

City of Santa Clarita Human Services Office 2012 Strategic Plan (Final Version: May 11, 2012)



Vision Statement

A community fully engaged in creating and sustaining a thriving, safe, and healthy Santa Clarita.

Mission Statement

The Human Services Office creates a safe, healthy, and thriving community by leveraging resources and facilitating community participation. We lead and promote collaborative innovative programs and services that educate, engage, enhance, and empower the community.

Core Values

Excellence

Humanistic Approach

Creativity

Futuristic Approach

Enthused Workforce

Ethics

Open and Non-Bureaucratic Government

City Council and Public Service



BACKGROUND

Over the past year, the Human Services Office has developed a strategic plan to help guide its programs, services, and resources. The purpose of the plan is to not only meet the needs of the community, but to foster a greater understanding of the role and purpose of the Human Services Office and its valuable programs and services offered to the community. In addition, the strategic plan ensures Human Services is in alignment with the overall expectations, desires, and philosophy of the organization. In sum, the strategic plan serves as a roadmap for current and future efforts, and structures Human Services in a way that is most effective, efficient, and responsive.

METHODOLOGY

The process for conducting a comprehensive assessment was accomplished utilizing several key elements:

Community Partners and Stakeholders Summit

The purpose of this summit was to determine major human service issues or challenges facing our community, identify existing services and programs available to address these needs, and determine where the gaps in services are. In addition, the purpose of the Summit was not only to help the City restructure its resources to meet the community needs, but to provide valuable information for agencies and organizations who play a vital role in providing human services to the community.

Community Services Survey

In order for the Human Services Office and community partners to comprehensively understand the needs of the community and align resources and programs accordingly, it is essential to understand the needs from the community user's/resident's perspective. This survey (Attachment A) provided an opportunity to gauge participation in existing programs, assess needs, and determine residents' top concerns. The survey was also designed to help the Human Services Office enhance its programs and services.

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis

The purpose of the SWOT Analysis was to develop and support more effective decision-making, improve organizational planning, and foster support throughout the organization in achieving the Human Services Office strategic objectives. As a result of the SWOT Analysis, a vision and mission statement was developed, and goals and objectives were defined.

KEY FINDINGS

Based on information gathered from the community and the organization, overall the Human Services Office has been doing a good job providing beneficial and award winning programs to the community. Highlights of the successful programs and efforts include the Heroin Kills Campaign, Neighborhood Committees, the Newhall Community Center, Youth Employment Services, Volunteer Programs, Family Education, Community and Teen Court, and Emergency Preparedness. While the aforementioned programs and others not listed have met a need, it is essential that the Human Services Office remains focused on addressing current or pressing community concerns. The following key findings summarize the top concerns identified by the

community through the Community Partners and Stakeholders Summit and the Community Services Survey in priority order.

COMMUNITY’S TOP IDENTIFIED CONCERNS	
Partners and Stakeholders Summit	Human Services Survey
Homelessness	Alcohol/Drug Abuse
Drug Addiction	Unemployment
Gang Affiliated Youth	Gangs
Delinquent Youth	Affordable Housing
Bullying	Crime
Social Networking Dangers	Juvenile Delinquency
	Homelessness
	Lack of After School Programs
	Family Violence
	Poverty

STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In order to allocate resources towards strategic goals and objectives, staff was reorganized and restructured (Attachment B) in a manner that allows the Human Services Office to be efficient, responsive, and effective. The Office is divided into three sections – Education and Prevention Programs, Outreach and Neighborhood Services, and Administration. The purpose of the Education and Prevention Section is to provide a variety of classes, programs, services, and lifelong opportunities that educate, engage, develop, and strengthen the community. This section includes Emergency Management, Civic Engagement and Participation, and Youth and Family Development. The purpose of the Outreach and Neighborhood Services Section is to enhance the quality of life, facilitate partnerships between the City and other citywide resources, and promote self-sufficiency through the development of neighborhood committees and targeted outreach services and programs. This section includes programs and classes offered through the Newhall Community Center, the Graffiti Task Force, Anti-Gang Taskforce, Youth Employment Services, and more. Administration is responsible for budget, strategic planning, staff development, training, recruitment, and providing support for the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department and elected and appointed City officials.

Utilizing the information gathered from the needs assessment process and staff’s knowledge, expertise, and experience from directly providing programs and services for the community, staff discussed and finalized strategic goals and objectives. Each goal has several targeted objectives that staff will work on over the next three to five years. The goals and objectives identified on the following page serve as a roadmap for allocating resources, making existing and future programmatic decisions, and achieving desired results.

HUMAN SERVICES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Provide education, programs, and activities that minimize and eliminate access to drugs.

Objectives:

- Revamp Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force by utilizing the national strategic prevention framework model to develop the Task Force as a comprehensive coalition with measurable strategic goals and objectives.
- Implement a comprehensive drug prevention education program in schools and broader community.
- Continue partnership with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and other law enforcement agencies to suppress drugs.
- Enhance marketing and public awareness efforts to further engage the community in anti-drug efforts.

Sustain the community's quality of life by providing valuable, relevant, and high quality programs, activities, and services.

Objectives:

- Utilize technology to enhance awareness of City and non-City programs, activities, services, and resources available to residents.
- Maintain high level of graffiti removal and beautification efforts.
- Conduct annual survey of Human Services programs and services.
- Conduct assessment of current emergency management systems and develop strategic plan in response to community and organizational needs.
- Establish a senior volunteer program to build intergenerational programming efforts.

Work in conjunction with key community partners on programs, services, and enforcement to deter gang activity in Santa Clarita.

Objectives:

- Revamp Anti-Gang Taskforce to be more comprehensive, effective, and current in its overall anti-gang efforts.
- Increase community mentoring opportunities through the provision and/or facilitation of mentoring programs.
- Provide parent education classes and identify other opportunities to further engage parents on gang prevention.
- Engage neighborhoods and communities susceptible to gang activity through neighborhood outreach, programs, and services.
- Identify recommendations to address key findings in the 2012 Gang Assessment and facilitate implementation by City and partner agencies.

Provide opportunities that promote strong relationships, enhance communication, and proactively respond to residents' needs.

Objectives:

- Strengthen partnerships with local non-profits, faith based organizations, and government agencies to raise awareness of collective resources and opportunities.
- Re-establish prevention policy board or similar group of key community members that cohesively addresses a broad range of community concerns, streamlines communication, and engages residents.
- Engage and work with other City divisions to raise awareness and identify collaborative programming efforts.

ADDITIONAL ACTION ITEMS

In addition to the identified goals and objectives, additional action items were identified to enhance effectiveness:

1. **Improve Overall Communications and Marketing Efforts** – In the Community Services Survey, of the 40% of respondents who had not participated in any Community Services programs, more than half (60%) indicated that they did not know about the programs. This indicates that there is a need for more and/or better marketing and outreach to raise awareness about programs and encourage residents to participate.
2. **Research and Apply for Grants** – There are numerous grants opportunities for human services type of programs. However, there is no dedicated staff member who regularly researches and applies for grants. With a strategic plan in place that identifies strategic goals and objectives, applying for grants can be more targeted. Additionally, grant funding provides an opportunity for the City to pursue and utilize non-General Fund resource to help address community matters.

CONCLUSION

Through extensive assessment, community engagement, and program evaluation and analysis, the Human Services Office is excited to work towards goals and objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant. Progress towards goals and objectives will be evaluated annually and adjusted as necessary. Staff believes that by moving forward in the direction outlined in this plan, Human Services programs, services, and activities will continue to have a lasting and meaningful impact on the community.

**City of Santa Clarita
Human Services Office
COMMUNITY SERVICES SURVEY
Fall 2011
Summary of Results**

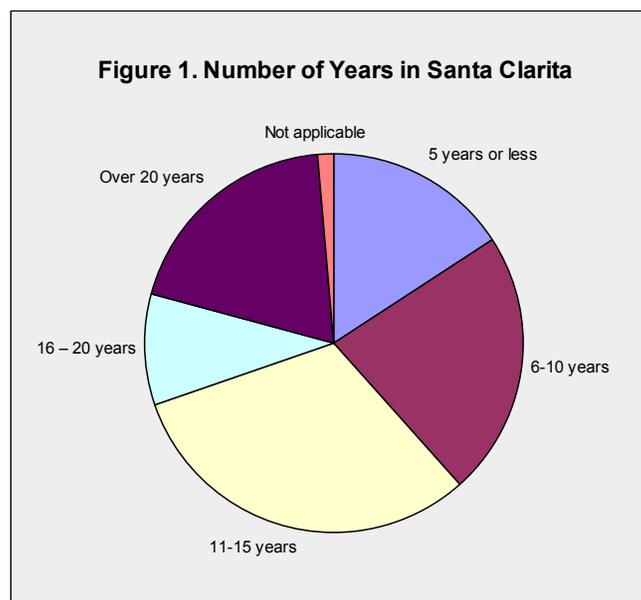
Background and Methodology

This report presents the results of a survey among residents of Santa Clarita to gauge participation in Community Services programs, assess community service needs, and determine residents' top concerns. The survey was also designed to help the City of Santa Clarita and the Human Services Office, in particular, enhance its programs and services so that they are continually responsive to community needs. This assessment is part of an ongoing process; staff will continue to survey and listen to the community, track and evaluate programs consistently, and make every effort to be proactive and stay on top of community issues and needs.

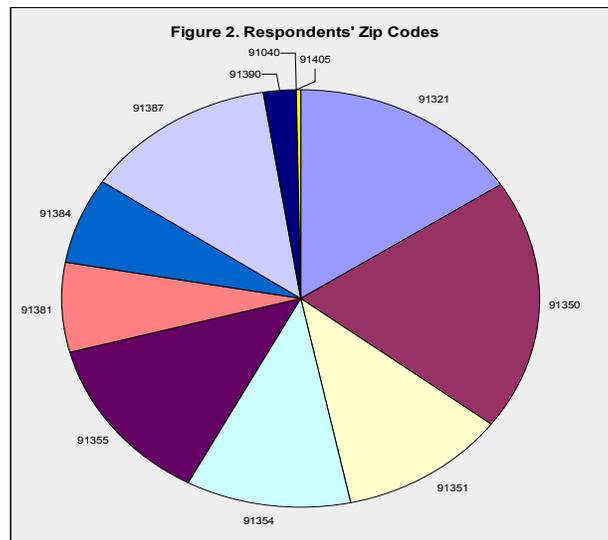
To collect the information contained in this report, Santa Clarita residents were invited to complete an online survey. Hard copies were also made available at various City facilities, including the three public libraries, the Newhall Community Center, and the WorkSource Center. Information about the survey was disseminated through press releases, social media, the City's website, schools, email blasts to local organizations and staff contacts, and at community events. A total of 662 residents completed the survey.

Respondents' Profile

Most of the survey respondents are long-time residents of Santa Clarita. Sixty percent have lived in Santa Clarita for over ten years, including 20 percent who have lived in the area for more than 20 years (Figure 1).



The respondents are spread out over the four Santa Clarita communities (Figure 2), distributed as follows: 27 percent from Canyon Country; 24 percent from Valencia; 20 percent from Saugus; and 16 percent from Newhall. Fourteen percent of those who completed the survey reside outside the City limits, including seven percent each from Stevenson Ranch and Castaic, and 0.3 percent from the San Fernando Valley.



A majority of the respondents (69 percent) are females (Figure 3). Age-wise, there is an almost even split between minors and adults, with 47 percent between 12 and 17 years old. Age distribution (Figure 4) is as follows: three percent are 18-24 years old; 24 percent in the 25-44 age range, 14 percent between 45 and 54 years; and 11 percent are 55 years or older.

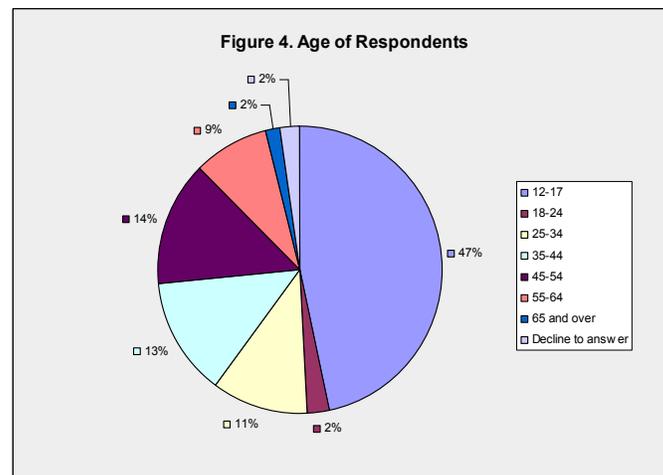
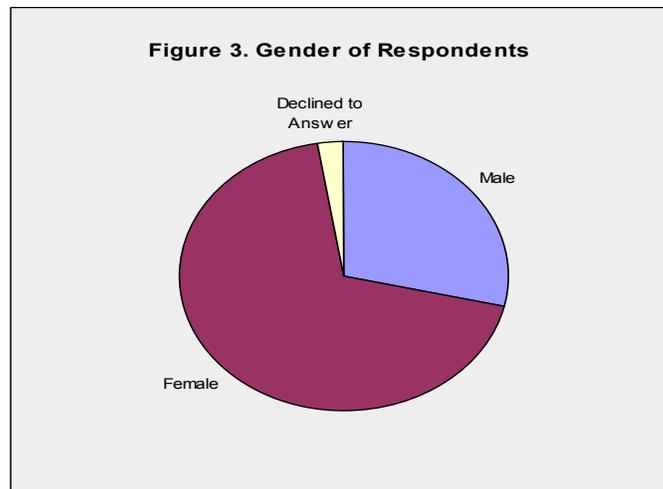
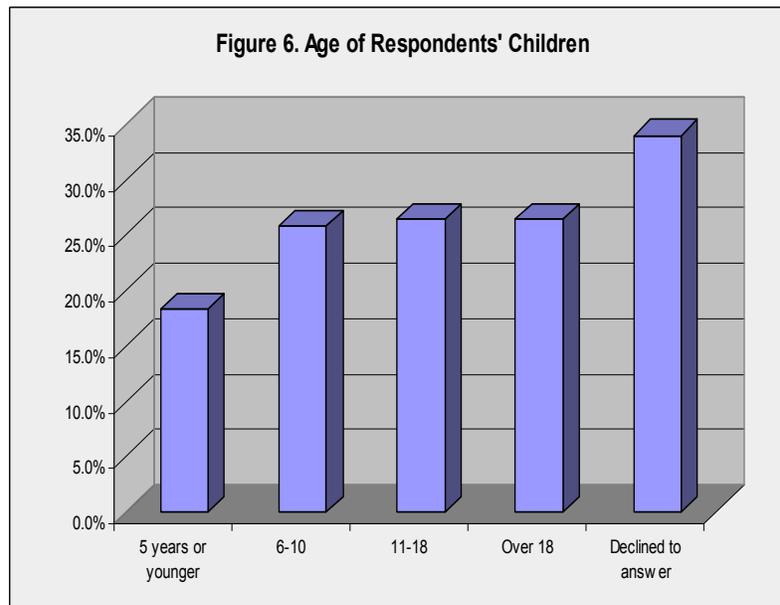
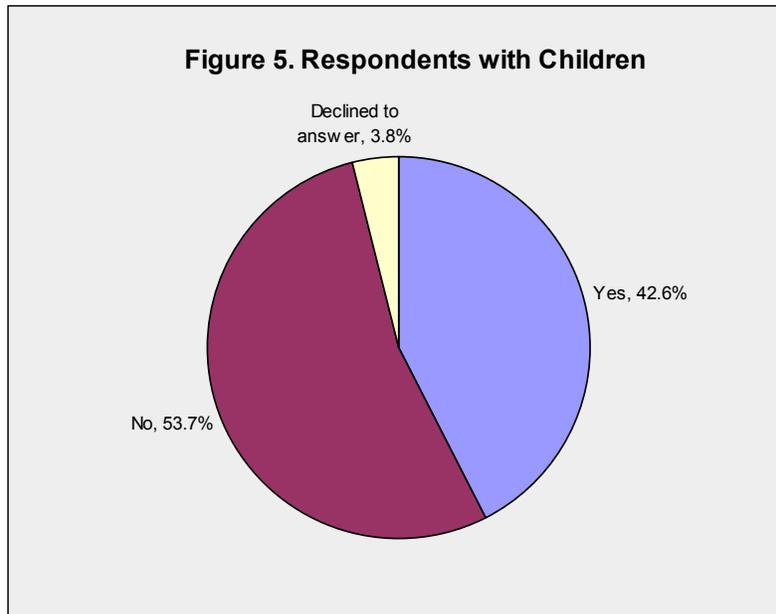


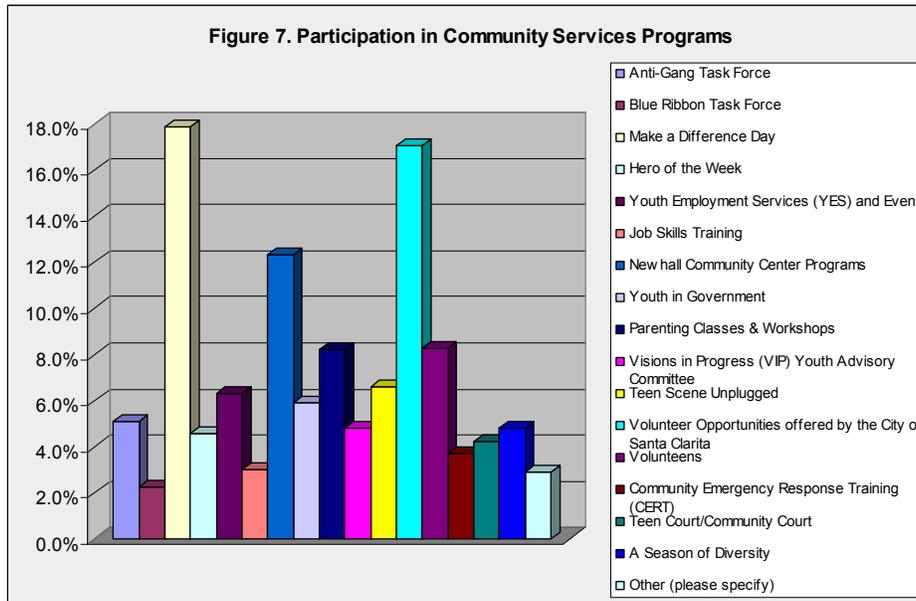
Figure 5 shows that only 43 percent have children, a number consistent with the fact that almost half of the respondents are 24 years or younger. While 18 percent of the respondents stated that they have children five years or younger, there is almost an even number of respondents who have children in the older age groups (Figure 6). Thirty-four percent of the respondents declined to answer this question.



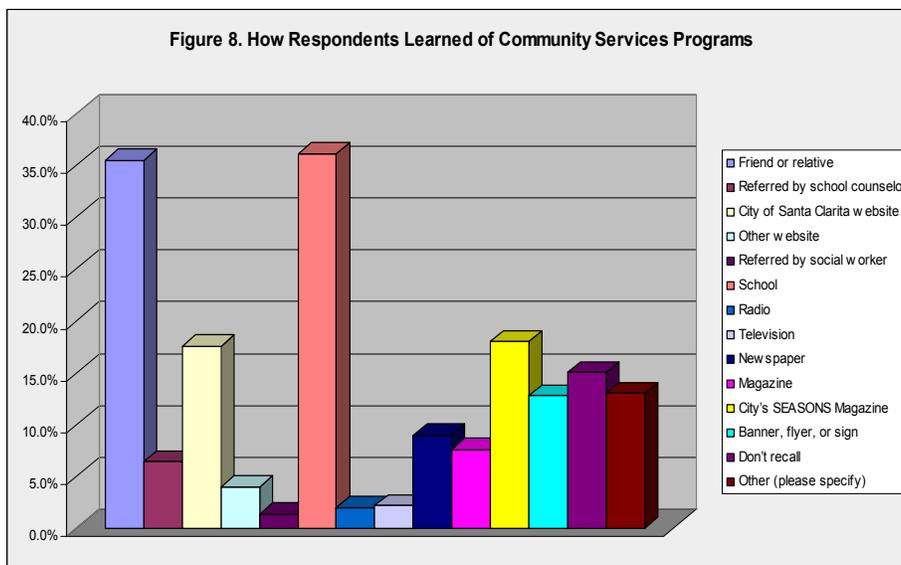
Participation in Community Services Programs

Over half (60 percent) of the respondents indicated that they have participated in different Community Services programs. Figure 7 shows the various Community Services programs and the rate of participation in each program. Results show that there is a high rate of community involvement and volunteerism among respondents, with 18 percent acknowledging that they

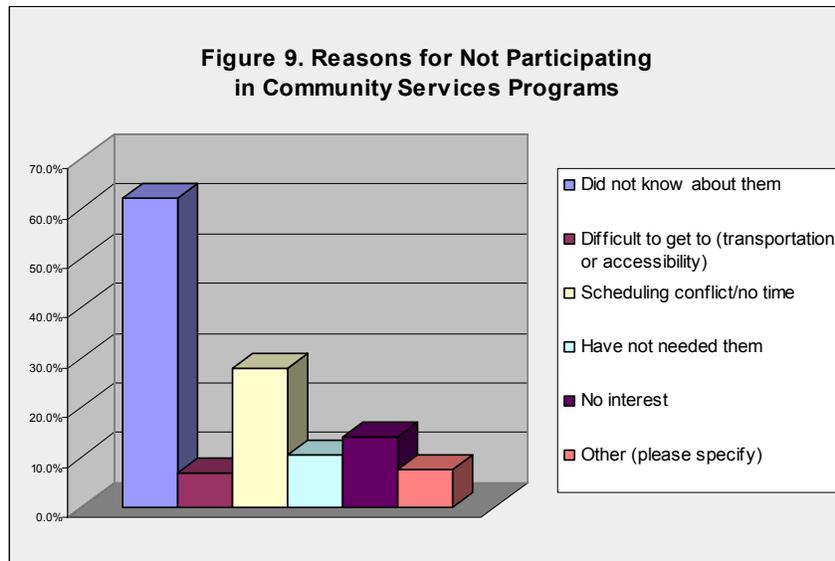
have participated in *Make a Difference Day*, 17 percent in volunteer opportunities offered by the City of Santa Clarita, and another eight percent as *Volunteers*. Community Center programs have the third highest rate of participation with 12 percent of respondents saying they have availed of the center’s programs. Eight percent have attended parenting classes and workshops, and 18 percent have participated in programs aimed to help at-risk youth (i.e., *Hero of the Week*, *Youth Employment Services*, *Job Skills Training*, and *Teen Court/Community Court*). Those who answered “Other” specified programs such as the *Youth Summit*, *NOMAD Art Lab* in the Valle Del Oro neighborhood, *Vital Intervention Directional Alternatives (VIDA)*, and *Human Relations Forum*, among others.



There are different ways by which respondents have heard about the City of Santa Clarita’s Community Services programs (Figure 8). On top of the list are schools (consistent with the fact that there is a high percentage of 12-17 year-old respondents) and friends/relatives. The City’s *Seasons Magazine* and website also prove to be good sources of information, as well as banners/flyers/signs. Collectively, 21 percent of respondents indicated that they got their information from various media outlets, including radio, television, newspapers, and magazines.



Of the 40 percent who have not participated in any Community Services program, more than half indicated that they did not know about the programs (Figure 9). Twenty-eight percent stated that they have no time or that the programs conflicted with their schedules, 14 percent are not interested, 11 percent have no need for the programs, and another seven percent said transportation or accessibility is an issue. Another eight percent of the respondents specified other barriers, including being new to Santa Clarita (two responses), not knowing how to participate (one response), and programs not being of quality (one response). Cost was also mentioned by two respondents and popular programs filling up quickly (one response), which may be references to programs other than those offered by Human Services.

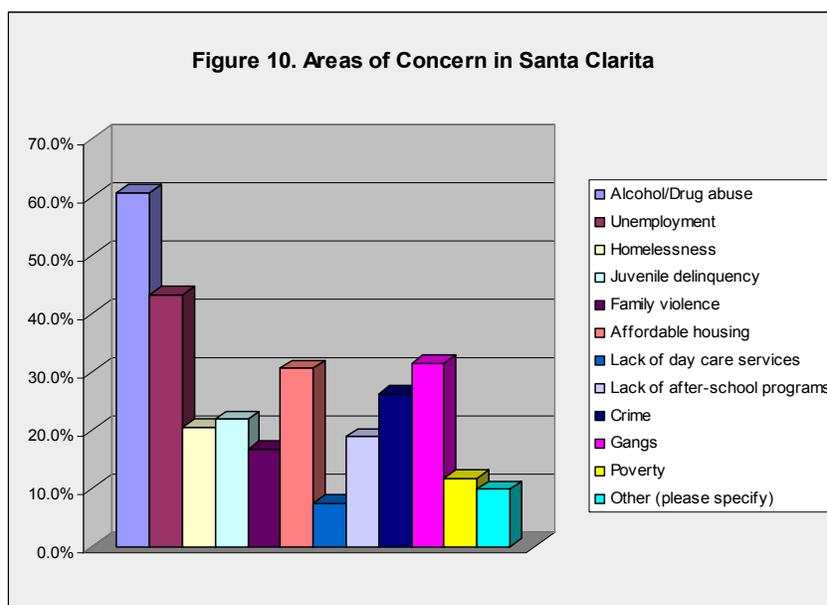


Community Concerns

To help the City be more responsive to community needs, the survey asked respondents to identify what they thought are the three top concerns in the community. Alcohol/drug abuse ranks number one, with 61 percent of the respondents saying it is a major concern, followed by unemployment (43 percent), and gangs (32 percent). Of those who ranked gangs as one of their top three concerns, 41 percent are youth aged 12-17. Figure 10 shows the community’s major concerns and are ranked from highest to lowest below:

1. Alcohol/Drug Abuse (61 percent)
2. Unemployment (43 percent)
3. Gangs (32 percent)
4. Affordable Housing (31 percent)
5. Crime (26 percent)
6. Juvenile Delinquency (22 percent)
7. Homelessness (21 percent)
8. Lack of After-School Programs (19 percent)
9. Family Violence (17 percent)
10. Poverty (12 percent)

In addition, respondents are also concerned about other issues such as the lack of day care services, graffiti, traffic/roads, bullying, racism, lack of activities for teens and young adults, and lack of senior facilities, among others.



Seventy-two percent of the respondents provided reasons why they considered these factors as community issues. Some answers are based on personal knowledge -- whether through personal experience with, or exposure to, the issue, through observations in the community, or what they see or hear in the news. For obvious reasons, respondents cited the economy as the cause of a number of these problems, stating that the current economic downturn leads to unemployment, homelessness, and crime, as well as stress triggering the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. Some claim that lack of adult supervision and parental involvement (perhaps due to households with two working parents) and the lack meaningful after-school activities for youth cause juvenile delinquency, teen use of drugs/alcohol, and gang involvement. Family issues come into play as well, with family violence, divorce, or alcoholism in the household as reasons that drive some kids into making the wrong choices.

A number of youth respondents said some of their peers think using drugs/alcohol is “cool,” that this is something they see constantly in school, with drugs and alcohol so easily accessible. Adult respondents mentioned that they moved to Santa Clarita for a safe environment in which to raise their kids, yet they have been noticing an increase in drugs/alcohol, gangs, and crime. Regardless of age, however, respondents agreed that all these concerns need to be addressed to protect youth, maintain a safe community, and make Santa Clarita a better place.

Analysis and Recommendations

This survey generated a good cross-section of Santa Clarita’s population in terms of the respondents’ age and area of residence. Most of the respondents are long-time residents of Santa Clarita and have witnessed the growth and changes in the community through the years. Of the adult respondents, 47 percent are between 25-44 years old, the age group most likely to have minor children and, therefore, most inclined to have concerns about a safe environment for their families and a keen interest in what is happening in the community. Meanwhile, the younger respondents provide a glimpse into their concerns on school campuses, a microcosm of the larger community. The youth’s responses are very telling, particularly their references to drugs/alcohol and gangs as concerns in their environment.

Overall participation in Community Services programs is over 60 percent, with the results showing that Santa Clarita residents have a high regard for volunteerism and civic engagement. Other than volunteer-related programs, each of the other Community Services programs average

about six percent participation among respondents. Moreover, the fact that 62 percent of those who have not participated did not know about the programs demonstrates that there is a need for more (or better) marketing and outreach to raise awareness about these programs and encourage residents to participate. Word-of-mouth seems to be an effective way to get the word out as well as the City's website and *Seasons Magazine*. Social media is an avenue that could be, and should be, utilized more consistently, especially for youth-oriented programs.

This survey gives the City and Human Services a fairly good insight into what residents regard as the important issues affecting their everyday lives and the community, as a whole. A number of the issues are directly related to the economy (i.e., unemployment, affordable housing, homelessness, poverty) and, therefore, outside of the Human Services Division's purview. Most of the other concerns, however, including alcohol/drug abuse, gangs, and juvenile delinquency, are already being addressed by existing Community Services programs (e.g., Blue Ribbon Task Force, Anti-Gang Task Force, Community Center programs, Hero of the Week, Youth Employment Services, Community Court/Teen Court, etc.). Nonetheless, it is evident that more needs to be done to better address these issues.

There are opportunities for enhancements in current programming to ensure that they are consistently responsive to community needs. Such improvements could include program design and structure, as well as how programs and services are marketed to reach target audiences.

It is also an opportune time to consider policy changes and develop new comprehensive strategies, particularly those that engage school districts, the Sheriff's Department, and community-based organizations. Strong partnerships with these agencies and the community are crucial to effect long-lasting changes that would best serve and benefit Santa Clarita's residents.

HUMAN SERVICES OFFICE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

ADMINISTRATION

- Arts Commission
- Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission Support
- City Council Support
- Division Budget
- Division Administrative Support
- Strategic Planning
- Staff Development, Training, and Recruitment

EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The purpose of the Education and Prevention Section is to provide a variety of classes, programs, services, and lifelong opportunities that educate, engage, develop, and strengthen the community. Program areas include:

Emergency Management & Special Projects

- Preparedness
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Crossing Guards
- Grants Research, Coordination, and Applications
- Marketing and Communications

Civic Engagement and Participation

- Volunteers (Events, City Departments, Canyon Recreation Center, Special Projects, Newhall Community Center)
- Community Services Grants
- Community Gardens
- Youth in Government
- Volunteers
- Youth Advisory Committee
- Senior Volunteer Program

Youth and Family Development

- Drug Free Youth in Town (DFYIT)
- Family Education (Workshops & Classes)
- Community and Teen court
- Blue Ribbon Task Force
- Heroin Kills Campaign

OUTREACH AND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

The purpose of the Outreach and Neighborhood Services Section is to enhance the quality of life, facilitate partnerships between the City and other citywide resources, and promote self-sufficiency through the development of neighborhood committees and targeted outreach services and programs.

Newhall Community Center

- Events
- Classes
- Exercise/Fitness/Sports
- Agency Partnerships
- Summer Camp
- After School Program
- Community Events
- Mentoring
- Workshops

Outreach, Gangs, and Graffiti Removal

- Anti-Gang Taskforce
- Graffiti Task Force
- Graffiti Removal
- Youth Employment
- Job Skills for Young Adults
- Neighborhood Committees and Programs
- Friday Night Lights
- Community Outreach Workers
- School Attendance Resource Board
- Employment Training
- Resource & Referral