



## Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc.

Partnering for Prosperous Communities Since 1965

# 2017 TVCCA Community Needs Assessment Executive Summary

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### Needs Assessment

As the designated Community Action Agency for New London County, TVCCA conducts a major triennial needs assessment to ensure that adequate and comprehensive anti-poverty services are offered to the residents of our community. This assessment is then updated on an annual basis in each of the next two consecutive years. The data is used to inform the agency's services, program development, and partnerships, and to provide information to other services providers as a resource in addressing service gaps.

The Community Needs Assessment includes detailed analysis of the major towns and cities within New London County. It utilizes a wide variety of data sources including: statistical data from the U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other similar sources; information gathered from other needs assessments done within the service area; and surveys of low-income participants, key stakeholders, and agency staff. This combination of quantitative and qualitative information allows TVCCA to fully evaluate the needs and resources of its service area.

### Key Findings

**Demographics:** The Ethnic and Racial composition of the county has seen drastic changes from 2000 to 2010 according to the most recent census data, overall becoming more diverse. Significant increases in the Hispanic, Asian, and Black populations have occurred across the county. Norwich, New London, and Groton have experienced the greatest changes to ethnic and racial composition.

Along with the drastic increase in racial and ethnic populations, the County has experienced an increase in households with limited English proficiency. While TVCCA's main program offices in Norwich and New

London have Spanish speaking staff and all programs have access to translation services for clients, current and future clients may benefit from increased outreach within the community.

**Employment:** New London County is still feeling the impacts of the Great Recession – it lost 9.3% of its job base, a full 3% higher than the nation as a whole. It has additionally lagged behind the rest of the state and the nation in its recovery rate – recording just a 30.8% recovery, while the state as a whole has recovered by 72.8%. However, The region saw a 2.2% economic growth rate during the last year, which was more than triple the state average of 0.6%, and driven by the manufacturing sector, which added 1,100 jobs from January 2015 through January 2016. Electric Boat, another of New London County’s top 5 employers and the world’s largest manufacturer of nuclear submarines, have initiated a major hiring spree thanks to several large government contracts for increased production.

**Income and Poverty:** Significant inequalities in income and poverty rates exist statewide and within TVCCA’s service area by ethnicity, race, gender, and household composition. Hispanics in New London County earn, on average, 47% less than their white counterparts and female-headed households (no husband present) earn less than half of male-headed households (no wife present). Additionally, according to U.S. Census American Community Survey estimates, 15.3% of female-headed households (no husband present) in the county with children under the age of 18 live in poverty; for female-headed households with children under the age of five, this figure jumps to 36.9%. Poverty in TVCCA’s service area is also concentrated in two of the three cities, specifically Norwich and New London, which each have poverty rates more than double that of county and state.

**Education:** Educational attainment is closely linked with the ability to earn a living, often leading those with less education to have low wage jobs with little upward mobility – 1 in 4 adults in TVCCA’s service area without a high school diploma live in poverty. Those with the highest levels of education on average earn more than three times as much as those with the least education.

**Housing:** Based on reported median incomes for the region, the wages required to afford housing in New London County (around \$20.33 per hour) are out of reach for many Hispanic residents and female-headed households (without a husband present). Due to increased coordinated efforts across the state, the number of literally homeless individuals in New London County has decreased 14% since its five-year high of 329 in 2014. However, the region is ill-prepared to deal with the growing population of homeless and housing unstable youth.

**Healthcare:** TVCCA’s service area is well served by two hospitals, L+M Hospital and Backus Hospital; three Federally Qualified Health Centers with multiple locations – United Community and Family Services (UCFS), Community Health Center, Inc., and Generations; and has two public health departments, Uncas Health District and Ledge Light Health District. Child & Family Agency and UCFS provide primary and mental health services to children within many area schools through School Based Health Centers. However, the complexity and fragmentation of the healthcare system impacts access; it’s difficult to navigate, with many barriers including finances, health insurance status, literacy, time constraints, and “how it is organized.”

**Transportation:** Decreased access to transportation associated with poverty creates barriers to obtain help from the programs available in the community. For many community members, transportation is a major barrier to access to food and services. In the city of New London, 17.07% of households reported to not own a vehicle and while public transportation is available in New London, only 13 of the 21 towns/municipalities in the County are serviced by public transportation.

**Childcare:** The cost of childcare continues to rise each year and, in many cases, can cost more than college tuition. For the more than 1 in 10 families are living beneath the poverty line in New London County, this is an insurmountable obstacle without a considerable subsidy to augment childcare costs. A family of four earning \$24,300 (Head Start Income Guidelines for 2015-2016) would have to contribute 41.7% of their income for a private preschool experience or an astronomical 47.2% of their income for infant/ toddler childcare. If you combine these costs with the limited access to Care 4 Kids, it would be quite impossible for many families to benefit from these early childhood education programs.

## Summary of Identified Needs

### Top Identified Needs by Low-income

#### Participants:

1. Employment and training opportunities
2. Paying credit card debts
3. Budgeting
4. Healthy food access
5. Transportation

### Top Identified Needs by TVCCA Staff:

1. Affordable housing
2. Transportation
3. Affordable, quality childcare
4. Paying bills, such as heating/electricity
5. Healthy food access

### Top Identified Needs by TVCCA Partners:

1. Affordable housing
2. Healthy food access
3. Transportation
4. Affordable, quality childcare
5. Employment and training opportunities

### Needs Identified through Assessment (not in priority order)

- Individuals with limited English proficiency need assistance and/or interpretation to obtain services in the community. (Family)
- The community needs to increase use of translation services and multilingual staff to better assist clients with limited English proficiency access the services they need. (Community)
- TVCCA needs to identify resources to allow for greater community outreach to households with limited English proficiency. (Agency)
- Individuals need skills to prepare them for the jobs available at Electric Boat and other major employers in the area. (Family)
- Families earning just over the income guidelines for benefit programs such as SNAP and Care4Kids need assistance to afford necessities like childcare. (Family)

- Our agency has a need for additional resources to establish programs that can benefit families that earn too much to qualify for government-subsidized programs but still need help affording basic necessities. (Agency)
- Individuals need at least high school diplomas to avoid living in poverty. (Family)
- Our community lacks affordable housing. (Community)
- Our agency has a need for additional resources or partnerships to assist homeless and housing unstable youth. (Agency)
- Our community lacks sufficient resources to assist families and individuals struggling with opioid use and abuse. (Community)
- Families do not have enough access to nutritional foods. (Family)
- New London County needs additional transportation options that improve access to health care. (Community)
- The region needs additional transportation options and increased transportation funding. (Community)
- Families need access to childcare subsidies, like Care4Kids, to afford quality childcare. (Community)
- More infant/toddler childcare slots are needed in the area. (Community)