

Center For Justice

Legal Needs Assessment Report

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Spokane, WA

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Background

History of Washington State Legal Aid

In 2003, the Washington Supreme Court commissioned a Task Force on Civil Equal Justice Funding. The task force conducted a study of the civil legal needs of low-income and vulnerable populations in Washington. It found that approximately 87 percent of low-income households experience at least one legal problem each year without the help of an attorney.

History of Traditional Legal Aid

Traditional legal aid has been unable to fully address the high demand of free legal services. Challenges that arise from traditional legal aid are largely associated with the CLEAR (Coordinated Legal Education, Advice and Referral service) phone line intakes. The volume of people trying to access the CLEAR phone line makes it almost impossible to get through to a person and clients often have to wait on the phone for several hours in order to talk to an operator. The CLEAR phone line does not have enough operators to make this system efficient. Additionally, the operating hours of the CLEAR system limits the system to those who are able to call between eight a.m. and five p.m. This leaves out a large population of people who either work or attend classes during this time frame. Traditional legal aid is also geared toward assigning an individual attorney to each individual person who comes through the program. This approach can be very expensive and time consuming.

Center for Justice Legal Assessment

In response to the 2003 study, the Center for Justice created a Community Advocacy program that seeks to help low-income people who are unable to seek the help of an attorney. The Community Advocacy program utilizes trained volunteers and interns to advocate on behalf of low-income clients under the supervision of an attorney. The Community Advocacy program has sought to better serve the community by creating a Community Outreach program. In 2007, the Outreach program conducted several legal education programs at local community centers in Spokane, Washington. The Center for Justice conducted this legal needs assessment to help pinpoint the largest unmet legal needs in the community and to increase the number of clients from diverse backgrounds. The Center for Justice also wanted to expand the delivery of free services to the community and a needs assessment would provide the necessary information for how an effective outreach program could best be implemented.

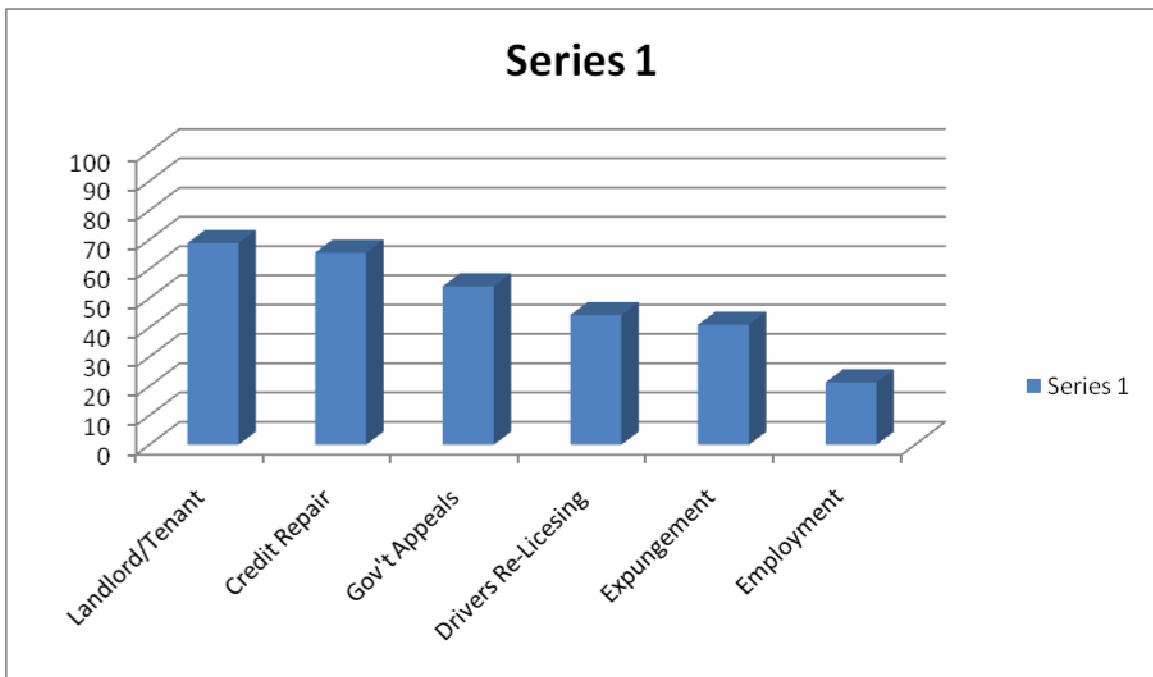
How the Assessment was conducted:

The legal needs assessment took four months to conduct. The survey consisted of interviews with a small group of service providers and an online survey completed by a much larger group of service providers in Spokane. The remainder of this report shows the data collected and provides an outline for future successful outreach programs.

Survey Results

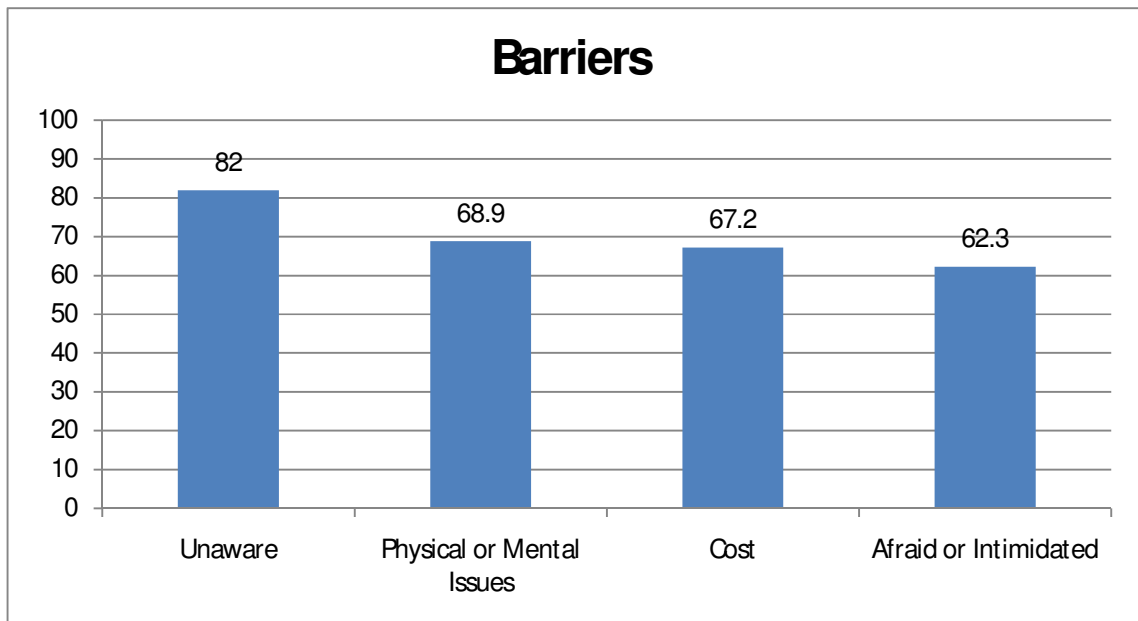
Our Current Services

The first question on the survey focused on the current services offered in the Center For Justice's Community Advocacy Program. Service providers were asked to rate the Center's services as to which are most valuable to their organizations and clients. The two services that were rated the highest were landlord/tenant issues and credit repair. (Community Advocacy does not offer any family law services)



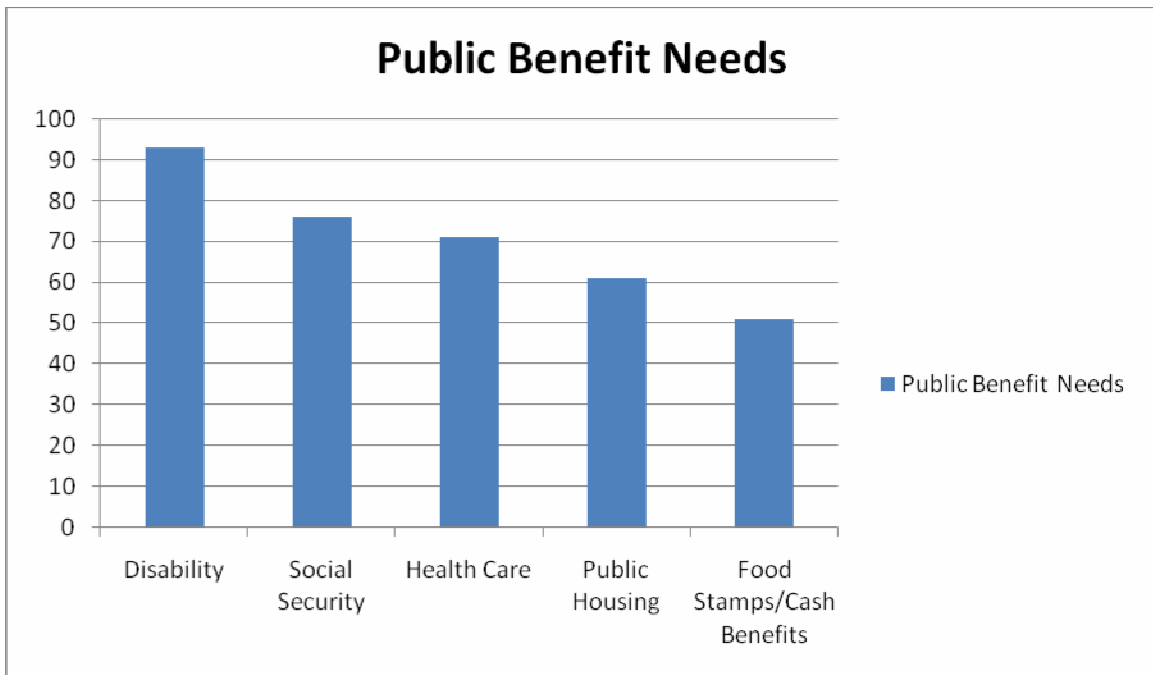
Barriers

There are four significant barriers that were common among service providers. The first barrier is that many clients were unaware of free legal services. Another recurring barrier, according to many providers, is that clients have physical or mental health issues that may keep them from seeking help. The high cost associated with legal services is a third barrier. A fourth barrier, according to providers, is that their clients are simply afraid or intimidated by legal matters; in addition, service providers communicated a sense of hopelessness that low income individuals encounter when they are trying to receive free legal assistance. Many service providers thought mistakenly that there are no free clinics in Spokane that can assist low income people with parenting plans or custody issues. The overall consensus among service providers was that there are simply not enough free legal services available. The Center For Justice does currently offer these free legal services: consumer protection problems, credit repair, criminal record expungement, driver re-licensing, government benefits, landlord/tenant disputes, unpaid wages and employment issues.



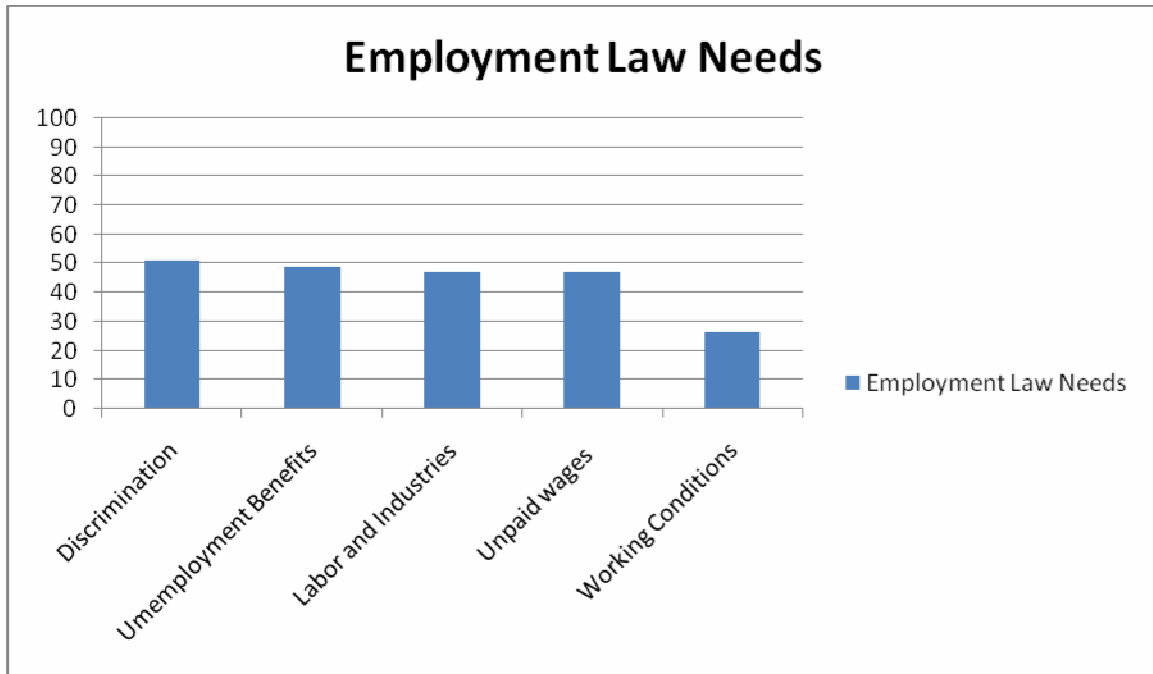
Public Benefits Legal Needs

The highest needs for public benefit law in Spokane are disability, social security and health care. There were no additional suggestions by service providers.



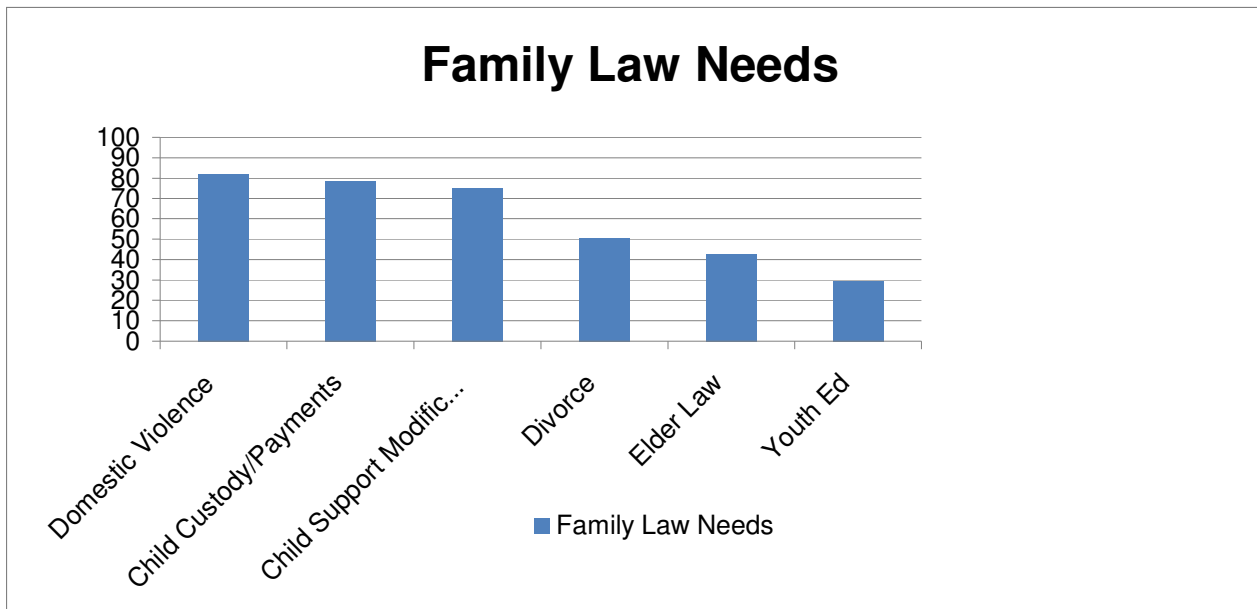
Employment Law

The three highest needs in Spokane for Employment law are discrimination, unemployment benefits, and Labor and Industries. Service Providers also noted that many clients struggle to find employment if they have a criminal record. Another issue is that many clients are unable to discern which questions are illegal in an employment interview. Other issues that arise in employment law are in relation to contract work, and also when a disabled person is working while receiving SSI/SSDI.



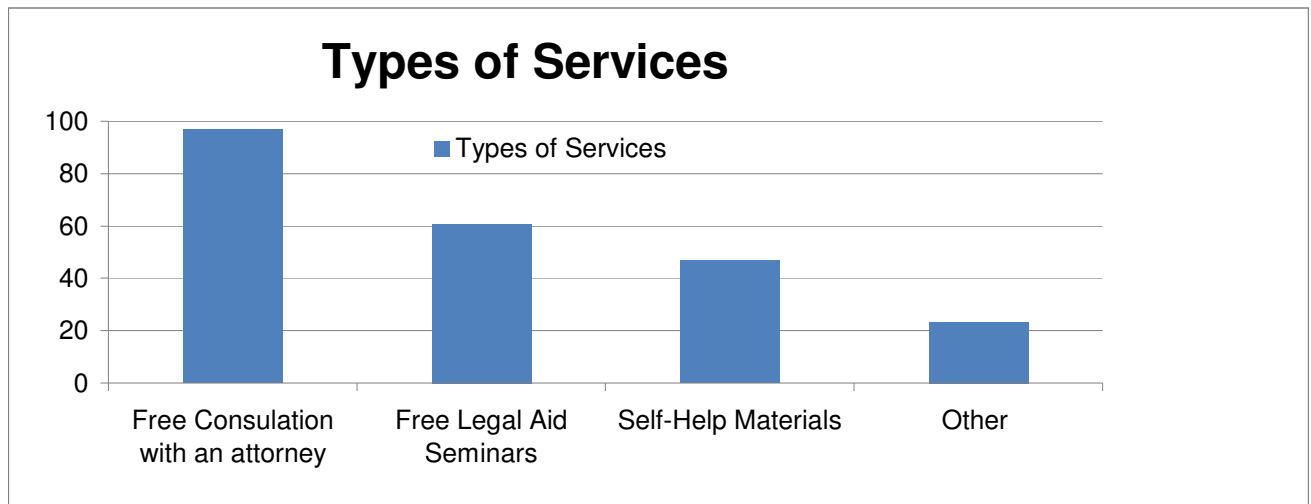
Family Law

Domestic Violence, Child Custody/Dependency Payments, and Child Support Modification were the issues with the highest need in the family law category. Service providers also noted that emancipation, guardianship issues of minors, felony charges, child visitation rights, and automatic removal of children from DD parents remain issues within the Spokane community.



Types of Services

Service providers overwhelmingly said that a free consultation with an attorney was the most valuable and effective way for reaching their clients. Other suggestions included: simplification of legal rights and terms to make them more understandable, consistent outreach events at the service provider locations, educational seminars for case managers and other community providers so that they know what legal resources are available.



Locations for Outreach Events

1. Community Centers

These particular community centers are eager to have some type of outreach from the Center for Justice: East Central Community Center, West Central Community Center, Spokane Valley Partners (Spokane Valley Community Center). Some key strengths to using community centers are that clients are already utilizing multiple services at the location and would feel familiar with the location. Community Centers would also cut down on transportation issues for low income individuals who may not have the means to travel to our downtown location. A key challenge with community centers is in finding some type of incentive that will get people to come on a night or weekend to an outreach effort.

2. Shelters/Drop In-Centers

Shelters are a very viable option for conducting outreach efforts. One particular advantage is that they have a consistent flow of people already using their services and the Center For Justice could try to overlap on the time that they would normally spend at a shelter. There is less of an issue of finding incentives for people to attend events put on at shelters because they already live there. Another advantage is that the Center would be able to utilize the case workers who would be able to guarantee/refer specific clients to an outreach program. This provides the Center's staff with a filter for clients with mental health issues and clients who have real legal issues. Some other downfalls to a shelter or drop-in center are that some are only open to their current clients and some people may feel uncomfortable going to a shelter to seek legal aid.

3. SACK Dinner

The Sack dinner is a service of Spokane Neighborhood Action Programs. It is a free meal once a week on Thursdays and is currently located at Mid-City Concerns in downtown Spokane. This dinner draws many low-income individuals in Spokane. On an average night there are anywhere from 60 people to over a 100 people. Once again this is a location that is already drawing low-income populations and it would be easy to take advantage of this large crowd.

4. Churches

One church that is interested in the community outreach programs is Westminster Congregational Church. The pastor is Andi Castro-Lang. Westminster also has a free meal about once a month that is usually provided on a Saturday and is geared towards low income people because of the church's close location to downtown. Another church downtown that helps low income populations is Central United Methodist which runs the Shalom ministries. Shalom Ministries serves free meals throughout the week. Depending on the space and location, this could be another good

5. Women's Hearth

The Women's Hearth helps low income women in Spokane. It received a grant for helping clients with legal services and is working with Carol to develop a workshop on landlord/tenant issues.

6. Service Providers

This includes organizations like Goodwill or The Arc of Spokane that have clients who have legal issues. Many of these populations are very low-income and fit right into our ideal low-income client. Here is a list of service providers that are interested in

partnering with some type of outreach program. Goodwill, Arc of Spokane, SNAP, Volunteers of America: Hope House, and St. Margaret's Shelter. These might also be a good venue to pursue some type of partnership and to develop outreach programs. Social workers would be able to provide incentives through their programs to attend our outreach programs. They are also a good barometer of types of legal topics their clients need to hear about.

Incentives for Outreach Programs:

The Center for Justice needs to develop incentives that would be appealing to low-income families. This was part of the reason for the community showing interest in the previous outreach programs. Some ideas for incentives are:

1. Show-case it as a Community Event: open to the whole neighboring community, instead of as a free legal aid event and trying to make it family friendly.
2. Free dinner: Spaghetti Feed, Chili Feed: these items could be donated by local grocery stores and would allow parents to bring the kids
3. Free dinner: donated by a local restaurant, this might be a favorable option since most of the families are low-income and a catered meal from a popular restaurant would be appealing.
4. Free Movie Night : for parents to bring their families to events. This type of an event would help build up a good reputation within the community.
5. Game Night: Kids can come for free, play games and get prizes, while parents attend a free legal information workshop.
6. Door Prizes from Dollar store or gift baskets could also be appealing.
7. Gift Certificates donated by local restaurant ie: Sonic Burgers donates \$5 gift cards to everyone who attends a free legal workshop.

The incentives need to get people's attention and get them to want to come to the event.

Summary of Survey Data

The survey shows that the most favored free legal outreach programs are free legal consultations. Free legal consultations received almost a ninety-seven percent agreement from all service providers. This type of outreach program would also help alleviate the fear and intimidation that low income individuals may feel when they face complex legal issues. Previously Center for Justice conducted a few outreach events that focused on providing free legal information which were geared at a specific topic

in a workshop or seminar type setting. The second most important issue is that over eighty percent of the service providers believed that their clients aren't even aware of the free services offered by the Center. The Center for Justice needs to spend time on creating name visibility in the community that will create awareness about its free services. This could also increase the number of minority populations that will use our center. Future outreach events may not be very successful until prospective clients become aware of free legal services by moving the Center's services to community centers CFJ, could become more visible and accessible to the community.

Appendix

These are the organizations that participated in the survey. There are several agencies that had more than one survey completed because employees from different departments filled out the survey.

1. *Transitions/Women's Hearth*

Transitional Programs for women sponsors and initiates programs which, in faithfulness to the mission of Jesus, foster the personal growth and wholeness of women and children in need. Transitional Programs for Women pursues this mission through the operation of the *Women's Hearth*, *Transitional Living Center*, *EduCare*, and *Miryam's House*.

2. *Spokane Mental Health and Spokane Mental Health PACT Team*

Spokane Mental Health offers numerous mental health services. It is a consumer oriented provider with emphasis on recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

3. *Habitat for Humanity*

Habitat for Humanity-Spokane is an ecumenical nonprofit Christian ministry bringing the community together to build decent, affordable homes for all God's people in need.

4. *SNAP: Spokane Neighborhood Action Program/ IDA Program/Homeless Program/Feed Spokane/Housing Improvements Program*

SNAP works for low-income and vulnerable people by: providing human services, housing and economic opportunities in a manner that enhances dignity and Advocating for programs, policies and resources that maximize individual capacities and promote communities.

5. *Displaced Homemaker Program/Change Point*

Change Point has helped displaced homemakers since 1979. They offer comprehensive transition classes as well as a focus on the specific needs of displaced homemakers through personal counseling, one-day workshops and

pre-employment training programs including resume building, cover letters, and interview training.

6. Lutheran Community Services/ Victim Rights Response Team and Crime Victim Service Center of Lutheran Community Services

Lutheran Community offers adoption services, advocacy and social justice, alcohol/drug treatment and education, community education and prevention, crisis intervention, disaster response, employee assistance programs, family support centers and services, foster care, homecare, mental health counseling, multicultural counseling and outreach, parent education and support, refugee resettlement, senior outreach and support, refugee resettlement, senior outreach and support, teen pregnancy prevention, transitional housing, violence prevention and counseling, volunteer services, and youth asset development.

7. Cup of Cool Water

Cup of Cool Water ministers to street kids by providing an overnight shelter, educational classes, outreach, drop-in center, Mentoring and discipleship.

8. Voices

VOICES mission is to strengthen individual voices for opportunity, income, child care, education, support, and other low-income issues in our community. VOICES strongly believes that low-income people are a necessary active part of finding effective solutions to poverty and that the collective voice creates positive change.

9. Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery

The mission of the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery is to provide immediate refuge for children and support to strengthen families through 24 hour care, parent education, crisis counseling, and referrals.

10. Employment Security Department: Community Justice Center: Department of Corrections

A combination of probation office, treatment alternatives for substance and alcohol abuse, and job hunters and skills class.

11. Spokane City Council: Bob Apple

12. Catholic Charities/St. Margaret's Shelter and Alumni Program

St. Margaret's is an emergency and transitional shelter for homeless women and their children. It provides housing, case management, parenting classes, and life skills training to homeless women. St. Margaret's also provides emergency shelter to mothers with high-risk newborns. Catholic Charities administers 15 programs which provide food, shelter, clothing, education, counseling and support to those in need, regardless of creed: Bernadette Place, Childbirth & Parenting Alone (CAPA), Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services, Christmas Bureau, Counseling, House of Charity, Housing, Parish Social Ministry, Refugee and Immigration Services, Regional Offices, Respect Life, St. Anne's Children and Family Center, St. Margaret's Shelter, Senior Services.

13. Union Gospel Mission Crisis Shelter

A safe, temporary refuge for women in emergency situations is available at the Crisis Shelter for Women & Children. Unlike many local shelters, the Crisis Shelter accepts women who have accompanying children.

14. Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium : One Stop Housing

The Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium is a membership association that promotes the long-term availability and maximum use of safe, affordable housing for people of low income in the Greater Spokane area. All total, our members have produced, preserved and rehabilitated over 2700 units of affordable rental housing and developed over 1800 homeownership opportunities for families of low income.

15. Spokane Housing Ventures

SHV was created with a two-pronged mission: to preserve existing and develop new housing for families and individuals with limited incomes and disabilities and to help residents access supportive services.

16. Northwest Fair Housing Alliance

The mission of the Northwest Fair Housing Alliance is to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunity for the people of Washington State through education, counseling and advocacy.

17. Community Minded Enterprises

Community Minded Enterprises is a non-profit that focuses on healthcare access, disability issues, childcare, workforce development, youth empowerment, and mental health.

18. Spokane Housing Authority

Created in 1971, the Spokane Housing Authority "is dedicated to increasing safe, affordable housing and providing opportunities to persons experiencing barriers to housing." In 2005, SHA was renamed Northeast Washington Housing Solutions and renewed its mission to state.

19. Project Hope

Project Hope helps students from minority backgrounds enter health professions.

20. Family Service Spokane

Family Service Spokane provides mental health care to adults, children and adolescents who are dealing with a mental illness or mental health-related issues.

21. Family Support Center

No Information available

22. Alexandria's House: Volunteers of America

Alexandria's House is a transitional living facility for pregnant and parenting teenagers and their babies. The home, established in 1990, has six furnished bedrooms, three bathrooms as well as shared kitchen, living and laundry

facilities. Alexandria's House offers comprehensive case management and 24-hour staff supervision. It is licensed by the state of Washington.

23. Spokane Valley Partners

Spokane Valley Partners is the community center in the Spokane Valley. Its services include: clothing bank, food bank, cooking classes, emergency services, protective payee and season programs like Coats for Kids or the Tree of Sharing.

24. Central Valley HEART (Homeless Education and Resource Team)

The Spokane Valley HEART Consortia is a collaborative program of the Central Valley, East Valley and West Valley School Districts. The Consortia is in place to address and support the educational needs of students who find themselves in temporary or transitional housing during the school year. The Consortia works closely with the Spokane Valley Partners (formerly the Spokane Valley Community Center), area shelter and housing providers, the Spokane Homeless Coalition, and the City and County of Spokane. It works to assure students, and their families, in temporary or transitional housing situations feel supported and encouraged while they secure permanent housing.

Organizations that were also included in the assessment through a direct appointment were:

1. SNAP

SNAP works for low-income and vulnerable people by: providing human services, housing and economic opportunities in a manner, which enhances dignity, it advocates for programs, policies and resources that maximize individual capacities and promote communities.

2. Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium

The Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium is a membership association that promotes the long-term availability and maximum use of safe, affordable housing for people of low income in the Greater Spokane area. All total, our members have produced, preserved and rehabilitated over 2700 units of affordable rental housing and developed over 1800 homeownership opportunities for families of low income.

3. LGBT Community Center

LGBTQ community center provides education, advocacy and wellness programs.

4. Hope House: Volunteers of America

Originally known as the Downtown Women's Shelter, Hope House was founded in response to the 1997 serial murders of women on the streets of Spokane to offer women protection from violence on the street. Operated by Volunteers of America since 2001, Hope House is dedicated to making a significant difference in the lives of homeless women.

5. Spokane Valley Partners

Spokane Valley Partners is the community center in the Spokane Valley. Its services include: clothing bank, food bank, cooking classes, emergency services, protective payee and season programs like Coats for Kids or the Tree of Sharing.

6. The Arc of Spokane

The Arc of Spokane provides residential support, homeownership opportunities, financial management, a community center, advocacy, family support, supported employment for people with disabilities.

7. Inland Northwest Business Alliance

The Inland Northwest Business Alliance (INBA) is a 501 (c)6 non-profit organization of GLBTQ/Allied businesses, professionals and individuals who have joined together to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere for individuals to network and socialize.

8. St. Margaret's Shelter

St. Margaret's is an emergency and transitional shelter for homeless women and their children. It provides housing, case management, parenting classes, and life skills training to homeless women. St. Margaret's also provides emergency shelter to mothers with high-risk newborns.

9. Westminster Congregational Church

10. World Relief

World Relief offers child development services, health services, refugee care, immigrant services, and trafficking victim response services.

11. Easter Seals: Northeast Community Center

Provides educational classes for low-income families.

12. Goodwill

Goodwill offers job placement services, social services for families, job placement services, re-entry programs, and workforce development services.

Organizations that participated in a phone interview

1. Family Service Spokane

Family Service Spokane provides mental health care to adults, children and adolescents who are dealing with a mental illness or mental health-related issues.

2. Catholic Charities: Immigration Services

Catholic Charities administers 15 programs which provide food, shelter, clothing, education, counseling and support to those in need, regardless of creed. Its programs include: Bernadette Place, Childbirth & Parenting Alone (CAPA), Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Relief Services, Christmas Bureau, Counseling, House of Charity, Housing, Parish Social Ministry, Refugee and Immigration Services, Regional Offices, Respect Life, St. Anne's Children and Family Center, St. Margaret's Shelter, Senior Services.

3. Christ Clinic

Offers free medical services for physical, physiological, and spiritual needs.

4. *Interfaith Hospitality Network*

Interfaith is a network of faith organizations that helps families that have become homeless by housing them in churches until they can help find housing and services to help the families get themselves on their feet.

5. *East Central Community Center*

East Central Community Center offers parenting classes, DD recreation and social integration programs, HeadStart, Neighborhood Resource Officer, Primary Care Medical Clinic, Senior Center, Youth recreation programs and a computer center.

6. *Transitions/Women's Hearth*

Transitional Programs for women sponsors and initiates programs which, in faithfulness to the mission of Jesus, foster the personal growth and wholeness of women and children in need. Transitional Programs for Women pursues this mission through the operation of the *Women's Hearth*, *Transitional Living Center*, *EduCare*, and *Miryam's House*.