

Department of Community Action

Background

The Department of Community Action (DCA) was established in 1979. DCA operates under the auspices of the County of Riverside with a staff of thirty-three employees. Its direction is provided by two statutory bodies: The Riverside County Board of Supervisors and the Community Action Commission which are responsible for program oversight. The Community Action Commission, which is a tripartite body, is comprised of volunteers from the public, private businesses and low income sectors, representing the five supervisorial districts.

Primary funding for the DCA comes from the federal Community Services Block Grant. The balance of their funding comes from public and private sources. Their mission is to implement and guide local and other anti-poverty activities. The purpose is to assist families to overcome poverty, with dignity, and move into a productive state of self-sufficiency.

Some of the titled programs offered to the community through DCA are:

Consumer Education Programs
Investment in Community
Literacy Training for Homeless Adults
Loans for the Working Poor
Long-term Case Management for Families
The Neighborhood Youth Corps - 2000
Comprehensive Homeless Services
Dispute Resolution Program
Riverside County Mentor Collaborative

Findings

1. There is a lack of non-emergency vehicle transportation for veterans and indigent persons from the eastern county to medical facilities in the western county.
2. All the programs are administered by volunteers in thirty independent community agencies throughout the county. In the Dispute Resolution Program, there are an additional fifty volunteers within the Riverside DCA office. More volunteers are constantly needed in the titled programs offered to the community.
3. In 1997, there were more than 27,000 documented (by the Department of Public Social Services) homeless individuals who sought public services from Riverside County. The number of homeless is increasing. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding for emergency homeless shelters has been drastically cut and will be eliminated entirely within the next few years.
4. The Neighborhood Youth Corps - 2000 is a program that encourages eighteen to twenty-five year old minority males to become Neighborhood Youth Corpsmen.

In turn, they serve in their communities as positive role models to "at risk" minority males from ten to twelve years of age. Corpsmen provide guidance, support and positive life skills by example. This program will lose its funding from the State Department of Health and Human Resources on September 30, 1998.

Recommendations

The Riverside County Board of Supervisors:

1. Provide non-emergency vehicle transportation for veterans and indigent persons from eastern county to western county medical facilities.
2. Solicit increased volunteer involvement as programs expand.
3. Request additional funding from FEMA and other federal government agencies. Encourage contributions from all city governments in the county to assist in funding local/regional homeless shelter programs.
4. Pursue grants from the State Department of Health and Human Resources to provide extended funding for the Neighborhood Youth Corps - 2000 beyond September 30, 1998. Encourage private and corporate donations to assist in this funding.