

# Shippensburg, PA Community Assessment 2019 Executive Summary



**Prepared by Shippensburg Community Resource Coalition**

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**With Support From:**



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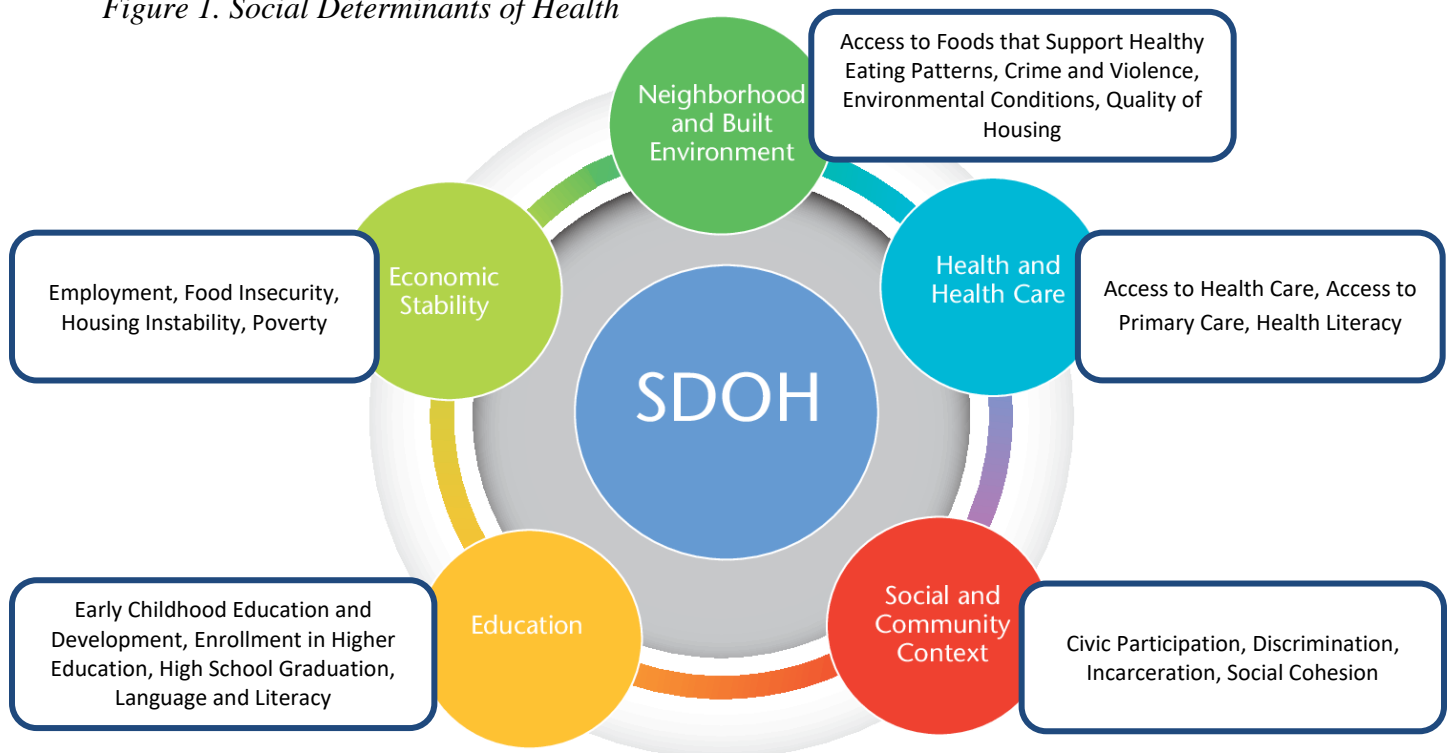
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Community Assessment was developed as a result of a strategic planning process of the Shippensburg Community Resource Coalition (SCRC) that occurred in 2013. There have been several community assessments in the surrounding areas that included Shippensburg, but were not exclusively focused on Shippensburg. The SCRC Board of Directors recognized the need to conduct an assessment that would help plan programs and secure funding for future endeavors and conducted the first community assessment in 2014. In 2018, the SCRC was awarded a grant from the Partnership for Better Health for the Healthy Shippensburg Project. The Healthy Shippensburg Project is directed by the Community Health Mobilizer and focuses on coalition building for systems change. In order to assess the Shippensburg community's systems, the Community Health Mobilizer collaborated with Shippensburg University and other community organizations to update the 2014 Community Assessment, with an emphasis on client involvement and social determinants of health. The social determinants of health are the ways that home, school, workplace, neighborhood, and community factors can impact one's health. According to Healthy People 2020, the five areas of social determinants of health are social and community context, health and healthcare, economic stability, education, and the neighborhood and built environment.<sup>1</sup>

*Figure 1. Social Determinants of Health*

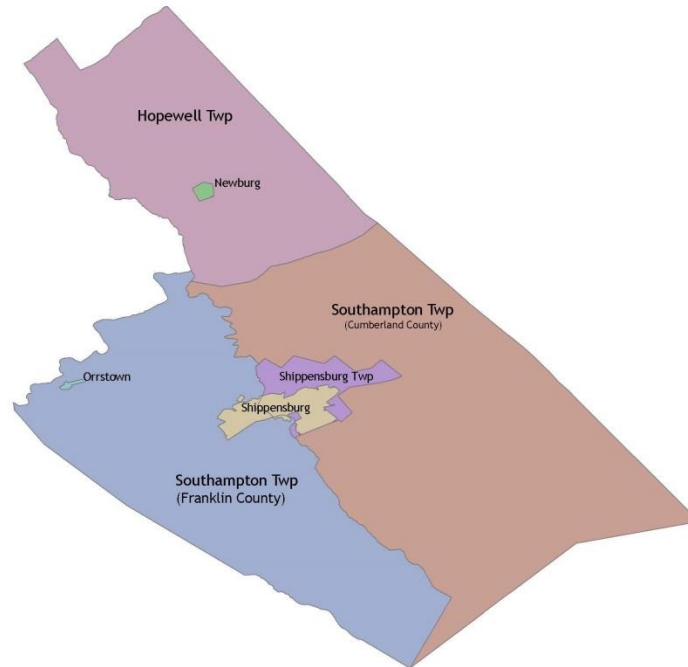


Source: Healthy People 2020: Social Determinants of Health

<sup>1</sup> Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Healthy People: Social Determinants of Health. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>

The community was geographically defined by the lines of the Shippensburg Area School District (SASD). Throughout the report, this area will be identified as the “Shippensburg area.”

*Figure 2. Geographic Area of the Shippensburg Area School District*



The strategic plan called for a new community assessment to be completed every five years. This Executive Summary provides a summarized version of the full report for the 2019 Shippensburg, PA Community Assessment. The full report is available by contacting the SCRC or visiting their website at [www.shipresources.org](http://www.shipresources.org).

Data was collected in multiple ways in order to understand more about how Shippensburg area residents are impacted by their homes, schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods, including data on residents’ perceived needs about social services and youth programming needs. These methods included a survey, focus groups, community key stakeholder interviews, and review of existing data. The survey was adapted from the United Way of Carlisle and Cumberland County’s Community Needs Assessment and originally created by the Penn State Data Center. The review of existing data occurred throughout the project timeframe. The other data was collected and analyzed as follows:

October 2018-November 2018.....Focus groups conducted  
October 2018-November 2018.....Community key stakeholders interviewed  
February 2019-April 2019.....Surveys distributed to at least 30 organizations and via  
social media (5 Shippensburg Community pages and  
messages to 33 organizations)  
February 2019-September 2019.....Survey & focus group results analyzed  
June 2019-October 2019.....Final report written

When conducting a community assessment, it is helpful to collect data in a variety of ways to provide a more complete picture of the strengths and challenges of the community. Each source of data is presented individually at first and analyzed for recurring themes. Then all sources of data are assessed together as a whole to provide an overall assessment. One should be cautious about taking the results from only one source of data on its own and generalizing it to the community as a whole. It is best to consider all sources of data as it provides a complete and more reliable picture of the whole community.

## **Demographic Information**

Most of the demographic information in this section is from the United States Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. Data from other sources are noted as such. Following this Executive Summary is a two-page demographic overview with tables from the 2013-2017 ACS data. The total population within the SASD boundaries in 2017 was 29,893 people, which is an increase of just over 1,973 people from 2010 U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>2</sup> The population of the Shippensburg area has a younger median age (30.6 years), than the state median (40.7 years), perhaps because Shippensburg University is located in the town. The percentage of youth under the age of 18 is almost the same (21.3%) as the state (21.0%).<sup>3</sup> It is a predominantly White/Caucasian area, with 92.3% of the population, which is a decrease of 0.9% from 2010.<sup>4</sup> The Black/African American population is 3.9%, which is an increase of 0.4% from 2010. The Hispanic/Latino population is 3.0%, which is an increase of 0.2% from 2010. The 2020 U.S. Census Bureau will provide a more accurate comparison to 2010 data because the 2017 data is based on sampling. However, the U.S. Census Bureau does state that comparisons can be made between U.S. Census Bureau data and American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.<sup>5</sup>

The poverty rate for all people in the Shippensburg area is 17.9% (2013-2017 ACS) which is 1.85% lower than previous measures 19.75% (2008-2012 ACS) and higher than the state rate of 13.1%.<sup>6</sup> According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the rate of children and teens who qualified for free or reduced lunches has increased every year since 2010-2011. In 2017-2018, 41.5% of students in the district qualified for free or reduced lunch rates, this is an increase of 6.1% from 2012-2013.<sup>7</sup> Finally, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: S0101 Age and Sex. [https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17\\_5YR/S0101/9700000US4221570](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/S0101/9700000US4221570)

<sup>3</sup> See Footnote 1.

<sup>4</sup> See Footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/comparing-acs-data.html>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: DP03 Selected Economic Characteristics.

[https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17\\_5YR/DP03/0400000US429700000US4221570](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/DP03/0400000US429700000US4221570)

<sup>7</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation: Kids County Data Center. School Lunch - Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in Pennsylvania. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/2720-school-lunch--students-eligible-for->

income is \$50,061 which is an increase of \$2,747 from 2010 and lower than the state median of \$56,951.<sup>8</sup> The unemployment rate of the Shippensburg area is 4.6%, which is an increase of 0.1% from 2010, and higher than the state rate of 4.1%.

Shippensburg residents highest level of educational attainment is lower than the state's averages. Only 20.8% of Shippensburg residents receive a bachelor degree or higher compared to 30.1% for PA.<sup>9</sup> Forty-five percent of residents achieve a high school diploma as the highest level of education compared to 35.6% of the state. Shippensburg also has a higher rate of the population completing less than ninth grade compared to the state's average (5.2% vs. 3.3% for PA). However, there is improvement since the 2010 Census. Educational attainment for a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 0.9% from 2010 and educational attainment for not completing ninth grade decreased 1.2% from 2010.<sup>10</sup>

According to the Future Ready PA Index, the Shippensburg Area Senior High School (SASHS) meets the interim goal/improvement target for performance in English Language Arts/Literature and meets the 2030 statewide goal for proficiency in Mathematics/Algebra 1.<sup>11</sup> The statewide average for high school graduation rate is 86.6%, SASHS graduation rate is 90.5%, similar to Carlisle Area Senior High School at 90.7% and above Chambersburg Area Senior High School at 82%.<sup>12</sup>

## Community Survey

The survey questions were aimed at learning more about how satisfied residents are with the human services and youth programs that are available in Shippensburg and the importance of providing these programs and services. There were also questions designed to elicit ideas for new programs and services. There were 422 valid surveys, 24 surveys less than the 2014 Assessment. The surveys were available both online and in paper version. The survey results

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free-or-reduced-price-

lunch?#detailed/2/any/false/1639,1600,1536,1460,1249,1120,1024,937,809,712/any/10324,10325

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: DP03 Selected Economic Characteristics.

[https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17\\_5YR/DP03/0400000US42|9700000US4221570](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/DP03/0400000US42|9700000US4221570)

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: S1501 Educational Attainment.

[https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17\\_5YR/S1501/0400000US42|9700000US4221570](https://factfinder.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/17_5YR/S1501/0400000US42|9700000US4221570)

<sup>10</sup> See Footnote 9.

<sup>11</sup> Future Ready PA: Shippensburg Area Senior High School. Proficient or Advanced on Pennsylvania State Assessments.

<https://futurereadypa.org/PerformanceDetail/233209203178131085137182251023145118024150025100/064138181095196083230174235056012199217224032242012170044177212254069212197057059041210232076035/067252007022085164088255016150149184199252177056>

<sup>12</sup> Future Ready PA: Shippensburg Area Senior High School. Career Standard Benchmarks: High School Graduation Rates.

<https://futurereadypa.org/Performance/233209203178131085137182251023145118024150025100/064138181095196083230174235056012199217224032242012170044177212254069212197057059041210232076035>



should be applied cautiously to the general population because there were several demographic differences between the survey sample and the 2013-2017 ACS data.

Overall, survey respondents were satisfied with the services and opportunities in Shippensburg. The areas that had the highest levels of satisfaction based on overall mean score, included quality of early childhood education, community safety, and efforts to improve literacy. It was also clear that many residents feel there is a strong sense of community and that the educational institutions and community safety are strengths of the area.

The three items that indicated some level of dissatisfaction based on overall mean score, included services for people who are re-entering the community after incarceration, the availability of mental health services, and the affordability of mental health services. Participants whose household income was above the poverty level indicated that they were dissatisfied with those same services. However, participant's whose household income was at or below the poverty level varied from the total survey sample and those above the poverty level, indicating some level of dissatisfaction with availability of mental health services, services for people who are re-entering the community after incarceration, and services to prevent and reduce homelessness (See Table 1).

*Table 1. Areas of Dissatisfaction Based on Income Group*

Respondents by Income Group	Top Areas of Dissatisfaction
All Survey Respondents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affordability of Mental Health Services (M=2.96, SD=0.95)</li> <li>2. Availability Of Mental Health Services (M=2.98, SD=0.95)</li> <li>3. Services for People who are Re-Entering the Community After Incarceration (M=2.98, SD=1.07)</li> </ol>
Respondents Above the Poverty Level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Affordability of Mental Health Services (M=2.96, SD =0.90)</li> </ol>
Respondents At or Below the Poverty Level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Services to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness (M=2.87, SD=1.05)</li> <li>2. Services for People who are Re-Entering the Community after Incarceration (M=2.96, SD=1.04)</li> <li>3. Availability Mental Health Services (M=2.98, SD=.94)</li> </ol>

The overall mean scores indicated that it was important that 22 out of 23 of the services and programs listed on the survey were available within the Shippensburg area. The only item that was indicated as unimportant was services to treat gambling addictions with a mean of 2.82 ( $SD = 0.91$ ). Those with the highest level of importance included quality daycare centers, affordable medical services, and supervised afterschool youth activities. Those identified as least important (but still identified as important according to respondents with a mean of 3.0+) were transportation services and opportunities for adult education.

In order to understand more about the program and service needs in the Shippensburg area, we defined need as a service that is ranked as important, but with which people indicated that they are not satisfied. By examining the services that had high importance scores, but lower satisfaction scores, we could more clearly identify needs. The following are the top four needs identified from the survey sample:

- Services to Reduce Harmful Drug Use
- Availability of After-School Youth Activities
- Mental Health Services
- Affordable Mental Health Services

When looking at identified needs based on income groups, respondents above the poverty level and those at or below the poverty level both identified mental health services and affordable mental health services as the two top identified needs. However, those at or below the poverty level identified needs mostly related to their economic instability:

- Services to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness
- Services to Prevent and Reduce Poverty
- Affordable Housing
- Opportunities for Adults with A Disability

Respondents whose income was above the poverty level identified some needs related to youth programming and services:

- Availability of After-School Youth Activities
- Services Specific to Youth
- Services to Reduce Harmful Drug Use

Survey respondents were asked open-ended questions about various types of programs/services that they felt are needed in Shippensburg, and Shippensburg's biggest strength and problem/issue. Survey respondents provided ideas for community safety programs/services. Suggestions to increase community safety and related programming ideas include:

- Increased police presence in the community
- Physical improvements such as street lamps, security cameras, and crosswalks

- Neighborhood watch programs
- Programs for youth to keep them occupied
- Education classes on specific topics for youth and adults
- Drug and alcohol education, prevention, and treatment

When asked about youth-related services and programs, many survey respondents indicated that something needed to be done to help youth have something to do, but there were limited specific ideas. After-school programming and non-sports related programming were mentioned the most. A need for a community center focused on youth activities was a strong theme, too. Other unique ideas offered include:

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| • School-based after school programs                      | • Hobby clubs                    |
| • Youth center/indoor recreation                          | • After-school help              |
| • Sports-related programming                              | • Secular volunteer clubs        |
| • Age-specific programming (kid's club and teen programs) | • Non-sports related programming |
| • Summer programming                                      | • Affordability of programs      |
| • Consent education                                       | • Healthy eating and lifestyles  |
| • Mental health services                                  |                                  |

The most popular suggestions for needed social service programs were as follows:

- Mental health services
- Affordable quality housing
- Drug and alcohol services

One of the new open-ended questions asked respondents about the types of programs that are needed in Shippensburg for those who are re-entering the community after incarceration. We added this question after hearing from focus group members about the challenges of re-entry. The impact of incarceration and then re-entering the community after incarceration is part of the social determinant of health focus area of Social and Community Context. When members of the community leave the community but leave behind family and friends, this disrupts the social cohesiveness of the community. When they re-enter the community, a new equilibrium must be reached to integrate them back into the community. When asked what types of programs for those re-entering the community after incarceration are needed, many respondents responded “unsure” or “not applicable.” Respondents that identified programming needs include the following:

- Programs to gain employment
- Job or technical training
- Assistance obtaining housing, including transitional or half-way houses

When asked to identify the biggest strength of Shippensburg, respondents mentioned the following areas:

- “Sense of Community”
- Educational Institutions
- Small Town Size
- Low Crime

Survey respondents were asked what the biggest challenge, problem, or issue in Shippensburg. The top areas identified include:

- Drug and Alcohol Use
- Lack of Youth Activities
- Lack of Community Center
- Lack of Downtown Development and Empty Businesses
- Lack of Social Cohesion (community’s inability to work together as a whole)

## **Focus Groups**

The Shippensburg Community Resource Coalition’s staff and social work interns facilitated five focus groups in the Shippensburg area as part of their community assessment to obtain a better sense of the community’s perspective on the health of the Shippensburg community in regards to nine topics: recreation/socialization, employment, food, housing, education, health care, mental health, crime and safety, discrimination, and social cohesion/community unity. The focus groups were held at the following social service agencies in order to hear from residents that have accessed social services: Shippensburg Produce and Outreach, Oasis of Love Bakery Distribution, Shippensburg Head Start Program, Tri-County Community Action, and Branch Creek Place senior center. Twenty-five community members participated in the focus groups. The results that follow reflect the perspectives of the focus group participants.

Focus group participants identified several strengths about the health of Shippensburg. Participants shared that Shippensburg does a good job of providing food resources such as food pantries and community meals. Another strength is the education system including the public schools and the university. Overall, they also identified Shippensburg as being a relatively safe place with limited instances of crime.

Areas of growth that focus groups identified were predominantly around the lack of transportation which is multi-faceted in its relationship to health. Without consistent, year-round, easy, accessible and flexible public transportation, Shippensburg residents struggle in accessing employment, health care services, mental health services, and county offices. It also affects the jobs they can acquire as they are limited to jobs in Shippensburg. The lack of employment opportunities with sufficient pay in Shippensburg was mentioned in most of the groups as a challenge. Recreation options for both youth and adults, including the lack of a community

center or indoor recreation facility is a concern. While there are sporting activities for youth, not all youth like sports nor can all families afford the cost associated with playing sports.

Another area of concern was not enough primary care providers or medical specialists in Shippensburg, thus requiring residents to travel to Chambersburg or Carlisle. A few participants shared about their “lack of a voice” in regard to community decision-making and that when they did speak up, those in authority and/or decision-makers did not listen to them. Lastly, participants discussed the lack of affordable and quality housing available to residents and families versus university students. They expressed that if they could afford to rent in Shippensburg that the quality would be poor and inhabitable. Since most leasing companies require a credit check and background check, participants expressed some difficulties in finding housing.

### **Community Key Stakeholder Interviews**

Ten interviews with key community stakeholders were conducted as part of the community assessment to obtain information about their opinions on the social determinants of health and how they are impacting the Shippensburg area. Interviewees were chosen based on their stakeholder role in the community and the services they provide to residents, their circle of influence, and their high level of participation in the community. Common themes arose between each of the 10 community stakeholder interviews in the area of lack of transportation for residents, the lack of funding and time for new services, and the areas for improvement between the community and Shippensburg University. Many interviewees mentioned that the Shippensburg community does a good job of providing food to those that are experiencing food insecurity through their food pantries, community meals, and youth food security programs such as Hound Packs. Interviewees also felt safe in Shippensburg, stating low crime rates.

Interviewees felt that there was room for improvement in the overall health of the Shippensburg area but the degree of improvement ranged from fair to significant. One respondent mentioned that the poor health of Shippensburg is hidden. When asked what unmet needs to health Shippensburg residents faced, the lack of public transportation, affordable housing, and sufficient primary care physicians were the top three. Barriers to meeting those needs included financial resources, transportation for employment and services, knowledge about available services and how to access them. Interviewees were asked what additional service(s) they thought their organization could provide to help meet some of the unmet needs in the Shippensburg area. Participants suggested more collaboration with Shippensburg University, adult day services, increased use of the senior center as a community center, and the addition of a social worker to help with paperwork and applications for human service benefits. Respondents said that barriers to providing additional services included funding, time, and transportation for residents to access new services.

Interviewees were asked what they thought that the SCRC could provide to meet the needs of the community. Transportation was once again suggested as it continues to be a main barrier. Collaborating and strategizing with other organizations to help improve current services and bring in new services was also suggested. Lastly, when asked who their organization could partner with in the community, respondents predominantly answered “Shippensburg University.” Other organizations included the Boys and Girls Club of Shippensburg, school counselors, churches, and the Coy Public Library of Shippensburg.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

The strengths, challenges, recommendations are drawn from all data sources (existing data, surveys, focus groups and surveys) through the lens of the five focus areas of the social determinants of health: social and community context, health and healthcare, economic stability, education, and the neighborhood and built environment. The following strengths of the Shippensburg community were identified:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| • Safe Neighborhood              | • Grief Services  |
| • Sense of Community             | • Food Resources  |
| • Willingness to Help Each Other | • Quality Education   |
| • Participation in Organizations | • Educational Programs from Early Childhood Through College |
| • Shared Resources               | • High School Graduation Rate                               |
| • Community Nurse                | • Raider Regional Transit                                   |
| • Shippensburg Health Center     |   |

The following challenges are identified:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Available and Affordable Mental Health  | • Discrimination                                  |
| • Available and Affordable Medical Services                                     | • Times of Food Resources                         |
| • Social Cohesion   | • Quality, Affordable Housing                     |
| • Member’s Opinions Do Not Matter   | • Consistent, Reliable, Year-Round Transportation |
| • Transparency and Communication between Government, Institutions and Residents | • Drug and Alcohol Use                            |
|   | • Poverty Rate                                    |
|   | • Employment Opportunities                        |

The following recommendations are based on the individual areas of focus for each social determinant of health.

Social and Community Context looks at how a community’s civic participation, social cohesion, discrimination faced by residents, and the incarceration rate impact the overall health and well-being of its residents. The following recommendations seek to improve Shippensburg’s civic participations and social cohesion:

- Increase the cohesion of the community as a whole by providing a space in which different social groups can interact, build trust, and establish a collaborative relationship
- Partner with Shippensburg University to increase understanding between students and residents, and bridge the gap between campus and town to create a common goal.
- Work with elected officials to strengthen the relationship they have with residents and increase collaboration across all resident social groups.
- Increase civic participation by sharing ways that people can become involved in organizations and encouraging participation in them.
- Provide education discrimination related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc.

Health and Healthcare is the social determinant of health concerned with access to health care which is defined as the “timely use of personal health services to achieve the best possible health outcomes.”<sup>13</sup> Recommendations to address increasing access to health care include the following:

- Increase partnerships with mental health providers to advocate for more mental health services that are affordable.
- Strengthen partnerships with area health organizations to advocate for more primary care providers and specialties.
- Increase awareness and knowledge of local health care services.
- Collaborate with current transportation companies, Raider Regional Transit and RabbiTransit, and other transportation options to address lack of transportation to medical facilities.
- Increase collaboration between human service providers and physicians.

Economic stability includes issues related to the community’s employment opportunities, poverty level, housing instability, and residents experiencing food insecurity. These four areas are all intertwined because without adequate employment opportunities providing a living wage<sup>14</sup>, community members will be at or below the poverty level, experiencing food insecurity, and housing instability due to their lack of financial resources.

- Increase and/or develop programs that help residents improve their socioeconomic status.
- Increase access to programs in Shippensburg that assist in finding and obtaining employment, including job training and soft skills training. This may mean developing new programs.

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<sup>13</sup> Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Healthy People: Access to Primary Care. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/access-to-primary>

<sup>14</sup> “Living wage” refers to a minimum wage that is the amount of money needed to meet a minimum standard of living in the U.S. According to MIT’s living wage calculator, the living wage for two adults and two children in PA is \$22.49 (Living Wage Calculation for Pennsylvania: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/42> )

- Develop programs for families and youth that strengthen the protective factors such as education, social and life skills, strong family relationships, and parenting skills.
- Increase collaboration between employers and employees about transportation to address the lack of transportation to places of employment.

Education examines the effects of early childhood education and development, the rate of high school graduation and enrollment in higher education, and language and literacy. The key issue of language and literacy is defined as spoken or written communication and includes one's level of ability to understand oral language, written language, numbers, and cultural and conceptual knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Recommendations to address education:

- Increase collaboration between Shippensburg University and the town to explore providing more services such as literacy classes including GED classes, English as a Second Language, and adult education classes.
- Explore how Hound Packs could serve more children including Pre-K and kindergarten.
- Explore booster programs for children from kindergarten through third grade.

The neighborhood and built environment involves more than just the structures of a neighborhood or environmental conditions like air pollutants and temperature but also the amount of crime and violence in a community, and how accessible foods that support healthy eating patterns are to residents. The following are recommendations to address the challenges facing Shippensburg in the area of the neighborhood and built environment:

- Increase outreach efforts with landlords and property managers to educate them on the impact of quality housing and ways they can collaborate with housing authorities and tenants to make housing more affordable.
- Conduct a walkability assessment of Shippensburg.
- Conduct an assessment of safety features in Shippensburg including, crosswalks, street lamps, and security cameras.
- Collaborate with local organizations to establish an indoor recreational facility.
- Develop more youth programs, particularly related to after school supervised activities.
- Collaboration between the school district, police department, and parents to develop programming to decrease the drug and alcohol use of youth.
- Provide assistance to community members in organizing community watches.
- Assess days and times that food resources are available to address barriers to accessing them.

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<sup>15</sup> Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Healthy People: Language and Literacy. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/language-and-literacy>