing; however, usage is decreasing nationally and in North Carolina. There was a -3% change from FY15 to FY16 in Individuals Served: End of Fiscal Year Open Case Count Comparison.

Source: “Moving Beyond Hunger: A Comprehensive Food Security Plan for Wake County Phase 2 Draft February 2017”

Wake County Human Services Board Advocacy Talking Points

Address Food Insecurity and Hunger, cont.

What elected officials might be able to do to address the issue:

- Support the development of an incubator farm and agricultural education hub at the Triangle Land Conservancy's Walnut Hill Preserve.
- Support development of Urban Agriculture Training Center and Food Hub in the heart of the vulnerable communities with Passage Home.
- Maintain support for the newly established Food Security Program Manager position, and sustain funding for funding school pantries and universal breakfast in schools.