

Anti-Poverty Strategy

1. Describe actions taken during the last year to reduce the number of persons living below the poverty level.

1) As the City's designated Community Action Agency, the Community Development Department Human Services and Family Development (HSFD) Division is committed to eliminating and ameliorating the causes and conditions of poverty in the City. The City's Human Services Delivery System (HSDS) is the mechanism designed to deliver a variety of services throughout the geographically and ethnically diverse City. Approximately 70% of the City's HSDS is comprised of CDBG funds, which the City uses to contract with nonprofit human service providers to deliver needed social services to city residents. CDBG funds leverage approximately \$5.5 million in Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds to increase assistance to residents in need.

The HSDS incorporates Family Development Networks (FDNs), based on a consortium model for delivering social services, and Neighborhood Action Programs (NAPs), which continue the traditional single-agency delivery model, fill identified gaps in services and target services to the poor and special needs groups. FDNs are designed to reduce the number of persons living below the poverty level by assisting low-income residents achieve family self-sufficiency through a continuum of care and multiple types of social services featuring a single point of access for the client.

The City initially provided funding for eleven FDNs and added a twelfth consortium in 2004. FDNs are composed of several nonprofit, community-based human service organizations collaborating together to provide long-term comprehensive case management to individuals and families. Long-term service plans are tailored for each client to provide comprehensive case management and delivery of services. FDNs also provide information and referral and specific youth services. For example, the Youth Advocacy Program (YAP) component of the FDN provides early intervention and diversion services to at-risk youth ages 6-17 and their families referred to the program from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the City Attorney's Office. This program provides law enforcement an alternative to processing youth in the justice system.

The FDNs also collaborate with other entities such as the City's Work Source job training centers funded by the Department of Labor and other grants, thereby concentrating FDN financial and personnel services on providing the human services necessary to prepare individuals and families to enter, or return to employment. A significant segment of the growing poverty in the City and the County is made up of the working poor. Linking the Work Source Development Centers and the Family Development Networks recognizes and responds to the need for specialized services that harder to employ welfare recipients and the working poor must have to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency.

The Neighborhood Action Program portion of the HSDS provides funding to nonprofit agencies that meet specially targeted needs, especially those of the City's youth. According to the Census 2000 demographic information provided by the City Planning Department, almost 300,000, or 7.7%, of the City's population are children under age 5. Another 700,000, or 18.9%, of the City's population are youth ages 5-17. Overall 26.6% of the City's population is children and youth ages 0-17. Of the City's nearly 1 million children and youth ages 0-17, 30% live in families with incomes at or below federal poverty guidelines. Almost 60% of children and youth under the age of 18 live in families with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, and 30% live in extreme poverty (Source: Executive Summary of the 2004-2005 Children Youth and Families Budget).

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The high percentage of children, youth and families living in very low-income households continues to present serious problems. Many of these children will remain poor because their parents are not qualified for jobs that offer more than minimum wage or part-time work. NAPs are located throughout the City and serve special needs populations such as the disabled, domestic violence survivors, families in need of childcare, and at-risk youth and their families, all groups disproportionately at the poverty level. For example, a disabled person in Los Angeles is more likely (34%) to live in households with total income of \$15,000 or less, compared to only 12% of those without disabilities.

The brunt of poverty in the City is often borne by children 18 years of age or younger. Children living in poverty are less likely to have adequate nutrition, medical care and appropriate education. Quality childcare improves their chances for breaking the cycle of poverty. Nine Neighborhood Action Programs provide child care services to over 400 children at 17 early childhood development centers, and CDD's Neighborhood Development Division provides facility/capital improvement assistance to approximately 100 childcare providers and family day care homes.

Education, vocational training, and job placement are the recommended strategies toward fighting poverty and are often effective. However, many families in the City remain in poverty despite full-time employment due to low wage levels. For these families, housing subsidies that reduce the amount of income spent on rent are effective and necessary tools in combating poverty.

Achievement of self-sufficiency means that families may not require or depend on public assistance. To guide low-income families effectively out of the cycle of public assistance dependency and onto self-sufficiency many factors must be examined to help the family identify everything it will take, financially and emotionally, to make a lifestyle change.

The Family Self-Sufficiency approach focuses on measurable outcomes; that is, in moving families from a crisis state, to a stable and thriving state. The approach further requires recruitment of clients who are willing to take a risk and accomplish specific objectives over a realistic period. This may take several months or several years, depending on the family, its unique problems and the length of time required to achieve desired goals.

The city has accepted the importance of Family Self Sufficiency (FSS), and has made it the major programmatic emphasis for the last several program years. The City allocates most of the Community Development Block Grant and the Community Services Block Grant for public services. Both sources of funds have been linked to the Family Self-Sufficiency model to address the needs of the poverty population.

The Human Service Delivery System includes agencies that provide case management and participation empowerment services. Part of the system is a network of specialized agencies, Neighborhood Action Projects (NAPs) and consortium-based Family Development Networks (FDNs), possessing the expertise to provide a comprehensive array of supportive services (i.e., child care, health, substance abuse treatment, food) necessary to overcome a family's barriers to self-sufficiency.