

UNITED WAY OF BLAIR COUNTY

IMPACT FUNDING:

A COMMUNITY PLAN

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# EVOLUTION OF OUR PLAN

One simple phrase, "Nothing has changed", started United Way of Blair County's Board of Directors looking at the possibility of change. It was time for us to research another way to invest our donors' contributions. We began by visiting other United Ways that had begun Impact Funding, researched the process of change and interviewed United Ways about their processes. Then we looked inward. Was United Way of Blair County ready for a change? Could the staff and the Board of Directors commit the time to drastically change the way we have done business? After all our research, it was decided that United Way of Blair County would move forward. United Way of York County Maine had the same characteristics as Blair County, the same size metro and similar community; and their process fit our community. We decided to follow their lead. In 2002, our journey to Impact Funding began.

There were multiple reasons for us to move toward Impact Funding. Channeling money from workplace campaigns to agencies had not sufficiently addressed our communities' problems. As mentioned in the previous paragraph the problems of Blair County had remained the same for years. Services were being provided but there had been no impact on the issues. The changing economic environment had increased social needs. Over the past several years, Blair County has lost major industrial jobs. United Way of Blair County was seen as a funder of agencies. We needed to become a community convener to bring together a variety of resources to address our community's needs. In light of our relationship with our volunteers, businesses and other human service organizations we were in a position to bring people and organizations together to address critical needs. With all this said, the primary reason for change was our donors were asking us to change. They want to see their contributions making a difference. They want their contributions directed to "Results That Matter."

As we began to develop our plan, we met with our member agencies during the summer of 2002. We let them know that United Way of Blair County would be moving to Impact Funding and would be developing Requests for Proposals (RFP) for future dollars. We talked about what Impact Funding meant and why we decided to change. We held two meetings to listen to their concerns and list their questions, so that as we proceeded, we could respond to them.

Change brings with it many questions. To begin answering these questions and mapping out our future, the Board of Directors met with Dr. Chuck Kormanski of Kormanski Consulting and Dr. Bill Engelbret of Penn State Altoona for a retreat Saturday, April 12, 2003 at the Sheetz Conference Center. From this retreat ten, (10) concerns were identified:

- It will be a challenge educating the community about our new direction.
- We will need to educate ourselves internally so that we can make the process work.
- We will need to develop strategies for raising funds.
- We will need to distribute our dollars for greater impact.
- We will need to insure that United Way can measure the impact.
- It will be a challenge to create a new image.
- We will need to determine the needs of the community (not just the monetary needs).
- We will need more commitment from business leaders.
- We will need to obtain more media coverage.
- It will be a challenge to create and sustain a culture of change.

From this point, a New Direction Committee was formed to begin our strategic plan for Impact Funding. The first decision to be made was how to determine the community needs. A list of Community Connectors was developed and these people were contacted and invited to several nominal group interviews. At these meetings they were asked to list what they thought the community issues were. The list was prioritized and ranked. A survey was developed based on the information collected at all of the nominal group interviews. This survey was a part of our 2003 campaign. After the original survey, a committee, with the help of Dr. Kormanski, revised the information.

March 31, 2004 was the deadline for collecting data from the survey. Dr. Bill Engelbret of Penn State Altoona compiled the data and presented it to the newly named and reorganized Community Building Committee (formerly the New Direction Committee). From information gathered, four Focus Areas were identified:

- Job Related Issues
- Meeting Emergency Needs
- Nurturing Children and Youth
- Strengthening Families

Each Focus Area was led by Community Leaders skilled in that area with a team of 15 -20 experts that had experience and knowledge of the area. The task of each team was to define and analyze information and data within these focus areas, to identify and to prioritize issues and to develop a plan of work.

After 2 long years, our mission and direction have changed. This beginning marks a long-term process that will grow and develop as we go. We expect to address the identified issues for the next 3 -5 years knowing that change doesn't happen overnight. To have a sustained change it will take time.

#### OUR PLAN PRESENTS VISION AND FOCUS

Historically, United Way of Blair County has used the funded agencies as our filter to let us know how they would provide services for the community. Impact Funding redirects our focus to deal with specific areas of community concerns. We listened to our community and found that families, children and youth, jobs and emergency needs were critical to them.

United Way of Blair County's Community Plan provides a foundation of information and ideas on which to build future action for addressing community issues. We fully expect these ideas to grow and further develop. The issues addressed in our plan are complex and will require long-term attention. We expect to be working on the strategies outlined here for at least the next three years. The results of our efforts will not be easily or quickly measured; but we are committed to tracking them, continually sharing our progress with the community and constantly re-evaluating our work.

## **THE COMMUNITY PLAN CONTINUES TO EVOLVE (2007 – present)**

Beginning in early 2007, The Blair County Human Services Office and the United Way of Blair County invited other key community leaders to once again join and support an effort to conduct a countywide needs assessment. It was once again time to identify community assets, identify targeted needs, and develop an action plan to fill those needs with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of all people in Blair County. The results of the current assessment were released to the public in January of 2009, and work groups are meeting now to develop a Community Plan based on the results of the most recent needs assessment.

The Community Building Committee of the United Way of Blair County considered its current plan, the focus areas of United Way Worldwide and the findings of the most recent needs assessment and refined their plan to focus on the following vision/focus areas:

### **INCOME:**

"We envision a Blair County where individuals and families attain financial stability and independence."

### **MEETING EMERGENCY NEEDS:**

"We envision a Blair County where there is a safety net for those experiencing emergencies."

### **EDUCATION:**

"We envision a Blair County where children and youth achieve their potential."

### **HEALTH:**

"We envision a Blair County where young and old alike are physically and mentally healthy."

# INCOME

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## VISION

*"We envision a Blair County where individuals and families attain financial stability and independence."*

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #1 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### **ISSUE:** Awareness

There are many resources, activities and programs available in our community that provides education and training opportunities. However, the awareness of these initiatives to the general public is limited at best.

#### *Current Key Finding:*

- Blair County has abundant resources, activities and programs available that provide education and training opportunities.

#### *Desired Objectives:*

- A. Increase public awareness and utilization of community/county resources for job training and education.
- B. Facilitate job training and education initiatives to match the economic vision with current and future job trends of the county.

#### *Initial Strategies:*

- A. Develop strategies and initiatives to involve local, state and federal government officials in training and retraining programs.
- B. Establish initiatives that bring together business leaders and workforce, development professionals to enhance collaboration for planning resource acquisition and program effectiveness.

#### **ISSUE:** Lack of education and training on basic budgeting practices for children and adults

#### *Current Key Findings:*

- There are limitations on access per program.
- Utilities and health issues impact budgets.
- Some people are refused budget counseling.

*Desired Objective:* All children and adults in Blair County are provided with basic budgeting courses.

#### *Initial Strategies:*

- A. Identify who provides basic budgeting and publicize the programs.
- B. Develop a universal curriculum for youth and adults.
- C. Provide incentives for attending training.
- D. Be inclusive of rural areas.
- E. Identify those in need of budget counseling.
- F. Develop a plan for those in severe need (bankrupt).
- G. Develop a comprehensive plan linking clients with agencies and agencies with other agencies.

**ISSUE:** Lack of education for renters' on their legal rights

*Current Key Findings:*

- Some landlords and renters are unaware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Some renters are given eviction notices without cause/representation.

*Desired Objective:* Blair County residents will have access to education regarding renter's legal rights.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Determine what information is available and publicize the information.
- B. Provide a document that identifies the types of housing available, age requirements and areas that have rentals.
- C. Develop creative access points to educate people on renter's legal rights.
- D. Provide information to service providers about renter's legal rights.
- E. Develop an expanded network of lawyers willing to do pro bono work.

# MEETING EMERGENCY NEEDS

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## VISION

*"We envision a Blair County where there is a safety net for those experiencing emergencies."*

**PRIMARY SERVICE RECIPIENTS:** Anyone experiencing a crisis or emergency situation

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #1 BASIC NEEDS

**ISSUE:** Lack of 24/7 emergency shelters and education on availability.

### *Current Key Findings:*

- Shelters in Blair County are full.
- Days spent in shelters are limited to 30.
- Service is often segmented by gender.
- Service is segmented by need.
- There is limited accessibility for people with disabilities.
- There is limited access based on client's history, i.e. criminal background.

*Desired Objective:* Blair County will have a sufficient number of "accessible" emergency shelter beds 24/7 for men, women and children.

### *Initial Strategies:*

- A. Educate and promote to the community and agencies what is available.
- B. Secure funding for new shelters or expand existing shelters.
- C. Ensure that all shelters are Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) approved.
- D. Ensure that there is accessible emergency/crisis transportation.

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #2

**ACCESS TO SERVICES:** Information & Referral, Affordability/Access, 24/7 Response, Physical Access/Barriers

**ISSUE:** Lack of education and communication on how to access emergency services, with special focus on which agency should be called first.

### *Current Key Findings:*

- In some situations a person has to have termination notices or eviction notices before they can receive help.
- Clients have to be "at the bottom" before they can find help.
- Confidentiality can be a hindrance when agencies try to help.

*Desired Objective:* All tiers of Blair County agencies will be able to accurately refer clients to meet identified needs.

### *Initial Strategies:*

- A. The Health and Welfare Council will prioritize on who to call first.
- B. Create or expand a website that Blair Countians can use to find help and a secure site, so that providers can coordinate services for individuals creating a more accurate response.
- C. Develop a communication system so that when dollars for a specific program are spent, referrals can be sent to the next agency.

**ISSUE:** Lack of a one-call information center- 211

*Current Key Findings:*

- Clients call multiple agencies getting frustrated trying to find the "right fit."
- Agencies themselves don't know what services other agencies provide.

*Desired Objective:* All individuals have access to a one-call information center

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Develop a plan to coordinate lobbying for a coordination of "help agencies" and advocate for dollars to supply the technology for coordination. (211 system)
- B. Develop a plan to educate the public about the information system.

**ISSUE:** Safe Shelter

Safe shelter is a place where children or youth that leave home due to a family conflict can go for a brief stay. It is easily accessible and provides supervision and security until such time as they can return home or find an alternate longer-term living arrangement.

*Current Key Findings:*

- 309 youth from ages 12 -21 were provided shelter and counseling in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Shelter from September 1, 2000 to August 21, 2003.
- There were 632 teen hotline calls and 8 violence prevention calls at this shelter.
- Reasons for youth seeking shelter were family/child conflict, parent refusing housing and homelessness.

*Desired Objective:*

- A. Assure that runaway and/or homeless youth, or youth at risk due to family conflict, have access to the services and support they need.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Fund programs that provide conflict resolution skills to youth at risk and their families.
- B. Fund programs that support runaway and/or homeless youth or youth at risk due to family conflict.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #3  
DISASTER/EMERGENCY SERVICES**

This element is defined as follows: Education/Training, Preparedness/Response/Recovery, emergency response services, 911/211, Technology/Contacting, Police/Fire/Ambulance/Trauma. There needs to be collaboration at all tiers and needs to improve second-tier response.

**ISSUE:** Lack of an effective process to identify individuals with special needs in emergency situations (medical, age, disability).

*Current Key Findings:*

- HIPPA regulations prevent emergency personnel from knowing if there are people with medical problems, disabilities or elderly in homes.
- There continues to be a lack of knowledge about available emergency services.

*Desired Objective:* All people with special needs in Blair County will be able to be identified/notified in an emergency.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Fund a survey to identify homes with people who will need special help during an emergency.
- B. Have a media blitz to encourage people who will need special assistance in an emergency to participate in the survey.
- C. Work with the existing disaster/emergency plans and 911.
- D. Collaborate with agencies to create a HIPPA-compliant release of information to list people with special needs.
- E. Coordinate with agencies who work with individuals who may be at risk.

**ISSUE:** Disaster Response

*Desired Objective:* All people will have access to food, shelter, and clothing in times of disaster.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Fund programs that provide food, shelter and clothing to those experiencing disasters/emergencies..

# EDUCATION

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## VISION

*"We envision a Blair County where children and youth achieve their potential."*

**PRIMARY SERVICE RECIPIENTS:** Children and youth up to age twenty-one (21).

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

We seek to make this vision a reality through these essential elements for children and youth:

- An ongoing relationship with a caring adult/older youth that promotes healthy beliefs and clear standards
- Safe places and activities where young people can learn and grow
- Appropriate life-skills

We have initially identified 5 key aspects of nurturing children and youth that require attention in Blair County. They are:

- Mentoring
- After-school activities
- Safe neighborhoods
- Childcare
- Appropriate life skills

## ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #1

### **AN ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH A CARING ADULT/OLDER YOUTH THAT PROMOTES HEALTHY BELIEFS AND STANDARDS.**

**ISSUE:** Mentoring

Mentoring is the purposeful creation of a caring relationship between an individual (other than a parent) and a child or youth that promotes healthy beliefs and standards by sharing new or mutual interests, taking part in activities together and/or providing ongoing support.

*Current Key Findings:*

- The Therapeutic Support Services (offered by several providers in Blair County) served 1,422 youth in 2003.
- The Roaring Spring First Church of the Brethren offers a mentoring program for children and youth between the ages of 11-18. Thirty-four youth are currently enrolled in this program.
- WIC served 4,752 for the month of February 2003 and 4,800 in March 2004.
- Youth involved in Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program are less likely to be involved with drugs.

*Desired Objectives:*

- A. Increase the number of children and youth who are matched with an appropriate mentor.
- B. Create and/or expand mentoring opportunities throughout Blair County.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Fund mentoring programs with special attention given to programs that:
  - i. Extend existing programs to geographic areas within Blair County where need is identified, and/or
  - ii. Create a new mentoring program. or
  - iii. Fund programs which incorporate opportunities for children and youth to make a contribution to their community.
- B. Increase knowledge of and interest in mentoring for the purpose of recruiting mentors and identifying "mentees".

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #2**  
**SAFE PLACES AND ACTIVITIES WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE CAN LEARN AND GROW.**

**ISSUE:** After-school activities (Elementary to High School)

After-school activities are critical for the positive emotional, social, mental and physical development of children and youth. These activities are especially important for children who may be left home alone without adult supervision. After-school activities may be school or community based and sponsored by individual schools, districts or community organizations. After-school includes activities that occur following a school day, during school vacation periods, including weekends or during the summer months.

*Current Key Findings:*

- There are 15 million "latch-key children" in the U.S. because working families are not available to care for their children after school.
- Juvenile crime peaks right after school lets out, from approximately 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm.
- Research shows that due to transportation issues and the availability of facilities centrally located, schools should be increasingly utilized for after-school programs.

National surveys reveal that after-school programs:

- Contribute to raising students' self-confidence, increase aspirations and improve social skills.
- Improve academic performance and reduce "retain-in-grade" and special education needs.

In Blair County:

- Based on discussion with students, the biggest problem for teens is boredom and "nothing to do". The availability and use of drugs is of concern. Many students felt they did not have a voice within their school and that their community was not supportive of them.
- The number of after-school activities varies widely in communities across the county.

*Desired Objective:* Increase the number and variety of after-school programs and/or increase participation in after-school programs throughout Blair County.

*Initial Strategy:*

- A. Fund proposals that
  - i. Expand current programming, or
  - ii. Implement new after-school programs.

**ISSUE:** Safe neighborhoods

Safe neighborhoods provide a secure, non-threatening environment where children and youth can play together and develop meaningful relationships within their community which promote healthy beliefs and behaviors.

*Current Key Findings:*

- In the United Way State of Caring Index from 2002 the question: How often do you gather together with others in your neighborhood formally or informally (for example at picnics or meetings), 47% said rarely or never.
- In the same survey the question: How often do you come together with people in your neighborhood to work on common goals, 61 % said rarely or never.
- People tend to spend time inside their homes rather than meeting neighbors and networking.

*Desired Objective:* Initiate and/or maintain programs and services that develop and sustain safe neighborhoods.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Fund initiatives/programs that support and sustain safe neighborhoods.

**ISSUE:** Childcare (Birth to age 5)

Childcare that is accessible, affordable, plentiful and of high quality is vitally important for the thousands of children in Blair County whose parents or guardians work.

*Current Key Findings:*

- The number of licensed, quality childcare slots is significantly less than the number required by families in Blair County.
- The cost of childcare is prohibitive to many families. Support to assist families with their childcare expenses is limited and misses many families who truly need assistance.
- Childcare is not available in many geographic areas of the county where it is needed.
- Availability of childcare outside of traditional working hours (9 am -5 pm) and for some populations is very limited - infant care, shift care, night care and sick care are difficult to access.
- Transportation to and from childcare facilities is limited.

*Desired Objectives:*

- A. Increase the number of licensed, quality childcare slots throughout Blair County.
- B. Increase the number of children from low and moderate-income families who receive subsidized childcare.

*Initial Strategy:*

- A. Fund one or more qualified non-profits to continue a current childcare program to create new childcare options or to expand the availability of childcare that provide developmentally appropriate curriculum in all areas of Blair County.
- B. Fund subsidized childcare slots for low and moderate-income families in one or more licensed childcare centers.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #3  
APPROPRIATE LIFE SKILLS**

**ISSUE:** Lifeskills

Appropriate life skills are vitally important for children and youth to become productive well-functioning members of society who are vested in their family, school and community. These life skills include but are not limited to: Communication, Healthy Relationships, Self Sufficiency, Civic Awareness and Cultural Appreciation.

*Current Key Findings:*

- It is important for our children and youth to comprehend the concepts and practices which enhance the health and well-being of themselves and others.
- Our children and youth need to demonstrate physical skills that lead to life-long participation in activities for fitness, enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment.
- Our children and youth need to demonstrate a variety of social and decision-making skills that promote healthy, responsible, active living.

*Desired Objective:* Support efforts to develop life skills of our children and youth in Blair County.

*Initial Strategy:*

- A. Fund existing or new programs that provide education and/or training to our children and youth in the following areas: Communication, Healthy Relationships, Financial Management, Home Management, Self-Sufficiency, Decision Making, Personal Hygiene, Parenting, Job Readiness, Literacy, Education, Civic Awareness, Cultural Appreciation and other related life skills.

**ISSUE: Parenting and Relationship Skills**

Programs and services should be offered to assist parents in learning the skills necessary to support their family members and increase their potential to improve their lives.

*Current Key Findings:*

- In 2000, 30.5% of women 19 and under were unmarried and had given birth.
- In 2000, 2% of women 19 and under were married and had given birth.
- Blair County's rate of births to unwed mothers is 34%.
- 13.5% of youth report they would use alcohol "given any chance."
- 6% of students indicate they have driven a car while or shortly after drinking.
- Blair County youth scored higher than the state average in the following family domains.
  1. Family history of antisocial behavior.
  2. Parental attitude favorable toward Alcohol, Tobacco and/or Drug use.
  3. Parent attitude favorable toward antisocial behavior.
- Blair County youth scored the same as the state in the following areas:
  1. Family attachment.
  2. Family opportunities for pro-social involvement.
  3. Family reward for pro-social involvement.

*Desired Objectives:*

- A. Increase measurable parenting skills through offering "best practice" parenting programs.
- B. Decrease the risk factors and increase the protective factors as described in Appendix C of the Blair County Youth Report ([www.hso.blairco.org](http://www.hso.blairco.org)).
- C. Enhance the family's ability to support and nurture their members.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Offer mentoring and parenting programs in easily accessible areas.
- B. Include life skills training where there are already opportunities for parent communication.
- C. Support "best practice" and research-based programs that develop parenting and relationship skills.

# HEALTH

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## VISION

*“We envision a Blair County where young and old alike are physically and mentally healthy.”*

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

We seek to make this vision a reality by supporting the following essential elements for strong families and their individual members:

- A safe, supportive and stable nurturing environment in which families can thrive and grow.
- Physical, mental and emotional health.
- Community Involvement and Social Interaction.

### ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #1

A safe, supportive and stable nurturing environment in which families can thrive and grow.

#### **ISSUE:** Violence and Abuse

Programs should address the prevention of family violence by and between adults as well as the support of programs, services and initiatives which assist victims and their families.

#### *Current Key Findings:*

- Since 2000, Blair County's rate of substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect has risen from 1.5 per thousand to 2.1 per thousand, 0.5 higher than the state rate per thousand.
- 54.3% of the population indicates they are "married, except separated."
- Blair County's number of Protection from Abuse Orders has increased from 372 in 1997 to 405 in 2001.

#### *Desired Objectives:*

- A. Reduce the number of families in Blair County who are affected by violence and abuse.

#### *Initial Strategies:*

- A. Fund programs and initiatives that reduce the rate of violence and abuse in Blair County that are substantiated by community indicators.
- B. Support public education programs and forums around the objectives of community organizations addressing this issue.

**ISSUE:** Lack of affordable, quality care for older adults. Families taking care of older members need to know about the services and supports that are available to them during time periods when they are working or needing time for other activities so that their older family member may have quality and safe respite care.

*Current Key Findings:*

- 21.7% of Blair County's population is over 65. This number is projected to be 21.5% by 2020 which is 2-3% higher than the PA average and well above the national average.
- In 2000, 29% of households in Blair County had a resident age 65 or over.
- There were 1,042 grandparents responsible for raising their grandchildren (reference [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)).  
Generations United website
- In 2000, 8,319 persons over 65 had a disability.
- The 2001 and 2002 National Study of Adult Day Centers indicates that Blair County needs three additional Adult Day Centers.

*Desired Objectives:*

- A. Increase family knowledge of how to choose adult care.
- B. Increase availability of affordable, quality care for older adults.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Review information on "best practices" for addressing the needs of older adults through a program titled Community Partnerships for Older Adults on: [www.partnershipsforolderadults.org](http://www.partnershipsforolderadults.org).
- B. Research and assess the need for a caregiver outreach program on the National Family Caregiver Association website: [www.nfcares.org](http://www.nfcares.org).
- C. Support community organizations addressing this issue.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #2**  
Physical, mental, emotional health

**ISSUE:** Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is a serious problem in Blair County requiring prevention, intervention and treatment programs to address all forms of substance use disorders among adults and youth in our community and to support those with addictions and their families.

*Current Key Findings:*

- Substance use disorder is considered a major health problem in Blair County.
- The continuum of treatment that exists in Blair County is: outpatient; psychiatric services; intensive outpatient; crisis stabilization; aftercare shelter and extended care. There are limits to the treatment that is available, especially for those who are uninsured.
- Blair County's rate of admissions per thousand for alcohol and heroin is 2 times the State rate:
  - 427 per thousand for alcohol
  - 267 per thousand for heroin
- Blair County's rate of wholesale malt beverage licenses per 30,000 population is higher than the state average.
- The following risk factors have been identified by the Blair County Drug and Alcohol Program as needing to be addressed:
  - Availability of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to youth.
  - Favorable attitude toward problem behavior among youth and adults.
  - Friends who engage in problem behavior among middle and high school students.

*Desired Objectives:*

- A. Reduce the incident rate of substance abuse in adults and youth in Blair County.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Review and research SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) and CSAP (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention) website for "best practice" approaches at: [www.prevention.samhsa.gov](http://www.prevention.samhsa.gov).
- B. Review the program logic model for selection and evaluation of prevention programs at: [www.prevention.samhsa.gov](http://www.prevention.samhsa.gov).
- C. Support and initiate a variety of programs and initiatives that reduce the rate of substance use disorder in adults and youth in Blair County that are substantiated by community indicators.
- D. Support and initiate public education programs and forums around the need for a continuum of care of treatment for substance use disorders.
- E. In developing a response to this area, use the six strategies for the delivery of prevention services support by the county including; education, information dissemination, alternative activities, problem identification and referral, community based process and environment. Those can be found on the website listed previously.
- F. Develop programs that respond to the six strategies or "best practices" models listed on the website and based on the needs identified in Blair County.
- G. Collaborate with the county and community organizations already planning for or addressing this issue.

**ISSUE:** Lack of available and affordable physical, mental and dental care. Initiatives, programs and services which increase the availability, affordability and accessibility of physical, mental and dental care treatment to those who cannot afford to provide it for themselves and for whom no other assistance is available.

*Current Key Findings:*

- Medicare and Medicaid eligible persons in Blair County have limited access to medical and dental care.
- Blair County is identified as a Health Professional Shortage area for dental care.
- The free clinics do not serve anyone with Medicare or Medicaid. These beneficiaries are limited to physicians who accept these forms of payment.
- The prescription needs of the elderly and chronically ill are of grave concern for many, especially for prescription drugs with no generic equivalents.
- The affordability of psychotropic drugs for those with chronic mental illness is also an area of concern. Current resources are inadequate to meet the ongoing need of individuals who do not have insurance.
- Free dental clinic, though provided through the Altoona Regional Health System, has waiting lists and the demand for services increases steadily.

*Desired Objectives:*

- A. Increase the capacity of the free dental clinics to provide services to persons of low income who are under or un-insured.
- B. Increase the capacity of the free health clinics to offer health services to persons of low income who are under or un-insured.
- C. Increase the availability of pharmaceuticals for persons who are unable to afford the prescriptions necessary to treat health problems.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Provide services, supports and funding to the free clinics that exist in the county.
- B. Review availability of health services to mothers, infants and children; i.e. WIC.
- C. Work with the hospitals or any other appropriate health care organization addressing this need, to identify areas of financial and treatment needs.

**ISSUE:** Lack of awareness of availability of meal programs and food pantries.

*Current Key Findings:*

- There is limited availability and locations.
- Senior citizens can use Meals on Wheels.
- Schools provide meals, but it is on a limited basis and does not cover weekends and holidays.
- Meals are available during Thanksgiving and Christmas, but not on other holidays.
- Food donations to the local pantries are seasonal.

*Desired Objective:* All residents of Blair County will have access to nutritious meals every day.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Identify those agencies that provide meals and inform the community through various media and other modalities.
- B. Research other available resources.
- C. Expand the current services to meet the need.
- D. Develop better linkages with the religious community.
- E. Increase the outreach to the homebound/disabled with transportation to centers that provide meals.
- F. Identify and develop creative ways to meet all family nutrition needs.

**ISSUE:** A healthy start promotes physical, cognitive, social, emotional well-being and development of children birth to age 5.

*Current Key Findings:*

- All childcare providers must have 6 hours of training each year to meet Department of Welfare standards. Better Kid Care provides 99% of this training.
- Through the Better Kid Care program, 20-25 different day cares were provided training from October 2003-June 2004.
- Better Kid Care provided programs dealing with Child Growth and Development, The Environment, Communication, Health, Safety and Nutrition Programs.
- Dental care is provided, but there are waiting lists.
- In Blair County, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Nurse Family Partnership and WIC provide low-income homemakers resources to help address critical issues including hunger, infant mortality, prenatal nutrition and poverty. There are 13 families on the waiting list for the Nurse Family Partnership (08/04).
- Early Intervention Program provides developmental and cognitive screenings for developmentally challenged children 0-3 years of age. Services are provided based on a 40% developmental delay.
- Family Resource Center provides programs targeted to children with less than a 40% developmental delay.

*Desired Objectives:*

- A. Increase programs that offer developmental screenings for all socio-economic levels.
- B. Develop healthy lifestyle programs; i.e., nutrition, exercise, recreation, cultural arts, etc.
- C. Increase access to dental care for children up to age 5.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Fund programs that offer developmental screenings for all socio-economic levels.
- B. Fund healthy lifestyle programs; i.e., nutrition, exercise, recreation, cultural arts, etc.
- C. Fund programs that increase access to dental care for children up to age 5.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT #3**  
**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL INTERACTION**

**ISSUE:** Lack of opportunities for community involvement and social interaction. There is a need for initiatives, programs and services that provide families and their members low or no cost opportunities to play/socialize together, volunteer, join groups and engage with others in meaningful community activities.

*Current Key Findings:*

- The availability of low or no-cost activities for families is not widely known.
- Involvement, engagement and connection with others are a widely accepted measure of a family's/person's overall health status.

*Desired Objective:* Increase the number of opportunities for family social interaction.

*Initial Strategies:*

- A. Promote and support low or no-cost "family-fun" activities and opportunities that are planned in community areas where the family lives.
- B. Support organizations that offer affordable, accessible family programming, which provides socialization and physical activities in combination with the gaining of education and knowledge on topics relative to family nurturing and safety.
- C. Offer education on creating healthy lifestyles.
- D. Research and offer "best practices" educational programs that are targeted toward building character, including the topics of respect, responsibility, honesty and caring.
- E. Consider supporting, enhancing and expanding existing local community efforts that offer after school and family oriented activities.
- F. Support and implement school and church-based activities and programs based on the need identified by the families in those areas.
- G. Examine areas in the social service organization where families could volunteer their talents and time.