

## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT LISTENING SESSION

October 16, 2025

### Present

Julie DeLaurentis, Co-Chair  
Christine Arpino, GC Probation  
Alicia Battaglia, Commissioner Aide  
Brigette Satchell, RCSJ  
Joseph Spencer, RCSJ  
Shannon O'Brien, WDB Staff  
Allison Spinelli, WDB Staff

Fran Harwell, Co-Chair  
Joann Gattinelli, Commissioner  
Natalie Fortunato, SJ Dream Center  
Stacey Smith, DVRS  
Alisha Thompson, DWD  
Alice Smith, WDB Staff  
Bridget DiGiambattista, WDB Staff

### Teams

Stephanie Buscher, GC Div. Social Services  
Andrea Askie-Rosario, Comm. Blind & Visually Impaired  
Lois Forman, Jewish Family Federation  
Pavi Lakshminarayan, NJDOL  
Michelle Pandolfo, GC Human & Special Svcs.

Lorrie Covolosky, Abilities Solutions  
Danielle Fithian, Goodwill Industries  
Alyssa Harris, Acenda Integrated Health  
Jenn Macchione, St. John of God Comm. Svcs.  
Christina Velazquez, GC Housing & Commun. Devl.

### Visitor

Kristen Wilson, RCSJ

Samantha VanKooy, RCSJ

Commissioner Gattinelli welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation.

Julie welcomed everyone and is looking forward to input to address needs of the community. Fran stated the mission is to how to better the needs of the community, strengthen bridges between various organizations and how to make the residents aware of the services available.

Shannon stated a formal needs assessment was done several years ago and needs to be updated. Based on conversation today, we will be able to write our formal mission and develop goals for this committee. Also from this meeting we will be able to create a priority list of those groups we need to target first.

1. Are there opportunities to co-host or co-promote resource information session in the community or at partner agency locations?

Joe suggested we develop a 'resource guide' that spotlights all the available resources in the county. Kristen stated there are currently many different resource guides for Gloucester County that are available but suggested it be centralized that is routinely maintained and updated. Julie suggested we go to local level where residents come for questions we can bridge with county resources. The Commissioner said we can have the municipality upload the information and have a resource page on their website. Christine stated what has helped her clients is the resource being brought to the courthouse. She stated many of those on this committee have presented in-person to their clients who are not aware of the resources available to them. She said transportation is biggest issue for her clients but stated the Pureland Shuttle has been wonderful for her clients especially for clients from Westville and Woodbury.

2. Does anyone you have a mailing list/resource guide of community resources you would be willing to share?  
Kristen had already stated there are various resource guides available, just not digitalized.

3. What are the biggest challenges currently facing Gloucester County residents?

Transportation, affordable housing, and communication. Brigitte stated we need to look at grassroots and really get into the community. Christine stated she feels it is a challenge having the Board of Social Services in a separate location away from the One Stop Career Center and the College particularly for those that have to take public transportation. Their clients have to schedule separate appointment dates due to timing of transportation and appointment. Sam stated speaking from someone close to her that affordable housing is a

concern due to high cost of rent and they are seeing this with the students as well. There are programs but there is limit on beds and availability and affordable housing is income based and waitlists are very long. Christina stated federal programs under currently administration are either being severely diminished or complete eliminated. With the current government shutdown for her programs are going to break tremendous amount of leases with landlords because of funding and housing authority only having enough reserves through November. Also, the federal home program which allows for States and other entitlement communities through HUD that allows for affordable housing development is on the "chopping block." Alyssa reported she works with middle school and high school guidance counselors who are struggling to find resources when the students are coming to them, recent concerns are homelessness issues. They have had an increase of kids as young as 13 or 14 years of age asking for resource lists of employers that would hire that young. The student cannot focus in school because they are taking on burden of homelessness and food insecurities. They are seeing uptick in their resources of doing small groups for mental health and addressing some of the issues however, some of dead ends because lack of funding, and cannot give resource information on rental assistance to a 14 year old. Transportation also an issued because the kids cannot attend any programs due to lack of ride so they try to offer during the day but they cannot keep pulling the youth out of classes. The guidance counselors are overwhelmed and have become like social workers by trying to connect them with resources and calling places for them. She said having more direct resources available in schools to assist. Michelle stated working families are experiencing reduction in financial support from the Child Care Assistance Program due to limited funding. As of Friday, August 1, 2025 the Child Care Assistance Program is no longer accepting new applications. Kristin stated they are seeing this with the students as the students need childcare to attend classes or for the jobs they need to have while attending college. Rowan University closed their childcare center in August.

4. Are there specific groups within the community whose needs aren't being fully met?

Some mentioned: jobs, transportation, opportunities for educational upgrade (expand capacity), individuals with disabilities, health insurance for seniors and computer assistance. For the senior population, Joann suggested meeting with municipalities to speak with senior population directly at senior centers, libraries, etc. Natalie stated that whatever list/guide is developed it is vital to maintain list of resources especially since things change often and this avoids providing incorrect information. Brigitte suggested having FBO participate on this committee so they can share information with their parishioners / members. Lois stated food insecurity is a problem and we should provide list of resources at the local food pantry. Rutgers Cooperative Extension has list of food pantries in Gloucester County and are working to update, the list is on their website, which is only good for those that know about it. Shannon stated if a resource guide is developed, it is important to have paper copy available so having a digital version that is constantly updated is important but we must bridge the gap to those individuals that can't access via computer.

5. How do you obtain information about available resources in Gloucester County?

What skills or training do employers in GC most commonly look for?

Kristen stated social skills are key. She can train anyone to be a case manager or where to find resources but cannot teach how to be kind to students.

What resources does your organization provide to support Gloucester County residents?

Alisha stated the American Job Center has a packet that provides information on services available from the AJC that covers DOL, Social Services, DVRS, Veterans, Unemployment and the College. This packet has been a very useful tool and have taken to all our events. Natalie stated her center is by word of mouth. Kristen stated knowing how to help the students navigate the existing community resources has impacted their students. They are visiting more food pantries and agencies so they can advocate for the students and offer encouragement.

Recommendations on how we can improve our community engagement?

Kristen stated she'd like to see an in-person centralized hub for the county where people could go in 'real life' to talk with people about resources and help their community navigate what already exists in the county. The hub should be inviting and warm with staffing that are compassionate and where no one feels stigmatized about why they are there.

If we create a survey to better assess our needs, would you be willing to share it with your community?  
Absolutely was response.

Allison stated the WDB has a grant opportunity out that is directly connected to several issues heard here. Our procurement opportunities are managed by the GC Improvement Authority and the RFP is titled WIOA Specialized Career Services and the grant funds could be used to address some work readiness soft skills training, additional opportunities for adult basic education. The application closing date is 10/28/25.