

Greenwich Department of Human Services

Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2020 - 2022

Approved
June 18, 2019

Introduction:

The Greenwich Department of Human Services plans and implements the Town's human services initiatives and oversees the numerous services and programs operated and contracted with the Town to help meet the needs of Greenwich residents. These services and programs funded by the Town strengthen the community by working to provide basic human needs such as shelter, food, personal safety and health care, increase adult self-sufficiency by education and employment services, and help children and youth overcome barriers to success and develop the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

The Department of Human Services' primary function is providing case management services and funding support to local programs, however, the department does operate a limited number of direct service programs, such as homecare, BANC After School Program and Summer Youth Conservation Program.

The purpose of the department's strategic plan is to provide a roadmap for investing in community priorities over the next three years. The vision, values, priorities and strategies in the plan serve as a guide for making decisions on allocating funds and taking action to pursue the goals in the plan. The plan also defines the leadership role the department plays in the systems it funds and ensures that the community has the capacity to serve the needs of Greenwich residents in a more effective and impactful way.

Beginning with the department's FY 2011-2013 Strategic Plan, the Human Services Board adopted a policy of maintaining existing direct services such as, case management, homecare and BANC, with any additional growth focused in the planning and contracting area (Community Partnership).

At the same time, the Board directed the department to develop a data driven decision making approach through an electronic data collection system. The department also established an outcome oriented evaluation focus both internally through a client service plan that includes outcomes and externally with a results based accountability report submitted by the community partners to the department.

The department continues its emphasis on partnering, collaborating and coordinating with key players in the community to address significant human services issues. These issues include: mental health, domestic abuse, early childhood development, substance abuse, youth development, workforce development, immigration and older adult challenges.

The FYs 2020-2022 Human Services Strategic Plan builds directly on the previous 2017-2019 strategic plan and is the result of broad, diverse community input. The goal is to build a plan that includes input from people from all backgrounds and focuses on priorities and goals that help eliminate the underlying drivers that perpetuate inequity across race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability and age.

The strategic plan represents diverse perspectives and received guidance from board members, management staff, and line staff. The strategic planning team reviewed and approved the department's mission, vision and core operating values statements and strategic priorities and goals.

The department has been recognized as playing a pivotal role in raising awareness of the need to ensure all groups are represented in town services and initiatives. The department is uniquely positioned to foster interconnectedness and work with our community partners to break patterns that have contributed to disparity. The ultimate goal is for the town to develop a welcoming and inclusive social infrastructure that integrates and aligns programs and initiatives across the human services system.

GDHS Mission Statement: To enhance the quality of life of Greenwich residents through support in meeting basic human needs and promoting services that foster self-sufficiency.

GDHS Vision Statement: All Greenwich residents have access to the opportunities and pathways that will lead them to well-being and economic stability. This vision is achieved through a robust and integrated system of appropriate services that are equitable, accessible, and available.

GDHS Core Operating Values:

At The Greenwich Department of Human Services, we:

- Are welcoming and inclusive
- Treat clients with dignity and respect
- Value positive team work
- Build honest relationships with open communication
- Focus on excellence in all we do

GDHS Strategic Plan Guiding Principles:

Leadership:

Our department works with other Town departments, community-based organizations and residents to provide leadership in the policy, planning, funding and delivery of human services in Greenwich. The department strives to be a leader in making strategic investments in the community that create opportunity and provide critical services to Greenwich residents.

Alignment and Integration:

The department leads efforts that create a more seamless approach to addressing human service needs. We work to enhance and expand the capacity of Greenwich’s human services system by facilitating collaboration, working with local providers, leveraging funding, linking and integrating services, reducing duplication and measuring the community impacts of services in meeting residents’ human service needs.

Innovation:

The department promotes creativity, is open to experimentation and seeks innovative, cutting edge solutions. We are committed to continuous learning and improvement and promoting a culture of taking risks as part of innovation and as a means to achieving success.

Strategic Priorities

1. *Meet basic human needs of Greenwich residents*

Meeting the basic needs of residents has long been a priority of GDHS. In every strategic plan, there has been a commitment to provide effective case management services and fund programs that provide shelter, food, personal safety and other resources necessary for meeting basic human needs.

During the 2017-2019 strategic plan cycle, critical human service need areas were identified and received policy and planning emphasis. These areas included: mental health and substance abuse, domestic violence, achievement gap, hoarding, immigration, and employment. In FY 2019, the department’s Community Partnership program invested approximately 50% of its funds in programs addressing mental health and substance abuse issues and another 37% in personal safety programs with a priority on domestic violence services.

While progress has been made, the challenges continue with many working families “one pay-check away” from financial disaster. The department’s emphasis will continue in the area of supporting childhood development to better prepare low-income children for school and providing employment assistance with adult clients.

2. *Prepare children and youth for success*

It is well known and researched that investments in quality early childhood learning experiences and development, after school programs and other activities that prepare children for school and keep them actively participating in their social, psychological, and cognitive development, produce adults who are self-sufficient and have the skills and capacity to become the leaders of tomorrow.

During the 2017-2019 strategic plan period, the GDHS took a leadership position in promoting and funding services that would assist low-income children and families with gaining knowledge and skills to better prepare the children for pre-school and future education endeavors.

Several projects are now taking shape through agencies collaborating on developing programs for pre-school and after-school programs. The department helped form an Achievement Opportunity Gap Community Asset Mapping Planning Project that will establish base-line needs data, identify direct service programs and determine the best matching programs for narrowing the achievement gap. We anticipate program expansion in this area and that will lead to more low-income children succeeding in school and achieving education goals.

3. *Increase employment, self-determination and empowerment for adults*

Despite the economic recovery following the great recession of 2008, many Greenwich residents are not benefitting and struggling to make ends meet. There are more job openings than unemployed workers for the first time since the government began tracking this ratio, however, there is a shortage of jobs that actually pay a living wage. Greenwich residents are challenged to pay a higher percentage of their earned income for housing and other basic needs. Many families are one pay check away from financial disaster. Updated income calculations, such as, ALICE (Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed), calculates that a family of four in Greenwich need to earn \$82,000 to reach a comfort level for financial security. According to the ALICE calculations, 22% of the Greenwich population is at risk of not being able to meet basic human needs.

The department has moved to establish a case management model that is based on developing a partnership with the client. The Case Manager and client work together on identifying goals that the client wants to achieve and will be an active participant in moving toward the goals. The Case Manager helps the client to facilitate achieving the goal. By having the client assume an active role in achieving the goals in the plan, the client is guided to be more independent and self-directed.

Department case managers identified a significant number of clients that were un/under employed and needed assistance with work preparation. Through the department's Community Partnership Program an employment counselor from Family Center's RITE Program is providing on-site employment support services for Greenwich Human Services' clients. The department is now taking the same direction with providing immigration support services through the New Covenant Center.

The department will be exploring the potential of a Family Independence Initiative, The Family Independence Initiative challenges families to take actions they think will lift them out of poverty; whether that is improving children's grades, saving more, starting a new business or improving their health through weight loss. Six to eight families who want to make improvements in their lives, self-organize into a peer support group. Families then turn to each other for help, support and inspiration, instead of the case manager.

4. *Participate in promoting programs that support older adults and the disabled in the community*

As the aging population grows, Greenwich must be prepared to accommodate the unique needs of this population group. Most residents want to stay in the town as they age, however, affordability is a key issue and deterrent for them to stay in town as they grow older and retire. Assisting older adults to maintain their homes on a fixed or limited income and offering available resources to those with or caring for someone with dementia is seen as a significant challenge by town residents.

With nearly half (46%) of its population over the age of 45 according to the latest census data, the Town of Greenwich must prioritize the needs of its aging population. In FY 2018, 34% of clients served by the Department of Human Services were age 65 and over. The department continues to work on specific need areas for older adults:

1. Affordable and qualified home care services
2. Increasing the number of health care professionals who accept Medicare
3. Conveniently located health and social services

The department has joined as a partner in the Town's Commission on Aging's Age Friendly Community Project. The project will assess the current physical and social environments and examine data-driven improvements that can be made in domains such as environment, housing, health care and transportation. By assessing the current structures and services, the project group will determine which amenities and structures are currently successfully provided and adapt current town amenities and structures to better meet the needs of their aging residents.

The department is a member of the 1st Selectman's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities. The Commissioner serves as the ADA Coordinator for the Town. The Disabilities Committee is actively involved in the mission of serving as a resource to the Greenwich community addressing accessibility, equal rights, removing barriers and promoting opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The Committee's commitment is to advise the Town departments and officials on ways to be in compliance with the ADA laws and establishing an environment that is inclusive for all its residents.

5. Enhance mental health/substance use disorder services

Mental health and substance abuse disorders are common. National estimates are that one in four persons have met the diagnostic criteria for a behavioral health problem in the last year and more than 50% meet the criteria at some point in their lifetime.

Estimates are that more than 300,000 adults in Connecticut experienced serious psychological distress in the past 12 months. People who experienced serious psychological distress in the past 12 months are more likely to abuse or be dependent on alcohol or illicit drugs during the same period. More than one quarter of adults who experience serious psychological distress in the previous year reported an unmet need for mental health care. Almost half of the people with a perceived unmet need reported that they did not receive treatment because they could not afford it.

Twenty-seven percent of Connecticut high school youth report that they felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities. Thirteen percent between the ages of 12-17 report they had a least one major depressive episode during the past 12 months. Fourteen percent of high school students reported they seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months. Eight percent of high school students reported one or more suicide attempts the past 12 months. More than half the children and youth in in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have some type of reported mental health issue.

Low reimbursement rates are a disincentive for individual physicians to accept patients with Medicaid coverage and mental health problems. The scarcity of mental health providers, especially psychiatrists, adds another barrier to low income residents in need of mental health services.

Since 2008, suicide has ranked as the 10th leading cause of death for all age groups in the United States. In 2016, suicide became the second leading cause of death for ages 10-34 and the fourth leading cause for ages 35-54. Suicide rates have steadily increased in recent years. From 1999 through 2017, the age-adjusted suicide rate increased 33% and suicide rates were significantly higher in 2017 compared to 1999 among females of all age groups.

The department will be continuing its efforts to educate the Greenwich community about mental health issues with the goal to de-stigmatize mental illness and encourage people to seek out treatment. At the same time, the department will be promoting the need to expand and increase mental health service capacity in Greenwich.

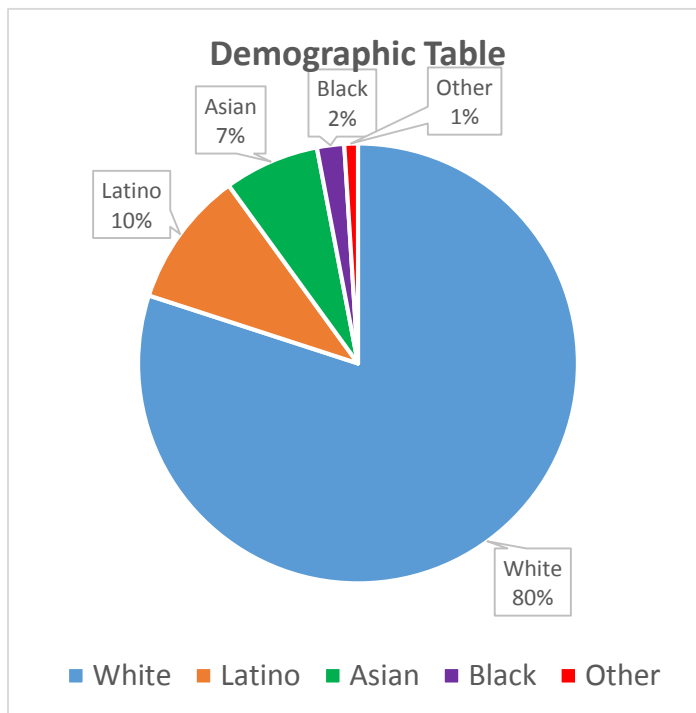
The department completed a baseline review of opioid use and community attitudes about opioids in 2016. A group was re-formed to work on developing substance abuse

and behavioral health prevention strategies with a focus on youth and families. The Prevention Council, composed of 31 Greenwich social service, education, government, health care, law enforcement, religious, and civic organizations, organized an effort to develop a youth survey that was successfully implemented in 2018. The survey reported a significant increase in vaping so a Prevention and Education Committee was formed and will focus on the vaping issue to establish strategies on community education and awareness. The Prevention Council, now known as Greenwich Together, is working on a strategic prevention plan for the Greenwich community.

6. Diversity and Immigration Challenges

Contrary to public perception, Greenwich has a much more diverse population with a growing segment of low and moderate income minority residents. A language other than English is spoken in 29% of Greenwich homes and 23% of residents were born outside of the U.S. A significant portion of the resident population still face difficult economic challenges related to stagnant wages that are not keeping up with the cost of living. Ten percent (10%) of the Latino population in Greenwich are living below the poverty level and fifty-one percent (51%) of Latino households earn under \$50,000 annually.

As the table below shows, of the 62,359 Greenwich residents, 20% or 12,472 residents are multi-racial or of a race or ethnicity other than white alone.



The Department of Human Services established a Community Partnership with the New Covenant Center. The New Covenant Center provides on-site immigration counseling for those department clients in need of assessing their immigration status and what actions they can take to safeguard their rights. The challenges and fate for those with questionable citizen status is more precarious than ever and the department will continue to support this vulnerable population group.

Strategic Goals:

Goal 1: Collaboration and Partnerships – To strengthen the Department’s role as a community leader in identifying high priority human service issues and partnering with community agencies to respond to Greenwich’s human service needs.

Goal 2: Communications and Public Relations – To increase community awareness of the Department’s programs and services and the Town of Greenwich’s human service needs.

Goal 3: Technology – To utilize ongoing technology advancements to improve service delivery and productivity, track outcomes and plan for the future.

Goal 4: Service Delivery - To strengthen staff alignment with the department’s mission, vision, and values.

Goal 5: Department Culture - To create a collaborative culture utilizing department standards and code of conduct leading to successful client outcomes.

Goal 1: *Collaboration and Partnerships* – To strengthen the Department’s role as a community leader in identifying high priority human service issues and partnering with community agencies to respond to Greenwich’s human service needs.

- Determine priority need areas for community collaborations by identifying critical social issues through internal assessment documents and external reports such as the United Way’s Needs Assessment and GCHIP Community Needs.
- Organize community work groups and coalitions around identified critical social issues to establish strategies and solutions for improvement (e.g., achievement gap, opioid/heroin, domestic violence, hoarding, and mental health).

Goal 2: *Communications and Public Relations* – To increase community awareness of the Department’s programs and services and the Town of Greenwich’s human service needs.

- Contact and present information on DHS services to community agencies/partners.
- Request coverage of DHS community activities on health and human service issues by press/media.
- Ensure online website is updated and offers clients information and forms. (on-going/monthly).
- Host and participate in community forums on critical social issues (e.g., opioid addiction)

Goal 3: Technology – To utilize ongoing technology advancements to improve service delivery and productivity, track outcomes and plan for the future.

- Develop and/or revise metrics that will facilitate individual and departmental performance and goals.
- Maintain and refine Results-Based Accountability (RBA) outcome report and identify best practices.

Goal 4: Service Delivery - To strengthen staff alignment with the department’s mission, vision, and values.

- Evaluate the department’s client income eligibility requirement of 200% federal poverty guideline and assess feasibility for increasing the percentage for client income eligibility
- Create standards of excellence that results in positive client experience.
- Increase communication efforts with state agencies (DMHAS, DCF, DSS) to ensure client support.

Goal 5: Department Culture - To create a collaborative culture utilizing department standards and code of conduct leading to successful client outcomes.

- Department survey on assessing staff satisfaction and perceptions on Department’s mission, vision, and values.
- Apply program standards that staff will be held accountable for maintaining.
- Run monthly update meetings where staff can share ideas and information
- Institute good news updates and communications to all staff
- Organize a Board/Staff Retreat