

HOLLERAN

Community Health Research & Strategic Planning

Monmouth County, New Jersey

MAPP Focus Group Report

Submitted by:

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BACKGROUND

The Governmental Public Health Partnership (GPHP) of Monmouth County, New Jersey, requested that Holleran conduct five focus groups among county professionals and residents. The focus groups were facilitated as part of the “Community Themes & Strengths Assessment,” one phase of the MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships) phase. The general purpose of the groups was to receive qualitative feedback from county professionals and residents regarding the quality of life in the county as well as areas of strength and opportunity for the county.

Two county professionals groups included representatives from various social service agencies, county agencies, public health, hospitals, education, and not-for-profit organizations. Three resident groups were facilitated throughout the county. Two of the three were non-Hispanic/Latino residents, while one was devoted specifically to identify the needs of the Hispanic/Latino population in the county.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS~ County Professionals

METHODOLOGY

Attendees were recruited via networking from various MAPP committee members. Names and contact information was forwarded to Holleran for recruitment. Additionally, several MAPP committee members participated in the groups. Two groups were held with a total of 24 participants.

Each group lasted approximately an hour and a half and was facilitated by Lisa Lehman, a Managing Partner with Holleran. The groups were held at the county’s Agricultural Building in Freehold.

A topic guide was developed as a template for the facilitator to follow during the groups. Holleran developed the draft topic guide with input and final approval from GPHP officers. The sessions were audio taped.

Quotes from tapes are integrated throughout the remainder of the report.

Participant Demographics

A total of 24 individuals attended the groups, with 11 in one group and 13 in the other.

Participant Feedback

Quality of Life Issues

When asked if they were fully satisfied with the quality of life in Monmouth County, the general response was “yes.” The county is viewed as an area with many lifestyle, recreational, and professional options. A number of attendees shared that one hour you can be at the beach, then the next hour you can be driving in a rural countryside, all within the same county. Additionally, the close proximity to New York City was generally viewed as a benefit to living in the area. It was reiterated several times that anything one needs is within close proximity. The county’s parks program was hailed as being highly successful in both what it offers, but also in its preservation efforts with open space. Additional quality of life indicators that were praised include the county’s diversity, relative safeness, large philanthropic base, high quality colleges, liberal stance on many issues, and business-friendly environment. Several attendees also mentioned the level of responsiveness of the county Freeholders as a plus. While a few disagreed with this sentiment, most agreed the elected officials have performed well in serving the needs of the county.

On the negative side, several quality of life issues were discussed. The most significant issue raised was the high cost of housing within the county. Its impact on lower- and middle-income individuals and families was discussed. The issue of housing is discussed in more detail in the “Strengths & Opportunities” section. The long-term impact of the cost of living was discussed in terms of individuals and families moving out of the area, how this affects employers in the county, and how it further segregates certain populations and municipalities within the county.

The attendees were also asked to share their thoughts on the health care system in the county. While many perceived the health care resources to be high quality, several concerns were raised in this regard. One issue related to the number of uninsured in the county. This issue was primarily discussed as it related to the number of illegal immigrants in the county. While the various clinics were praised for their efforts, the general consensus is that there are too few clinics and resources for this population. Also related to this issue was the shortage of bilingual providers in the county and the need for a more diverse health care workforce. The number of medical specialists to treat the large number of uninsured in the county was also seen as a significant problem. It was pointed out that some specialists in the area are lacking not only for the uninsured, but also because of a trickle-down effect of the high cost of housing. The young adult population (18-30) was identified as a dwindling population as many cannot afford to live in the county, even if they were born and raised in the area. This, in turn, has led to less of a demand for Obstetric and Gynecology practices. Some suggestions were made to more fully utilize the services of nurse practitioners to meet some of the demand. Another recommendation was to have county physicians.

As previously mentioned, two specific areas were discussed with relation to the level of economic opportunity. One theme was that the county is generally friendly to businesses and allows for growth opportunities in this area. On the negative side, the level of individual economic opportunity appears mixed. Many individuals are not able to find jobs with a sufficient salary to cover the cost of living. Many attendees explained about growing up in the area and having concerns that they or their children will not be able to enjoy the same opportunities because of the high cost of living. The closing of Ft. Monmouth was also discussed in terms of its negative impact on the county's economy. Several attendees shared that the county needs to "think out of the box" with how the space at Ft. Monmouth could be utilized. A few individuals suggested utilizing that space for affordable housing projects.

Sense of community was a topic that was discussed briefly. Attendees

appeared to have mixed feelings about this issue. Some individuals shared that there are a number of small communities where neighbors know one another and there is a family-like atmosphere. However, many also shared that this appears to be eroding. The fast-paced lives of many families, with children in numerous activities, parents working very full-time jobs, and a constant influx in and out of county residents, was perceived to be having an increasing, negative impact on the quality of life and relationships in the county.

When asked if “all” groups within the county have a voice and opportunity to contribute to and participate in the county’s quality of life, the response was that all groups do not have the same opportunities. Specifically, it was mentioned that the illegal Hispanic/Latino residents do not have the same opportunities as others. It was noted by some that while these individuals may be in the county without official citizenship, that they are still human beings and deserve the same respect as others. It was also pointed out that many of these Hispanic/Latino individuals were working professionals in their country of origin with much to contribute, and that they are simply looking for a better life for themselves and their families. A few attendees debated the appropriateness of illegal immigrants living in the county. It is evident that this debate is a significant issue in the county that divides many residents.

- *“We really need to try to attract a more diverse group of healthcare professionals to the area.”*
- *“The charity care system in this county is over-burdened. We need more clinic-type services for the un- and under-insured.”*
- *“I think there are many who don’t know how to navigate the health system, especially seniors. It would be great to have a one-stop shop health facility.”*
- *“There are too few specialists, especially for the Latino community. There are some major mental health needs here in the county and they aren’t getting it. Chronic depression leads to drug and alcohol problems and so on.”*

Strengths and Opportunities within Monmouth County

Attendees were asked to identify the perceived strengths and opportunities

in the county. The following areas, in particular, were discussed.

Children & Youth: Attendees shared that in general the schools within the county are of high quality. However, a few attendees disagreed with this sentiment, stating that some schools are not given enough funding and that the number of support programs for struggling/troubled children are too few. It was suggested that more after-school programs are needed. The vocational schools were specifically praised for their high quality education. County YMCA chapters were praised for their programs and community outreach. Big Brothers/Big Sisters was also praised as a high quality program for children in the county. Area skate parks were also identified as positive recreational opportunities for the children. On the negative side were concerns about gang activity in the county. A few attendees shared that they feel the gang problem is being overlooked, ignored, and even denied by some. However, others identified that certain law enforcement officials have taken steps to monitor and combat gang activity in the county.

It was also noted that there is a lack of counseling and mental health services for children in the county. This was mentioned not only as it relates to psychiatric needs, but also the treatment and prevention of drug and alcohol problems. Several attendees mentioned the level of acceptance of teen alcohol use among a growing number of parents in the county. Drug and alcohol use and abuse among county teens and pre-teens were noted as increasing problems. The need for a child advocacy center and more services and residential programs for special needs children were also mentioned.

Older Adults: The biggest issue raised with this population related to the high cost of housing in the county. Stories were shared of many older adults in the county who have lived there their entire lives, but can no longer afford to because of high taxes. The increasing number of active adult communities in the county was generally seen as a plus. However, the attendees discussed the impact of this on the county's health care system, in that it will need to meet the health care needs of this aging population. The need for accessible support and treatment for seniors was

also discussed. This discussion revolved primarily around the need for ample, affordable transportation services for county seniors. Senior centers in the county were praised for their work, however, it was mentioned again that a number of older adults do not have the transportation to access these programs. Home health programs were identified as good, but lacking in many instances because of reimbursement problems and staffing problems with home health aides.

The specific health needs of the county's older adults were also discussed. It was noted that the 55+ age group is the second largest group with new cases of HIV infection. The incidence of Hepatitis C was also discussed.

Minority Groups: The specific issues facing the Black/African American population was discussed. It was pointed out that there is a tremendous exodus of African Americans out of the county, again because of the high cost of housing. A number of issues were previously addressed with regard to the Hispanic/Latino population. Several attendees suggested the need to change the county's mentality and level of tolerance of the immigrant population. Education was seen as the core component to this culture change.

Economy: The primary economic issues in the county relate to the high cost of housing, jobs with salaries that do not cover the high costs of living, high taxes, recruitment struggles for area employers, and the closing of Ft. Monmouth.

Housing: Of all the issues discussed during the groups, the high cost of housing appeared to be the most significant concern. Attendees discussed the significant trickle-down effect that the high housing costs are having on the county, from an exodus of 18-30 year-olds to employers struggling to find staff who will accept the proposed salaries. Stories were told of older housing that is being torn down and replaced with rather large, upscale homes because of their locations. Attendees were also concerned that many housing projects and ventures are being executed without input from the public, which was perceived as very unfair. Most of these housing and zoning decisions were seen as squeezing out the lower socioeconomic

groups. One housing topic that was discussed at considerable length was the definition of “affordable” housing. Attendees shared that people often view “affordable housing” as section 8 or HUD housing, however, the “affordable” housing in need in the county related to affordable housing for the middle and even upper-middle income. The housing market in Monmouth County is viewed as being more and more customized to the needs of the wealthy.

Environment: Again, the county parks system was praised across both groups. Several attendees also mentioned that the water quality of Monmouth County beaches is much better than it used to be and is superior to the water quality of other New Jersey beaches. Poor drainage, however, was identified by some as an issue. Several attendees pointed out that the drainage system and water runoff in some parts of the county is less than optimal. Other environmental threats that were mentioned include the increasing smog in the county and associated asthma rates, the rising costs of utilities, and limited access to the ocean in some areas.

Transportation: The transportation system in Monmouth County garnered mixed reviews. In some areas, it was praised for its efficiency and accessibility, while the more rural areas criticized it for its lack of accessibility. In general, attendees agreed that the north and south transportation channels are effective, however, the east and west public transportation is less than optimal in terms of availability and ease of use. Several stories were shared of having to travel several hours and change several lines before getting to ones destination.

- *“Regardless of whether you agree if the immigrant population should be here or not, they are still a part of the county and their needs need to be addressed.”*
- *“The closing of Ft. Monmouth could be a real opportunity for this county to think out of the box and provide areas of affordable housing.”*
- *“When they talk about affordable housing, “affordable” for whom? They need to take a hard look at the definition of what is affordable to all income levels.”*
- *“It would be great if there was a resources book or an A-to-Z of what is out there. The United Way has done this and others, but it needs to be more*

comprehensive.”

- *“The parents need to be educated about the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol abuse. Many of them see nothing wrong with letting their kid drink alcohol. I think there is a big problem in the county with teen drinking. It’s socially acceptable.”*
- *“That young adult age group is the biggest one in need right now. They are not able to find jobs, they are living at home with mom and dad or moving out of the area.”*
- *“The VNA primary care centers are staffed with nurse practitioners and it works out great. I think the county needs to be more fully utilizing nurse practitioners to address some of these health needs.”*
- *“A comprehensive dental program for children and adults would be great.”*

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS~ County Residents (Non-Hispanic/Latino)

METHODOLOGY

Attendees were recruited from a randomly generated list of households within Monmouth County. Holleran handled the recruitment efforts. Two groups were held with a total of 20 participants, 10 in each group. One group was conducted “East of the Parkway” in Tinton Falls and the other group was “West of the Parkway” in Freehold.

Each group lasted approximately an hour and a half and was facilitated by Lisa Lehman, a Managing Partner with Holleran. All participants were paid a \$50 cash incentive for their attendance.

The same topic guide utilized with the professionals group was also utilized with the resident groups.

Participant Demographics

As was previously mentioned, a total of 20 individuals attended the groups, with 10 in each group. Among the 20, eight were male and 12 were female.

Participant Feedback

Quality of Life Issues

When asked about the perceived quality of life in Monmouth County, the two groups differed in a number of ways. The group facilitated in Tinton Falls appeared to represent a more diverse population from a lower or middle socioeconomic group. The group held in Freehold generally represented individuals from middle to upper income levels. The Tinton Falls group shared that they feel there is a dichotomy in the county where the middle class is being squeezed out, with only the wealthy and poor left behind. This sentiment was not echoed by the Freehold group.

The following are some of the quality of life issues shared by the residents living east of the parkway, generally in the Tinton Falls area. It was perceived that most of the recreational programs require one to pay, thus limiting many families and children. The need for a dual income was emphasized to compensate for the high standard of living. Many in this group also spoke of the need to educate young adults and teens about pregnancy prevention and parenting skills. It was perceived that too many individuals are having children without considering the consequences and responsibility of raising a child. The cycle of costly daycare was discussed in terms of its tendency to discourage single moms from working. The perception of young mothers is that you can receive more assistance if not working and on medical assistance. This group perceived the transportation system as poor. They perceived there to be a lack of efficient public transportation. Stories were shared of having to ride the bus for several hours and change lines to get to one doctor's appointment. Additional quality of life issues shared by this group included high taxes, the high cost of housing, too few jobs, and too few activities for the 16-20 age group.

The second resident group, held in the western part of the county, was more positive and optimistic about the quality of life in Monmouth County. They enjoy the proximity to New York City, feel the schools provide a high quality education, like the level of job opportunity, and generally perceive county residents to be friendly and neighborly. Concerns addressed by this group included traffic congestion, expensive housing for young adults, too much building on open spaces, and “spoiled” children who are used to getting everything handed to them.

There were several quality of life issues that both groups tended to agree upon. For example, all attendees agreed that location, in terms of proximity to the beaches and to rural, country areas, was a strength. The colleges were perceived as high quality and the parks program in the county was hailed. The county libraries were also mentioned as positive, specifically their children’s programs and free computer classes.

With the exception of too few mental health services, the participants from the western part of the county generally perceived the county’s health care resources to be meeting their needs. They also noted that for many seniors, there is a lack of awareness with what services exist and that even many services for older adults have been cut.

In contrast, the attendees from the “east of the parkway” group shared a number of concerns with the health care system. They praised the services of the Parker Clinic, but indicated the demand is greater than the supply. The ability to afford prescriptions was shared by a large number of attendees in this group, even with assistance from the clinic. This group also noted the shortage of medical specialists for those who are un- or under-insured in the county. The VNA was also noted as being too costly for some individuals. One of the most significant issues raised related to medical transportation. Several attendees shared experiences where the medical transport service was late or limiting. Some of the mothers in the group shared that the service does not allow parents to take young kids along with them, which in turn significantly limits any opportunity for poor, single parents to get to medical appointments. The lack of awareness

of what services are available was also identified as a problem. Attendees shared that one has to “dig” to find out information. This need to “dig” was specifically discussed in relation to the county’s older adults, who are more intimidated to search in depth for this information. The 55 to 65 year-old population was identified as being most in need of health care services and “falling through the cracks.” Several attendees also agreed that it is the middle-income group that is falling between the cracks in the county, not necessarily the low income.

In terms of economic opportunity, the residents east of the parkway had a number of recommendations. They perceived there to be a need for more vocational training and life skills training. They feel that individuals without a job would be better equipped and more motivated to find a job if they had more training. Additionally, it was perceived that more jobs are needed within the towns, where people do not have to travel far. Transportation is an additional limiting factor for many residents seeking a job.

Quotes West of the Parkway:

- *“There are great schools and colleges here in the county.”*
- *“It is just a great place to live. It’s close to the city. The people are friendly. It is safe.”*
- *“The one thing that is horrible in this county is the traffic congestion. There needs to be something done on Route 9.”*

Quotes East of the Parkway:

- *“The Meals on Wheels is great for senior citizens, but I don’t know if all of them know about it.”*
- *“Transportation to medical appointments is horrible. There is no way for a single mom to go anywhere, because they don’t let you take kids. So, they don’t get the medical care they need.”*
- *“Employers just aren’t paying the health insurance like they used to. It is really hard to find a job that will offer benefits.”*
- *“It is a great location by the beach, but at the same time you’re not far from the*

Strengths and Opportunities within Monmouth County

Attendees were asked to identify the perceived strengths and opportunities in the county. The following areas, in particular, were discussed.

Children & Youth: In general, the schools were perceived as being of high quality in the county. Specific mention was made of the “Abbott schools” in the county as providing a good education for the students. There was mention in the east of the parkway group that there are not enough healthy social activities for the 16-20 year-old population, which leads to gang activity and unhealthy behaviors. Several individuals noted that there are a number of gangs and hate groups within the county. Suggestions were made for more dances, a swim club, and more skate parks. The participants felt as if the children need more positive role models, particularly when they are not getting it at home. The attendees from the eastern part of the county also mentioned that they feel the younger children are more receptive to the diversity of the county than the adults. The schools were credited for programs such as cultural heritage days.

The group from the western part of the county mentioned that they feel teen alcohol use and abuse is a problem. These participants discussed that many county teens whose parents are wealthy are given anything they want. Examples were given of parents buying their children expensive gifts and being “push-overs” to compensate for not being around a lot because of long work hours, etc. The alcohol problem among teens was also viewed as a function of money and boredom. Their general concern was not only with the addiction itself, but with the general entitlement fostered in some of these children. Attendees in this group also identified that there is a shortage of daycare in the county. The demand is greater than the supply of daycare, nanny’s and in-home sitters. This group also recommended an increase in the amount of activities offered to children, above and beyond just sports. They noted that it is often very hard to get volunteers for kids activities in the county. This group also perceived that the kids’ schedules are over-burdened with sports activities, which has had a negative impact

on the stress levels within families and necessary “family time.”

Older Adults: Across both groups, participants shared that they do not believe seniors in the county are fully aware of what services exist. Additionally, transportation for older adults appears limited. This population was described as particularly needy because many of their family members are no longer in the area, having to move because of housing costs.

Minority Groups: Both groups voiced issues regarding the inequality of medical treatment and housing opportunities for various minority populations within the county. While acknowledging that their illegal status presents problems for the county, the participants west of the parkway indicated they are thankful for the illegal residents. They explained that the illegal Hispanic/Latino residents will do jobs that no one else in the county is willing to do and that without them, the county would be in trouble. They did share concerns, however, that often many of the Hispanic/Latino residents live with multiple families under the same roof. This was seen as unsafe and in violation of housing rules and regulations. The residents east of the parkway shared stronger sentiments about the illegal immigrant population. Keeping in mind that many in this group were uninsured, several attendees mentioned, “They get everything.” They perceived the illegal Hispanic/Latino population to be wealthy when it comes to cash flow because of being paid “under the table,” but poor in the eyes of the government and financial assistance programs. They perceived themselves to be in need, but not able to get assistance, while the illegal immigrant population is.

Housing & Development: This topic yielded significantly different feedback across each of the two groups. The participants east of the parkway perceived the county housing costs to be unaffordable and intent on pushing the non-wealthy out of the county. They explained that currently the HUD housing is shut-off, in that the county only takes so many applications, and then closes the application process. They strongly recommended an increase in affordable housing, both for purchase and rent. On the other hand, the participants living west of the parkway

perceived the housing opportunities to be sufficient for the most part. Both groups agreed that the young adult population is struggling to afford housing in the county. These young adults are often children of current residents, were born and raised in the county, but cannot afford to purchase a home or even rent in the area.

Both resident groups also mentioned concern over development in the county. The residents east of the parkway shared that there are too many vacant businesses and buildings, while new buildings are being erected. They encouraged the county to take a stronger stance on having businesses occupy and renovate existing buildings. The participants west of the parkway perceived there to be too much building on open spaces. Both resident groups also perceived the builders and developers to be corrupt and tied-in with county political figures.

Environment: The developers were also criticized for changing water runoff and aquifer laws within the county. There were concerns among some of the residents from the western part of the county that the watershed initiatives are in danger. East of the parkway, residents shared stories of various municipalities where flooding and drainage are severe problems. Concerns were also shared that tourists from outside of the county leave behind a significant amount of trash on the beaches. They strongly encouraged having more garbage cans near the beaches. The ocean was perceived to be cleaner than years prior and the sand replenishment initiative to be successful.

Transportation/Traffic: Lastly, the attendees across both groups perceived traffic congestion to be a significant problem in the county, particularly during tourist season.

Quotes West of the Parkway:

- *“My recommendation is for a moratorium on eminent domain and for no more development until a master plan is created.”*
- *“We need to have affordable housing so that kids who live here don’t have to move away. It needs to be affordable for all.”*
- *“Hey, those Mexican men do jobs that no one else would do. They are very hard*

workers."

- *"Quite frankly, I think kids around here drink because of boredom and having too much of their parents' money. Parents don't want to say no to their kids around here."*
- *"I think the politics are corrupt around here and the builders are right in the middle of it."*

Quotes East of the Parkway:

- *“The recreational things around here are great, but you still have to pay for everything. That doesn’t work out so well for a 16 year old who doesn’t have a job or parents with any money to pay for it.”*
- *“The tourists leave their trash behind. They’re suppose to take it with them, but they don’t.”*
- *“The politics are terrible in the county. It’s all who you know. You can’t even get a job with the borough unless you know someone.”*
- *“There are vacant buildings everywhere, but yet new ones go up right next to them. I just don’t understand the logic in that. They’re eye-sores.”*

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS~ Hispanic/Latino Residents

**No audio recordings from this group.*

METHODOLOGY

Attendees were recruited via networking with various key representatives from the Hispanic/Latino population. Holleran was provided with a list of names for recruitment. Additionally, households were randomly targeted based on their Hispanic/Latino surname.

The focus group yielded a smaller group than hoped for (5 of the 12 recruited showed up for the group). Given the low attendance, all non-attendees were called and asked to participate in a brief interview regarding the strengths and opportunities for the Hispanic/Latino residents of Monmouth County. Holleran staff conducted an additional five telephone interviews. The focus group participants were paid a \$40 cash incentive for their attendance. The focus group was held at the YMCA in Freehold and was facilitated by Lisa Lehman, Managing Partner with Holleran.

Participant Feedback

Several themes emerged from the focus group and telephone interviews. The specific issues of the Hispanic/Latino population “without papers”

were discussed. The sentiment of “no papers, no jobs” was echoed several times. They shared that, yes, one can get a job, but often it is low paying and not enough to cover the living costs. Stories were shared of individuals who are getting paid very low wages and are taken advantage of because of their illegal status. The transportation issue was also identified as a hurdle for many of the Hispanic/Latino residents. They are unable to obtain a drivers license without papers, which results in individuals driving without a license, large numbers of individuals packed into one vehicle, often a van, and an inability to obtain a job that isn't within walking distance. Stories were shared of safety issues with over-crowded vehicles and individuals riding bikes to work along busy roads.

Several health care related issues were discussed. The lack of insurance is viewed as a significant problem. Additionally, it was reported that many health care providers and specialists will not even take cash if someone doesn't have insurance, which eliminates the ability to receive any treatment. A local hospital was identified by several individuals as turning individuals away who do not have insurance. A few individuals pointed out that many of the illegal immigrants do not believe they have any rights and are often treated as if they have no rights. While acknowledging these individual's rights may be limited because they are not United States citizens, they emphasized that they still have rights as human beings, which seems to be overlooked at times. Stories were also shared of inappropriate referrals and recommendations for the uninsured. One focus group participant shared a story of an individual with a broken leg who was referred to a chiropractor for treatment. Stories were also told of health professionals charging extremely high fees simply as a way of turning away those without insurance.

The limitations upon children and health care access were discussed as well. Those interviewed shared that there is a shortage of providers for children, especially those that take NJ KidCare. However, it was pointed out that citizenry is required for NJ KidCare and because of this, a number of children go uninsured because they may not be in the country legally. The concern over poor dental care for Monmouth County Hispanic/Latino children was also raised. This, again, was viewed as a function of a lack of

dentists in the area who accept either cash or NJ KidCare.

There were some safety concerns expressed. Some individuals perceived the housing projects in the Freehold area to be very unsafe and told stories of young children selling drugs outside. Also, the area between Broad Street and Monmouth Avenue in Freehold was described as unsafe, where one has to be cautious about not being robbed or beat up.

The structure of Hispanic/Latino families was also discussed. Several individuals shared that the family structure is suffering because parents aren't always able to spend the appropriate amount of time with their children because of having to work long hours. As both parents often have to work to support the family, children will often miss out on recreational opportunities because parents do not know about them. It was suggested to have a parental support group or network within the Hispanic/Latino population, but the attendees also mentioned it might be hard for many parents to participate due to time constraints.

In terms of positive quality of life factors for the Hispanic/ Latino population, St. Rose of Lima in Freehold was praised for the community outreach they do, as well as the schools. The schools appear to be a trusted and safe ally for the Hispanic/Latino population.

When asked what recommendations they had for improving the quality of life for Hispanic/Latino residents in the county, most of the issues centered around the needs of the illegal immigrant population. The ability to obtain a drivers license was among the biggest issues, followed by affordable housing, and health insurance coverage. Also, the group recommended increasing communications with the Hispanic/Latino population. Suggestions were made to distribute flyers on screenings, services, etc., in stores, clinics, and other locations that are frequented by Hispanic/Latino residents. One participant shared that she recently saw a Planned Parenthood brochure in Spanish that was distributed at a local store. She thought this was a very effective way to "get the word out." Additional suggestions were to have more bilingual legal services in the county and to have more free English classes. A number of individuals pointed out that

these English classes do exist, but the times aren't always best suited for peoples' schedules (need more weekends) and they are often held in locations that require transportation to get there. The final group of suggestions revolved around increasing the availability of jobs for the Hispanic/Latino residents of the county.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Several significant themes appear from the groups and can be considered the most significant areas of opportunity.

1. The high cost of housing within Monmouth County was identified across all five groups.
2. The young adult population appears to be a population in great need within the county. The 18-30 population is struggling to raise a family and buy a home given the current salary ranges and high housing costs. Additionally, it was reported that many within this population are uninsured.
3. Feedback from both the professionals and resident groups suggests that a drinking problem exists among the county youth.
4. Gang activity was suggested as present within the county across several of the groups.
5. The need for medical services for the un- and under-insured in the county appears greater than the supply. It appears as if many health care providers will not accept cash for payment, therefore, leaving the uninsured with care.
6. Lastly, it was generally agreed that there are too few medical specialists in the county, specifically for the un- and under-insured. Specialists in high demand appear to be dentists, pediatricians, and mental health professionals.