



Human Services Coordinating Council Recap

6 Month Review of the Findings, Challenges, Recommendations



Legislation

Section 17a-760 - CGS

...there shall be established a regional human services coordinating council for each planning region...

...to encourage collaborations that will foster the development and maintenance of a client-focused structure for the health and human services system in the region.



Overview of Committees and Meetings

Initial (Kick-Off) Meeting held: April 21, 2016

Subcommittees were established:

- Health
- Housing
- Employment
- Transportation



Guest Speakers were invited to speak with our subcommittees.

The subcommittees met between August and November of 2016

- They presented facts and information about their designated topic
- Challenges and potential solutions were discussed
- Possible funding and model programs were presented
- Discussed ways to collaborate within the human services field, with municipal, state and federal leaders, as well as state agencies.



Our list of presenters included:

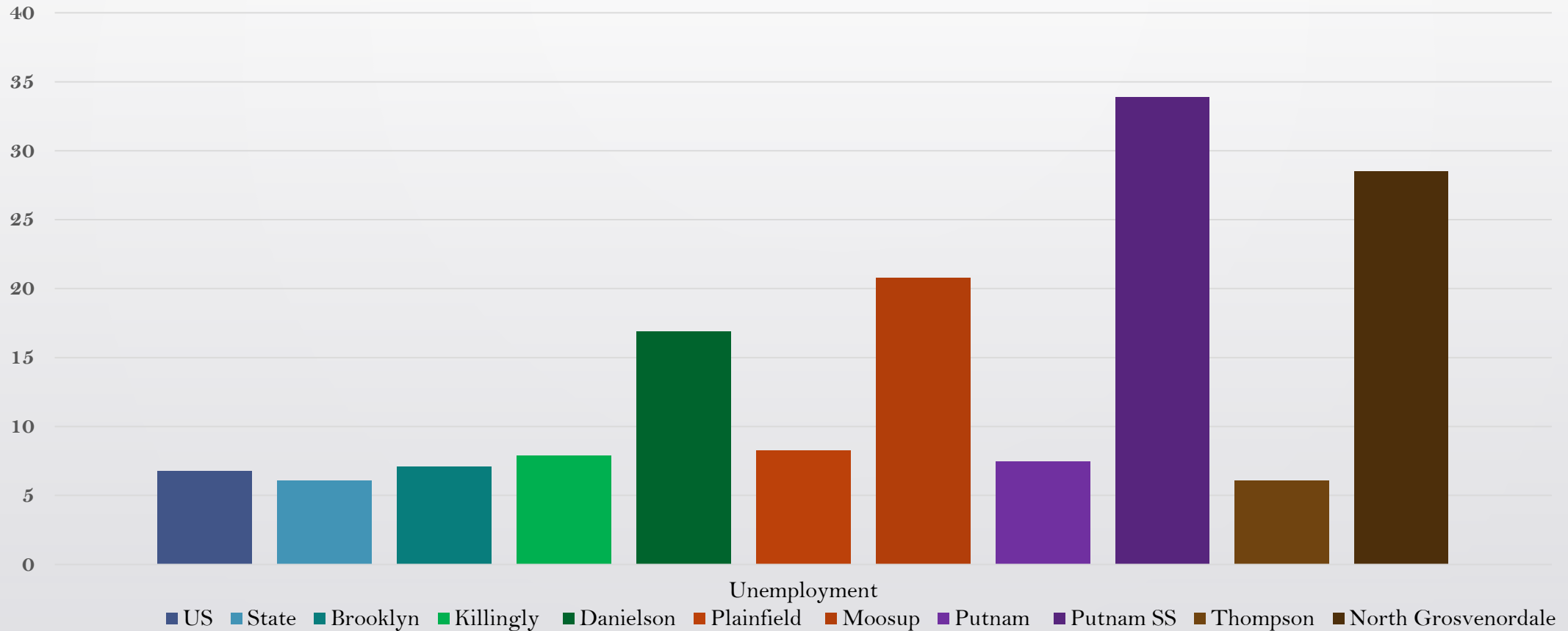
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Consultant
- CT Dept. Of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Partnership for Stronger Communities
- CT Dept. of Transportation (DOT)
- Transit for Connecticut
- NECCOG
- CT Dept. of Labor (DOL)
- CREC (Capital Region Educational Council)
- Generations Family Health Center
- UCONN: Department of Nutritional Sciences
- Northeast Connecticut Council Against Substance Abuse (NECASA)



Employment

- The unemployment rate as reported by the department of labor only reflects those persons currently applying for unemployment benefits.
- These numbers do not include those who have exhausted benefits, stopped filing or are currently underemployed.
- Town unemployment rates can mask some of the high unemployment numbers in some of the villages within a town.
- The unemployment rates have remained historically above the state and national average, with the villages rate 2 to 3 times higher than the town averages.

Unemployment Rates 2015





Available resources for Employment Assistance

- The American Job Center

Employment Services:

- Free Career Workshops and Seminars
- Job Search Assistance
- Resume Preparation
- WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)

Business Services:

- Apprenticeships (DOL)
- Step Up (DOL)
- Shared Work Program

One million dollars in funds were given to local companies for employment opportunities through the Apprenticeship and Step Up programs



Recommendations:

- Expand collaborative efforts with DOL, QVCC, and EASTCONN on residents' training needs
- Encourage satellite offices for job and educational services to reach residents without transportation
- Evaluate the services provided with the needs of underemployed and unemployed persons in the region
- Promote internship and apprenticeship programs and expand local business relationships that promote hiring locally



Transportation

NECTD Currently Provides Deviated Fixed Route Service (Hourly loops with deviations as requested by a passenger) to the towns of: Brooklyn, Killingly, Putnam and Thompson

NECTD also provided Senior/Disabled Service to the towns of: (door-to-door service -available weekdays by reservation) Brooklyn, Canterbury, Killingly, Putnam, Thompson, Eastford, Plainfield, Pomfret, Woodstock, and Union



Transportation Projects

- An application to Conn DOT has been submitted to implement Deviated Fixed Route Service in Plainfield
- An application to Conn DOT has been submitted to commence Veterans transportation to VA Medical Centers
- A survey was issued to gauge interest for transportation between our Region and Worcester, MA
- We are currently assessing routes, stops and times, as well as working with riders and community organizations to increase outreach and usage




NECTD Facts:

- We NEVER deny a ride for inability to pay the \$1.00 fare
- We offer discounted passes – 15 rides for \$10
- Local Social Services agencies can also purchase passes or tickets for clients
- All our buses are wheel chair accessible with a wheel chair lift and securements



Recommendations:

- Increase outreach and awareness about the transit system
 - Develop an educational outreach plan for customers and organizations about NECTD
 - Create a collaborative approach to address the transportation gaps i.e. shared services, ride share expansion, shared drivers and vehicles
 - Promote increased related to transportation resources : Transit expansion, pedestrian safety, sidewalk expansion, bike lanes, etc.
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Health

- Most residents in the region use the ER as their primary care instead of a physicians Office - Preventable hospital visits are high
- Windham County ranks last in most CT County Health Rankings
- The region has the most expensive patients in the state of Connecticut
- Many health care issues are multi-generational
- Pre-Mature Deaths and Infant Mortality Rates in the region are the highest in CT
- Physical Activity is low and obesity is high; Diabetes, Heart Disease and High Cholesterol



Health

- It is more expensive to purchase food in rural area
- Food Deserts – Less access to healthy and affordable food
- Food Swamps – Unhealthy food are more readily accessible
 - i.e. convenient stores (accept WIC and EBT), but less healthy choices
- Food Mirages – Healthy Food is available but not fiscally attainable
- Healthy foods are covered, but are more expensive. Usually frozen or canned fruits and vegetables are not covered under SNAP or WIC



Health

- Rural communities have issues with access to walkable environments
- Safety is an issue, high speed limits, no sidewalks
- Distance to trails and parks - Won't go if there's no car access
- Concern for safety of children – parental limitations, less small, close neighborhoods
- Less access to healthcare
- Built environmental factors: land use patterns, zoning large lots, pedestrian friendly



Health

- Opioids/Opiates have overtaken alcohol, tobacco and marijuana as primary drugs or abuse substances as of 2016 (from 1990 where the order was alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana, respectively)
- For every dollar spent on education/prevention, \$18 in healthcare, mental services, and other costs are saved.
- 51% of drugs (pills too) are retrieved from a friend or family member
- 25% taken from those family or friends unknowingly
- NE CT Region lacks long term inpatient facility and wait times at other facilities are long and maybe difficult to get to without transportation



Recommendations:

- Increase educational outreach about routine screenings, promote preventative check-up and screenings
- Increase substance abuse prevention programs
- Increase access to substance abuse resources, especially in patient facilities
- Promote healthy eating and activity habits
- Increase educational opportunities about healthy habits (trainings and classes for families)



Housing

- The region currently has approximately 96,000 residents
- There are 37,240 housing units where 9,348 are renter occupied units
- Only 350 are affordable housing units
- Most renters in the region are paying fair market rate for their apartments
- In 7 of our 16 towns 30 percent of renters pay more 30% of their income on housing



Housing

MYTH: Low Income Housing negatively impacts property values of the surrounding housing stock.

FACT: Housing units earmarked for low-income residents have virtually no impact on surrounding property values in major U.S. metro areas, according to an analysis of home-price data that runs counter to the conventional view that such projects cause nearby property values to decline.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/low-income-housing-shown-to-not-weigh-on-nearby-property-values-1480361327>



Housing

FACT: In no state, metropolitan area or county in the United States can a full-time worker earning the prevailing minimum wage afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.

<http://nlihc.org/press/releases/6845>

FACT: Nationwide, the housing wage for a two-bedroom apartment is \$20.30 hourly (or \$42,240 annually). That means someone earning the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 would have to work 112 hours a week to afford the typical rent.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/how-much-income-you-need-to-afford-rent-by-state_us_574880cae4b0dac7ad4c828

FACT: A resident would need to be making an average \$18.69 an hour to afford a 2-bedroom apartment in the region.

www.psc.org

FACT: 35% of the region's renters are paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

<https://factfinder.census.gov/>



Recommendations:

- Expand access to CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funds
 - Receiving applications and allocating funds in a spattered process would allow more home owners to receive funds for needed repairs
 - It will start to improve neighborhoods and pride of the homeowners
- Expand Home Ownership and owner occupied rentals
 - Work with USDA, CHFA and HUD with program development and resources that promotes home ownership
- Dispel myths about low and moderate income housing through education
 - The perceived impact that low and moderate income has on property values
 - That the number of low and moderate income units is high, when there are only 350
 - Most renters are paying full market rate for their rental with 35% paying 30% of their income on housing