



**Foothill Unity Center, Inc.**

HELPING PEOPLE. CHANGING LIVES.

# **2022-2023 Community Needs Assessment and Community Action Plan Summary**

DRAFT for Public Comment



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California Department of  
Community Services and Development

Community Services Block Grant



The mission of Foothill Unity Center is to help neighbors in crisis attain self-sufficiency by partnering with the community and using our resources wisely to provide vital support services with love and dignity.

Foothill Unity Center envisions a community where all have their needs met including the need to give; all get the necessary support to become self-sufficient; all are treated with love and dignity, all the time.

As a federally designated Community Action Agency and the region's primary provider of integrated resources, we are commissioned to combat the conditions and causes of poverty that plague our low-income communities. Our service area spans the Foothills of the San Gabriel Valley including Altadena, Arcadia, Azusa, Baldwin Park, Bradbury, Duarte, Irwindale, Monrovia, Pasadena, Sierra Madre, South Pasadena and Temple City.

## **Poverty in our Communities**

Though our neighborhoods may appear affluent, 27% of families lack enough resources to meet basic needs, as measured before the pandemic. Our community's level of unemployment and underemployment with low and stagnant wages, combined with our high cost of housing, are the major causes of poverty.

- 60,000 people, 11.7% of the population live below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). In 2021, the FPL for a family of 4 is an annual income of \$26,500.
- 20% of children ages 0-17 live in poverty ... that's 21,000 children.

Unemployment rates are highest among those without a high school degree, and in several cities in the Center's service area, as many as 50% of adults do not have education past a high school diploma. Adults without a high school diploma suffer a poverty rate of 34%. Language barriers, pandemic business closures, and inadequate child care support have made unemployment worse.

Pandemic job loss has disproportionately affected the low income workforce who were in customer facing jobs that closed during the pandemic, without an option to work from home. Women appear to have taken on much of the additional child care and assistance of remote school learning, causing women to leave the workforce, having a negative impact on their careers and household income.

Our community's cost of housing is more than 3X the national average and the scarcity of affordable housing is heartbreaking. Los Angeles has a shortage of 509,000 affordable

housing units. Nearly a third of families pay more than half their income for rent; these families struggle to not slip into homelessness.

- More than 5,000 individuals are homeless across the San Gabriel Valley.

As our community is rich in immigrants, they are challenged by not only the cost of housing and education, but also linguistic isolation and cultural barriers. Persistent language barriers affect employment opportunities, education levels, ability to understand and navigate healthcare systems and other available resources. Many immigrants are undocumented and not able to work in the formal economy; they are especially vulnerable to discriminatory housing and work practices; often fearful of available government and community resources.

Though not new in the last couple of years, the pandemic has brought increased visibility to systematic racism and discrimination that have exacerbated the inequality and the conditions of poverty in our community. The ethnic and racial make-up of our community's homeless population is a clear and striking result of this deeply embedded bias and its impact on access to economic stability and healthcare; 32% of the homeless population is African American, as compared to 8% of the general population.

As gentrification has become common in previously affordable neighborhoods, the low income members of the community are priced out of the area. Low-income residents find themselves living in overcrowded housing, or facing long stressful commutes. The increase in anxiety and economic insecurity has not surprisingly led to a deterioration in the behavioral health of our community.

Poverty translates directly to food insecurity and poor nutrition, homelessness and housing insecurity, barriers to quality healthcare, and healthcare access.

## **Community Needs Assessment**

Foothill Unity Center is required to conduct a bi-annual Community Needs Assessment that includes qualitative and quantitative data from the public and private sectors, educational institutions, and community partners including faith-based organizations, healthcare providers, civic organizations. Interviews, focus groups and surveys were conducted with the low-income population that uses resources offered through the Center. This year's community needs assessment reflects the voices and responses of more than 500 individuals, program participants, community partners, donors, volunteers, trainees, staff and community members regarding the current needs of communities within the San Gabriel Valley. These voices and responses to this year's Community Needs Assessment

are what drives Foothill Unity Center's program priorities, organizational strategies, and its 2022-2023 Community Action Plan.

The top prioritized needs voiced through the community needs assessment are:

- Employment/Job Development Resources
- Food and Nutrition Resources
- Education Resources
- Financial Support Resources
- Healthcare Resources
- Housing and Homeless Resources
- Senior Resources

## **Foothill Unity Center's 2022-2023 Community Action Plan**

As the Community Action Agency of the Foothills, Foothill Unity Center will tackle the conditions and causes of poverty through its existing core programs structured to serve Family, Agency, and Community; this plan will address the top needs identified in this year's community needs assessment.

Our **Job Development Program** is a pathway for individuals to enter or re-enter the workforce by gaining employment and access to wages that support economic security. Internal efforts include building skills through on-site work experience and training, resume assistance, access to food handling and warehouse certifications, mentoring and job coaching for youth, seniors, and adults. External efforts include communication and coordination of resources such as academic and vocational counseling, certifications, financial literacy workshops, assistance with access to higher education and navigation of financial aid opportunities. Lastly, external efforts include increased communications with employers willing to give opportunities of employment for participants enrolled in the job development program.

Our **Food Program** is a resource in place to end hunger for the housed and the unhoused, as well as a collaboration with community partners and vendors to mitigate food waste. Daily food distributions include bagged lunches and hygiene kits for the homeless, homebound grocery deliveries for seniors and disabled persons who are isolated, sick and shut-in, and emergency family food to those that have the ability to cook and store food. Internal activities to enhance the nutritional impact of food services include healthy recipes, nutrition education workshops, and healthy food demonstrations. External efforts guided by Los Angeles Regional Food Bank include collectively becoming a nutritious program pantry that establishes policy and assurances that nutrient-rich foods

are at all times accessible by low-income communities. In a collaboration with Food Forward, a weekly produce hub on-site assures that a rainbow of fruit and vegetables is accessible to other pantry partners committed to ending hunger and preventing chronic diseases prevalent in low-income communities that they serve.

Our **Health Program** is designed to diminish health disparities with access to healthcare, education on ways to manage chronic health diseases, and assistance with navigating the healthcare system. Internal and external efforts include coordination of dental and vision screenings, exams, and procedures through mobile clinics, vaccines, glucose/diabetes screenings, blood pressure screenings, and health education workshops and exercise groups. Further, a behavioral health coordinator has been an addition to the health services department to communicate and coordinate access to behavioral health resources which has proven to be a noticeably growing need.

Our **Housing and Homeless Program** assists those experiencing urgent emergency and chronic housing needs, providing permanent and temporary placements that include motel vouchers, temporary housing, rental assistance, navigation, retention, rapid rehousing, housing readiness assistance, and eviction prevention.

Our **Case Management Program** is the driving strategy and standard of care practice that supports our Food, Housing, Health, and Employment programs through assessment, case planning, care coordination, advocacy, resource linkages, and follow up. Individualized client plans allow our case workers to track progress and make adjustments specific to personal situations. Case management provides access to a complete continuum of services, a safety net that improves the odds of success for an individual to move from poverty to economic security. Our case workers navigate the healthcare and housing systems, education opportunities, and the network of community partners.

Our **Volunteer Program** provides the necessary additional capacity to deliver integrated services across our core programs. Community Engagement activities in our food distribution, holiday distribution events, and organizational needs, provide volunteers the opportunity to accept civic responsibility and to affect change. Volunteers learn about the issues that low-income people face; and as a result, such volunteers become better advocates and change makers for the betterment of our communities. In a typical year we have approximately 6,000 volunteers.