

Community Conversations Executive Summary



2017

An open and honest dialogue with Allen County residents about the state of our community

United Way of Allen County has been a respected convener of resources.

In our **more than 90-year history** in this community, we have worked to make a difference, from raising financial resources through workplace campaigns to putting volunteers to work through our annual Day of Caring.

We believe **we can do more**. We are adding to our work, looking at additional ways we can improve the lives of all who call Allen County home. Our community told us the kind of place they aspire to build. We want you to help us get there. We hope this information helps you better understand your community and shows you ways you can work alongside United Way to help us **make a difference**.

For more than a year, United Way of Allen County listened to our community. Using an approach developed and honed over decades by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, United Way “turned outward” from our boardrooms and committees. We looked to the community to define what it wanted to be, where it wanted to go, and what barriers were in the way. United Way learned that if we made more intentional choices about creating change, we could have a greater impact in our community.

Our staff conducted over 50 Community Conversations, in addition to many meetings with local business leaders. These Community Conversations involved more than 500 Allen County residents of all ages and were held at a variety of locations. We talked to people on buses, met with groups at area places of worship and library branches, and talked with teens in their high school classrooms.

Over the course of these conversations, certain consistent aspirations emerged.

Residents want to live in safe neighborhoods that foster a healthy lifestyle and a sense of belonging where they can feel connected to each other and the resources in their community.

A recent multi-state study completed by Rutgers University in partnership with United Ways around the country showed a growing segment of our population in Allen County is working and staying above the poverty line, but not able to attain financial stability.

The MISSION of United Way of Allen County is to ...

Unite our community's time, talent, and treasure to cultivate and advance community solutions that address the most critical issues around basic needs, education, financial stability, and healthy lives.

United Way learned through those conversations and our own data that working families struggling to make ends meet were at greatest risk of being left behind, even as Allen County continues to grow economically.

For these participants in our conversations, there were many barriers between what they wanted for their communities and what they could achieve. United Way understands for those 33,000 Allen County households struggling to attain financial stability, access to healthy lifestyles, safe neighborhoods, and connectedness could be difficult to attain.

POTENTIAL BARRIERS

SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS	HEALTHY LIFESTYLES	BELONGING	CONNECTED
Crime, violence, drugs, and gangs	Lack of resources and stigma around mental health services	Communities are segregated/lack of integration	Inadequacies in transportation and access to/knowledge of resources
Homelessness	Food deserts	Lack of understanding and representation of diversity (socio-economic, age, disability, sexual orientation, culture, etc.)	Lack of opportunities for youth (jobs, extracurricular activities, guidance, role models, etc.)
Need more safe and affordable housing	Prevalence of a variety of health issues	People are not welcoming of what they do not understand	Employment and education
Communities are not aesthetically pleasing		Lack of translation support/language barriers	

These barriers faced by this growing portion of our community are the intersection of this public knowledge, our expert knowledge, and our vision—an Allen County where all individuals and families discover and achieve their potential. This is the new focus for our work.

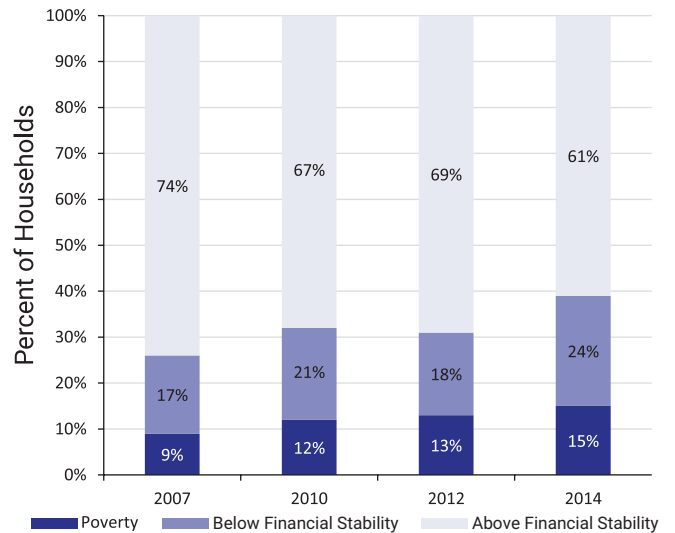


In January 2017, United Way's Board of Directors adopted a resolution based on this new focus:

"In concert with its mission, United Way of Allen County hereby resolves through community knowledge and collaboration to focus and align all future funding and resource deployment decisions to serve the needs of working populations challenged to make ends meet."

We know that if we can tackle specific issues facing this population, it will have a positive ripple effect on those living below the poverty line and those above. United Way fights for the basic needs, education, health, and financial stability of every person in our community. We believe that our role as a trusted community partner can begin to drive conversations about potential solutions to issues faced by this segment of our population.

Households by Income, 2007-2014



United Way of Allen County continues to bring together the community's resources, convening hand-raisers and game-changers to fight for Allen County.

Join us as we **LIVE UNITED.**

www.unitedwayallencounty.org