

# THE VISION INSTITUTE INC. OF COLORADO EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2016

CRITICAL NEEDS IN WELD AND LARIMER COUNTIES



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## **Introduction**

Founded by Dr. Maria Medina Ed. D. in 2016, The Vision Institute Inc. of Colorado serves Weld and Larimer Counties in Colorado and is governed by a Board of Directors, including the founder/CEO. The service area covers approximately 6583 square miles with over 618,000 people. Both counties are significantly more densely populated than Colorado, with Larimer County being significantly more densely populated than the United States. The primary racial/ethnic group in Larimer and Weld Counties is White/Non-Hispanic with Weld County consisting of significantly more Hispanic/Latino persons than Larimer County. Industry is diverse between the two counties. Weld County's primary industries are Agriculture and Mining, whereas Larimer County's industries are Education, Healthcare, and Retail. Colorado State University is located in Fort Collins, and it is considered to be a "college town" subject to influxes of population, transiency of population, retail industry, and lower socioeconomic status of most college age youth.

The mission of The Vision Institute is to provide basic needs emergency relief, including unexpected medical, to economically disadvantaged populations and one on one educational coaching to assist with creating long term self-sufficiency through education. The Vision Institute, Inc. fulfills the mission through providing enhancement grants to current food and shelter non-profits to assist with growing needs and through providing individual financial assistance for unexpected medical costs. These mechanisms further our collaborative efforts with granted organizations and educational opportunities for the target demographics both on an individual level and an organizational level.

The Vision Institute conducted an assessment of critical needs or Community Profile, in order to identify populations most at risk; identify needs and gaps in the existing systems; identify assets in the existing systems; and better understand what people view as the highest needs in the community. The Community Profile is the foundation for strategic planning and informs priorities for mission and non-mission work. By focusing on these priorities, The Vision Institute, Inc. ensures that resources and programs reach the individuals most impacted. The Community Profile will be utilized to determine priorities for grantmaking decisions in the community. The Community Profile is also a resource for the community members, grantees, partners, sponsors, policy makers and others to direct and commonly align their efforts.

## **Quantitative Data: Measuring Impact**

The purpose of The Vision Institute Inc. of Colorado Quantitative Data Report is to measure the critical needs of shelter, food, and medical access issues, within the communities of Fort Collins Colorado (Larimer County) and Greeley Colorado (Weld County). Through evaluation of the population characteristics/demographics, critical needs health indicators, and the HP 2020 Objectives, the Vision Institute Inc. is able to identify high priority populations and critical needs that should be addressed. In utilizing the HP2020 Objectives as a baseline, the Vision Institute has a common standard by which to measure current indicators and potential changes, as programs are implemented.

Demographic Key Findings:

- Weld County has significantly more Hispanic/Latino residents than Colorado and the United States
- Weld County has more residents under 18 and less adults of all ages than Colorado and the United States
- Larimer County has significantly more young adults, 18-24 years old, than the United States or Colorado. This is likely due to Colorado State University being located in Ft. Collins
- Larimer County has a higher median gross rent than the United States and Colorado
- Weld County has a higher percentage of homes that speak a language other than English than Colorado, but less than the United States
- Weld County has less high school graduates or above than Colorado and fewer residents with a bachelor's degree or above than Colorado and the United States
- Weld County has less per capita income than Colorado and the United States
- The amount of dollars spent on healthcare and social assistance per capita is significantly less in Weld County than Larimer County: \$3.13 vs. \$5.96 respectively (\$5.40 CO; \$6.35 US)

#### Critical Needs Key Findings:

- Both Larimer and Weld Counties exhibit the need for healthcare coverage access and assistance
- Weld County, with higher rates of poor health, exhibits more need in the area of medical care and healthcare coverage
- Weld County has significantly more Adults who have Delayed Medical Care because of Cost than Colorado and the United States. Larimer County and Colorado are both significantly higher than the United States
- Weld County and Colorado have significantly more residents without health insurance than the United States
- Weld County has significantly more children, as reported by parents, and adults that are in fair or poor health than Colorado
- Weld County, Larimer County, and Colorado have less people that have a “medical home” or ongoing medical care than the United States
- Ft. Collins median and average rent is higher than the United States and Greeley and on par with Colorado
- Colorado has a significantly higher percentage of homeless families than the United States
- Larimer County has a significantly higher percentage of chronically homeless than Colorado and the United States
- Larimer and Weld Counties have a higher percentage of Unaccompanied Young Adults (Aged 18-24) that are homeless than Colorado and the United States
- Approximately a third of Colorado's homeless population is unsheltered, defined as sleeping on the street, in a vehicle, in an abandoned building, or in another place not meant for human habitation
- Fort Collins Colorado experienced a sharp increase in the number of chronically homeless between 2014 and 2015
- Substance use, mental illness, physical illness, and domestic violence are key indicators

among the homeless population

- Emergency Department visits are significant to consider, because “children without stable housing (are) more likely to use emergency department services as a result of a lack of a regular health care provider.” (Nabihah Maqbool, et al. (2015). The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health: A Research Summary Center for Housing Policy INSIGHTS and Jellyman, T. and Nicholas Spencer (2008) “Residential Mobility in Childhood and Health Outcomes” Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health62 (7) 584-592.)
- Harsh winter conditions factor in to the need to address the continuing homeless situation in both Larimer and Weld Counties

Preliminary findings from the Quantitative Data Report, show that there are many potential focus areas of concern in critical needs for the populations of Weld and Larimer Counties. Through a system of analysis and quantitative inquiry, The Vision Institute Inc. prioritizes:

- Weld County
  - Access to services for population demographics that include higher rates of disparate populations: ie lower income level, lower education level, language barriers, and higher Hispanic/Latino population
  - Availability of services, due to significantly less monies spent on healthcare and social assistance programs than Larimer County, Colorado, and the United States
- Larimer County
  - Critical needs among the significantly higher young adult population, as they typically have higher risk factors in drug and alcohol use, food and housing insecurity, and lower income
  - High housing costs effects on homelessness
  - High rates of “chronically homeless”
- Both Counties
  - Healthcare coverage, insurance, and access issues
  - Delay of medical care, identify as “fair or poor” health, and no “medical home” for many residents
  - Number of homeless families and homeless “Unaccompanied Young Adults”
  - Harsh winter conditions that affect the third of Colorado’s homeless population considered to be “unsheltered”
  - Substance use as a potential contributors and/or risk factors for homelessness

### **Systems Analysis: Analyzing Existing Services**

Existing systems and programs in Larimer and Weld Counties were analyzed by The Vision Institute, Inc., in order to:

- Identify gaps in the Continuum of Care (CoC)
- Focus resources and dollars in order to address the gaps
- Utilize knowledge of these resources to assist clientele through the CoC

Key findings for the existing systems/programs in Larimer and Weld Counties are as follows:

## *Larimer County*

### Strengths:

- Multiple Transitional and Emergency Shelters available
- Rent and Utility Assistance provided by multiple organizations
- Variety of governmental, religious, and private non-profit organizations providing services
- Some childcare and clothing assistance
- Some navigation available
- Some prescription assistance and dental assistance
- Some specific veteran's services and services for victims of domestic violence
- Legal Aid availability

### Weaknesses:

- Most shelters are located in Fort Collins, not throughout the county
- Overall lack of financial assistance for medical needs
- Only one organization provides assistance with co-pays
- No organizations with a specific focus on deductible assistance
- No organizations with a specific focus on substance use and cycle of homelessness
- No organization with a specific focus on substance abuse financial assistance

### Potential Collaborations:

- Homelessness Prevention Initiative of Larimer County
- Fort Collins Rescue Mission
- Homeless and Emergency Services/Fort Collins
- Dental Connections

## *Weld County*

### Strengths:

- Multiple Transitional and Emergency Shelters available
- Rent and Utility Assistance provided by multiple organizations
- Variety of governmental, religious, and private non-profit organizations providing services
- Some services for victims of domestic violence
- Some communication assistance services and clothing assistance
- Legal Aid availability

### Weaknesses:

- Most shelters are located in Greeley, not throughout the county
- Overall lack of financial assistance for medical needs
- No organization providing assistance with co-pays

- No organization providing deductible assistance
- Only one organization with a specific focus on substance use and cycle of homelessness
- No organization with a specific focus on substance abuse financial assistance
- No specific veteran's services

Potential Collaborations:

- Weld County Food and Clothing Bank
- Greeley Transitional House
- Food Resources in Downtown Greeley
- Sunrise Community Health Inc.

### **Qualitative Inquiry: Ensuring Community Input**

A qualitative inquiry helps to frame data already identified in the quantitative data and system analysis sections with the actual human experience, through capturing stories. The Vision Institute has analyzed these “stories” to determine the types of programs that will be most effective in addressing the identified deficiencies and in development of an action plan.

Utilizing key informant interviews, four areas of focus were assessed in the qualitative inquiry: priority unmet needs, barriers to obtaining assistance, unexpected medical, and potential solutions to meet unmet needs.

Several themes emerged during the key informant interviews. In discussing unmet needs, every interviewee revealed:

- No assistance for unexpected medical
- Financial barriers to shelter
- Lack of employment due to no physical address
- Problems with the healthcare system
- Mistrust of doctors
- Discrimination

Some, but not all interviewees also brought up the following as major factors in discussing basic needs:

- Unsafe environment
- Substance abuse assistance needed and desired
- Medicaid does not cover all medical needs. Dental, mental health, and other health services are often not covered.
- Shelters are not long term and on a lottery basis
- The stigma of homelessness

Themes and findings point to high need for assistance with unexpected medical costs, financial barriers, health system issues, healthcare access, (lack of) education about homelessness, discrimination, and substance abuse. This qualitative data report points to a need for more

education and awareness campaigns with meaningful directions that can reach various parts of the population that could address some of those problems and possibly drum up financial support. Also found is the need for financial assistance in the areas of unexpected medical healthcare, job placement assistance, housing, and long term self-sufficiency. Specifically, the number of people sleeping and begging on the streets in the college town of Fort. Collins Colorado is increasing, however, the food and shelter services are reaching their maximum levels. The Vision Institute fills in these gaps.

### **Vision Institute Action Plan**

Supported by the data in this Community Profile Report and making inferences through missing data exploring the critical needs of shelter, food, and medical services, the Vision Institute Inc. of Colorado has identified the following problems, goals, and objectives for the next 5 years:

- Problem Statement #1: Among citizens of Weld and Larimer Counties, Colorado, high medical co-pays and deductibles create a barrier in access to healthcare needs that go beyond basic preventative care.
  - Goal #1: Provide direct financial assistance to meet healthcare related expenditures.
    - Objective #1- Research grants and apply for funds through foundations, non-profits, government, or for-profit businesses, beginning in 2017 and continuing through 2022.
    - Objective #2- Provide direct financial assistance to individuals for co-pays/deductibles or Medicaid supplication.
    - Objective #3- Staff will conduct one hour educational coaching session with each recipient of financial assistance, in order to start the conversation of self-sufficiency and long term sustainability.
    - Objective #4- Identify applicable partnerships to “advertise” the financial assistance to priority populations, as soon as grant funds are obtained.
  - Goal #2: Provide navigation to insurance options.
    - Objective #1- Send staff to healthcare navigator training.
    - Objective #2- Identify applicable partnerships to connect with priority populations regarding insurance.
- Problem Statement #2: Weld and Larimer Counties, Colorado, have a growing unsheltered homeless population that are in need of critical services regarding housing, jobs, and access to healthcare.
  - Goal #1: Provide financial assistance to open a PO Box address for aid in filling out job applications.
    - Objective #1- Research grants and apply for funds through foundations, non-profits, government, or for-profit businesses, beginning in 2017 and continuing through 2022.

- Objective #2- Assist individuals who are homeless in purchasing a valid P.O. Box to utilize for employment opportunities.
  - Objective #3- Staff will conduct one hour educational coaching session with each recipient of financial assistance, in order to start the conversation of self-sufficiency and long term sustainability.
  - Objective #4- Partner with organizations that provide temporary housing and food services for the homeless, once grant funds are obtained.
- Goal #2: Provide navigation services for housing and healthcare options, such as Medicaid/Medicare.
    - Objective #1- Use staff to act as navigator for housing and healthcare, utilizing navigation training techniques.
    - Objective #2- Identify open housing options in Weld and Larimer Counties and create resource list for navigation purposes.
    - Objective #3- Partner with organizations that provide temporary housing and food services for the homeless, in order to connect with priority populations.
    - Objective #5- Conduct an educational campaign regarding homelessness to be released in both Larimer and Weld Counties in order to gain public and government support for creating more housing opportunities.
  - Goal #3: Provide navigation to financial assistance options and enrollment for obtaining GED, furthering education, or obtaining special certifications for any recipients that have expressed the desire to further their education within the required one hour coaching session.
    - Objective #1- Use hired staff to act as navigator for education options, utilizing navigation training techniques.
    - Objective #2- Identify financial assistance options nationally and locally for education assistance and create resource list for navigation purposes.
    - Objective #3- Based on individual educational desires, remove access barriers through assisting with applications for financial assistance and enrollment.