

Human Services

8. Human Services

Overview

Human Service has held an important place in Chatham's history since the incorporation of the Town in the early 18th century, and probably before then. Originally the Selectmen were also "overseers of the Poor" and spent a large part of their time addressing the needs of the townspeople. Funds for these services were provided annually by Town Meeting. As the Town grew and changed, so did the needs of the people, many of which could not be addressed within Chatham. Cooperation with agencies outside Chatham became important. In addition, however, greater knowledge of how to *prevent* troubles or to keep troubles from worsening has emphasized the need for professional helpers with knowledge in various specialized fields. The result has been the development of a variety of organizations, both public and private, dedicated to helping individuals with the requirements for functioning in society.

New perceptions of human service needs have arisen out of general demographic and societal changes. Prominent among the changes is the greater number of older people in the population.

Concomitantly, but also related to advances in emergency and rehabilitation medicine, larger numbers of people of all ages are living with physical handicaps. Children and young people are exposed to risk factors that were virtually unknown to earlier generations of residents. This section of the Comprehensive Plan addresses these types of problems and some of the problems of the support system itself.

Although it can be argued that the whole aim of government is human service, this section does not encompass the services of public safety, public education and public sanitation which are designed for the protection of the whole population, but *assumes* their continuance with adequate support into the future.

In summary, this section of the plan proposes a town-level approach to human services planning and activity with the following goal: to insure that no persons in Chatham, regardless of age, income or other characteristics, go without food, shelter or other resources enabling them to function as productive members of our community.

Goals & Policies

8.1 Goal

Ensure that human service needs of Chatham residents are identified and appropriate resources made available and effectively used.

Policies

The Chatham Human Services Committee shall continue to advise the Town on human service needs and shall be constituted to be representative of the community. The Human Services Department shall be charged with providing staff assistance to the Committee. Duties and responsibilities of the Human Services Committee shall be as follows:

1. Develop an ongoing mechanism for systematic collection of information about human service needs and resources from official and voluntary agencies. (HR1)

Advise the Board of Selectmen, the Finance Committee and Town Meeting about the financing needed for adequate service delivery. (HR2)

Encourage coordination of activities by service organizations and voluntary programs.

Provide information to the general public about services available and services needed. (HR3)

Encourage volunteerism where appropriate.

Continue to financially support human services through Town Meeting appropriation at least at the current level and that additional support also be available in the future to meet documented needs as they emerge.

Services to the Elderly

Maintain adequacy of response to home health care needs

Explore public/private methods for assisting financially to meet gaps in medical coverage. (HR4)

Continue town support of services provided through the Council on Aging and continue to encourage private support.

Encourage the cooperation of public and private groups including interfaith groups, in providing assistance with household chores for the elderly population. (HR5)

Increase the stock of appropriate and affordable rental housing for the elderly in conjunction with the Affordable Housing Committee and the Chatham Housing Authority. (See Affordable Housing section.)

Coordinate public and voluntary transportation resources serving the elderly. (HR6)

Services to the Physically Challenged

Continue to enforce federal and state laws as well as encouraging voluntary cooperation to provide access to public buildings, public restrooms, shops, churches, recreational areas, curb cuts, fog stripes and transportation facilities, including provisions for those with hearing or vision disabilities. (HR7)

Use microphones at all large public meetings and provide assisted listening systems. (HR8)

Make sure all street signs are clearly visible. (HR9)

Increase the number of handicap parking spaces in the downtown area. Encourage volunteer monitoring of use of these spaces. (HR10)

Consider holding Town Meeting on Saturday morning.

Needs of Children and Their Families

Support the recommendations of the document “Chatham’s Future: Our Youth” developed in 1995 by “Together We Can,” a community group. (HR11)

Support the recommendations of “Chatham’s Children” for a well-planned structured community effort supported by Town funds to provide Chatham’s teens age 12-18 play, learning and growth opportunities that will enhance their quality of life. (HR12)

Encourage cooperation of schools, Monomoy Community Services, and ecumenical groups in further development of affordable day care, including services for children from birth to four years and before and after school care. (HR13)

Work to increase the stock of affordable housing in Chatham, realizing the needs of families with children in conjunction with the Affordable Housing Committee and the Chatham Housing Authority. (*See Affordable Housing section*).

Investigate the need for resources for counseling about federal and state benefits available to children and families. Coordinate efforts with the health Outreach Program of the Lower/Outer Cape Community Coalition. (HR14)

Identify resources to provide low or no cost legal information and consultations for low income families. (HR15)

Support the recommendations of the Affordable Housing section of this plan, particularly as they address the needs of young families, the disabled and elderly people with low incomes. (HR16)

Work with regional bodies such as the Lower/Outer Cape Coalition and the Regional Transit Authority to maximize the use of funds available from state and federal sources for increasing public transportation services on Cape Cod as well as to off-Cape destinations. (HR17)

Support the development of “feeder systems” to transport riders from home or other designated locations to stops on public transportation routes. (HR18)

Continue the search for feasible in-town shuttle service from remote parking to frequently used locations. (HR19)

Promote the use of newly instituted RTA and Plymouth & Brockton runs to insure their continuation. Educate the public about the benefits of public transportation for decreasing traffic and traffic’s deleterious effects on air quality and human health. (HR20)

Work towards promoting healthy/constructive behaviors in Chatham’s residents.

Support agencies and programs, such as the DARE program of the Police Department, the Substance Abuse Council,

Together We Can, the churches, and Monomoy Community Services, and exchange information among them about planned activities. (HR21)

Develop additional multi-age recreational resources and provide adequate supervision for children and adolescents using recreational facilities. (HR22)

Publicize programs and activities related to promotion of constructive behaviors. (HR23)

Support the conversion of the Main Street School into a community center where all residents can develop constructive behaviors. (HR24)

Support human services within Chatham and monitor the efficacy of the system as it relates to residents.

Support out-of-town agencies providing needed services to Chatham residents commensurate with numbers served and costs. (HR25)

Promote town/agency participation in programs that develop and coordinate resources. (HR26)

