

Affordable Housing Tops the List of Needs of At-Risk Families in San Diego County

As a follow-up to the August CJ Fax detailing the reported challenges faced by at-risk youth and families in San Diego County, Table 1 presents additional data on the gaps in services as identified in a survey of over 700 providers and consumers. Specifically, this survey asked respondents to identify both the challenges and the gaps in services for families who are accessing services at government and community-based agencies.

Respondents overwhelmingly cited affordable housing as the most glaring deficit to at-risk families in the region. Although respondents did not reach the same degree of consensus in identifying the main gaps in services, they were in greater agreement when identifying the top challenges for families. For example, more than 70 percent of respondents agreed on several challenges facing families, whereas there was only one service gap (affordable housing) that the majority of respondents agreed upon. For 40 percent or more of respondents, the top gaps included services for: youth in general (mentoring and truancy); addressing specific issues (incarcerated parents, mental health and substance abuse interventions, gang interventions, safe housing/shelters); and supporting the entire family (affordable after school programs and child care, parenting skills).

**Table 1
TOP SERVICE NEEDS GAPS FOR AT-RISK FAMILIES**

Percentage Indicating the Greatest Gaps in Services		
60% or More	40% or More	30% or More
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Affordable Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mentoring programs ✓ Gang intervention services ✓ Mental health services ✓ Children of incarcerated parent ✓ Truancy services ✓ Substance abuse services ✓ Safe housing/Shelters ✓ Parenting skills ✓ Affordable after school and child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reentry services ✓ Transportation ✓ Kinship services ✓ Recreational activities ✓ Health care ✓ Domestic violence services ✓ Special education services ✓ Employment services ✓ Life skills training ✓ Cultural awareness and immigration services

SOURCE: SANDAG San Diego County Youth, Family and Community Survey (May 2005)

The intent of this survey, which was conducted at the direction of the San Diego County Partnership Workgroup of the Commission on Children, Youth and Families, was to inform San Diego County Probation Department and Health and Human Services Agency of the challenges and needs of families accessing their services. Overall, this broad gap analysis suggests the need for multi-faceted solutions that can help ease the economic burden facing families (e.g., affordable housing and child care), as well as address their individual needs (e.g., mental health and substance abuse treatment).