



## **About the Social Development Commission**

The Social Development Commission (SDC) is a community action agency and a commission on poverty. That makes SDC different from other community action agencies. It is mandated by the county to provide programs and services that empower Milwaukee County residents but it also must incorporate research and advocacy in its work.

SDC serves all of Milwaukee County. It serves a diverse population and has a significant number of bilingual employees.

Milwaukee County still has the state's highest poverty rate at 18% .

As documented in SDC's 2018 Outcomes Report, SDC serves on average more than 8,000 individuals each year. The majority of customers are between 22 and 44 years of age.

**Data –Driven:** Social Development Commission programming and tactics are data driven. Based on responses from the most recent community needs assessment and further study, SDC has identified three priorities that Milwaukee County residents experiencing poverty say must be addressed. They are:

- Need for Higher Wage Jobs
- Housing
- Mental Health

### **1. Need for Higher Wage Jobs:**

**Almost half of respondents indicated that the biggest way to positively affect poverty in Milwaukee is through the creation and access to jobs.**

This has been consistent with the 2009, 2013 and 2015 surveys. Respondents indicated that more jobs providing living wages (family sustaining) would solve many of the issues surrounding poverty.

To address this major barrier keeping Milwaukee County residents trapped in poverty, SDC has launched three programs addressing unemployment. They are 1) ChefStart Culinary Program, 2) Absolute Advantage Pre-Apprenticeship Program and 3) YouthBuild, a program that equips young people with construction skills while helping them obtain their high school diploma.

## **2. Housing:**

According to a recent news report .... **“new Department of Health Services (DHS) data shows that In 2018, 9.2% of children under 6 who were tested for lead poisoning in the City of Milwaukee had blood lead levels above the threshold for identifying poisoning ( $\geq 5$  mcg/dL).”**

One of the biggest issues facing Milwaukee County residents today is a lack of affordable and quality housing. Lead exposure through a variety of sources continues to threaten Milwaukee County children.

In 2018, SDC served more than 1000 households. As a result, residents experienced improved health and safety due to improvements made within their homes. This includes reduction or elimination of lead, radon, carbon dioxide.

SDC also helped approximately 800 households become more energy efficient.

## **3. Mental Health:**

It is important to note that in SDC’s community needs assessment, 21.9% of respondents stated some sort of personal issues kept them in poverty. To address this critical issue, the Social Development Commission assigns case managers to customers enrolled in programs. Using a “wraparound” approach, case managers identify other needs such as substance abuse and mental health issues.

SDC’s Health and Wellness teams are also deployed in Milwaukee County schools. In summary, programs and services provided by SDC’s Health and Wellness team includes: education awareness presentations, screening and clinical assessments and prescription advocacy and referral service.

Other services SDC offers includes the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. It is the largest in the county. Last year it completed 4,730 federal returns, 5,474 state returns and provided more than \$7 million in total refunds.

Other projects planned in 2020 include:

- Housing and Economic Development Projects
- Lead Abatement
- An initiative in conjunction with Milwaukee Public Schools and influential partners to improve outcomes at a designated Milwaukee public high school.

SDC has served Milwaukee County residents for more than 50 years. It is an organization with expertise and trust in Milwaukee County.

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