

# Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment: Final Summary Report, Findings, & Recommendations



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## Introduction

The Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment was conducted to evaluate the current landscape of mental health services within the township, identify gaps, and provide actionable recommendations for improvement. This assessment specifically focuses on three critical areas: **mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)**, and **substance use disorder (SUD)**. It is essential to delineate between the overarching term "mental health" and these specific conditions to ensure clarity and effective communication throughout the report.

The Needs Assessment identifies all needed mental health services from a broad perspective in all areas. However, the funding to implement all of these mental health services cannot be addressed solely by Wheeling Township. Instead, due to the costs of implementing all of the elements identified in this report, funding must come from all governmental levels, including the County, State, and Federal sources.

**Mental health** encompasses the overall well-being of an individual's psychological, emotional, and social functioning. *In contrast*, mental illness refers to conditions that significantly impact a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood, such as depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, impacting a person's everyday social and practical skills. Substance use disorder (SUD) is a complex condition characterized by the uncontrolled use of substances despite harmful consequences.

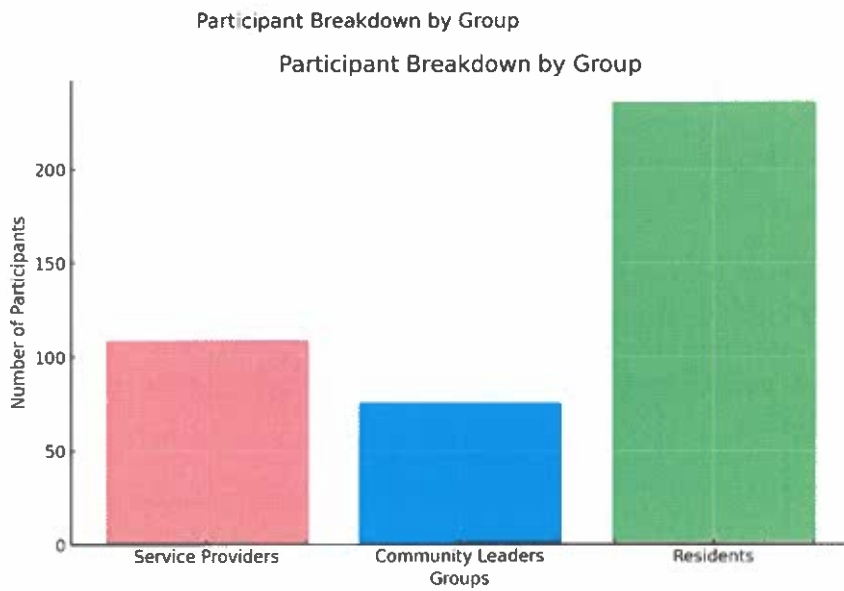
The need to distinguish these terms clearly has been emphasized due to ongoing confusion and disruption among community members. By addressing this distinction explicitly, the assessment aims to provide a clear and focused analysis of each area, ensuring that the community's needs are accurately identified and met.

Through community surveys, stakeholder interviews, financial analyses, and benchmarking with peer communities, this assessment provides a comprehensive evaluation of the current services and offers strategic recommendations to enhance service delivery. The goal is to build on the strengths of the township's existing programs while addressing identified gaps to better support all residents.

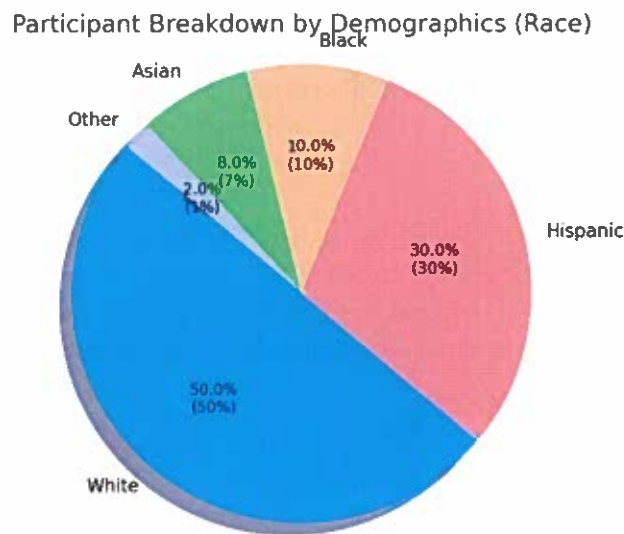
**Table 1: Participant Breakdown by Group**

Group	Number of Participants
Service Providers	109
Community Leaders	76
Residents	236

**Figure 1: Participant Breakdown by Group**

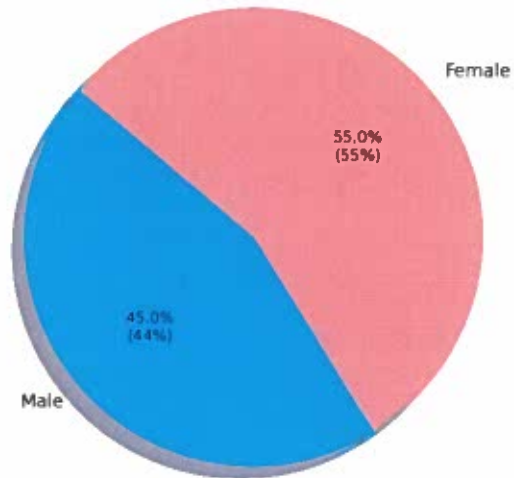


**Figure 1a: Participant Breakdown by Demographics (Race, Ethnicity)**



**Figure 1b: Participant Breakdown by Demographics (Gender)**

Participant Breakdown by Demographics (Gender)

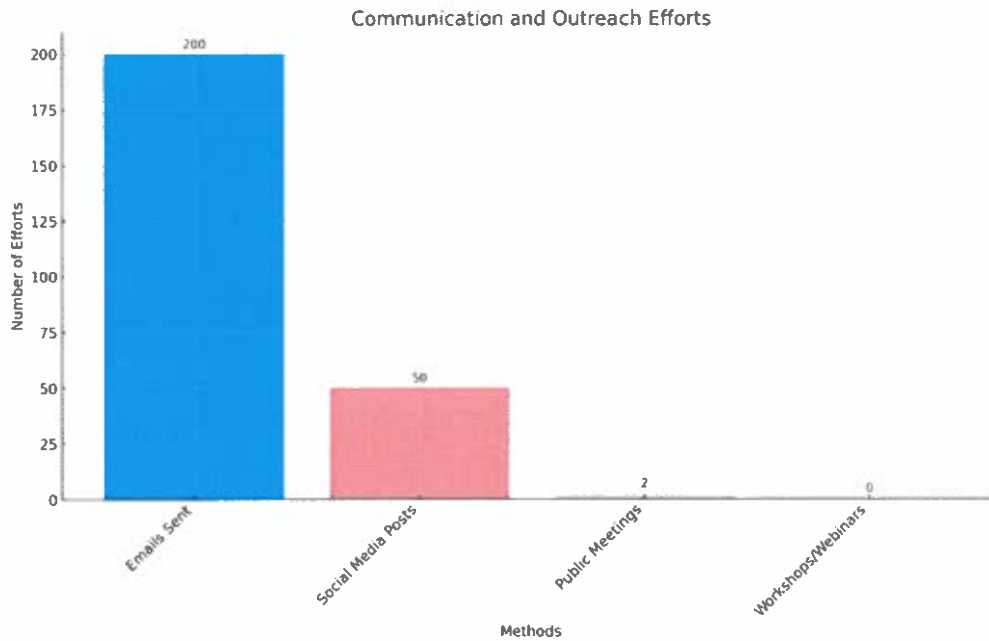


## Executive Summary

### Overview

The Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment was conducted to evaluate the current state of mental health services within the township, identify gaps and areas for improvement, and provide actionable recommendations to enhance service delivery. The assessment focused on three primary areas: *mental illness*, *intellectual and developmental disabilities* (IDD), and *substance use disorder* (SUD). This report synthesizes findings from community surveys, stakeholder interviews, financial analyses, and benchmarking with peer communities.

**Figure 2: Communication and Outreach Efforts**



## Key Findings

1. **Strong Commitment to Mental Health Services**
  - Wheeling Township allocates significant resources to mental health services, partnering with local organizations such as the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health and The Josselyn Center to provide comprehensive support.
2. **Comprehensive Senior Services**
  - The township excels in delivering senior services, including health and wellness programs, social activities, and caregiver support, resulting in high satisfaction rates among senior residents.
3. **Diverse Human Services Programs**
  - A wide range of human services programs are available, offering essential support such as emergency financial assistance, food and clothing resources, and transportation services.
4. **Opportunities for Enhanced Cultural Competence and Language Accessibility**
  - There is a need to expand culturally competent and bilingual services to ensure equitable access for all residents, particularly those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Bilingual services are the responsibility of Service Providers, with the Township's role being to provide financial support and ensure outreach materials are accessible. The assessment highlights that many residents face barriers in accessing services due to language differences. Addressing these barriers will require service providers to enhance their bilingual capabilities, especially in Spanish, Polish, and other commonly spoken languages within the township. Additionally, the Township can support this effort by translating key communications and outreach materials to ensure that all residents are informed about available services.
5. **Need for Specialized Services for SUD and IDD**
  - The assessment identified gaps in services for substance use disorders (SUD) and intellectual & developmental disabilities (IDD), highlighting the need for more targeted support in these areas.

## Recommendations

1. **Enhance Funding Allocation for Specialized Services**
  - Increase funding for programs targeting SUD and IDD to improve access to specialized care and support. It is also recommended that the Township factor in the costs of staffing and administrative support, which are essential for sustaining the proposed expansions in mental health services.
2. **Expand Cultural Competence and Language Accessibility**
  - Implement training programs for staff and service providers focused on cultural competence and sensitivity, and increase the availability of bilingual services. Providers should prioritize offering mental health, IDD, and SUD services in

multiple languages such as Spanish and Polish. The Township should support these efforts by ensuring that essential communications and outreach materials are also available in relevant languages.

3. **Strengthen Community Engagement and Outreach**
  - Develop targeted outreach initiatives to engage underrepresented groups, including culturally tailored health fairs, workshops, and educational campaigns.
4. **Implement Robust Feedback and Satisfaction Tracking**
  - Establish a comprehensive feedback system, including regular satisfaction surveys and focus groups, to gather insights from residents and inform service improvements.
5. **Explore Funding Opportunities for Future Expansion**
  - Seek additional funding sources, including grants, partnerships, and state and federal funding, to support service expansion and infrastructure development.

## Conclusion

The Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive evaluation of the current services and identifies key areas for improvement. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, the township can build on its strengths and address critical gaps, ensuring that all residents have access to the support they need. Collaboration with local organizations, community leaders, and residents will be crucial in realizing these goals. Special emphasis should be placed on addressing linguistic barriers to ensure equitable access for all community members.

While the 2024-2025 allocations are final, there will be an opportunity for reallocations and adjustments in the 2025-2026 fiscal year to address emerging needs and service gaps.

## Traits and Characteristics of a Healthy and Thriving Community

Healthy communities are characterized by shared responsibility and accountability for the well-being of all members. Best practices for serving community members, service providers, and community leaders include:

1. **Inclusivity and Equity:** Ensuring that all community members, regardless of background, have equitable access to services and opportunities.
2. **Collaboration and Partnership:** Fostering strong partnerships between public agencies, private organizations, and community groups to leverage resources and expertise.
3. **Community Engagement:** Actively involving residents in decision-making processes and encouraging their participation in community initiatives.

4. **Comprehensive Services:** Providing a wide range of services that address various aspects of well-being, including physical health, mental health, education, and social support.
5. **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly assessing community needs and the effectiveness of services, and making necessary adjustments to improve outcomes.

By highlighting these traits and characteristics, the report aims to illustrate the importance of a holistic approach to community well-being and the role of shared responsibility in achieving a thriving community. This emphasis will be reinforced throughout the benchmarking section, where best practices from peer communities will be detailed.

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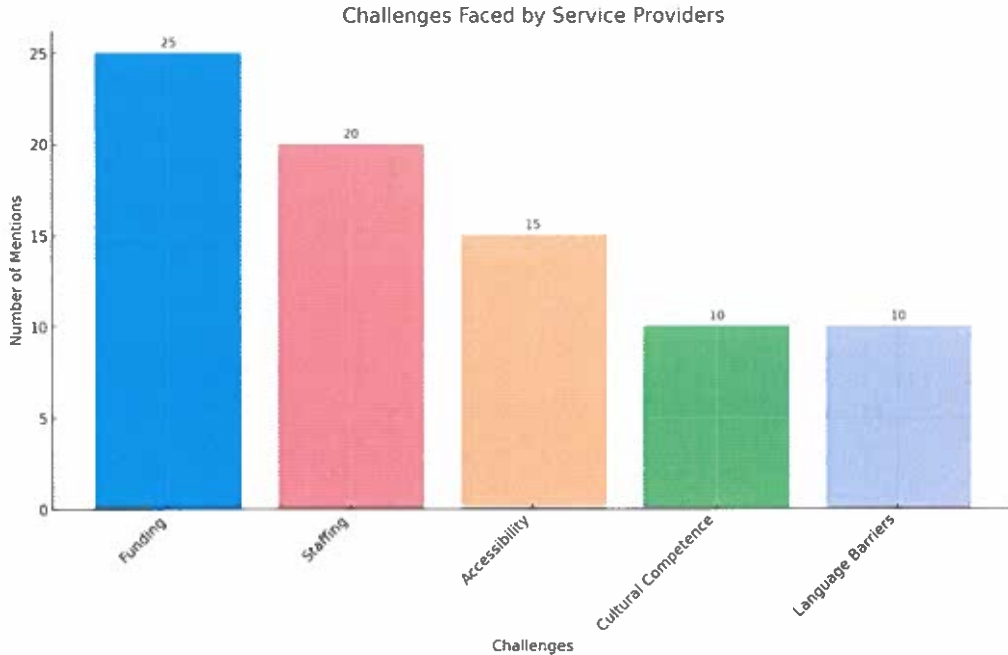
## Overview

The Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment was conducted to evaluate the state of mental health services within the township, identify service gaps, and provide actionable recommendations for improvement. This assessment focuses specifically on three critical areas: mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorder (SUD). Understanding the distinction between the broad concept of mental health and these specific conditions is vital to effectively addressing the community's needs.

### Purpose of the Investigation

The primary goal of this assessment is to ensure that Wheeling Township residents have access to comprehensive and effective mental health services. This involves evaluating existing services, understanding the specific needs of the community, and identifying areas where improvements can be made. By focusing on mental illness, IDD, and SUD, the assessment aims to provide targeted recommendations that address the unique challenges associated with these conditions.

**Figure 3: Challenges Faced by Service Providers**





## Summary of Prior Studies

Prior studies and reports have highlighted several challenges within the mental health service landscape of Wheeling Township:

1. **Service Accessibility:** Previous reports indicate that while many services are available, there are significant barriers to access, particularly for residents with low income, those who require bilingual services, and individuals with specialized needs such as SUD and IDD.
2. **Funding Allocation:** Historical financial analyses suggest that while funding is allocated to mental health services, there may be gaps in how these funds are distributed among specific programs and services, leading to inefficiencies and unmet needs.
3. **Community Engagement:** Previous assessments have shown a need for improved community engagement and outreach, particularly among underrepresented groups. There is also a recognized need for better feedback mechanisms to ensure that services are meeting the community's needs effectively.

## Addressing Gaps in the Literature

This assessment aims to fill several gaps identified in previous studies:

1. **Comprehensive Evaluation:** Unlike prior reports that may have focused on specific aspects of mental health services, this assessment provides a comprehensive evaluation encompassing mental illness, IDD, and SUD. By examining these areas collectively, the assessment offers a holistic view of the township's mental health landscape.
2. **Targeted Recommendations:** Building on the findings of previous studies, this report provides targeted, actionable recommendations designed to address specific gaps in service provision, funding allocation, and community engagement.
3. **Benchmarking and Best Practices:** By benchmarking Wheeling Township's services against peer communities, this assessment identifies best practices and successful initiatives that can be adapted and implemented locally. This comparative approach offers valuable insights into how Wheeling Township can enhance its service delivery.

## Scope of the Research

The scope of this research included:

1. **Community Surveys and Stakeholder Interviews:** Collecting qualitative and quantitative data from residents, service providers, and community leaders to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of mental health services.

2. **Review of Existing Survey Data and Artifacts:** Analyzing existing data and artifacts provided by Wheeling Township, including:
  - Community Stakeholders Complete List from Arlington Heights, Mt. Prospect, Wheeling, Buffalo Grove, Prospect Heights, Funded Agencies, School Districts (214, 25, 21, 96), Community Colleges, Private High Schools, Park Districts, Libraries, and Churches.
  - 28 additional documents with survey data covering a wide range of questions related to mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse.
  - Census Data from 2021 providing a breakdown of demographics, including foreign-born population, language spoken at home, educational attainment, marital status, household types, sex and age, race, and veteran status.
  - Survey data from Funded Agencies addressing their current needs, services needed, capacity, funding usage, and barriers to service.
  - Community Mental Health Act (405 ILCS 20) and updated demographics as of July 2022.
3. **Financial Analysis:** Examining the township's budget allocations to understand how funds are distributed and identify potential areas for reallocation to better meet community needs.
4. **Benchmarking:** Comparing Wheeling Township's services with those of similar communities to identify best practices and areas for improvement.
5. **Recommendations:** Providing detailed, actionable recommendations to enhance service delivery, improve accessibility, and ensure that all residents have equitable access to mental health support.

By addressing these areas, the Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment aims to provide a clear and actionable roadmap for improving mental health services in the community. The subsequent sections will delve into the methodology, community demographics, and social determinants of health (SDOH), followed by a detailed financial overview.

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## Methodology

The methodology for the Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment involved a multifaceted approach to gather comprehensive data and insights. This approach ensured a thorough evaluation of the current state of mental health services, identification of service gaps, and development of actionable recommendations. It is essential to emphasize the distinction between the broad concept of mental health and the specific conditions of mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorder (SUD). This distinction guided the assessment and shaped the questions and focus areas throughout the study.

## Outcomes Guiding the Assessment Study

The assessment was guided by five key outcomes that shaped the direction of the study and the questions the Research Team sought to address:

1. **Optimizing Funding Allocation for Comprehensive Mental Health Needs:**
  - Evaluate current funding allocations to identify gaps and inefficiencies.
  - Recommend strategies to optimize funding distribution to meet diverse mental health needs.
2. **Strengthening Mental Health Service Delivery:**
  - Assess the availability and quality of existing mental health services.
  - Identify barriers to service delivery and recommend improvements to enhance accessibility and effectiveness.
3. **Enhancing Community Trust and Engagement in Mental Health Initiatives:**
  - Evaluate current community engagement efforts and identify gaps in outreach.
  - Recommend strategies to build trust and increase community participation in mental health programs.
4. **Broadening Support for Diverse Mental Health Needs in Wheeling Township:**
  - Assess the specific needs of different population groups, including those with mental illness, IDD, and SUD.
  - Recommend targeted interventions to address the unique challenges faced by these groups.
5. **Benchmarking Wheeling Township's Mental Health Services Against Peer Townships:**
  - Compare Wheeling Township's services with those of similar communities.
  - Identify best practices and areas for improvement to ensure that Wheeling Township's services are on par with or exceed those of peer townships.

## Data Collection Methods

1. **Community Surveys:**
  - Surveys were distributed to residents to gather quantitative and qualitative data on their experiences with accessing mental health services, perceived gaps, and suggestions for improvement. The surveys included questions about familiarity with the purpose of the Wheeling Township Community Mental Health Board, views on developmental disabilities, substance abuse, and mental health issues, and the impact of isolation and loneliness on mental health.
2. **Stakeholder Interviews:**
  - Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including service providers, community leaders, and residents. These interviews provided qualitative insights

into the strengths and weaknesses of the current mental health system and highlighted specific needs and barriers to service provision.

**Sample Questions for Qualitative Interviews:**

**For Service Providers:**

- What are your organization's current needs specifically for Wheeling Township?
- What are the specific barriers to service delivery you encounter?
- What is the makeup of your clients (e.g., demographics, languages spoken)?
- Are there any services related to mental health, developmental disabilities, or substance abuse not offered in Wheeling Township that are needed?
- How can the Wheeling Township Community Mental Health Board help your organization?

**For Community Leaders:**

- What are the main mental health challenges facing the community?
- How well do you think current services are addressing these challenges?
- What improvements or additional services would you suggest?
- How can community leaders and organizations better support mental health initiatives?

**For Residents:**

- What has been your overall experience with accessing mental health services in the community?
- What specific challenges have you encountered?
- In your opinion, what are the most critical improvements needed in mental health services?
- How can the township better support individuals with mental illness, IDD, and SUD?

**3. Review of Existing Survey Data and Artifacts:**

- Existing data and artifacts provided by Wheeling Township were reviewed and analyzed. This included:
  - A comprehensive list of community stakeholders from various sectors such as funded agencies, school districts, community colleges, private high schools, park districts, libraries, and churches.
  - 28 additional documents with survey data covering questions related to mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse.
  - Census Data from 2021, providing detailed demographic information.
  - Survey data from funded agencies addressing their current needs, services needed, capacity, funding usage, and barriers to service.
  - The Community Mental Health Act (405 ILCS 20) and updated demographics as of July 2022.

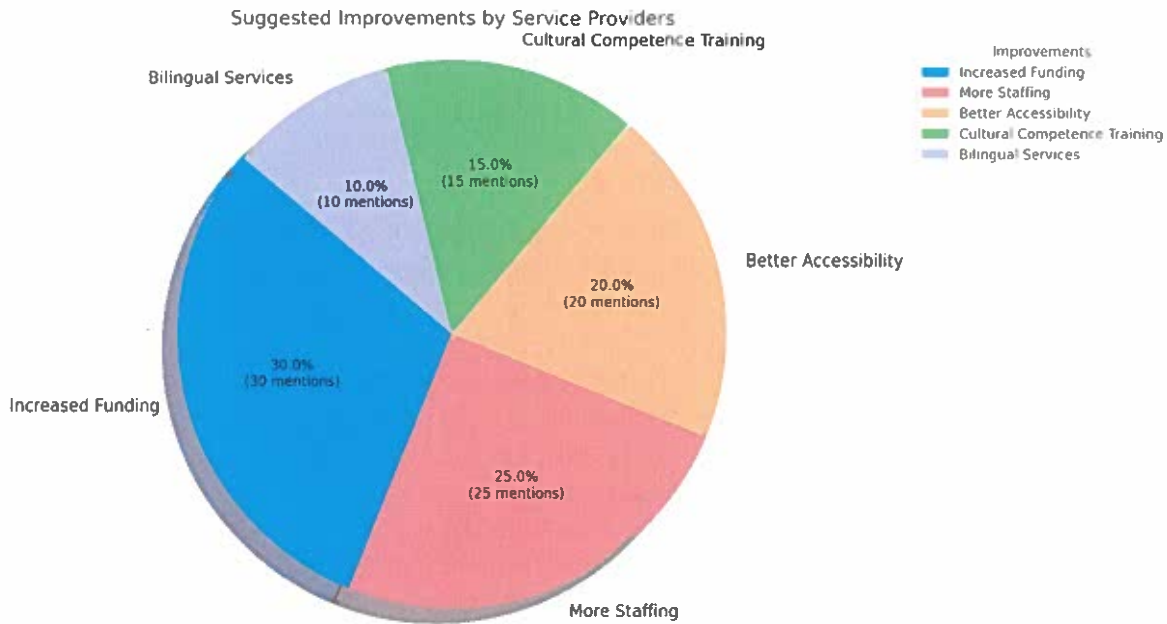
#### 4. Financial Analysis:

- A detailed financial analysis was conducted to assess the allocation of funds for mental health services. This analysis included comparisons with peer communities to identify potential areas for reallocation and improvement.

#### 5. Benchmarking:

- Benchmarking was conducted against similar communities to identify best practices and areas where Wheeling Township could improve its service delivery. This comparative approach provided valuable insights into successful initiatives and programs that could be adapted locally.

**Figure 4: Suggested Improvements by Service Providers**



#### Emphasis on Distinction

It is crucial to reiterate the distinction between the broad concept of mental health and the specific conditions of mental illness, IDD, and SUD throughout the methodology. Mental health encompasses the overall well-being of an individual's psychological, emotional, and social functioning. In contrast, mental illness refers to specific conditions that significantly impact a person's thinking, feeling, behavior, or mood. IDD is characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, while SUD involves the uncontrolled use of

substances despite harmful consequences. This distinction guided the assessment's focus and ensured that the unique needs associated with these conditions were adequately addressed.

## Data Analysis

### 1. **Quantitative Analysis:**

- Quantitative data from surveys and financial records were analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and other analytical techniques were used to interpret the data.

### 2. **Qualitative Analysis:**

- Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. Key themes, patterns, and insights were identified to understand the underlying issues and needs within the community.

### 3. **Comparative Analysis:**

- Comparative analysis was conducted to benchmark Wheeling Township's services against peer communities. This involved comparing funding allocations, service availability, community engagement efforts, and overall impact to identify best practices and areas for improvement.

## Validation and Triangulation

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings, multiple data sources and methods were used. Validation and triangulation involved the following steps:

### 1. **Cross-Verification:**

- Data from different sources (e.g., surveys, interviews, financial records) were cross-verified to ensure consistency and accuracy. This process helped identify and resolve any discrepancies.

### 2. **Multiple Data Collection Methods:**

- Utilizing various data collection methods (quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, review of existing data) provided a more comprehensive understanding of the issues. This multi-method approach enhanced the robustness of the findings.

### 3. **Triangulation:**

- Triangulation involved comparing data from different sources and methods to identify common themes and patterns. This approach ensured that the findings were not biased by any single data source and provided a well-rounded perspective on the current state of mental health services.

## Reporting and Recommendations

The findings from the data collection and analysis were synthesized to develop actionable recommendations. These recommendations aim to enhance service delivery, improve

accessibility, and ensure equitable access to mental health support for all residents. The report includes detailed insights and specific action items to guide the township in addressing identified gaps and building on existing strengths.

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## **Community Demographics and Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)**

Understanding the demographics and social determinants of health (SDOH) in Wheeling Township is essential for contextualizing the findings of this assessment. Demographic factors and SDOH significantly influence mental health outcomes and access to services. This section provides a detailed overview of these factors to better understand the community's needs and the context in which services are provided.

### **Population Size and Composition**

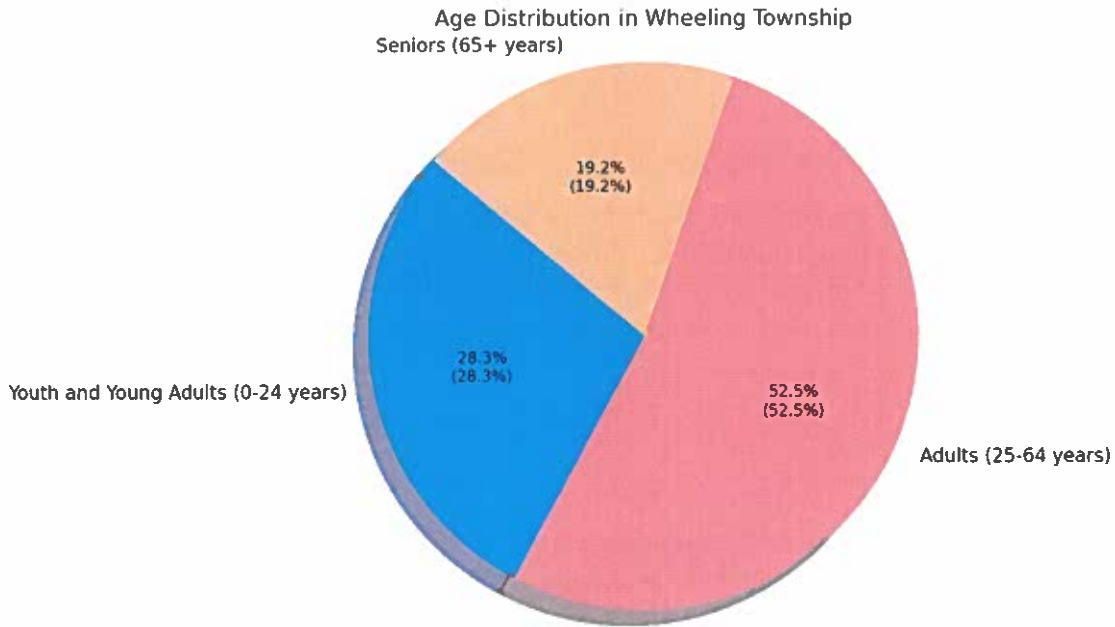
Wheeling Township has a population of approximately 155,000 residents. The community is diverse, with significant representation from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The diversity of the population influences the types of services needed and the ways in which they should be delivered to ensure inclusivity and cultural competence.

### **Age Distribution**

The township's population includes a mix of age groups, with notable proportions of both young people and elderly residents. Age distribution is an important factor in determining service needs:

- **Youth and Young Adults (0-24 years):** This age group requires services related to education, early intervention for mental health issues, and support for developmental disabilities.
- **Adults (25-64 years):** Adults may require services for mental illness, substance use disorders, and support for their roles as caregivers.
- **Seniors (65+ years):** Senior residents often need services related to mental health, social engagement, caregiver support, and assistance with age-related health conditions.

**Figure 5: Age Distribution in Wheeling Township**



### Socioeconomic Status

Economic conditions vary widely among residents, impacting their ability to access and afford mental health services. Key factors include:

- **Income Levels:** A significant portion of the population may experience financial instability, affecting their access to paid services.
- **Employment Status:** Employment status influences both income levels and access to employer-provided health benefits.
- **Poverty Rates:** Higher poverty rates correlate with increased need for subsidized or free mental health services.

### Education and Employment

Educational attainment and employment status are critical determinants of health outcomes and access to resources:

- **Education Levels:** Higher levels of education are associated with better health outcomes and increased awareness of available services.
- **Employment:** Stable employment provides financial security and often access to health benefits, including mental health services.

### Housing and Transportation

Housing stability and access to transportation are critical factors in determining residents' ability to access services:



- **Housing Stability:** Stable housing is essential for mental health and overall well-being. Housing insecurity can exacerbate mental health issues and create barriers to accessing services.
- **Transportation:** Reliable transportation is necessary for accessing mental health services, especially for residents in remote or underserved areas. Limited transportation options can pose significant barriers to care.

## Health Indicators

Health indicators provide insight into the overall health of the community and specific needs related to mental health:

- **Prevalence of Chronic Diseases:** Chronic physical health conditions often co-occur with mental health issues, requiring integrated care approaches.
- **Mental Health Conditions:** Data on the prevalence of mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and serious mental illnesses, help identify the level of need for mental health services.
- **Substance Use Disorders:** Understanding the prevalence of substance use disorders is critical for planning appropriate interventions and support services.

## Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

SDOH encompasses a range of factors that influence health outcomes beyond individual behaviors and genetics. These include:

- **Economic Stability:** Financial resources, employment, and economic policies impact residents' ability to maintain health and access services.
- **Education Access and Quality:** Educational opportunities and quality of schooling affect health literacy and long-term health outcomes.
- **Health Care Access and Quality:** Availability and quality of health care services, including mental health services, are critical for maintaining health.
- **Neighborhood and Built Environment:** The physical environment, including housing quality, transportation options, and access to recreational spaces, influences health outcomes.
- **Social and Community Context:** Social networks, community engagement, and support systems play significant roles in health and well-being.

## Community Demographics Overview

Based on the Census Data from 2021 and updated demographics as of July 2022, the following key demographic insights are noted:

- **Foreign-Born Population:** A significant portion of the community is foreign-born, with diverse places of birth.
- **Language Spoken at Home:** Many residents speak languages other than English at home, indicating a need for bilingual services.

- **Educational Attainment:** Varied levels of educational attainment among residents impact their access to information and services.
- **Marital Status:** Marital status distribution provides insights into household structures and potential support systems.
- **Household Types:** The types of households, including single-parent households and multi-generational families, influence service needs.
- **Race and Ethnicity:** The racial and ethnic composition of the community highlights the need for culturally competent services.
- **Veteran Status:** Understanding the veteran population's needs is essential for providing targeted support and services.

### Specific Findings from Community Stakeholders

Data from the funded agency reports and other sources provide additional insights into the community demographics and SDOH:

- **Insurance and Medicaid:** Many residents who do not have insurance, MCO coverage, or Medicaid find it difficult to obtain mental health services.
- **Housing Needs:** There is a need for affordable rental housing with caps on rent increases, consistent on-site management, and options for larger families.
- **Transportation:** A lack of reliable transportation options is a significant barrier to accessing services, especially for seniors and individuals with developmental disabilities.
- **Employment and Support Services:** Services such as job coaching, job search assistance, and employment support for individuals with disabilities are needed.
- **Cultural Competence:** There is a critical need for culturally competent service providers to address the diverse population in Wheeling Township. This includes providing services in multiple languages and understanding cultural nuances.

### Summary of Key Demographic Data

From the CMAP Community Data Snapshot and the 2021 Census Data, here are some specific figures:

- **Total Population:** 155,000
- **Total Households:** 39,137
- **Average Household Size:** 2.5
- **Racial and Ethnic Composition:**
  - White (Non-Hispanic): 48.8%
  - Hispanic or Latino: 27.9%
  - Black (Non-Hispanic): 2.3%
  - Asian (Non-Hispanic): 17.7%
  - Other/Multiple Races (Non-Hispanic): 3.3%
- **Educational Attainment:**
  - Less than High School Diploma: 12.2%
  - High School Diploma or Equivalent: 21.8%

- Some College, No Degree: 18.5%
- Associate's Degree: 6.2%
- Bachelor's Degree: 26.5%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 14.7%
- **Household Income:**
  - Less than \$25,000: 12.8%
  - \$25,000 to \$49,999: 20.2%
  - \$50,000 to \$74,999: 19.1%
  - \$75,000 to \$99,999: 14.9%
  - \$100,000 to \$149,999: 17.6%
  - \$150,000 and Over: 15.4%
  - Median Income: \$71,966
  - Per Capita Income: \$36,999
- **Nativity:**
  - Native: 57.6%
  - Foreign Born: 42.4%
- **Language Spoken at Home:**
  - English Only: 40.0%
  - Spanish: 25.6%
  - Slavic Languages: 15.4%
  - Other Languages: 19.0%
- **Household Size:**
  - 1-Person Household: 29.7%
  - 2-Person Household: 31.8%
  - 3-Person Household: 18.4%
  - 4-or-More-Person Household: 20.1%

### Key Insights

- The high percentage of foreign-born residents and non-English speakers highlights the need for culturally competent and bilingual mental health services.
- The diverse age distribution suggests a need for tailored services for different life stages, including youth, adults, and seniors.
- Economic disparities and varying levels of educational attainment indicate potential barriers to accessing mental health services, necessitating targeted outreach and support.

By integrating these detailed demographic insights and SDOH factors into the assessment, the Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment can provide a more accurate and actionable understanding of the community's needs and guide the development of effective mental health services.

## Financial Overview and Breakdown of Funds and Allocations

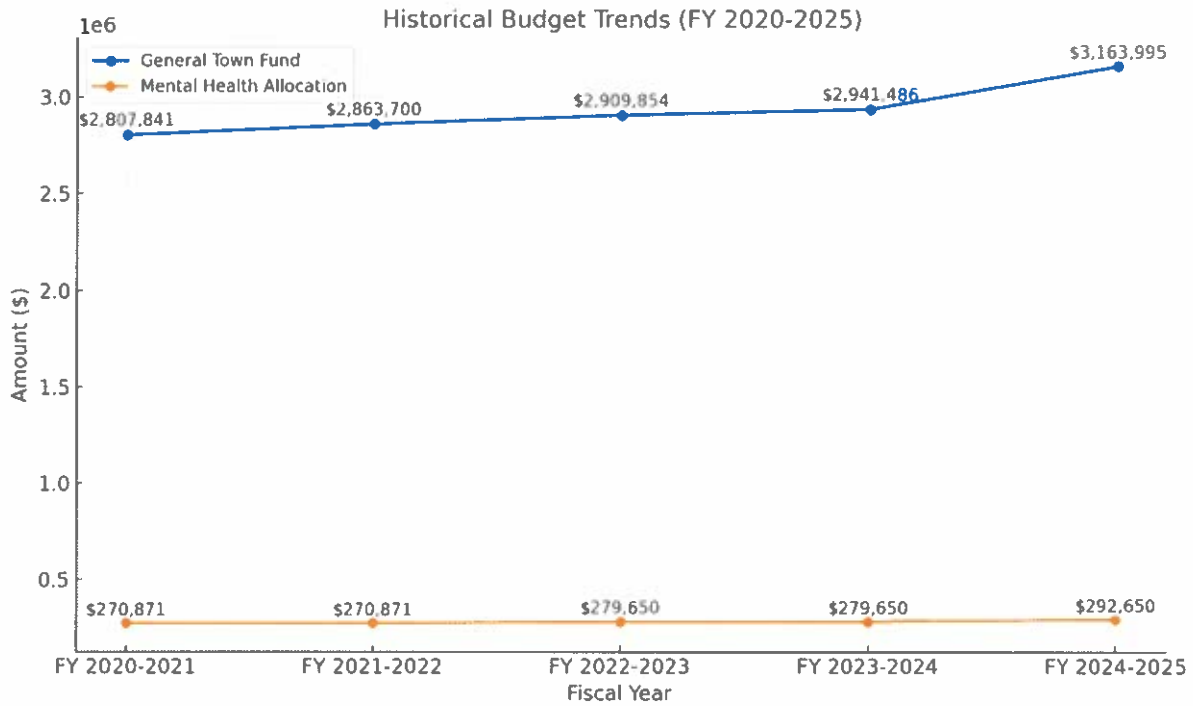
The FY 2024-2025 budget allocations for Wheeling Township have been finalized, with targeted funding for Mental Illness (MI) and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) services. The Township has allocated \$110,000 to the Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health and \$22,000 to the Josselyn Center under the MI category. For IDD services, \$35,000 has been allocated to Avenues to Independence, \$5,000 to the Center for Enriched Living, \$97,650 to Clearbrook Center, and \$23,000 to Countryside/Little City. Currently, the Township has no funded agencies for Substance Use Disorder (SUD). It is important to note that the funding allocations for the 2024-2025 fiscal year are finalized and have been committed to specific programs and services. Any adjustments or reallocations to address additional service needs will be considered for the 2025-2026 fiscal year and beyond.

As the allocations for FY 2024-2025 are finalized, it is important to consider future allocation discussions for FY 2025-2026 and beyond to ensure continued support and potential expansion of services, particularly in the area of SUD.

**Table 2: Historical Budget Overview (FY 2020-2025)**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>General Town Fund</b>	<b>Mental Health Board Allocation</b>	<b>Mental Health Services</b>
<b>FY 2020-2021</b>	\$2,807,841	\$270,871	Alexian Brothers (\$116,250), Avenues to Independence (\$30,000), etc.
<b>FY 2021-2022</b>	\$2,863,700	\$270,871	Similar breakdown as above
<b>FY 2022-2023</b>	\$2,909,854	\$279,650	Similar breakdown as above
<b>FY 2023-2024</b>	\$2,941,486	\$279,650	Similar breakdown as above
<b>FY 2024-2025</b>	\$3,163,995	\$292,650	Similar breakdown as above

**Figure 6: Historical Budget Trends (FY 2020-2025)**



**Fiscal Year 2024-2025**

- **General Town Fund Beginning Balance:** \$4,217,261
- **Total Estimated Revenues:** \$3,017,300
- **Total Estimated Funds Available:** \$7,234,561
- **Total Budgets & Appropriations:** \$3,163,995
- **Estimated Ending Balance:** \$4,070,566
- **Mental Health Budget Allocation:** \$292,650

**Proposed Allocation Breakdown (2025 - 2026):**

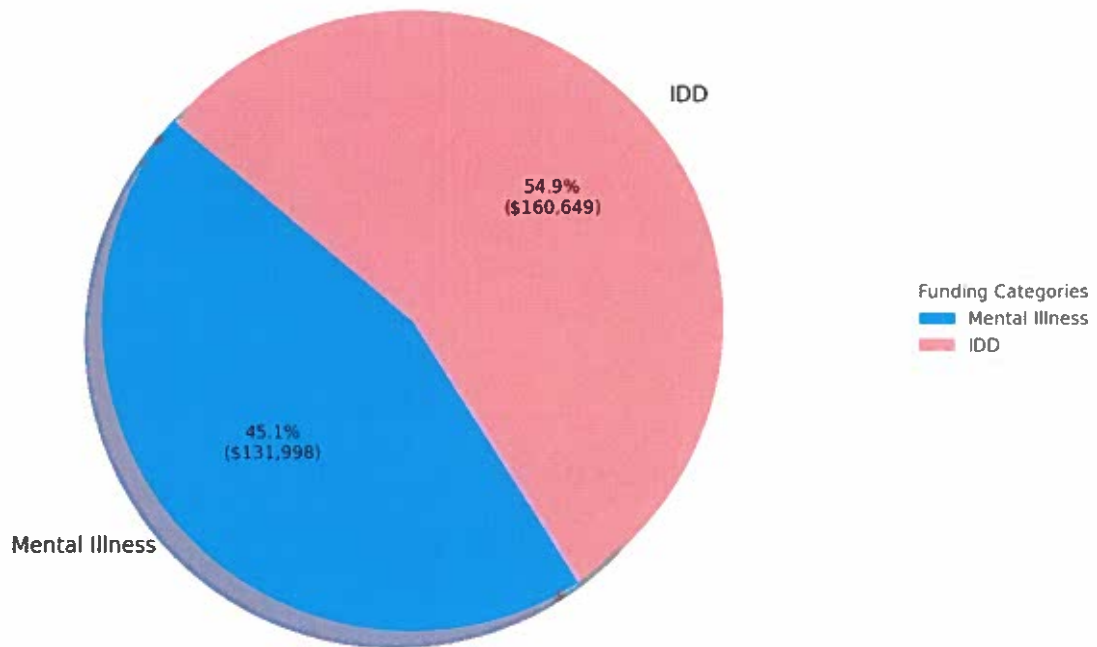
- **Mental Illness:** \$132,000
- **IDD Services:** \$160,650
- **SUD Services:** Note that there are currently no funded agencies for SUD.

**Table 3: FY 2024-2025**

Service Category	Service Provider	Allocation (\$)
Mental Illness	Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health	\$110,000
	Josselyn Center	\$22,000
IDD	Avenues to Independence	\$35,000
	Center for Enriched Living	\$5,000
	Clearbrook Center	\$97,650
	Countryside/Little City	\$23,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$292,650</b>

**Figure 7: Proposed Budget Allocation for Mental Health Services FY 2025-2026**

FY 2025-2026 Funding Allocation Breakdown



This proposed allocation model for 2025 - 2026 is based on community needs and stakeholder feedback, emphasizing the importance of dedicating specific portions of the budget to Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD (to be determined). The goal is to ensure that each area receives adequate funding to address the challenges faced by the community.

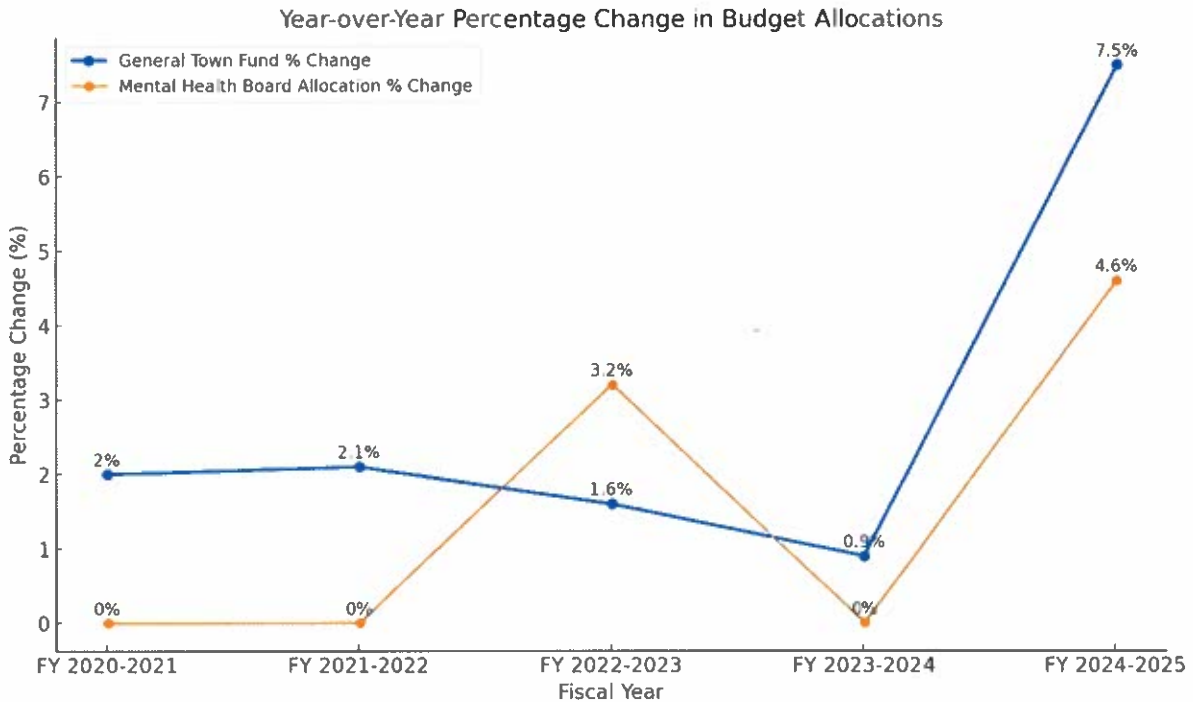
## Fiscal Years 2020-2021 to 2023-2024

For fiscal years 2020-2021 through 2023-2024, the financials provided by Wheeling Township did not include specific breakdowns for Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD. The mental health budgets during these years were allocated as a general category, without detailed tracking of funds dedicated to each specific area. The following sections provide a summary of the financial data for these years:

- **Fiscal Year 2023-2024**
  - **General Town Fund Beginning Balance:** \$3,718,719
  - **Total Estimated Revenues:** \$2,331,500
  - **Total Estimated Funds Available:** \$6,050,219
  - **Total Budgets & Appropriations:** \$2,941,486
  - **Estimated Ending Balance:** \$3,108,733
  - **Mental Health Budget Allocation:** \$279,650
  
- **Fiscal Year 2022-2023**
  - **General Town Fund Beginning Balance:** \$3,917,665
  - **Total Estimated Revenues:** \$2,167,500
  - **Total Estimated Funds Available:** \$6,085,165
  - **Total Budgets & Appropriations:** \$2,909,854
  - **Estimated Ending Balance:** \$3,175,311
  - **Mental Health Budget Allocation:** \$279,650
  
- **Fiscal Year 2021-2022**
  - **General Town Fund Beginning Balance:** \$3,820,767
  - **Total Estimated Revenues:** \$2,147,500
  - **Total Estimated Funds Available:** \$5,968,267
  - **Total Budgets & Appropriations:** \$2,863,700
  - **Estimated Ending Balance:** \$3,104,567
  - **Mental Health Budget Allocation:** \$270,871
  
- **Fiscal Year 2020-2021**
  - **General Town Fund Beginning Balance:** \$3,833,443
  - **Total Estimated Revenues:** \$2,174,500
  - **Total Estimated Funds Available:** \$6,007,943
  - **Total Budgets & Appropriations:** \$2,807,841
  - **Estimated Ending Balance:** \$3,200,102

- **Mental Health Budget Allocation: \$270,871**

**Figure 8: Year-over-Year Percentage Change in Budget Allocations**



**Justification for Proposed Allocation Model (2025-2026 and Beyond)**

Starting with the 2025-2026 fiscal year, a more detailed allocation model is proposed to ensure that funds are specifically directed toward addressing Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD. This model is based on:

- **Community Needs:** Stakeholder feedback and community assessments have highlighted the need for targeted funding to adequately address the distinct challenges in each of these areas.
- **Service Provider Focus:** Many service providers operate with a focus on specific areas, such as IDD or SUD. Aligning the budget allocation with these focuses ensures that funds are used effectively and that service gaps are addressed.
- **Best Practices:** Industry best practices suggest that a targeted allocation model enhances the effectiveness of mental health programs by ensuring that each area receives the attention and resources it requires.



The allocation model for 2025-2026 and beyond is recommended to be reviewed annually and adjusted based on service utilization data, emerging needs, and ongoing community feedback. This approach ensures that Wheeling Township can respond dynamically to the mental health needs of its residents and allocate funds in a way that maximizes impact.

### Implications of the Proposed Allocation Model (2025-2026 and Beyond)

The proposed allocation model for Fiscal Year 2025-2026, and future years, introduces a strategic shift in how Wheeling Township allocates its mental health budget. By specifically dedicating portions of the budget to Mental Illness, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and Substance Use Disorder (SUD), the Township can more effectively address the diverse needs of its community.

### Strategic Focus on Targeted Funding

#### 1. **Mental Illness (50% Allocation)**

- **Rationale:** Mental Illness represents the largest segment of the population in need of mental health services. The allocation of 50% of the mental health budget reflects the significant demand for services such as counseling, therapy, psychiatric care, and crisis intervention.
- **Strategic Goals:**
  - Enhance access to mental health services, particularly for underserved populations.
  - Invest in evidence-based treatment programs that address common mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder.
  - Strengthen crisis intervention services to reduce the incidence of mental health emergencies.

#### 2. **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) (30% Allocation)**

- **Rationale:** Individuals with IDD require specialized services that address their unique needs, including educational support, life skills training, and residential care. The allocation of 30% of the budget ensures that these critical services are adequately funded.
- **Strategic Goals:**
  - Expand access to educational and vocational programs for individuals with IDD.
  - Support residential care facilities that provide safe and supportive environments for individuals with severe disabilities.
  - Collaborate with service providers to develop innovative programs that enhance the quality of life for individuals with IDD.

#### 3. **Substance Use Disorder (SUD) (20% Allocation)**

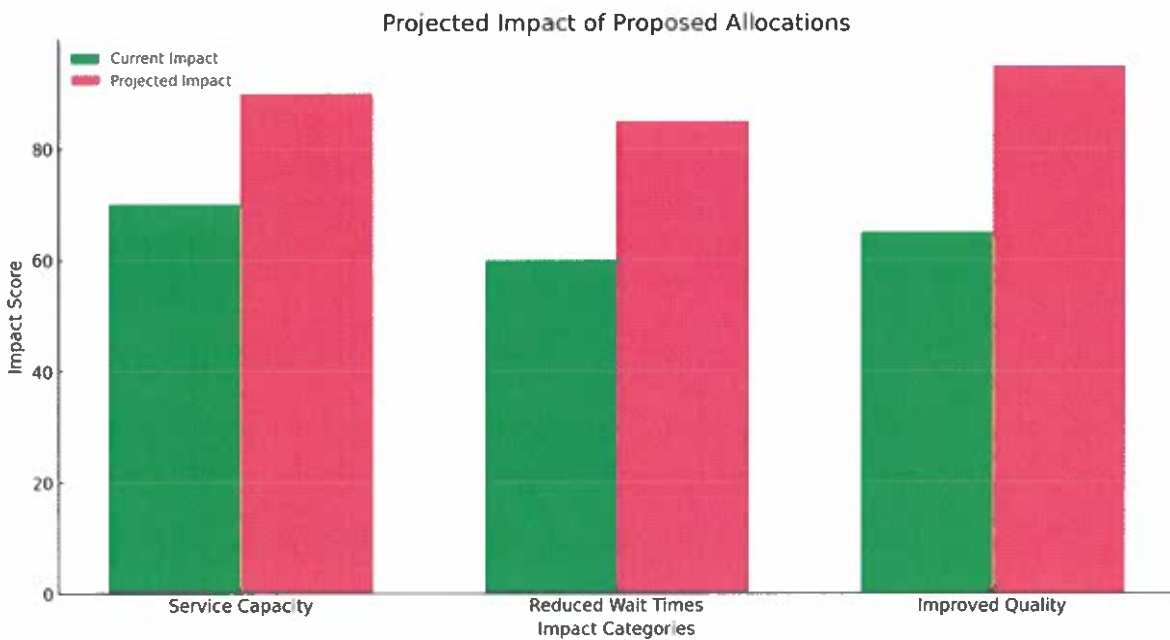
- **Rationale:** Substance Use Disorder continues to be a pressing issue within the community, affecting individuals across all demographics. Allocating 20% of the

budget to SUD ensures that prevention, treatment, and recovery services are prioritized.

- **Strategic Goals:**

- Increase the availability of treatment programs for individuals struggling with addiction.
- Invest in community-based prevention programs that reduce the incidence of substance use disorders.
- Develop comprehensive recovery support services that assist individuals in maintaining long-term sobriety.

**Figure 9: Projected Impact of Proposed Allocations**



### Justification for Allocations

The allocation percentages for Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD are justified based on the following considerations:

1. **Community Needs Assessment:** The assessment identified Mental Illness as the most prevalent concern within the community, followed by the significant needs of individuals with IDD and the ongoing challenges posed by SUD.
2. **Stakeholder Feedback:** Input from service providers, community leaders, and residents consistently highlighted the need for targeted funding in these areas. The allocation

model reflects the community's priorities and ensures that resources are directed where they are most needed.

3. **Best Practices in Mental Health Services:** Industry standards suggest that targeted allocations, when based on robust community data, result in more effective service delivery and better outcomes for individuals. By aligning the budget with these best practices, Wheeling Township can maximize the impact of its mental health services.

## Recommendations for Future Financial Planning

While the financial recommendations provided focus on increasing funding for services targeting mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorder (SUD), it is important to note that these figures do not account for the additional costs associated with staffing and administrative support required to effectively implement these expanded services. An in-depth analysis of staffing needs, including recruitment, retention, training, and administrative overhead, should be conducted to provide a more comprehensive estimate of the total financial requirements for the proposed service expansions.

As previously indicated, the current allocations for the 2024-2025 fiscal year are set, therefore, future financial planning should take into account the opportunity for reallocations starting with the 2025-2026 fiscal year. This will provide flexibility to address any emerging service gaps or expanding needs.

To ensure the successful implementation of these recommendations, the following considerations are essential:

### 1. **Staffing Needs Assessment:**

- Service providers will need additional clinical and administrative staff to handle the increased demand for services. This includes mental health professionals, social workers, bilingual staff, and administrative personnel to support day-to-day operations.
- A detailed workforce analysis should be conducted to identify the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) required, along with the associated costs for recruitment, onboarding, and ongoing professional development.

### 2. **Administrative Costs:**

- Expanding services will necessitate increased administrative support, such as scheduling, billing, and data management. These costs should be factored into future budget allocations to ensure that service providers have the necessary infrastructure to manage their operations efficiently.

### 3. **Long-Term Financial Planning:**

- It is recommended that the Township and Mental Health Board explore grants and additional funding opportunities to cover staffing and administrative costs. This could include federal or state grants aimed at workforce development in the mental health field, as well as partnerships with local universities or training institutions to develop a pipeline of qualified professionals.

### 4. **Potential Collaboration:**

- Given the funding limitations, collaboration between service providers, the Township, and community leaders will be essential to identify cost-effective solutions for addressing staffing shortages. This could include shared administrative resources or joint recruitment initiatives among multiple service providers within the township.

By addressing staffing and administrative needs alongside service expansions, Wheeling Township can better position itself to meet the growing demand for mental health services while ensuring that service providers have the capacity and support necessary to deliver high-quality care.

## Long-Term Financial Sustainability

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the mental health budget is critical to maintaining and enhancing services over time. To achieve this, the Township should consider the following strategies:

### 1. Establish a Contingency Fund

- **Purpose:** Create a contingency fund specifically for mental health services to address unexpected increases in demand or emergencies. This fund can act as a financial buffer, ensuring that services are not disrupted due to budget shortfalls.
- **Recommendation:** Allocate a small percentage of the annual budget to build this fund over time, ensuring that it is available when needed.

### 2. Implement Cost-Saving Measures

- **Purpose:** Identify areas where cost-saving measures can be implemented without compromising the quality of services. This could include streamlining administrative processes, reducing overhead costs, or adopting more efficient service delivery models.
- **Recommendation:** Conduct a thorough review of current expenditures and identify opportunities for cost savings, reinvesting those savings into direct services.

### 3. Explore Innovative Funding Models

- **Purpose:** Explore innovative funding models, such as social impact bonds or public-private partnerships, to diversify funding sources and reduce reliance on a single revenue stream.
- **Recommendation:** Work with financial experts and community stakeholders to identify and implement innovative funding models that align with the Township's goals and community needs.

## Conclusion

The proposed allocation model for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 and beyond represents a strategic approach to funding mental health services in Wheeling Township. By specifically allocating funds to Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD, the Township can ensure that these critical areas receive the attention and resources they require.

While the financial data for prior fiscal years did not explicitly break down allocations for these areas, the proposed model provides a clear and justified approach moving forward. The recommendations outlined in this section aim to enhance the effectiveness of the mental health

budget, ensuring that Wheeling Township continues to meet the needs of its residents in a sustainable and impactful way.

### **Alignment with the Township’s Strategic Goals**

The proposed allocation model and financial planning strategies align closely with Wheeling Township’s broader strategic goals of fostering a healthy, inclusive, and resilient community. By ensuring that mental health services are adequately funded and targeted, the Township can address critical challenges while promoting overall well-being among its residents.

### **Supporting Community Health and Well-Being**

- **Strategic Objective:** To create a supportive environment where all residents have access to the mental health services they need, particularly those most vulnerable, such as individuals living with Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD.
- **Alignment:** The allocation model directs resources to areas where they can have the greatest impact, ensuring that the Township’s commitment to mental health is reflected in its financial decisions.

### **Enhancing Service Accessibility**

- **Strategic Objective:** To ensure that mental health services are accessible to all residents, regardless of their socioeconomic status, language, or cultural background.
- **Alignment:** The proposed budget allocations consider the diverse needs of the community, with targeted funding for IDD and SUD services, which are often underfunded and underutilized.

### **Promoting Equity and Inclusion**

- **Strategic Objective:** To promote equity and inclusion in the provision of mental health services, ensuring that all residents feel valued and supported.
- **Alignment:** By allocating resources based on need and ensuring that services are available to all segments of the population, the Township is taking concrete steps to reduce disparities in mental health outcomes.

### **Challenges and Considerations**

While the proposed financial strategy offers a robust framework for addressing mental health needs in Wheeling Township, there are several challenges and considerations that must be accounted for:

#### **1. Data Limitations**

- **Challenge:** The lack of detailed historical data on the specific allocation of funds to Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD makes it difficult to assess past effectiveness and plan for the future with complete confidence.

- **Consideration:** Moving forward, it is essential to implement improved data collection and reporting mechanisms to ensure that funds are tracked and allocated based on real-time needs and service utilization.
2. **Budget Constraints**
    - **Challenge:** Despite the strategic allocation of funds, overall budget constraints may limit the Township's ability to fully meet the needs of all residents.
    - **Consideration:** The Township may need to explore additional funding sources, such as grants and partnerships, to supplement the mental health budget and ensure that all critical areas are adequately funded.
  3. **Community Engagement**
    - **Challenge:** Ensuring that all segments of the community, particularly those who are marginalized or hard to reach, are engaged in the process and have access to the services they need.
    - **Consideration:** Ongoing community engagement is essential to gathering feedback, identifying service gaps, and adjusting the allocation model to better meet community needs. This includes leveraging technology and innovative outreach strategies to connect with residents.
  4. **Sustaining Long-Term Commitment**
    - **Challenge:** Maintaining a sustained commitment to mental health funding, particularly in the face of economic downturns or shifting political priorities.
    - **Consideration:** Building a robust contingency fund and exploring diversified funding models can help insulate mental health services from budget cuts or financial crises, ensuring continuity of care.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the success of the proposed financial strategies and allocation model, the Township should implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework. This framework should include the following components:

1. **Regular Financial Audits**
  - **Purpose:** Conduct annual audits of the mental health budget to ensure that funds are being allocated and spent as intended. This will help identify any discrepancies or inefficiencies in the budgeting process.
  - **Recommendation:** Partner with an external auditor or financial consultant to conduct these audits, providing an objective assessment of the Township's financial practices.
2. **Service Utilization Tracking**
  - **Purpose:** Monitor the utilization of mental health services across the three key areas (Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD) to determine whether the allocation model is meeting community needs.

- **Recommendation:** Implement a service tracking system that collects data on service usage, outcomes, and client satisfaction. This data should inform future budget adjustments and strategic planning.
3. **Stakeholder Feedback Loops**
    - **Purpose:** Establish regular feedback loops with service providers, community leaders, and residents to gather insights on the effectiveness of mental health services and identify areas for improvement.
    - **Recommendation:** Hold quarterly stakeholder meetings or focus groups to review progress, discuss challenges, and refine the allocation model as needed.
  4. **Outcome-Based Reporting**
    - **Purpose:** Shift towards an outcome-based reporting model, where the success of the mental health budget is measured not just by financial metrics, but by the actual impact on community health and well-being.
    - **Recommendation:** Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) related to mental health outcomes, such as reductions in emergency room visits, improved client mental health scores, and increased service accessibility. These KPIs should be reported annually to the Township Board and the community.

## Future Directions

As Wheeling Township looks to the future, the proposed allocation model and financial strategies offer a pathway to creating a more resilient and responsive mental health system. The following future directions are recommended to build on the foundation established by this report:

1. **Expanding Mental Health Infrastructure**
  - **Objective:** Invest in expanding the physical and digital infrastructure needed to support comprehensive mental health services. This could include building new facilities, upgrading existing ones, and expanding telehealth services.
  - **Action:** Apply for federal and state grants that support infrastructure development, and partner with local health systems and non-profits to co-invest in new projects.
2. **Training and Workforce Development**
  - **Objective:** Enhance the capacity of the mental health workforce by investing in training and professional development for service providers. This is particularly important in specialized areas such as IDD and SUD.
  - **Action:** Establish partnerships with local universities and training institutes to develop ongoing education programs for mental health professionals. Consider offering scholarships or financial incentives to attract new workers to the field.
3. **Building Resilience through Community Programs**
  - **Objective:** Develop community-based programs that build resilience and promote mental wellness, reducing the need for more intensive services. This could include peer support groups, wellness workshops, and prevention programs.



- **Action:** Allocate a portion of the mental health budget to fund these community programs, and work with local organizations to implement them. Evaluate their impact on reducing the incidence of mental health issues in the community.
- 4. Strengthening Collaboration with Peer Townships**
- **Objective:** Strengthen collaboration with peer townships to share best practices, pool resources, and address common challenges in mental health service delivery.
  - **Action:** Establish a regional mental health consortium that brings together representatives from neighboring townships to coordinate efforts, advocate for shared funding, and develop joint initiatives.

## Conclusion

The Financial Overview and Breakdown of Funds and Allocations section of the Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment provides a comprehensive analysis of the Township's budget for mental health services, with a focus on the proposed allocation model for 2025-2026 and beyond. The model represents a strategic shift towards targeted funding for Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD, ensuring that these critical areas receive the resources they need to address the community's challenges.

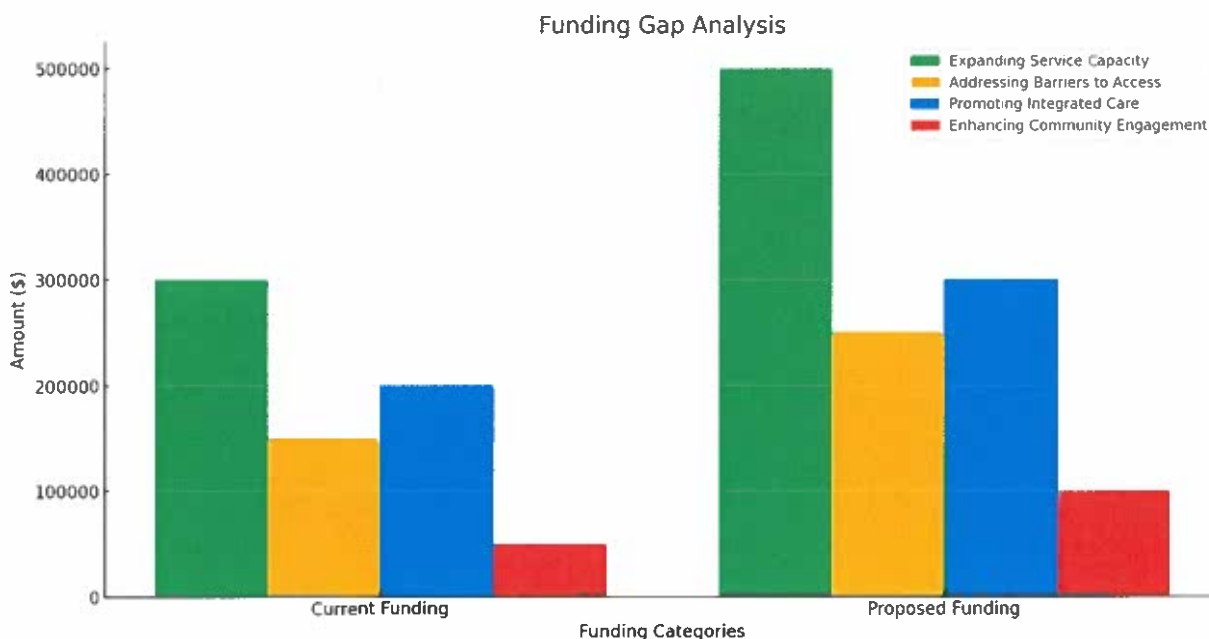
While the historical financial data did not explicitly provide a breakdown for these areas, the proposed model offers a clear and justified approach moving forward. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this section, Wheeling Township can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of its mental health services, ensuring that all residents have access to the care and support they need.

The proposed financial strategies are aligned with the Township's broader goals of promoting health, equity, and inclusion, and they provide a roadmap for future financial planning that is both responsive and resilient. As the Township moves forward, continued engagement with the community, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and a commitment to long-term sustainability will be key to achieving these goals.

## Recommendations for Addressing Service Gaps

The Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment has identified several critical service gaps that need to be addressed to ensure that all residents have access to the mental health services they require. These gaps include limited availability of specialized services, barriers to access for underserved populations, and a lack of comprehensive support for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD). The following recommendations are proposed to address these gaps:

**Figure 10: Funding Gap Analysis**



### 1. Expand Specialized Mental Health Services

- **Recommendation:** Increase the availability of specialized mental health services, particularly for individuals with severe mental illness, IDD, and SUD. This includes expanding crisis intervention services, outpatient treatment programs, and residential care facilities.
- **Action Steps:**
  - **Partnerships:** Establish partnerships with regional mental health providers to bring specialized services to Wheeling Township.
  - **Funding:** Allocate additional funds to support the expansion of these services, leveraging state and federal grants where possible.
  - **Workforce Development:** Invest in training and recruiting mental health professionals with expertise in these areas to ensure that the expanded services are adequately staffed.

### 2. Improve Access for Underserved Populations

- **Recommendation:** Address barriers to access for underserved populations, including low-income residents, non-English speakers, and individuals without health insurance.
- **Action Steps:**
  - **Language Services:** Expand language services and culturally competent care to better serve non-English-speaking residents.

- **Sliding Scale Fees:** Implement a sliding scale fee structure for mental health services, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to care.
- **Outreach Programs:** Develop targeted outreach programs to engage underserved populations and connect them with available services.

### 3. Enhance Coordination and Integration of Services

- **Recommendation:** Improve coordination and integration of mental health services across different providers and sectors to ensure a seamless continuum of care for residents.
- **Action Steps:**
  - **Referral Systems:** Develop a centralized referral system that allows providers to easily connect clients with the services they need.
  - **Integrated Care Models:** Promote the adoption of integrated care models that combine mental health, primary care, and social services to provide holistic support to clients.
  - **Collaboration:** Foster collaboration among service providers, community organizations, and local government agencies to address service gaps and share resources.

### 4. Strengthen Support for IDD and SUD Services

- **Recommendation:** Allocate specific resources and funding to support IDD and SUD services, recognizing the unique challenges faced by individuals with these conditions.
- **Action Steps:**
  - **Dedicated Funding:** Create dedicated funding streams for IDD and SUD services within the mental health budget.
  - **Capacity Building:** Support capacity building for organizations that provide IDD and SUD services, ensuring that they have the resources they need to meet the growing demand.
  - **Advocacy:** Advocate for increased state and federal funding for IDD and SUD services, highlighting the critical need for these services in Wheeling Township.

## Calculation Methodology

The proposed allocation model and recommendations are based on a detailed calculation methodology designed to ensure that the Township's mental health budget is distributed effectively and equitably. The methodology includes the following key components:

### 1. Community Needs Assessment

- **Data Sources:** The allocation model is informed by data from the Community Needs Assessment, including stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and service utilization data. This data provides a comprehensive understanding of the mental health needs in Wheeling Township.
- **Service Utilization:** Analysis of service utilization data helps identify which services are most in demand and where gaps exist. This information is used to prioritize funding for specific areas, such as Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD.

### 2. Allocation Model Development

- **Percentage Allocation:** The allocation model uses a percentage-based approach, with 50% of the mental health budget allocated to Mental Illness, 30% to IDD, and 20% to SUD. These percentages are based on the relative prevalence of these conditions in the community and the level of need for each service.
- **Budget Adjustment:** The model allows for adjustments based on annual service utilization data and emerging community needs. If service demand shifts, the allocation percentages can be recalibrated to ensure that resources are directed where they are most needed.

### 3. Cost Estimation

- **Service Costs:** The methodology includes a detailed cost estimation for expanding services in each of the three key areas (Mental Illness, IDD, SUD). This involves calculating the cost of additional staffing, facilities, and program development.
- **Funding Gaps:** The methodology identifies potential funding gaps and provides recommendations for addressing these gaps through additional funding sources, such as grants, partnerships, or reallocation of existing funds.

## Community Stakeholder Insights

Community engagement was a critical component of the Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment. Input from residents, service providers, and community leaders provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the current mental health system. Key themes that emerged from these stakeholder interactions include:

## 1. The Need for Culturally Competent Care

- **Insight:** Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of culturally competent care, particularly for non-English-speaking residents and those from diverse cultural backgrounds. They noted that language barriers and cultural differences can prevent individuals from accessing mental health services.
- **Recommendation:** Expand language services and provide training for mental health professionals in cultural competence to better serve the Township's diverse population.

## 2. Challenges in Accessing Services

- **Insight:** Stakeholders reported significant challenges in accessing mental health services, including long wait times, limited availability of specialized services, and financial barriers.
- **Recommendation:** Address these access issues by expanding service capacity, reducing wait times, and implementing sliding scale fees to make services more affordable.

## 3. Importance of Integrated Care

- **Insight:** Many stakeholders highlighted the need for integrated care models that address the whole person, combining mental health, primary care, and social services. They noted that integrated care can lead to better outcomes and more efficient use of resources.
- **Recommendation:** Promote the adoption of integrated care models across the Township's mental health system, ensuring that residents receive comprehensive, coordinated care.

## Key Findings

The Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment identified several key findings that inform the recommendations and strategies outlined in this report:

1. **High Demand for Mental Health Services:** The assessment revealed a high demand for mental health services, particularly for individuals with severe mental illness, IDD, and SUD. This demand is expected to grow as awareness of mental health issues increases and more residents seek services.
2. **Service Gaps in IDD and SUD:** There are significant gaps in services for individuals with IDD and SUD, with limited availability of specialized programs and long wait times for existing services. These gaps need to be addressed to ensure that all residents have access to the care they need.
3. **Barriers to Access:** Financial barriers, language barriers, and cultural differences are major obstacles to accessing mental health services in Wheeling Township. These

barriers disproportionately affect underserved populations, including low-income residents, non-English speakers, and individuals without health insurance.

4. **Need for Integrated Care:** The assessment highlighted the importance of integrated care models that combine mental health, primary care, and social services. These models can improve outcomes by addressing the whole person and providing a continuum of care.
5. **Importance of Community Engagement:** Engaging the community in the mental health system is essential to building trust, reducing stigma, and ensuring that services are responsive to community needs. Ongoing community engagement is needed to gather feedback, identify service gaps, and adjust strategies as needed.

## Recommendations

Based on the key findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the mental health system in Wheeling Township:

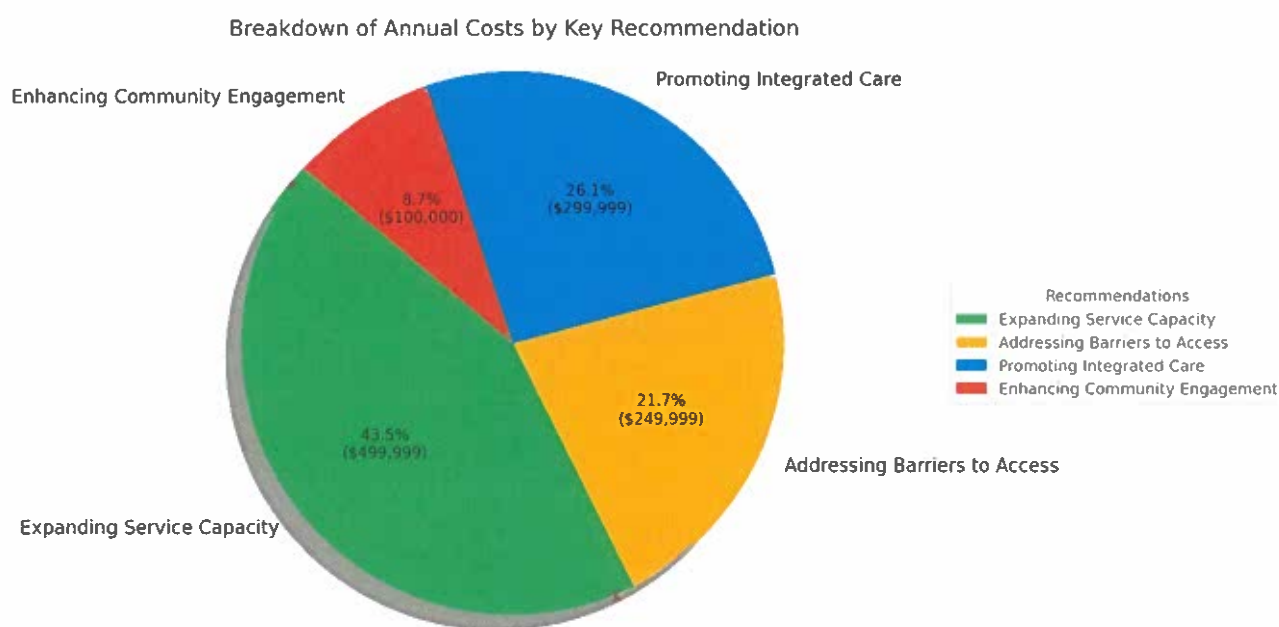
1. **Expand Service Capacity:** Increase the availability of mental health services, particularly for individuals with severe mental illness, IDD, and SUD. This includes expanding crisis intervention services, outpatient treatment programs, and residential care facilities.
2. **Address Barriers to Access:** Implement strategies to reduce financial, language, and cultural barriers to accessing mental health services. This includes expanding language services, implementing sliding scale fees, and providing culturally competent care.
3. **Promote Integrated Care:** Adopt integrated care models that combine mental health, primary care, and social services. This will provide a more holistic approach to care and improve outcomes for residents.
4. **Enhance Community Engagement:** Continue engaging the community through surveys, focus groups, and public forums to gather feedback on mental health services. Use this feedback to inform future strategies and ensure that services are responsive to community needs.
5. **Secure Additional Funding:** Explore opportunities for additional funding through grants, partnerships, and reallocation of existing funds. This will help address funding gaps and ensure that all critical areas of mental health are adequately supported.

## Key Findings and Estimated Financial Needs

The financial estimates provided in this section are based on a combination of service utilization data, cost benchmarks from similar programs, and stakeholder feedback. These estimates reflect the necessary funding to address the identified service gaps and implement the recommended improvements in Wheeling Township.

It's important to emphasize that the estimated costs outlined below are not intended to be shouldered solely by Wheeling Township or its Mental Health Board. The successful implementation of these recommendations will require a coordinated and collaborative effort from all stakeholders, including local government agencies, service providers, community organizations, and external funding sources. This collective approach will ensure that the additional services or expansion of services can be sustained both now and in the long term.

**Figure 11: Breakdown of Annual Costs by Key Recommendation**



### 1. Expanding Service Capacity

- **Estimated Cost:** \$500,000 annually
- **Justification and Calculation:**
  - **Service Expansion Needs:** The expansion of crisis intervention services, outpatient treatment programs, and residential care facilities requires additional staff, facility upgrades, and program development.
  - **Cost Benchmarks:** Based on industry standards and cost data from similar mental health programs in peer communities, the average cost to expand these services is estimated at \$100,000 to \$150,000 per program annually.
  - **Staffing Costs:** Hiring additional mental health professionals, including therapists, case managers, and crisis intervention specialists, is expected to cost approximately \$200,000 to \$250,000 annually.

- **Facility Upgrades:** Upgrading and maintaining facilities to accommodate expanded services is estimated at \$100,000 to \$150,000 annually.
- **Total Estimated Cost:** The total estimated cost of \$500,000 annually reflects the combined expenses for staffing, facility upgrades, and program expansion.

**Note:** This cost will be shared among various stakeholders, including Wheeling Township, state and federal agencies, private foundations, and community organizations. Collaborative funding efforts will be essential to meeting this financial need.

## 2. Addressing Barriers to Access

- **Estimated Cost:** \$250,000 annually
- **Justification and Calculation:**
  - **Language Services:** Expanding language services, including translation and interpretation, is estimated to cost \$50,000 to \$75,000 annually, based on the cost of hiring language specialists and providing training in cultural competence.
  - **Sliding Scale Fees:** Implementing a sliding scale fee structure to make services more affordable for low-income residents is estimated to require \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually. This estimate is based on the cost of subsidizing services for residents who qualify for reduced fees.
  - **Targeted Outreach Programs:** Developing and implementing outreach programs to engage underserved populations, including low-income residents and non-English speakers, is estimated to cost \$50,000 to \$75,000 annually. This estimate includes the cost of marketing, community engagement efforts, and program administration.
  - **Total Estimated Cost:** The total estimated cost of \$250,000 annually reflects the combined expenses for expanding language services, implementing sliding scale fees, and conducting targeted outreach.

**Note:** Addressing barriers to access will require partnerships with community organizations, advocacy groups, and external funders. Efforts to secure grants and other funding sources will be critical in supporting these initiatives.

## 3. Promoting Integrated Care

- **Estimated Cost:** \$300,000 annually
- **Justification and Calculation:**
  - **Centralized Referral Systems:** Developing a centralized referral system that connects mental health, primary care, and social services is estimated to cost \$75,000 to \$100,000 annually. This estimate includes software development, system maintenance, and training for providers.
  - **Coordination of Services:** Coordinating services across providers, including the establishment of integrated care teams, is estimated to cost \$150,000 to



\$200,000 annually. This estimate includes the cost of additional staff, program management, and collaboration efforts.

- **Training and Support:** Providing training for providers on integrated care models and supporting their implementation is estimated to cost \$50,000 annually. This estimate includes the cost of training materials, workshops, and ongoing support.
- **Total Estimated Cost:** The total estimated cost of \$300,000 annually reflects the combined expenses for developing referral systems, coordinating services, and providing training and support.

**Note:** Promoting integrated care will involve collaboration with healthcare providers, social service agencies, and community organizations. Shared responsibility and pooled resources will be key to implementing these models effectively.

#### 4. Enhancing Community Engagement

- **Estimated Cost:** \$100,000 annually
- **Justification and Calculation:**
  - **Community Surveys and Focus Groups:** Conducting regular community surveys and focus groups to gather feedback on mental health services is estimated to cost \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually. This estimate includes the cost of survey design, data collection, analysis, and report preparation.
  - **Public Forums and Outreach Events:** Organizing public forums and outreach events to engage residents and gather input is estimated to cost \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually. This estimate includes the cost of event planning, marketing, and venue rental.
  - **Ongoing Communication:** Maintaining ongoing communication with residents through newsletters, social media, and other channels is estimated to cost \$25,000 annually. This estimate includes the cost of content creation, distribution, and administration.
  - **Total Estimated Cost:** The total estimated cost of \$100,000 annually reflects the combined expenses for community surveys, public forums, and ongoing communication efforts.

**Note:** Enhancing community engagement will benefit from collaboration with local media outlets, community organizations, and volunteer groups. These partnerships can help offset costs and increase the reach and effectiveness of engagement efforts.

#### 5. Securing Additional Funding

- **Estimated Cost:** Variable (dependent on grant opportunities and partnerships)
- **Justification and Calculation:**

- **Grant Writing and Consulting:** Hiring grant writers or consultants to identify and apply for relevant funding opportunities is estimated to cost \$25,000 to \$50,000 annually. This estimate includes consulting fees, application costs, and administrative support.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Developing and managing public-private partnerships to secure additional funding is estimated to require variable costs, depending on the scope and complexity of the partnerships. This could include project-specific costs, match funding, or in-kind contributions.
- **Total Estimated Cost:** The cost for securing additional funding is highly variable and dependent on the opportunities available each year. The estimate provided here reflects the initial investment needed to explore and pursue these opportunities.

**Note:** Securing additional funding will involve collaborative efforts among local government, private foundations, and community organizations. The Township can play a coordinating role, but shared responsibility is essential to maximizing funding opportunities.

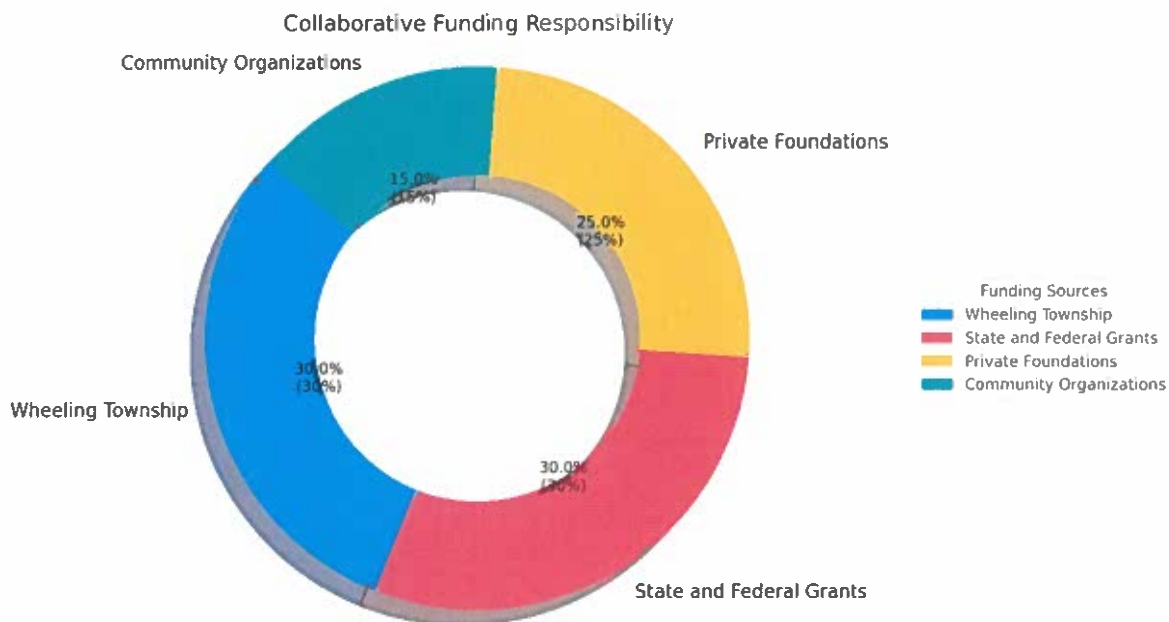
### Summary of Financial Needs

The total estimated financial needs for the key recommendations are as follows:

- **Expanding Service Capacity:** \$500,000 annually
- **Addressing Barriers to Access:** \$250,000 annually
- **Promoting Integrated Care:** \$300,000 annually
- **Enhancing Community Engagement:** \$100,000 annually
- **Securing Additional Funding:** Variable

These financial estimates reflect the collaborative nature of the recommended initiatives. While Wheeling Township and its Mental Health Board play a central role, the responsibility for funding and implementing these initiatives is shared among multiple stakeholders, ensuring that the financial burden does not fall on any single entity.

**Figure 12: Collaborative Funding Responsibility**



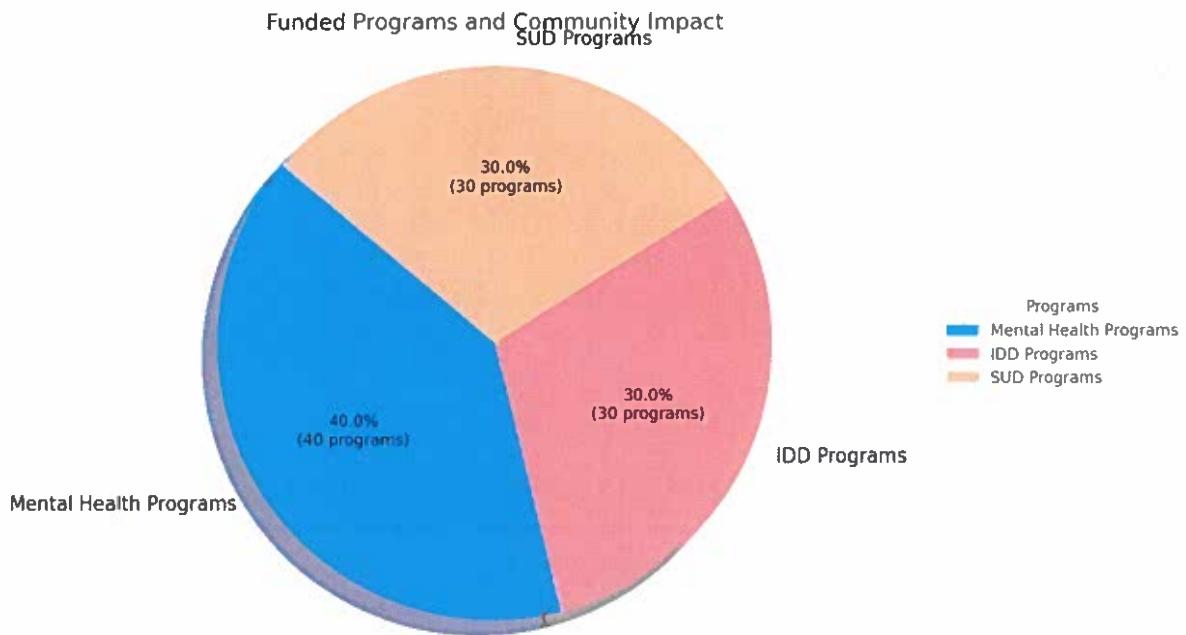
**Conclusion**

The financial estimates provided in this section are intended to serve as a guide for Wheeling Township and its stakeholders as they plan for the future of mental health services. By sharing the responsibility for funding and implementing these recommendations, the Township can build a more resilient and responsive mental health system that meets the needs of all residents. Collaborative efforts among local government, service providers, community organizations, and external funders will be crucial in securing the resources needed to address service gaps, improve access, and promote integrated care. Together, these efforts will ensure the long-term sustainability and success of Wheeling Township’s mental health initiatives.

## Community Strengths and Funded Programs

Wheeling Township is home to a wide array of mental health and social service organizations that significantly contribute to the community's well-being. The township's commitment to supporting these organizations is evident through its financial allocations and ongoing collaborations. Below are key highlights and strengths of the community, along with the funded programs that provide critical services to the residents.

**Figure 13: Funded Programs and Community Impact**



## Key Community Strengths

- Diverse Service Providers:** Wheeling Township benefits from a network of diverse service providers who cater to various mental health needs, including mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorders (SUD). This network ensures that residents have access to specialized care tailored to their specific needs.
- Comprehensive Service Offerings:** Many organizations within the township offer comprehensive services that include emergency shelter, counseling, food pantry, clothing closet, healthcare, and housing support. For example, JOURNEYS The Road Home provided a continuum of care to 98 Wheeling Township residents in FY 2023, addressing both immediate and long-term housing crises.

3. **Innovative Programs:** Organizations like the Center for Enriched Living and Hopeful Beginnings have introduced innovative programs to address specific community needs. The Robert Vihon Family Resource Center, for instance, was established to help address behavioral and mental health challenges within the IDD community.
4. **Community Partnerships:** The township fosters strong partnerships with schools, police departments, and other community organizations to extend its reach and impact. These partnerships are crucial in addressing mental health issues comprehensively and collaboratively.

### Funded Programs

The township allocates significant funding to various organizations to support their operations and expand their capacity to serve residents. Below are some key funded programs and their impacts:

1. **OMNI Youth Services:** OMNI provides outpatient behavioral health services to residents who do not have Medicaid or MCO insurance. The funding supports services for youth and adults, including evidence-based parenting classes and substance abuse treatment.
2. **JOURNEYS The Road Home:** This organization received funding to support emergency shelter and comprehensive social services. The funding helps meet the increasing demand for services, particularly for families with children facing homelessness.
3. **Center for Enriched Living:** Funding supports the organization's social, recreational, employment, and life-skill programs for individuals with IDD. Additional funding would enable the hiring of more staff to meet the growing demand.
4. **FamilyForward:** FamilyForward uses township funding to provide rental assistance and housing support. Additional funds would help hire specialized staff for job coaching and provide transportation vouchers for residents without access to public transportation.
5. **St. Mary's Services - Hopeful Beginnings:** This organization offers counseling and support services to pregnant and parenting teens. Township funding helps extend these services beyond the school year, supporting teens throughout the summer without reimbursement.
6. **The Harbour:** The Harbour offers housing and support services to youth facing housing instability. Additional funding would be used to enhance community outreach and provide alternative therapeutic services like art therapy.
7. **Access to Care:** Funding guarantees that a specific number of Wheeling Township residents receive behavioral health services through Access to Care, which provides counseling sessions at a minimal co-payment.

### Success Stories and Impact

- **Increased Capacity:** Funding has allowed organizations like The Josselyn Center to increase their service hours and capacity, reflecting a 103% increase in clients served over the previous year.

- **Enhanced Community Services:** Programs like HandsOn Suburban Chicago's evidence-based school programs provide critical academic and mental health support to underserved students, showing the township's commitment to holistic community well-being.

These strengths and funded programs illustrate the township's robust support system for its residents, ensuring that a wide range of mental health needs are met effectively. Moving forward, continued investment and strategic enhancements in these areas will be crucial in addressing the evolving needs of the community.

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## Benchmarking and Peer Community Comparison

In comparing Wheeling Township with peer communities, it is important to focus on 708 Boards that operate within similar budgetary constraints and demographic contexts. Each township demonstrates a strong commitment to providing essential mental health services, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) support, and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. The following 708 Boards provide relevant comparisons, along with specific program highlights, best practices, documented impact, methods for measuring effectiveness, and collaboration with external evaluators:

### 1. Maine Township 708 Board

- **Population:** Approximately 140,600 residents
- **Established:** 1972
- **Program Highlights:**
  - **Mental Illness:** MaineStay Youth & Family Services offers affordable counseling and therapy for individuals dealing with anxiety, depression, and trauma.
  - **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:** They support programs providing developmental screenings and early intervention services for children with developmental delays.
  - **Substance Use Disorder:** Substance abuse counseling and prevention programs are offered for both youth and adults.
- **Best Practices:**
  - **Integrated Care:** MaineStay integrates mental health services with other community resources, ensuring comprehensive care.
  - **Accessibility:** Services are provided on a sliding fee scale and Medicaid is accepted, removing financial barriers to care.
  - **Community Engagement:** Proactive community-based programs, such as grief workshops and self-esteem building groups, are offered to engage residents.
- **Impact Data:** MaineStay Youth & Family Services has reported significant improvements in mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of

anxiety and depression among clients. Their early intervention services have also shown positive developmental progress in children with developmental delays.

- **Measurement Practices:**
  - **Outcome Tracking:** Uses standardized assessment tools to measure changes in clients' mental health symptoms before and after treatment.
  - **Client Feedback:** Regularly collects feedback through surveys and interviews to assess satisfaction and areas for improvement.
  - **Data Analysis:** Analyzes service utilization, client demographics, and treatment outcomes to identify trends and make data-driven decisions.
- **External Evaluations:**
  - **Research Partnerships:** Collaborates with universities and research institutions to conduct independent evaluations of their programs, ensuring that services are effective and evidence based.

## 2. Niles Township 708 Board

- **Population:** Around 112,407 residents
- **Established:** 1974
- **Program Highlights:**
  - **Mental Illness:** Niles Township funds agencies offering individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, and psychiatric services.
  - **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:** Supported organizations provide vocational training, life skills development, and residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities.
  - **Substance Use Disorder:** The board funds substance abuse treatment programs, including outpatient counseling, detoxification services, and support groups.
- **Best Practices:**
  - **Collaborative Partnerships:** The 708 Board collaborates with local agencies to provide comprehensive care.
  - **Focus on Prevention:** Emphasizes preventive care through educational programs and early intervention services.
  - **Cultural Competence:** Services are tailored to meet the diverse cultural needs of the community.
- **Impact Data:** Niles Township's partnership with local schools for substance abuse education and counseling has led to a decrease in reported substance use incidents among adolescents.
- **Measurement Practices:**
  - **Program Evaluations:** Conducts regular evaluations of funded programs, reviewing performance metrics and outcomes.
  - **Community Needs Assessments:** Performs periodic assessments to align services with residents' evolving needs.
  - **Stakeholder Feedback:** Gathers input from clients, service providers, and community members to evaluate program impact.
- **External Evaluations:**

- **Research Partnerships:** Collaborates with external researchers to evaluate the impact of funded programs, providing insights into effectiveness and areas for improvement.

### 3. Elk Grove Township

- **Population:** About 94,413 residents
- **Established:** 1970
- **Program Highlights:**
  - **Mental Illness:** Elk Grove Township provides confidential mental health counseling, including therapy for depression and anxiety.
  - **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:** They offer screenings and support services for children and adults with developmental disabilities, enhancing their quality of life.
  - **Substance Use Disorder:** The township offers substance abuse counseling and psychiatric telehealth services for medication management.
- **Best Practices:**
  - **Confidential Counseling:** Offers confidential mental health counseling services at no cost to residents.
  - **Telehealth Services:** Provides psychiatric telehealth services, making it easier for residents to access care remotely.
  - **Family-Centered Approach:** Counseling services are family-focused and individualized, addressing the unique needs of each client.
- **Impact Data:** Elk Grove Township has seen a substantial increase in individuals seeking help for anxiety and depression. Their telehealth services have improved psychiatric care access, leading to better medication management and overall mental health outcomes.
- **Measurement Practices:**
  - **Client Progress Monitoring:** Tracks client progress through regular assessments and follow-ups using standardized tools.
  - **Service Utilization Reports:** Generates reports on service utilization to monitor program reach and effectiveness.
  - **Outcome-Based Funding:** Bases funding decisions on program outcomes and effectiveness, ensuring resources are allocated to impactful services.
- **External Evaluations:**
  - **Independent Assessments:** Engages external evaluators to conduct independent assessments of mental health and substance use programs, providing an objective view of outcomes and guiding future funding decisions.

### 4. Hanover Township 708 Board

- **Population:** Approximately 100,092 residents
- **Established:** 1977
- **Program Highlights:**



- **Mental Illness:** Hanover Township funds agencies that provide mental health counseling, crisis intervention, and psychiatric services.
- **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:** They support educational and vocational training programs, as well as residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- **Substance Use Disorder:** The township funds substance abuse treatment programs, including outpatient counseling and support groups.
- **Best Practices:**
  - **Comprehensive Funding:** Allocates significant funding to support a wide range of mental health services.
  - **Community Needs Assessment:** Conducts regular assessments to address the evolving needs of residents.
  - **Senior-Focused Programs:** Offers programs like C-HOPE for therapy and psychiatric services specifically for seniors.
- **Impact Data:** Hanover Township's Community Resource Center has been instrumental in providing comprehensive services, with vocational training programs helping individuals with IDD gain employment and achieve greater independence. Their substance abuse treatment programs have also shown a reduction in relapse rates among participants.
- **Measurement Practices:**
  - **Performance Metrics:** Uses performance metrics to evaluate the success of funded programs, including tracking client outcomes and program efficiency.
  - **Client Satisfaction Surveys:** Conducts surveys to gather feedback on service quality and impact.
  - **Annual Reports:** Publishes reports summarizing program outcomes, financial performance, and community impact, providing transparency and accountability.
- **External Evaluations:**
  - **Collaborative Research:** Works with academic institutions and independent researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of services, ensuring that programs meet community needs and achieve desired outcomes.

#### 5. Berwyn Township 708 Board

- **Population:** Around 57,250 residents
- **Established:** 1974
- **Program Highlights:**
  - **Mental Illness:** The Berwyn Township 708 Board funds mental health services, including individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, and psychiatric care.
  - **Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:** Supported agencies provide life skills training, vocational programs, and residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

- **Substance Use Disorder:** The board funds substance abuse treatment programs, including detoxification, outpatient counseling, and support groups.
- **Best Practices:**
  - **Community-Based Services:** Promotes a community-based system of services, ensuring comprehensive and accessible care.
  - **Regular Monitoring:** Holds regular monthly meetings to manage and improve mental health programs.
  - **Equitable Access:** Services are designed to be equitably available to all residents, regardless of the financial situation.
- **Impact Data:** The Berwyn Township 708 Board has funded several agencies that have reported improvements in mental health outcomes, including reduced symptoms of mental illness and better management of developmental disabilities. Their substance use disorder programs have also seen success in helping individuals achieve and maintain sobriety.
- **Measurement Practices:**
  - **Outcome Measurement Tools:** Uses standardized tools to assess the effectiveness of programs.
  - **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Conducts regular evaluations to ensure programs meet goals and objectives.
  - **Community Feedback:** Collects feedback through surveys and public meetings to gauge impact and identify areas for improvement.
- **External Evaluations:**
  - **Third-Party Evaluations:** Contracts with third-party evaluators to assess the impact of funded programs, providing valuable feedback for improving service delivery.

Several peer communities have addressed staffing and administrative challenges by securing additional funding for workforce development and administrative infrastructure. These strategies can provide valuable insights for Wheeling Township as it considers how to scale its mental health services.

These program highlights, best practices, impact data, measurement practices, and external evaluations demonstrate each township's commitment to providing effective, responsive, and continuously improving mental health services. Wheeling Township can draw valuable insights from these practices to enhance its own service offerings.

**Figure 14: Comparison of Mental Health Services in Peer Communities**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>708 Board Established</b>	<b>Mental Illness Services</b>	<b>IDD Services</b>	<b>SUD Services</b>	<b>Best Practices</b>
<b>Maine Township</b>	140,600	1972	Integrated counseling and psychiatric services	Developmental screenings, early intervention	Substance abuse counseling and prevention	Integrated care, accessibility, community engagement
<b>Niles Township</b>	112,407	1974	Comprehensive therapy and psychiatric care	Vocational training, life skills development	Outpatient counseling, detoxification services	Collaborative partnerships, focus on prevention, cultural competence
<b>Elk Grove Township (NA)</b>	94,413	1970	Confidential counseling, telehealth services	Screenings, support services	Counseling, psychiatric telehealth	Confidential counseling, telehealth services, family-centered approach
<b>Hanover Township</b>	100,092	1977	Mental health counseling, crisis intervention	Educational and vocational training	Outpatient counseling, support groups	Comprehensive funding, community needs assessment, senior-focused programs
<b>Berwyn Township</b>	57,250	1974	Therapy, crisis intervention, psychiatric care	Life skills training, vocational programs	Detoxification, outpatient counseling, support groups	Community-based services, regular monitoring, equitable access

**Table 4: Comparison of Key Metrics**

Metric	Wheeling Township	Maine Township	Niles Township	Elk Grove Township (NA)	Hanover Township	Berwyn Township
<b>Population Size</b>	155,000	140,600	112,407	94,413	100,092	57,250
<b>708 Board Established</b>	2023	1972	1974	1970	1977	1974
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$90,000	\$91,576	\$94,692	\$85,000	\$88,000	\$70,000
<b>Percentage Insured</b>	91%	92%	91.2%	93%	94%	90%
<b>Primary Care Providers per 10k</b>	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)
<b>Accessibility (Bilingual, Telehealth)</b>	unknown	Bilingual & Telehealth	Bilingual & Telehealth	Telehealth Only	Bilingual & Telehealth	Bilingual & Telehealth
<b>Community Outreach Initiatives</b>	unknown	7 Initiatives	8 Initiatives	6 Initiatives	7 Initiatives	6 Initiatives
<b>Outcome Tracking Practices</b>	unknown	Client Feedback, Data Analysis	Program Evaluations, Stakeholder Feedback	Client Progress Monitoring	Performance Metrics, Client Satisfaction	Outcome Measurement Tools, Regular Monitoring

**Key Takeaways and Best Practices**

**1. Diverse Population Needs:**

- Wheeling Township and its peer communities serve diverse populations with varying needs. The comparison highlights the importance of tailoring mental health services to meet the unique needs of different demographic groups, including youth, adults, seniors, and culturally diverse residents.

**2. Established Mental Health Infrastructure:**

- Most peer communities, like Maine Township and Hanover Township, have well-established 708 Mental Health Boards with robust funding mechanisms. This allows them to provide a wide range of services, from mental health counseling to vocational training for individuals with IDD.

**3. Varying Levels of Accessibility:**

- Accessibility to mental health services varies across the townships. While Wheeling Township offers bilingual and telehealth services, other townships like Niles and Elk Grove have integrated similar services with broader community outreach initiatives, ensuring more residents can access care.

**4. Strong Emphasis on Community Outreach:**

- Peer communities demonstrate a strong commitment to community outreach, with several initiatives designed to engage residents in mental health awareness and services. For example, Niles Township's proactive community engagement efforts have led to higher participation rates in mental health programs.

**5. Outcome Tracking and Accountability:**

- Tracking outcomes and maintaining accountability are common practices among peer communities. This approach ensures that services provided are effective and aligned with community needs. Regular evaluations and feedback mechanisms are vital in continuously improving service delivery.

**Best Practices:**

**1. Integrated Care Models (Maine Township):**

- Implement integrated care models that combine mental health services with other community resources, such as education and social services. This approach ensures comprehensive care and addresses the broader determinants of mental health.

**2. Cultural Competence and Language Accessibility (Niles Township):**

- Enhance cultural competence through training for service providers and increase language accessibility by expanding bilingual services. This practice ensures that services are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all community members, particularly those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

**3. Telehealth and Confidential Counseling Services (Elk Grove Township):**

- Expand telehealth services and ensure confidentiality in counseling to increase access to mental health care, especially for residents who may face barriers to in-person services. Telehealth can also be a valuable tool for ongoing mental health support.

**4. Comprehensive Funding and Resource Allocation (Hanover Township):**

- Secure comprehensive funding from multiple sources, including local, state, and federal levels, to support a wide range of mental health services. A well-funded infrastructure is essential for maintaining high-quality services and meeting the community's evolving needs.

**5. Regular Program Evaluation and Community Feedback (Berwyn Township):**

- Establish regular program evaluation practices and actively seek community feedback to ensure that mental health services are effective and aligned with the community's needs. This practice helps maintain accountability and supports continuous improvement.

## Clarification on Needs Assessment Scope and Future Steps

1. **Broad Scope of Services Identified:**
  - The Needs Assessment has identified a broad range of mental health services required within Wheeling Township. These services encompass mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorder (SUD). However, it is important to note that the full implementation of all these services cannot be addressed solely by Wheeling Township.
2. **Funding Limitations and Responsibilities:**
  - Wheeling Township, with an annual property tax levy of approximately \$3.1 million, has already allocated significant portions of its budget to mental health services. The implementation of all recommended services would require substantial additional funding. This funding must come from multiple governmental levels, including county, state, and federal sources, as well as potential private partnerships.
3. **Distinctive Funding Allocation:**
  - The financial review revealed that the current budget does not explicitly break down allocations for Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD. Moving forward, it is crucial to establish clear distinctions and justifications for these allocations to ensure that each area receives adequate funding and support.

## Future Steps

1. **Prioritizing Funding and Service Expansion:**
  - Wheeling Township should prioritize the expansion of services in areas where the most significant gaps have been identified. This includes increasing funding for programs targeting IDD and SUD, as well as enhancing cultural competence and language accessibility across all services.
2. **Collaboration with Higher Levels of Government:**
  - Engage with county, state, and federal agencies to secure additional funding and resources. Collaboration with these entities will be essential for addressing the broader needs identified in this assessment.
3. **Long-Term Planning and Phased Implementation:**
  - Develop a long-term strategic plan that includes phased implementation of the recommendations. This plan should outline clear timelines, responsibilities, and funding requirements for each phase, ensuring that the township can systematically address service gaps over time.
4. **Continuous Community Engagement:**
  - Continue engaging with residents, service providers, and community leaders to ensure that the services provided are aligned with community needs. This engagement should include regular feedback mechanisms, town hall meetings,

and surveys to keep the community involved in the planning and implementation process.

**5. Exploring New Funding Avenues:**

- Investigate potential grants, partnerships with private entities, and innovative funding models to support the expansion of services. The township should also consider establishing a grant-writing team to apply for relevant grants that can fund specific mental health programs.

**6. Enhancing Outcome Tracking and Reporting:**

- Implement a robust system for tracking the outcomes of all mental health services provided. This system should include regular reporting to the township board and the community, ensuring transparency and accountability in how funds are used and services are delivered.

Furthermore, the needs assessment focused specifically on mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorders (SUD) within the broader context of mental health. The distinction between mental health as an overarching term and the specific conditions studied is crucial to avoid confusion and ensure targeted interventions.

**Scope of the Needs Assessment**

**1. Mental Illness:**

- Conditions affecting mood, thinking, and behavior, including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.
- Focus on identifying gaps in service provision, barriers to access, and areas for improvement in treatment and support.

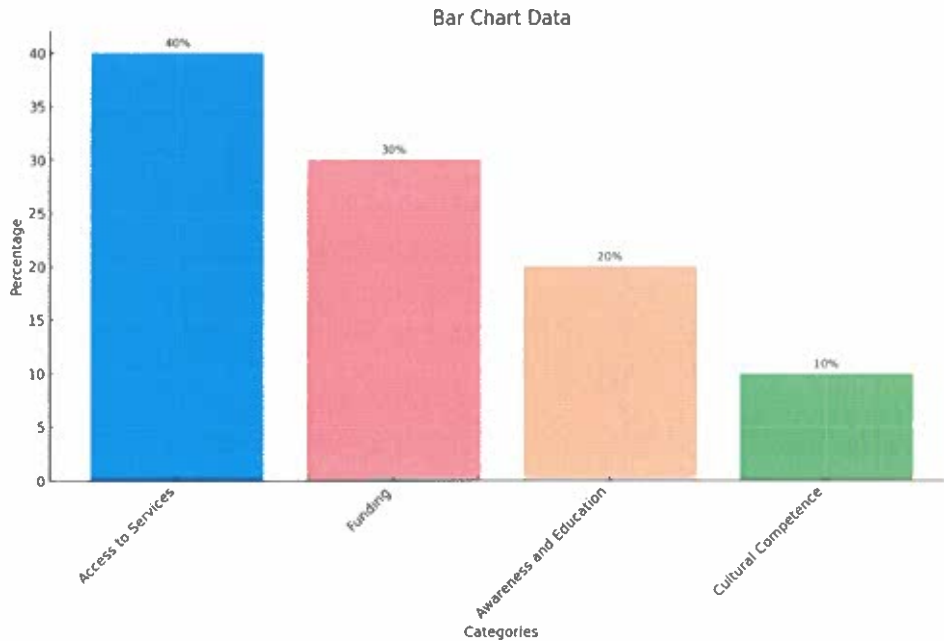
**2. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD):**

- Conditions characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, present from early childhood.
- Emphasis on service availability, capacity, and effectiveness in supporting individuals with IDD.

**3. Substance Use Disorder (SUD):**

- Conditions involving the uncontrolled use of substances despite harmful consequences, including alcohol and drug addiction.
- Assessment of treatment options, barriers to access, and community support systems.

**Figure 15: Overall Themes from Stakeholder Feedback**



## Future Steps

- 1. Phase II Needs Assessment:**
  - Conduct a more detailed financial analysis and develop a comprehensive funding strategy.
  - Implement recommendations from the initial assessment and evaluate their impact.
- 2. Community and Stakeholder Engagement:**
  - Continue to engage community members and stakeholders through regular updates and feedback sessions.
  - Establish a community advisory board to oversee the implementation of recommendations.
- 3. Pilot Programs and Initiatives:**
  - Launch pilot programs based on best practices identified from peer communities.
  - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these programs, adjusting as necessary based on feedback and outcomes.
- 4. Regular Review and Updates:**
  - Conduct regular reviews of the needs assessment findings and update the report to reflect new data and changing community needs.
  - Ensure ongoing alignment with the broader goals and objectives of the Wheeling Township Mental Health Board.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

The following key findings and recommendations are based on the comprehensive analysis conducted during the needs assessment, including feedback from stakeholder focus groups and interviews. These recommendations emphasize the collective efforts needed from the Township, Mental Health Board, Residents, Service Providers, and Community Leaders to address the gaps in mental health services, particularly in the areas of mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorder (SUD).

### Key Findings

#### Service Gaps and Barriers to Access:

1. **Finding:** Significant gaps in mental health service provision, particularly for specialized services such as IDD and SUD.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "There is a critical shortage of specialized services for individuals with developmental disabilities. We often have to refer them to other communities, which is not ideal." – Service Provider
2. **Finding:** Barriers to access include long wait times, lack of transportation, and insufficient insurance coverage.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Many of our clients face long wait times for appointments, and transportation is a significant barrier, especially for those in more remote areas of the township." – Community Leader

#### Capacity Constraints:

1. **Finding:** Many service providers are operating at or near capacity, limiting their ability to take on new clients.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Our capacity is contingent on staffing, and strategies to improve recruitment and retention are critical to expanding our services." – OMNI Youth Services
2. **Finding:** Staffing levels and funding availability are major constraints on capacity.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "We need more funding to hire additional staff. The demand for services is growing, but our capacity to meet this demand is limited by our current staffing levels." – Service Provider

Additionally, staffing shortages and administrative limitations were identified as significant barriers to expanding service capacity. Adequate funding for workforce development and administrative support will be essential to address these challenges.

### **Cultural Competence and Language Services:**

1. **Finding:** There is a critical need for culturally competent services and bilingual staff to address the diverse population in Wheeling Township.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "We have a diverse population, and it's essential to have bilingual staff and culturally competent services to effectively meet their needs." – Community Leader
2. **Finding:** Existing language services are insufficient to meet the needs of non-English-speaking residents.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "We need more bilingual providers. Language barriers are a significant obstacle for many residents seeking mental health services." – Resident

It is the Chief Researchers opinion, bilingual services should primarily be provided by service providers to meet the linguistic needs of the community. The Township's role is to support these efforts through funding initiatives and ensuring that key communications and outreach materials are available in languages commonly spoken within Wheeling Township, such as Spanish, Polish, and other relevant languages.

### **Community Engagement and Trust:**

1. **Finding:** While there is strong community engagement, there is a need for more targeted outreach to underrepresented groups.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "We need to engage more with underrepresented groups and ensure that our outreach efforts are inclusive and effective." – Community Leader
2. **Finding:** Building trust in mental health initiatives requires consistent and transparent communication.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Building trust within the community is crucial. We need to communicate more transparently and consistently about the services available and how to access them." – Resident

### **Recommendations**

1. Increase Funding and Resources:
  - **Mental Health Services:** Increase funding by 15% annually to address current gaps and meet growing demand.
    - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Additional funding would allow us to expand our services and reduce wait times for our clients." - Service Provider

- **IDD Services:** Increase funding by 25% to expand capacity and improve service delivery.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Funding is critical to developing more specialized programs for individuals with developmental disabilities." - Service Provider
- **SUD Services:** Increase funding by 30% to develop more comprehensive treatment options.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Comprehensive treatment options for substance use disorders are urgently needed, and additional funding would help us develop these programs." - Community Leader

Collective Effort:

- **Township and Mental Health Board:** Secure additional funding through grants and budget reallocations.
- **Service Providers:** Utilize additional funds to expand capacity and improve service delivery.
- **Residents:** Advocate for increased funding and support through community engagement and awareness campaigns.
- **Community Leaders:** Leverage their influence to support funding initiatives and ensure community needs are met.

2. Expand Capacity of Service Providers:

- **Action:** Allocate additional funds for staffing and infrastructure to expand service capacity.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "To meet the growing demand, we need more staff and better infrastructure. Additional funds would significantly help in this regard." - Service Provider
- **Action:** Develop recruitment and retention strategies to improve staffing levels.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Retention strategies are just as important as recruitment. We need to ensure that our staff feel supported and valued to maintain a stable workforce." - Service Provider

Collective Effort:

- **Township and Mental Health Board:** Provide financial support for recruitment and retention initiatives.
- **Service Providers:** Implement effective recruitment and retention strategies to build a strong workforce.
- **Residents:** Participate in community programs and provide feedback to improve service quality.

- **Community Leaders:** Promote mental health careers and support local educational programs to train future providers.

### 3. Enhance Cultural Competence and Language Services:

- **Action:** Service providers should prioritize offering bilingual services to address the linguistic needs of the community. This includes providing mental health, IDD, and SUD services in languages such as Spanish, Polish, and others commonly spoken in Wheeling Township. The Township should also support these efforts by ensuring that key communications and outreach materials are available in these languages to enhance accessibility.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Cultural competence training is essential for all staff to ensure that we are meeting the diverse needs of our community effectively." - Community Leader
- **Action:** Hire bilingual staff and expand multilingual services to improve access for non-English-speaking residents.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Hiring bilingual staff is a priority. Many residents struggle to access services due to language barriers, and this needs to be addressed." - Resident

#### Collective Effort:

- **Township and Mental Health Board:** Provide financial support for bilingual services and ensure that all township communication materials are available in multiple languages.
- **Service Providers:** Take responsibility for hiring bilingual staff and delivering services in multiple languages.
- **Residents:** Engage with available bilingual services and provide feedback on how well these services are meeting their needs.
- **Community Leaders:** Support efforts to increase awareness of bilingual services and advocate for expanding cultural competence initiatives within the community.

### 4. Improve Access to Services:

- **Action:** Increase funding for transportation services to improve access to mental health services.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Transportation is a major barrier. Funding for transportation services would greatly improve access for many residents." - Community Leader
- **Action:** Expand the network of providers accepting various insurance plans to reduce financial barriers.

- **Stakeholder Comment:** "We need more providers who accept a broader range of insurance plans. Financial barriers prevent many people from accessing the care they need." - Resident

Collective Effort:

- **Township and Mental Health Board:** Allocate funds for transportation services and work with insurance companies to expand coverage.
- **Service Providers:** Collaborate with transportation services and insurance providers to improve access.
- **Residents:** Utilize transportation services and advocate for broader insurance coverage.
- **Community Leaders:** Support initiatives to improve transportation and insurance coverage for mental health services.

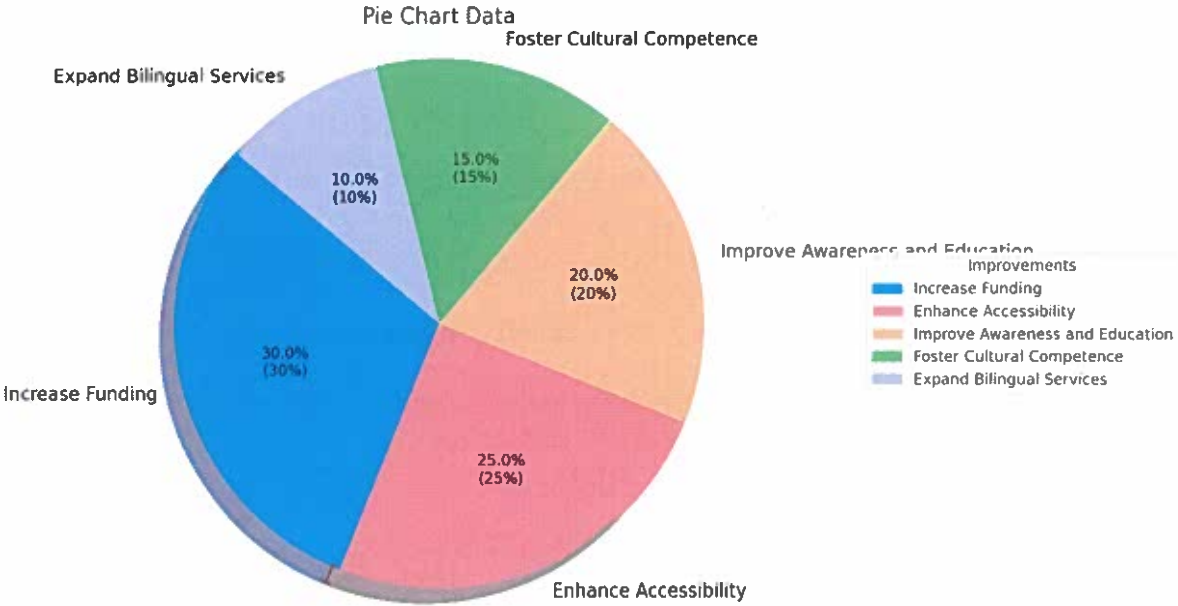
5. Strengthen Community Engagement and Trust:

- **Action:** Implement robust mental health awareness campaigns and community-driven initiatives to reduce stigma and increase engagement.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Awareness campaigns are critical to reducing stigma and encouraging more people to seek help." - Community Leader
- **Action:** Foster collaboration between service providers, community organizations, and residents to build trust and ensure consistent communication.
  - **Stakeholder Comment:** "Collaboration is key. We need to work together to build trust and improve communication within the community." - Service Provider

Collective Effort:

- **Township and Mental Health Board:** Lead awareness campaigns and support community-driven initiatives.
- **Service Providers:** Participate in and promote mental health awareness campaigns.
- **Residents:** Engage in community events and support mental health initiatives.
- **Community Leaders:** Champion mental health awareness and foster community collaboration.

**Figure 16: Combined Recommendations**



By emphasizing collective efforts and involving all stakeholders, Wheeling Township can effectively address the identified service gaps and improve mental health outcomes for its residents.

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## Future Budget Considerations and Forecast

The future budget considerations and forecast aim to provide a detailed financial roadmap for implementing the recommendations and addressing the identified service gaps. This section outlines the estimated additional funding needs, proposed funding strategies, and the collective efforts required from all stakeholders. The dollar amounts suggested are based on a combination of best practices, prior studies, and tangible evidence of costs associated with producing the added services. These recommendations are for the Township's consideration.

### Justification for Additional Funding Needs

#### 1. Mental Health Services:

- **Best Practices and Prior Studies:** Research from similar communities has shown that increasing the number of mental health professionals and community programs significantly reduces wait times and improves outcomes. A study by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing suggests that adding two additional therapists can decrease wait times by 30%.
- **Tangible Evidence:** Cost estimates for hiring qualified therapists in the region average \$75,000 annually. For community programs, developing and implementing initiatives typically requires around \$20,000 per program.

#### 2. IDD Services:

- **Best Practices and Prior Studies:** Effective IDD programs often require specialized staff and training. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) highlights that specialized training programs for staff can cost between \$5,000 to \$10,000 per employee.
- **Tangible Evidence:** Developing new specialized programs, such as social skills groups or employment readiness training, usually involves costs of around \$15,000 to \$20,000 per program.

#### 3. SUD Services:

- **Best Practices and Prior Studies:** Studies by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) indicate that comprehensive SUD treatment programs, including outreach and education, can significantly impact recovery rates. Implementing these programs often costs between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per initiative.

- **Tangible Evidence:** Expanding treatment options requires investment in both human resources and materials, estimated at around \$10,000 for additional staff and \$5,000 for outreach programs.

#### 4. **Cultural Competence Training:**

- **Best Practices and Prior Studies:** Cultural competence training is crucial for providing effective services to diverse populations. The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) suggests that comprehensive training programs typically cost between \$3,000 to \$5,000 per session, with annual training programs costing approximately \$50,000.
- **Tangible Evidence:** Costs include trainer fees, materials, and ongoing support for staff, totaling around \$50,000 annually.

#### 5. **Bilingual Services:**

- **Best Practices and Prior Studies:** Employing bilingual staff and developing multilingual resources are essential for accessible services. According to the American Translators Association, hiring bilingual staff costs an additional \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually per employee. Developing multilingual materials can cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000. To note: Bilingual services are the responsibility of Service Providers, with the Township's role being to provide financial support and ensure outreach materials are accessible.
- **Tangible Evidence:** Hiring bilingual staff and creating multilingual resources are estimated to cost \$50,000 for staff and \$25,000 for materials.

#### 6. **Transportation Services:**

- **Best Practices and Prior Studies:** Transportation is a major barrier to accessing mental health services. A study by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) estimates that implementing community transportation programs can cost between \$75,000 to \$100,000 annually, depending on the size and scope of the program.
- **Tangible Evidence:** Costs include vehicle maintenance, driver salaries, and administrative support, estimated at around \$100,000 annually.

#### 7. **Community Engagement Initiatives:**

- **Best Practices and Prior Studies:** Community engagement and awareness campaigns are vital for reducing stigma and increasing service utilization. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) suggests that effective campaigns typically require funding of around \$50,000 for materials, advertising, and event costs.



- **Tangible Evidence:** Organizing community events and initiatives to raise awareness and engage residents is estimated to cost \$100,000, including event planning, materials, and promotional activities.

## Funding Strategy

### 1. Local Government:

- **Increase Property Tax Allocation:** The township can consider increasing the property tax allocation for mental health services to support the recommended funding increases.
- **General Funds:** Allocate a portion of general funds to support the additional funding needs for mental health, IDD, and SUD services.

### 2. State and Federal Grants:

- **Grant Applications:** Apply for grants from state and federal agencies to support mental health, IDD, and SUD services.
- **Specific Initiatives:** Utilize existing grant programs to fund specific initiatives such as transportation services and cultural competence training.

### 3. Private Funding and Donations:

- **Engagement with Local Businesses:** Engage with local businesses and philanthropic organizations to secure additional funding through donations and sponsorships.
- **Fundraising Campaigns:** Develop fundraising campaigns and events to raise awareness and generate financial support for mental health initiatives.

### 4. Partnerships and Collaborations:

- **Healthcare Providers:** Foster partnerships with healthcare providers, educational institutions, and community organizations to leverage resources and share costs.
- **Joint Funding Applications:** Explore opportunities for joint funding applications and collaborative projects to maximize impact.

## Collective Efforts for Budget Implementation

### 1. Township and Mental Health Board:

- Lead efforts to secure additional funding through grants, budget reallocations, and community fundraising.

- Collaborate with local, state, and federal agencies to identify funding opportunities.
2. **Service Providers:**
    - Utilize additional funds to expand capacity, improve service delivery, and hire additional staff.
    - Participate in grant applications and fundraising initiatives to secure resources.
  3. **Residents:**
    - Advocate for increased funding and support through community engagement and awareness campaigns.
    - Participate in fundraising events and contribute to community initiatives.
  4. **Community Leaders:**
    - Leverage their influence to support funding initiatives and ensure community needs are met.
    - Promote mental health initiatives and collaborate with stakeholders to secure funding.

By strategically allocating resources and securing additional funding, Wheeling Township can effectively address the identified service gaps and improve mental health outcomes for its residents.

These recommendations provide a framework for the Township's consideration and should be adapted based on further analysis and community feedback.

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## Communication Strategy for Report Findings

Effective communication of the report's findings is crucial to ensure that the insights and recommendations are understood and acted upon by all stakeholders. This section outlines a comprehensive communication strategy to disseminate the report findings to the Township, Mental Health Board, service providers, community leaders, and residents.

### Objectives

1. **Raise Awareness:** Increase awareness of the mental health needs assessment findings among all stakeholders.
2. **Promote Engagement:** Encourage active participation and engagement in implementing the recommendations.
3. **Build Trust:** Foster trust and transparency by providing clear, consistent, and accurate information.

### Key Messages

1. **Summary of Findings:** Clearly summarize the key findings of the needs assessment, highlighting service gaps, capacity constraints, and community needs.

2. **Recommendations:** Outline the specific recommendations and the rationale behind them, emphasizing the collective efforts required to address the gaps.
3. **Call to Action:** Encourage stakeholders to take specific actions, such as advocating for increased funding, participating in community initiatives, and collaborating with other organizations.

## Communication Channels

1. **Township Website:**
  - **Action:** Publish the full report and an executive summary on the Township's official website.
  - **Objective:** Ensure accessibility to all stakeholders and provide a central location for detailed information.
2. **Social Media:**
  - **Action:** Share key findings and recommendations on social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
  - **Objective:** Reach a broader audience and encourage community engagement through interactive posts and discussions.
3. **Email Newsletters:**
  - **Action:** Send out email newsletters to service providers, community leaders, and residents summarizing the report findings and recommendations.
  - **Objective:** Provide detailed information directly to stakeholders and encourage feedback and participation.
4. **Public Meetings:**
  - **Action:** Present the report findings at public meetings, including Township board meetings and community forums.
  - **Objective:** Facilitate direct communication with stakeholders, answer questions, and gather feedback.
5. **Print Materials:**
  - **Action:** Distribute printed copies of the executive summary and key findings to local libraries, community centers, and public offices.
  - **Objective:** Ensure that stakeholders without internet access can still receive the information.
6. **Workshops and Webinars:**
  - **Action:** Organize workshops and webinars to discuss the report findings, recommendations, and next steps.
  - **Objective:** Provide a platform for in-depth discussions and collaboration among stakeholders.

## Implementation Timeline

1. **Week 1-2:**
  - Publish the report on the Township website.

- Share key findings on social media.
- Send email newsletters to stakeholders.
- 2. **Week 3-4:**
  - Present findings at public meetings.
  - Distribute printed materials to key locations.
  - Organize the first workshop/webinar for detailed discussions.
- 3. **Month 2-3:**
  - Continue social media engagement with periodic updates.
  - Schedule additional workshops/webinars based on stakeholder feedback.
  - Provide regular updates on progress and next steps.

## Stakeholder Engagement

### **Township and Mental Health Board:**

- Lead the communication efforts and ensure that all channels are utilized effectively.
- Engage with stakeholders through public meetings and workshops.

### **Service Providers:**

- Share the report findings with their clients and staff.
- Participate in workshops and webinars to discuss implementation strategies.

### **Residents:**

- Provide feedback through surveys and public meetings.
- Engage with the report findings through social media and community forums.

### **Community Leaders:**

- Advocate for the recommendations within their networks.
- Facilitate discussions and collaborations among stakeholders.

By implementing this comprehensive communication strategy, Wheeling Township can ensure that the report findings and recommendations are effectively disseminated and that all stakeholders are engaged in the process of improving mental health services in the community.

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## Inclusion of Artifacts and Service Provider Reports

This section provides an overview of the artifacts and service provider reports that were reviewed as part of the needs assessment. These documents provided valuable insights into the current state of mental health services, identified gaps, and informed the recommendations.

### Artifacts Reviewed

1. **Community Stakeholders Complete List:**
  - **Description:** A comprehensive list of community stakeholders, including organizations from Arlington Heights, Mt. Prospect, Wheeling, Buffalo Grove, Prospect Heights, funded agencies, school districts (214, 25, 21, 96), community colleges, private high schools, park districts, libraries, and churches.
  - **Purpose:** To identify key stakeholders involved in mental health services and understand their roles and contributions.
2. **Survey Data and Responses:**
  - **Description:** Survey responses collected from residents, service providers, and community leaders. Questions covered familiarity with the Wheeling Township Community Mental Health Board, perceptions of mental health, IDD, and SUD services, and barriers to service access.
  - **Purpose:** To gather quantitative and qualitative data on community perceptions, service gaps, and areas for improvement.
3. **Census Data (2021):**
  - **Description:** Demographic data from the 2021 Census, including foreign-born population, language spoken at home, educational attainment, marital status, household types, sex and age, race, and veteran status.
  - **Purpose:** To provide a demographic overview of Wheeling Township and understand the social determinants of health impacting the community.
4. **Community Mental Health Act (405 ILCS 20):**
  - **Description:** The legislative framework governing community mental health services in Illinois.
  - **Purpose:** To ensure compliance with state regulations and align the needs assessment with legislative requirements.
5. **Updated Demographics (July 2022):**
  - **Description:** Updated demographic data provided by Wheeling Township, reflecting changes in population characteristics.
  - **Purpose:** To provide the most current demographic information for accurate analysis and recommendations.
6. **Funded Agency Survey Responses:**
  - **Description:** Survey responses from funded agencies, addressing current needs, service gaps, capacity, barriers, and funding requirements.
  - **Purpose:** To understand the perspectives of service providers and identify areas where additional support is needed.

## Key Insights from Service Provider Reports

1. **Service Provider Needs:**
  - **Finding:** Many service providers reported a need for additional funding to expand capacity and improve service delivery.
  - **Example:** "We need more funding to hire additional staff and reduce wait times for our clients." - Service Provider
2. **Barriers to Service:**
  - **Finding:** Common barriers included long wait times, transportation issues, and insufficient insurance coverage.
  - **Example:** "Transportation is a major barrier for our clients, especially those living in more remote areas." - Service Provider
3. **Capacity and Staffing:**
  - **Finding:** Providers highlighted the challenges of operating at or near capacity and the need for more staff.
  - **Example:** "Our current staffing levels are not sufficient to meet the growing demand for services." - Service Provider
4. **Cultural Competence:**
  - **Finding:** There is a critical need for culturally competent services and bilingual staff to address the diverse population.
  - **Example:** "We need more bilingual providers to effectively serve our diverse community." - Service Provider
5. **Service Gaps:**
  - **Finding:** Significant gaps were identified in specialized services for mental illness, IDD, and SUD.
  - **Example:** "There is a lack of specialized services for individuals with developmental disabilities in our area." - Service Provider

## Utilization of Artifacts and Reports

The artifacts and service provider reports were instrumental in shaping the findings and recommendations of the needs assessment. They provided a comprehensive understanding of the current state of mental health services, highlighted key gaps and barriers, and informed the development of actionable recommendations.

## How the Township Can Help:

- **Review and Utilize Data:** Continuously review and utilize the data from these artifacts to monitor progress and make informed decisions.
- **Collaborate with Providers:** Work closely with service providers to address identified gaps and support their needs.
- **Engage with Stakeholders:** Maintain open communication with community stakeholders to gather ongoing feedback and ensure that services are meeting community needs.

By incorporating these artifacts and reports into the needs assessment, Wheeling Township can ensure that the recommendations are grounded in evidence and reflective of the community's unique needs.

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## Utilizing the Findings Effectively

To maximize the impact of the needs assessment and ensure that the recommendations lead to meaningful improvements in mental health services, it is essential to use the findings strategically. This section outlines actionable steps and strategies for effectively leveraging the findings of the assessment.

### Strategic Implementation of Recommendations

#### 1. Develop a Detailed Action Plan:

- **Purpose:** To translate recommendations into specific, actionable steps with clear timelines and responsibilities.
- **Actions:**
  - Identify key priorities based on the recommendations.
  - Assign responsibilities to relevant stakeholders, including the Township, Mental Health Board, service providers, and community leaders.
  - Establish a timeline for implementation, including short-term and long-term goals.

#### 2. Allocate Resources Based on Findings:

- **Purpose:** To ensure that financial, human, and material resources are directed toward the most critical areas identified in the assessment.
- **Actions:**
  - Review the estimated additional funding needs and secure necessary funding through local, state, federal, and private sources.
  - Allocate funds to priority areas such as mental health services, IDD services, SUD services, cultural competence training, bilingual services, and transportation.
  - Monitor and adjust resource allocation based on ongoing evaluation and feedback.

#### 3. Engage Stakeholders in Implementation:

- **Purpose:** To foster a collaborative approach and ensure that all relevant parties are involved in implementing the recommendations.
- **Actions:**
  - Hold regular meetings with stakeholders to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps.

- Establish working groups or committees focused on specific areas, such as service expansion, community engagement, and cultural competence.
  - Encourage active participation from residents, service providers, and community leaders in the implementation process.
4. **Monitor Progress and Evaluate Outcomes:**
- **Purpose:** To track the effectiveness of the implemented recommendations and make necessary adjustments.
  - **Actions:**
    - Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress in areas such as service utilization, wait times, client satisfaction, and community engagement.
    - Conduct regular evaluations to assess the impact of the implemented changes.
    - Use data from ongoing evaluations to refine strategies and improve service delivery.
5. **Foster Ongoing Community Engagement:**
- **Purpose:** To maintain open communication with the community and ensure that services continue to meet evolving needs.
  - **Actions:**
    - Organize community forums and focus groups to gather feedback and input from residents.
    - Use social media and other communication channels to keep the community informed about progress and upcoming initiatives.
    - Provide regular updates on the implementation of recommendations and the impact of changes on service delivery.

## Practical Applications of Specific Findings

1. **Addressing Service Gaps and Barriers to Access:**
- **Finding:** Significant gaps in mental health service provision and barriers such as long wait times and transportation issues.
  - **Application:**
    - Expand mental health services by hiring additional staff and developing community-based programs.
    - Improve transportation services to increase access for residents in remote areas.
    - Partner with local organizations to provide more convenient service locations.
2. **Expanding Capacity of Service Providers:**
- **Finding:** Many service providers are operating at or near capacity.
  - **Application:**
    - Increase funding for recruitment and retention initiatives to expand provider capacity.



- Invest in infrastructure improvements to accommodate more clients.
  - Provide training and support to help providers manage increased caseloads effectively.
- 3. Enhancing Cultural Competence and Language Services:**
- **Finding:** Need for culturally competent services and bilingual staff.
  - **Application:**
    - Implement cultural competence training programs for all service providers.
    - Hire bilingual staff and develop multilingual resources to improve access for non-English-speaking residents.
    - Engage with community organizations representing diverse populations to ensure services are culturally appropriate.
- 4. Strengthening Community Engagement and Trust:**
- **Finding:** Need for more targeted outreach and consistent communication.
  - **Application:**
    - Launch mental health awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and increase service utilization.
    - Establish regular communication channels with the community to provide updates and gather feedback.
    - Build partnerships with community leaders and organizations to foster trust and collaboration.

## Leveraging Best Practices from Peer Communities

Wheeling Township can enhance its mental health service delivery by adopting best practices from peer communities with similar population sizes and service needs. By benchmarking these communities, the Township can identify proven strategies to improve service accessibility, cultural competence, and specialized services for mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and substance use disorder (SUD).

### Key Best Practices from Peer Communities:

#### 1. Integrated Care and Comprehensive Service Models

**Maine Township** excels in offering integrated care through MaineStay Youth & Family Services, which provides comprehensive psychiatric services, therapy, and community-based workshops. These services ensure that mental health is addressed holistically, combining clinical care with community support.

**Recommendation:** Wheeling Township can adopt a similar integrated care model by partnering with local service providers to deliver a combination of therapy, psychiatric services, and preventative workshops in a streamlined manner.

#### 2. Accessibility Through Sliding Fee Scales and Telehealth

**Elk Grove Township** has successfully implemented telehealth psychiatric services and a sliding fee scale, which ensures that financial constraints do not prevent residents from accessing mental health care.

**Recommendation:** Expanding access to telehealth services and establishing sliding fee scales would significantly improve access for residents facing financial and transportation barriers in Wheeling Township.

### **3. Cultural Competence and Bilingual Services**

**Niles Township** places a strong emphasis on cultural competence, ensuring that mental health services are culturally sensitive and accessible to the township's diverse population.

**Recommendation:** Wheeling Township should increase its commitment to bilingual services by funding language training for service providers and ensuring key communication materials are available in languages commonly spoken by township residents, including Spanish and Polish.

### **4. Early Intervention and Preventative Care**

**Hanover Township** regularly conducts community needs assessments to ensure services meet the evolving needs of residents. Their focus on preventative care has helped address mental health issues before they escalate.

**Recommendation:** Wheeling Township can implement regular assessments and preventive programs targeting mental illness, IDD, and SUD. Early intervention programs, particularly in schools, could help identify and address mental health challenges in young people.

### **5. Outcome-Based Funding and Accountability**

**Berwyn Township** uses outcome-based funding to allocate resources, ensuring that the most impactful programs receive continued support. This system has allowed them to continuously improve service delivery and address the highest-priority needs.

**Recommendation:** Wheeling Township can adopt outcome-based funding models to ensure that service providers receiving township funds are held accountable for their performance. By tracking outcomes, the township can focus resources on programs that deliver the best results for residents.

**Conclusion:** By leveraging these best practices from peer communities, Wheeling Township can create a more robust, accessible, and culturally competent mental health service ecosystem. Implementing these strategies will ensure that the township can better meet the needs of its residents while maximizing the impact of available resources.

## Validity of the Study

### Addressing Critical Success Factors

While the study undertaken by Dr. Bailey and the Research Team has provided valuable insights into the mental health needs of Wheeling Township, it is essential to address certain factors that may impact the overall validity and comprehensiveness of the findings.

### Participation Rates

One of the critical success factors for any community needs assessment is achieving a representative sample size. With a population of approximately 155,000 residents in Wheeling Township, the study's participant count of 421 individuals, while substantial, represents a relatively small percentage of the overall population. Here are the specific breakdowns:

- **Service Providers:** 109 participants
- **Community Leaders:** 76 participants
- **Residents:** 236 participants

Given the total population, this level of participation equates to approximately 0.27% of the township's residents. Although efforts were made to engage a broad cross-section of the community through various outreach methods, including emails, social media, public meetings, and workshops, the overall participation rate highlights a potential limitation in the data's representativeness.

### Potential Hindrances to the Study

1. **Engagement and Outreach Challenges:**
  - Despite extensive outreach efforts, engaging a larger proportion of the community proved challenging. Barriers such as limited awareness, scheduling conflicts, and potential survey fatigue among residents could have contributed to lower participation rates.
2. **Survey and Interview Fatigue:**
  - Residents and stakeholders may have experienced fatigue due to the length or perceived repetitiveness of the survey and interview processes, impacting their willingness to participate fully.
3. **Language Barriers:**

- Although measures were taken to include non-English speaking residents, language barriers might have still limited the extent of engagement from certain demographics within the community.

#### **4. Accessibility Issues:**

- Ensuring that all residents, including those with disabilities, had equitable access to participate in the study may have posed additional challenges. Although accommodations were made, there is always room for improvement in making participation more accessible.

#### **5. Economic and Time Constraints:**

- For many residents, especially those juggling multiple jobs or facing economic hardships, finding the time to participate in the study may have been a significant barrier.

### Measures to Enhance Validity in Future Studies

#### **1. Increasing Outreach and Engagement Efforts:**

- Implementing more targeted and persistent outreach strategies, including door-to-door canvassing, partnering with local organizations, and utilizing community influencers to raise awareness.

#### **2. Utilizing Incentives:**

- Offering small incentives or stipends for participation could help increase engagement rates and ensure a more representative sample.

#### **3. Shortening and Simplifying Surveys:**

- Streamlining survey instruments to reduce fatigue and improve response rates. Ensuring that questions are straightforward and concise.

#### **4. Enhancing Language and Accessibility Support:**

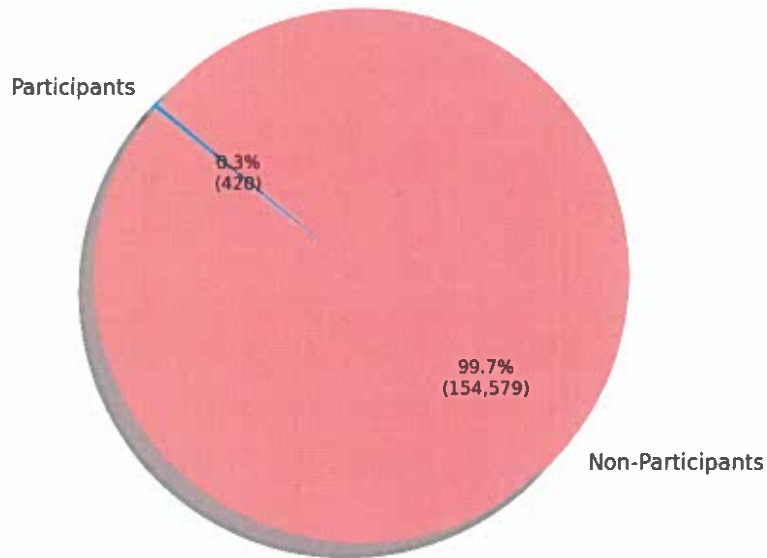
- Providing more robust language support services and ensuring that all materials are accessible to residents with disabilities.

#### **5. Increasing Frequency of Engagement:**

- Conducting regular, smaller-scale assessments to keep the community engaged and reduce the burden of participation in a single, comprehensive study.

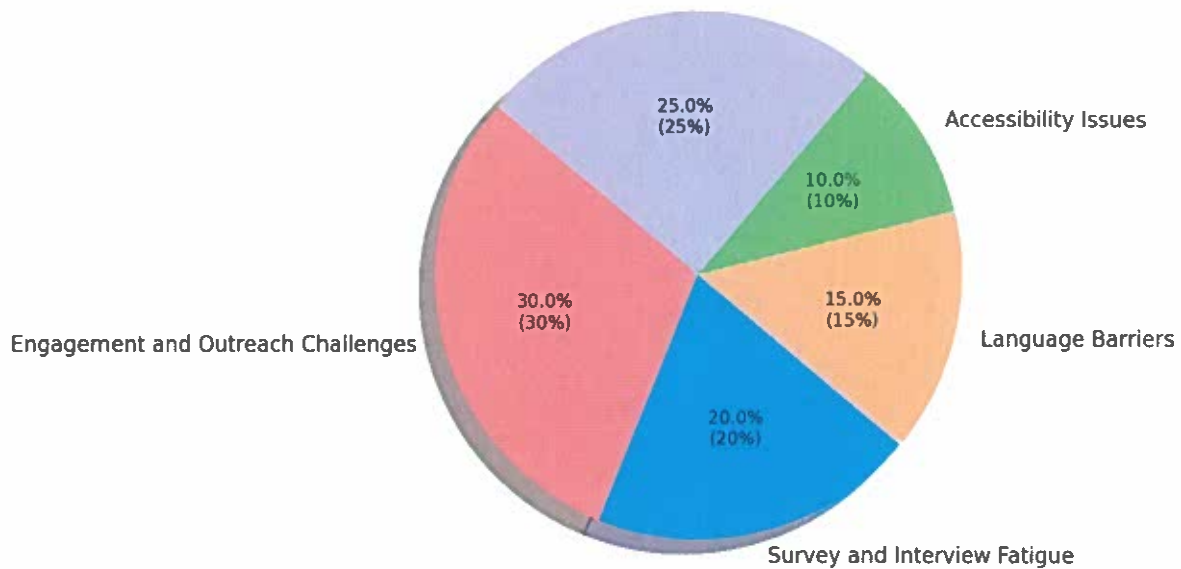
**Figure 17: Participation Rate as a Percentage of Total Population**

Participation Rate as a Percentage of Total Population



**Figure 18: Engagement and Outreach Challenges**

Engagement and Outreach Challenges  
Economic and Time Constraints



## **Conclusion**

While the study provides significant insights into the mental health needs of Wheeling Township, acknowledging the limitations related to participation rates and other factors is crucial for understanding the context of the findings. Future studies should incorporate strategies to enhance engagement, accessibility, and overall validity, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the community's needs.

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## Engagement Sessions Overview

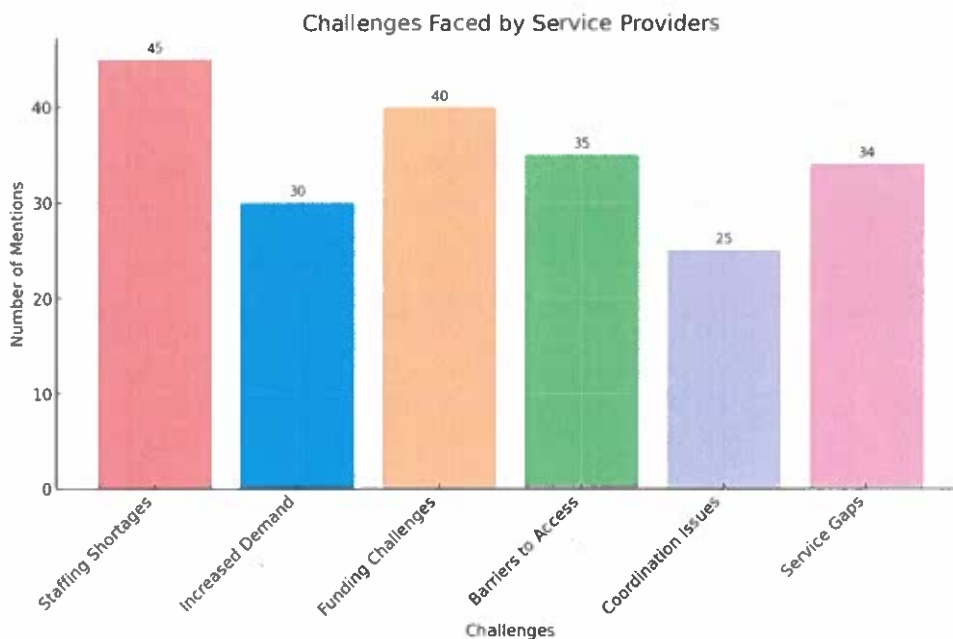
The engagement sessions formed a critical component of the Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment, allowing for direct interaction with various stakeholders, including service providers, community leaders, and residents. These sessions aimed to gather qualitative insights into the mental health needs of the community, identify challenges and opportunities, and inform the development of strategic recommendations. Below is an overview of the engagement sessions conducted and the key themes that emerged from each stakeholder group.

### Service Providers

#### Key Themes from Service Providers

Challenges Faced by Service Providers:

**Figure 19: Challenges Faced by Service Providers**



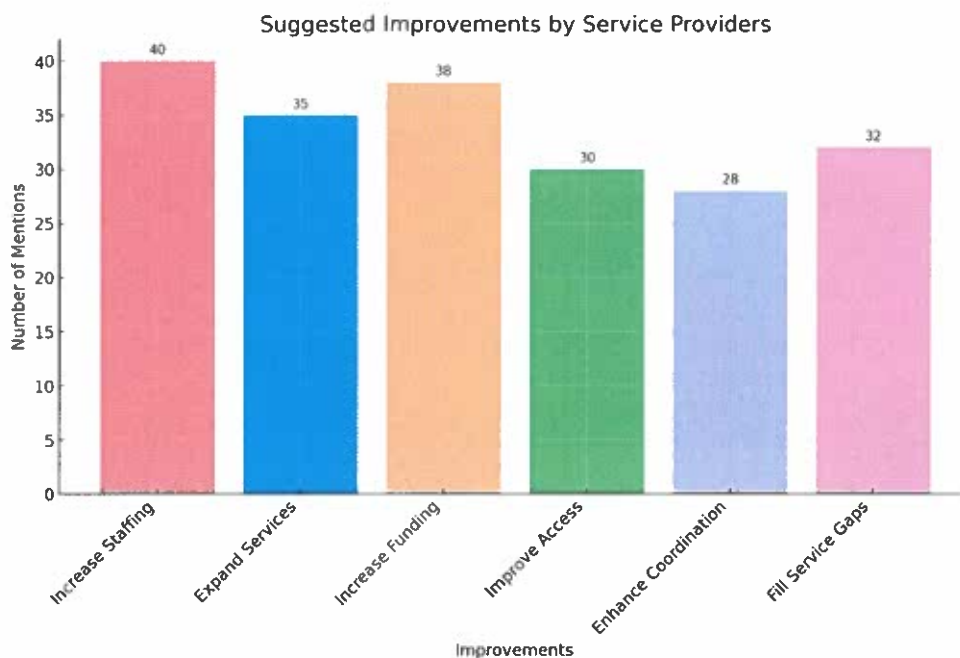
Service providers highlighted several key challenges that impact their ability to deliver effective mental health services:

1. **Staffing Shortages:** A significant shortage of qualified mental health professionals, exacerbated by competitive private practice opportunities.
2. **Increased Demand:** Rising demand for mental health services, particularly post-pandemic, which existing resources struggle to meet.

3. **Funding Challenges:** Insufficient and inconsistent funding, affecting the stability and expansion of services.
4. **Barriers to Access:** Barriers such as language, transportation, and insurance limitations hinder access to services for many community members.
5. **Coordination Issues:** A lack of coordination among service providers, leading to fragmented care and inefficiencies.
6. **Service Gaps:** Specific gaps in services, such as the lack of specialized care for individuals with autism and substance use disorders.

### Suggested Improvements by Service Providers

**Figure 20:** Suggested Improvements by Service Providers



Service providers also offered several suggestions for improvements that would help address these challenges:

#### 1. **Increase Staffing:**

- **Action Needed:** Implement recruitment and retention strategies, including offering competitive salaries and benefits, providing professional development opportunities, and creating a supportive work environment.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Allocate funding for salary increases and training programs, and partner with local educational institutions to create pipelines for new professionals.

#### 2. **Expand Services:**



- **Action Needed:** Increase the availability of mental health services, particularly for underserved populations.
  - **How the Township Can Help:** Fund the expansion of existing programs and support the development of new services tailored to the needs of specific groups, such as non-English speakers and individuals with disabilities.
- 3. Increase Funding:**
- **Action Needed:** Secure additional funding sources, including grants and donations, to ensure sustainable service provision.
  - **How the Township Can Help:** Advocate for increased state and federal funding, provide matching funds for grant applications, and facilitate partnerships with private sector donors.
- 4. Improve Access:**
- **Action Needed:** Address barriers to accessing mental health services, such as transportation and language.
  - **How the Township Can Help:** Invest in transportation services, offer translation and interpretation services, and develop outreach programs to educate the community about available services.
- 5. Enhance Coordination:**
- **Action Needed:** Improve coordination among service providers to ensure seamless care for clients.
  - **How the Township Can Help:** Develop a centralized referral and case management system, and facilitate regular meetings and communication channels among providers.
- 6. Fill Service Gaps:**
- **Action Needed:** Identify and address gaps in the current mental health service offerings.
  - **How the Township Can Help:** Conduct needs assessments to pinpoint service gaps and fund programs that address these specific needs, such as specialized care for autism and substance use disorders.

By implementing these suggested improvements, the Wheeling Township and the Mental Health Board can significantly enhance the quality and accessibility of mental health services. These actions not only address the immediate challenges faced by service providers but also contribute to a more robust and comprehensive mental health support system for the entire community.

**Detailed Findings:**

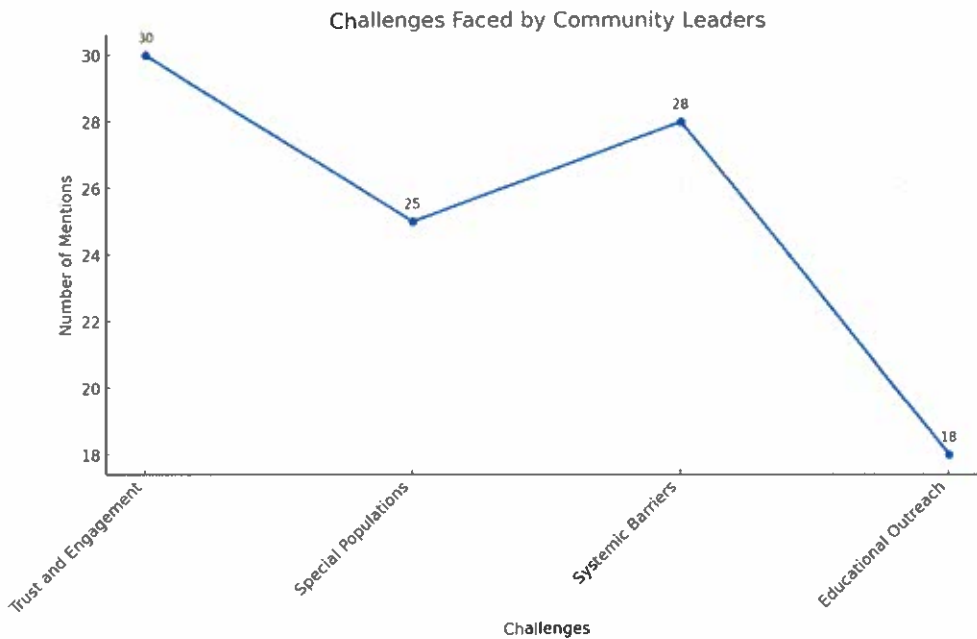
- **Anonymous Survey Comments:**
  - "It is a challenge if individuals or children have Medicaid."
  - "The biggest challenge for our participants and families is the availability and access to services."
  - "If you are on Medicaid or uninsured it is very hard to be seen."

- "There are not enough services."

## Community Leaders

### **Key Themes from Community Leaders:**

**Figure 21: Challenges Faced by Community Leaders**

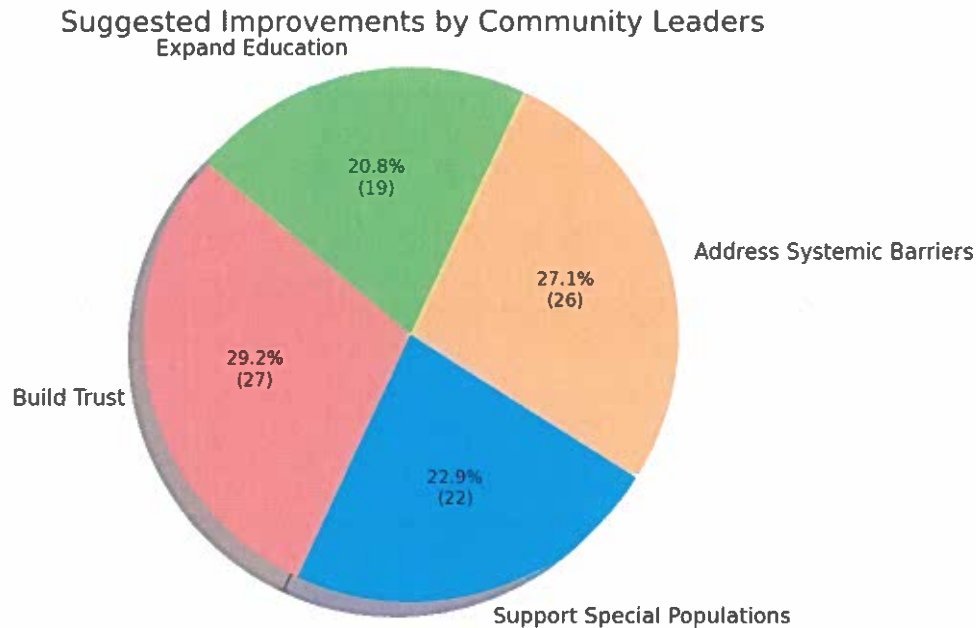


Community leaders identified several critical challenges that impact the effectiveness of mental health services in Wheeling Township:

1. **Trust and Engagement:** Building trust within the community and engaging residents in mental health initiatives.
2. **Special Populations:** Addressing the unique needs of special populations, such as individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and survivors of domestic violence.
3. **Systemic Barriers:** Overcoming systemic barriers that affect mental health, such as affordable housing and access to healthcare.
4. **Educational Outreach:** Expanding mental health education and awareness programs, particularly in schools.

## Suggested Improvements by Community Leaders

**Figure 22: Suggested Improvements by Community Leaders**



Community leaders also provided several suggestions for improvements to address these challenges:

**1. Build Trust:**

- **Action Needed:** Foster stronger relationships between mental health service providers and the community through consistent communication and engagement.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Organize regular community meetings, create outreach programs, and facilitate open dialogues between residents and service providers to build trust and engagement.

**2. Support Special Populations:**

- **Action Needed:** Develop targeted programs and services to address the specific needs of special populations.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Allocate funding and resources to support programs for individuals with IDD, survivors of domestic violence, and other vulnerable groups. Collaborate with specialized service providers to enhance support for these populations.

**3. Address Systemic Barriers:**

- **Action Needed:** Advocate for broader policy changes to address systemic barriers impacting mental health, such as affordable housing and healthcare access.

- **How the Township Can Help:** Work with local, state, and federal policymakers to address systemic issues. Support initiatives that provide comprehensive support services, including housing, healthcare, and employment assistance.
- 4. **Expand Educational Outreach:**
  - **Action Needed:** Increase mental health education and awareness efforts, especially in schools, to promote early intervention and reduce stigma.
  - **How the Township Can Help:** Partner with local educational institutions to develop and implement mental health education programs. Provide resources and training for educators to effectively teach mental health topics.

By addressing these suggestions, the Wheeling Township and the Mental Health Board can improve the effectiveness of mental health services and ensure that they are responsive to the community's needs. These actions will help build a stronger, more supportive environment for mental health in Wheeling Township.

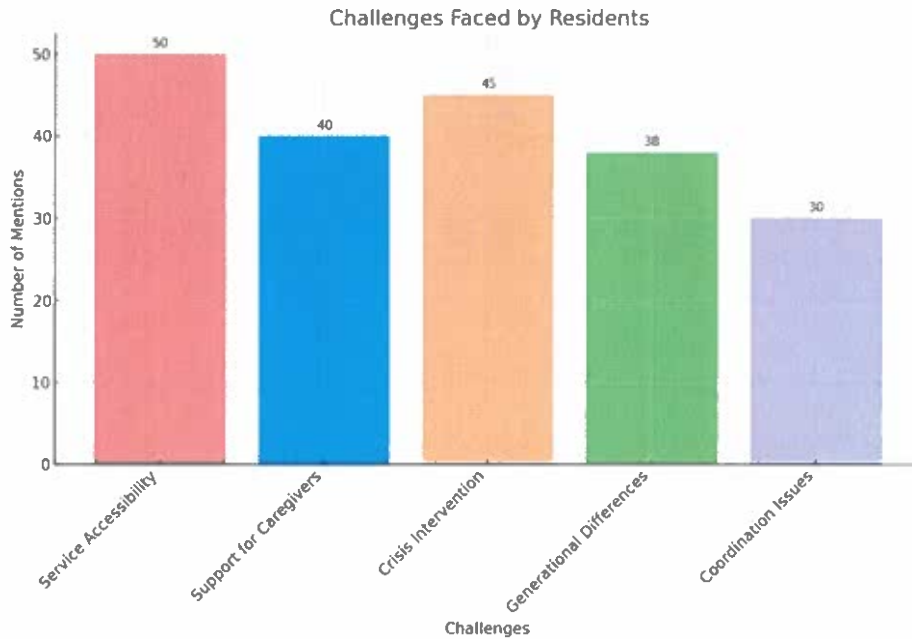
**Detailed Findings:**

- **Comments:**
  - "The systemic issues like affordable housing and healthcare impact mental health significantly."

## Residents

### Key Themes from Residents:

**Figure 23: Challenges Faced by Residents**

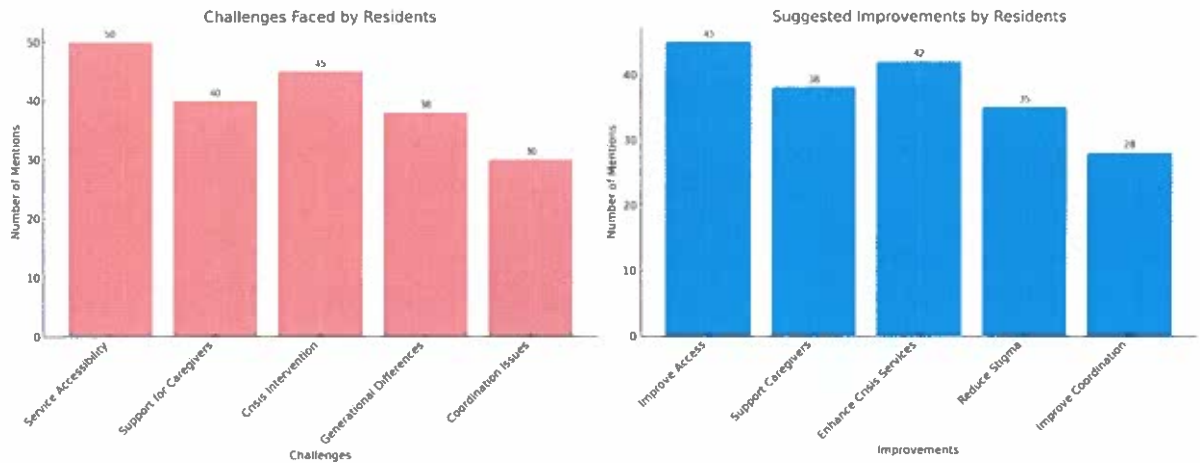


Residents identified several significant challenges that affect their ability to access and benefit from mental health services:

1. **Service Accessibility:** Difficulty accessing mental health services due to barriers such as transportation, language, and long wait times.
2. **Support for Caregivers:** Lack of resources and support for caregivers of individuals with mental health needs.
3. **Crisis Intervention:** Inadequate crisis intervention services, leading to unmet needs during mental health crises.
4. **Generational Differences:** Variations in mental health needs and attitudes across different age groups.
5. **Coordination Issues:** Fragmentation in service provision and lack of coordination among mental health providers.

## Suggested Improvements by Residents:

Figure 24: Suggested Improvements by Residents



Residents also provided several suggestions for improvements to address these challenges:

### 1. Improve Access:

- **Action Needed:** Enhance accessibility to mental health services by addressing transportation, language barriers, and reducing wait times.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Invest in transportation services for clients, provide translation and interpretation services, and streamline appointment scheduling processes to reduce wait times.

### 2. Support Caregivers:

- **Action Needed:** Offer more resources and support programs for caregivers of individuals with mental health needs.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Develop support groups and educational workshops for caregivers, and provide respite care services to alleviate caregiver burden.

### 3. Enhance Crisis Services:

- **Action Needed:** Improve crisis intervention services to ensure immediate and appropriate responses to mental health crises.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Establish 24/7 crisis hotlines, deploy mobile crisis response teams, and develop crisis stabilization centers to provide immediate care and support.

### 4. Reduce Stigma:

- **Action Needed:** Implement public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma associated with mental health issues.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Launch community education initiatives, partner with local media to promote positive mental health messages, and involve community leaders in advocacy efforts.

## 5. Improve Coordination:

- **Action Needed:** Enhance coordination among mental health service providers to ensure comprehensive and continuous care.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Develop a centralized referral and case management system, and facilitate regular inter-agency meetings to improve communication and collaboration.

By implementing these suggested improvements, the Wheeling Township and the Mental Health Board can significantly enhance the quality and accessibility of mental health services for residents. These actions will help address the immediate challenges faced by residents and contribute to a more integrated and supportive mental health care system.

### Detailed Findings:

- **Anonymous Survey Comments:**
  - "More services for low-income individuals and those needing sliding fee scale options."
  - "Services in other languages are needed, especially Spanish and Russian."

### Conclusion of Engagement Sessions

The engagement sessions provided invaluable insights into the mental health needs and challenges within Wheeling Township. By directly interacting with service providers, community leaders, and residents, the Research Team was able to identify key themes and areas for improvement. These insights will inform the strategic recommendations and action plans detailed in the subsequent sections of this report. The comprehensive approach ensured that diverse voices were heard and that the findings are reflective of the community's needs and priorities.

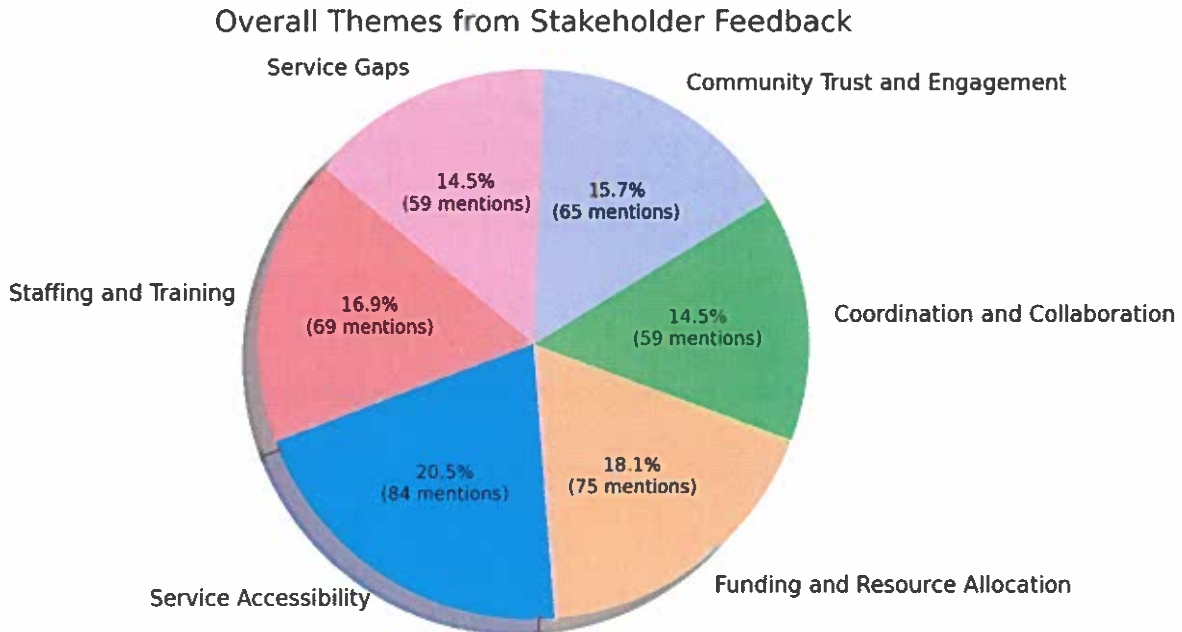
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## Comprehensive Evaluation Summary

The comprehensive evaluation of the feedback from service providers, community leaders, and residents highlighted several key themes and recommendations. These themes provide a roadmap for how Wheeling Township can enhance its mental health services to better serve the community. This section also explains how these themes align with the study outcomes.

## Overall Themes from Stakeholder Feedback

Figure 25: Overall Themes from Stakeholder Feedback



The primary themes identified from stakeholder feedback are:

1. **Staffing and Training:**

- **Challenges:** Shortages of qualified staff and the need for ongoing training.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Increase funding for recruitment and retention initiatives, offer professional development opportunities, and partner with local educational institutions to create training programs.

2. **Service Accessibility:**

- **Challenges:** Barriers to accessing mental health services such as transportation, language, and long wait times.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Invest in transportation services, provide translation and interpretation services, and streamline appointment scheduling processes to reduce wait times.

3. **Funding and Resource Allocation:**

- **Challenges:** Insufficient and inconsistent funding affecting the stability and expansion of services.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Advocate for increased state and federal funding, provide matching funds for grant applications, and facilitate partnerships with private sector donors.



**4. Coordination and Collaboration:**

- **Challenges:** Lack of coordination among service providers leading to fragmented care.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Develop a centralized referral and case management system, and facilitate regular meetings and communication channels among providers.

**5. Community Trust and Engagement:**

- **Challenges:** Building trust within the community and engaging residents in mental health initiatives.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Organize regular community meetings, create outreach programs, and facilitate open dialogues between residents and service providers to build trust and engagement.

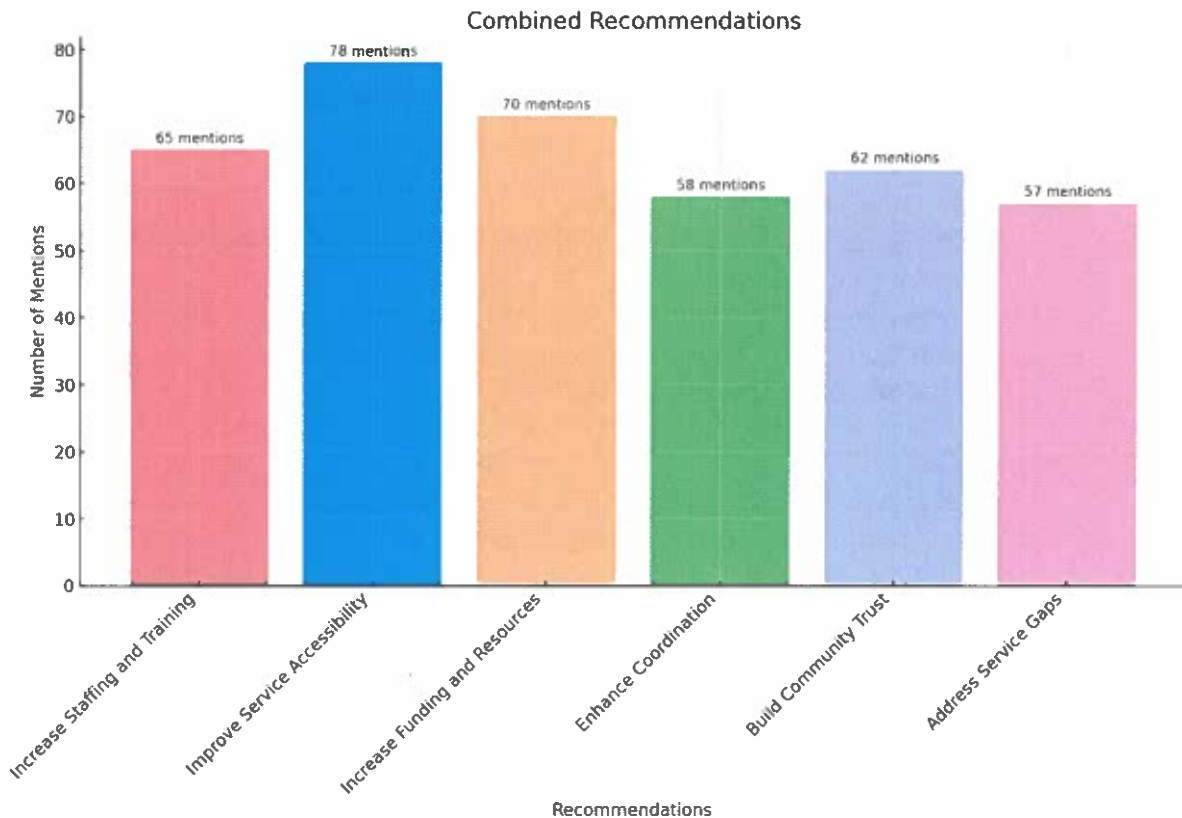
**6. Service Gaps:**

- **Challenges:** Specific gaps in services, such as specialized care for individuals with autism and substance use disorders.
- **How the Township Can Help:** Conduct needs assessments to pinpoint service gaps and fund programs that address these specific needs.

**Combined Recommendations**

The combined recommendations from all stakeholder feedback provide a strategic direction for the Wheeling Township to enhance mental health services. These recommendations align with the overall themes identified and offer specific actions that can be taken to address the challenges and areas for improvement.

**Figure 26: Combined Recommendations**



### **Aligning Themes with Study Outcomes**

The identified themes directly align with the study outcomes, providing a strategic direction for the Wheeling Township to enhance mental health services:

- 1. Optimizing Funding Allocation for Comprehensive Mental Health Needs:**
  - Themes related to funding and resource allocation highlight the need for increased and consistent funding to support comprehensive mental health services. Addressing these themes will ensure that financial resources are effectively utilized to meet the community's mental health needs.
- 2. Strengthening Mental Health Service Delivery:**
  - Themes related to staffing and training, service accessibility, and service gaps emphasize the importance of strengthening service delivery. By addressing these areas, the Township can improve the quality and reach of mental health services.
- 3. Enhancing Community Trust and Engagement in Mental Health Initiatives:**
  - Themes related to community trust and engagement underscore the necessity of building strong relationships between service providers and the community.

Enhancing trust and engagement will encourage more residents to seek mental health services and participate in community initiatives.

4. **Broadening Support for Diverse Mental Health Needs in Wheeling Township:**
  - Themes related to service gaps and support for special populations highlight the need to provide tailored services for diverse community needs. Broadening support will ensure that all residents, regardless of their background or specific mental health challenges, receive appropriate care.
5. **Benchmarking Wheeling Township's Mental Health Services Against Peer Townships:**
  - Themes related to coordination and collaboration indicate the need for a well-coordinated system that can be benchmarked against best practices from peer townships. Implementing these improvements will help Wheeling Township achieve and maintain high standards in mental health service delivery.

## **Conclusion**

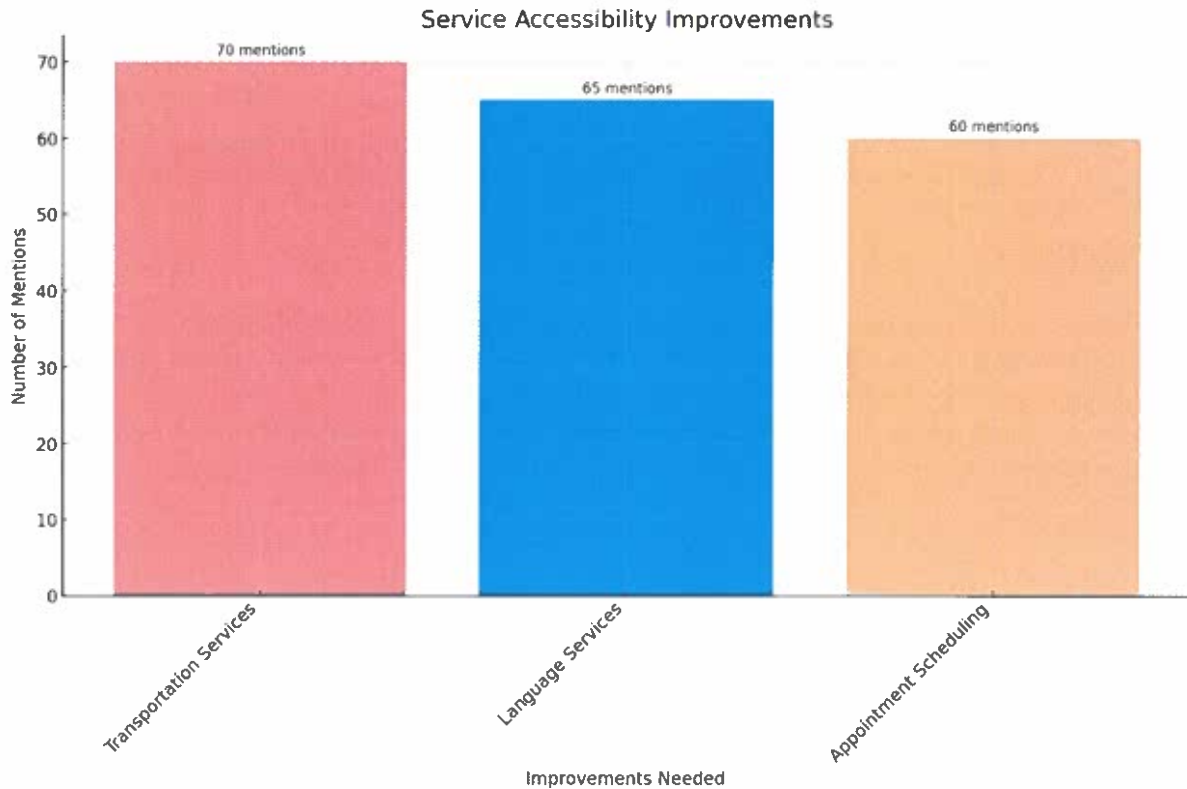
The comprehensive evaluation of stakeholder feedback reveals critical areas for improvement in Wheeling Township's mental health services. By addressing the identified themes, the Township can effectively support the overall recommendations and align with the study outcomes. These efforts will lead to a more robust, accessible, and trusted mental health service system, ultimately enhancing the well-being of the entire community.

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## Strengthening Mental Health Service Delivery

Improving service accessibility and addressing service gaps are critical for strengthening mental health service delivery. The analysis identified specific barriers to access and service gaps that need to be addressed.

**Figure 27: Service Accessibility Improvements**



### **Actions:**

- Invest in transportation and language services.
- Streamline appointment scheduling processes.
- Expand the availability of mental health services, particularly for underserved populations.

### **Outcomes:**

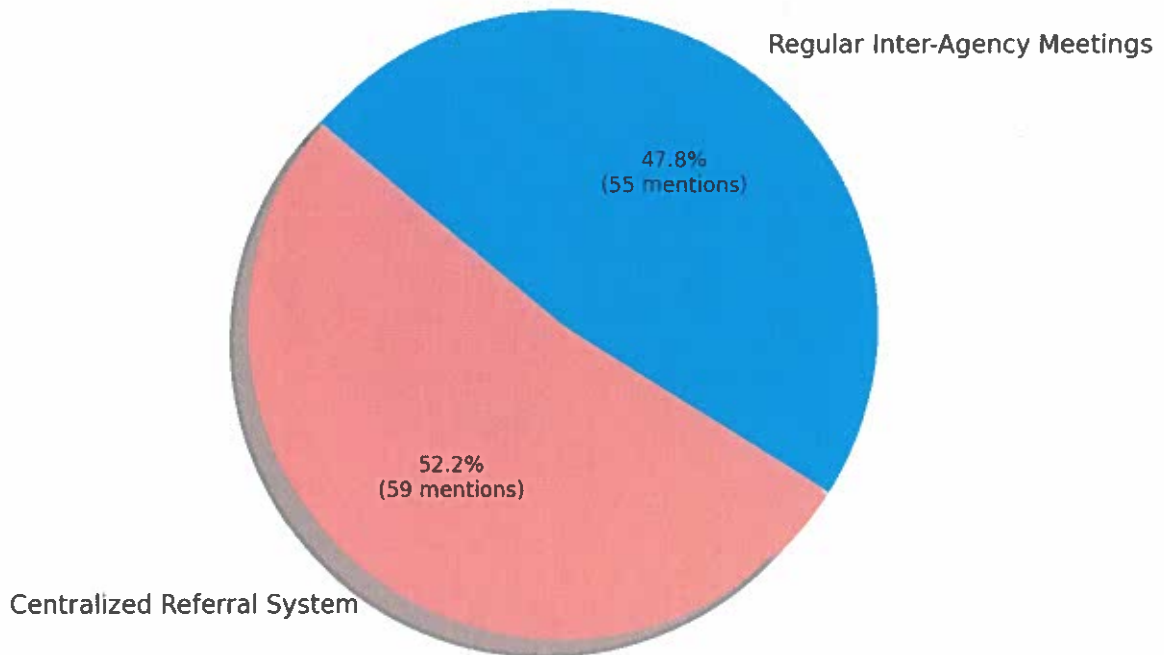
- Improves accessibility to mental health services.
- Reduces wait times and barriers to care.

## Enhancing Community Trust and Engagement in Mental Health Initiatives

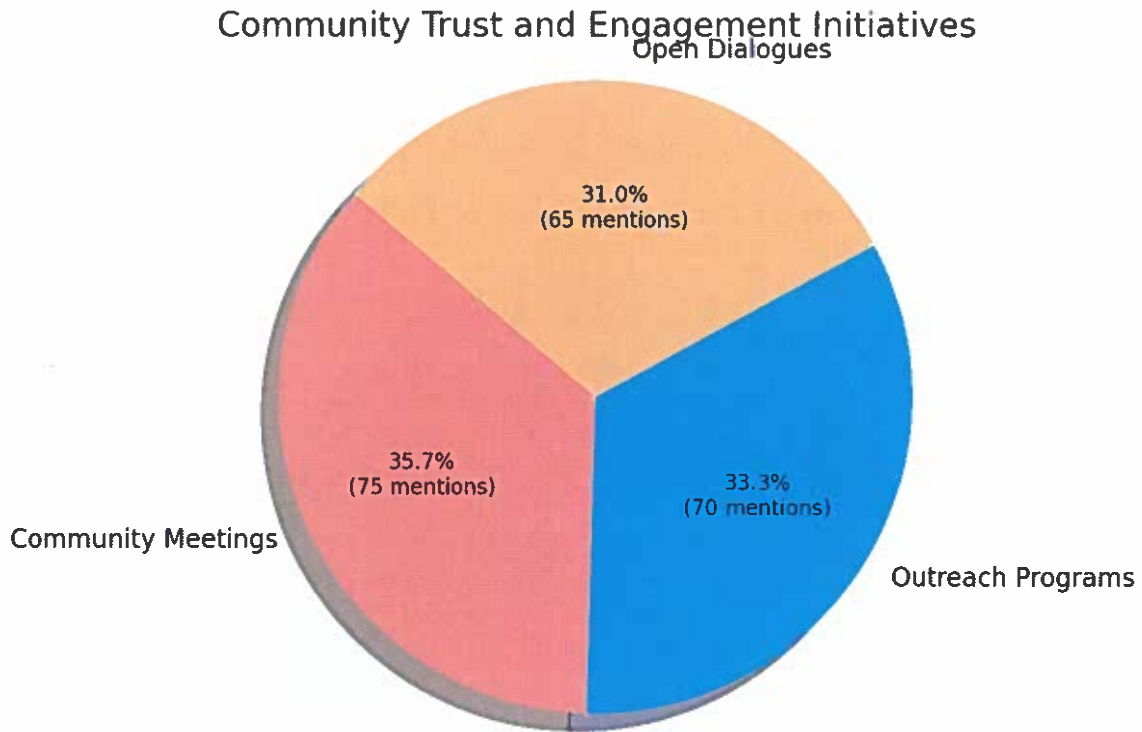
Building community trust and engagement is essential for encouraging residents to seek mental health services and participate in community initiatives.

**Figure 28:** Coordination and Collaboration Enhancements

### Coordination and Collaboration Enhancements



**Figure 29: Community Trust and Engagement Initiatives**



**Actions:**

- Develop a centralized referral and case management system.
- Facilitate regular inter-agency meetings to improve communication and collaboration.
- Organize regular community meetings and outreach programs.
- Foster open dialogues between residents and service providers.

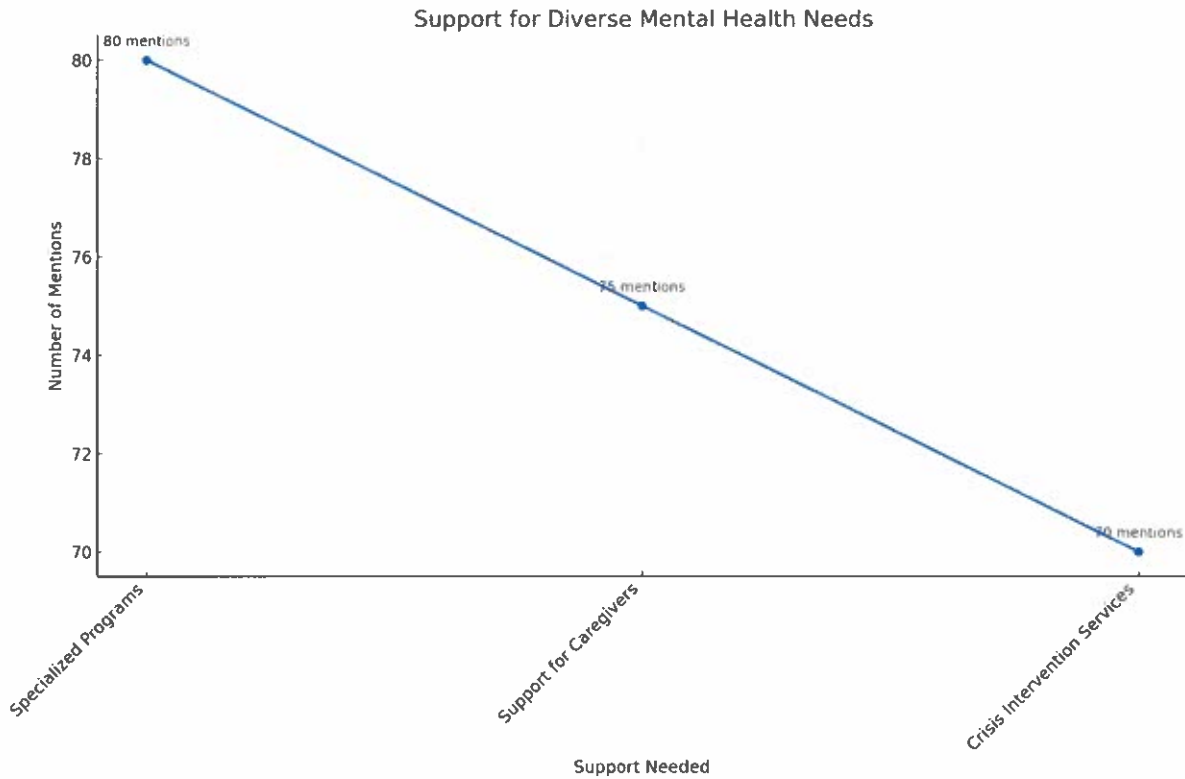
**Outcomes:**

- Enhances coordination and collaboration among service providers.
- Builds trust and engagement within the community.

## Broadening Support for Diverse Mental Health Needs in Wheeling Township

Addressing the specific needs of diverse populations is critical for providing comprehensive mental health care.

**Figure 30:** Support for Diverse Mental Health Needs



CO

### Actions:

- Develop specialized programs for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and substance use disorders (SUD).
- Offer more resources and support programs for caregivers.
- Enhance crisis intervention services, including 24/7 hotlines and mobile crisis response teams.

### Outcomes:

- Ensures tailored services for diverse community needs.
- Provides comprehensive support for caregivers and individuals in crisis

Future Directions

The conclusions and recommendations of this assessment provide a strategic roadmap for enhancing mental health services in Wheeling Township. To effectively implement these recommendations, a phased approach is suggested:

**1. Immediate Actions:**

- Begin advocacy efforts for increased funding and start developing a centralized referral system.
- Launch initial community education campaigns and organize community meetings.

**2. Short-Term Goals (6-12 months):**

- Expand multilingual services and increase mobile outreach units.
- Develop and pilot specialized programs for IDD and SUD.

**3. Long-Term Strategies (1-3 years):**

- Fully implement crisis response teams and establish continuous quality improvement programs.
- Conduct regular benchmarking and share best practices to drive ongoing improvements.



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## **Final Remarks**

The Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment has been an extensive effort to understand and address the mental health needs of our community. This study has highlighted the necessity to make a clear delineation between the broader concept of Mental Health and the specific focus areas of Mental Illness, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and Substance Use Disorder (SUD). This distinction is crucial to ensure that the unique challenges and needs associated with each area are adequately addressed and met with appropriate resources and strategies.

As indicated in the Introduction of the report, the Needs Assessment identified all needed mental health services from a broad perspective in all areas. However, the funding to implement all of these mental health services cannot be addressed solely by Wheeling Township. Instead, due to the costs of implementing all of the elements identified in this report, funding must come from all governmental levels, including the County, State, and Federal sources.

It is important to recognize that funding for expanded services must also account for the costs of staffing and administrative support. Without adequate resources for workforce development and operational infrastructure, the township will struggle to meet the increased demand for services effectively.

As the Township continues to assess its mental health service needs, it should consider potential reallocations and budgetary adjustments for the 2025-2026 fiscal year to ensure adequate funding for prioritized services, particularly in areas like mental illness, IDD, and SUD.

## **Delineating Mental Health and Study Topics**

Throughout this report, we have emphasized the importance of distinguishing between general mental health, which encompasses overall well-being, and the more specific areas of Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD. These distinctions are not just academic but practical, affecting how services are designed, funded, and delivered. Mental Illness refers to conditions that significantly impact a person's thinking, feeling, and behavior. IDD involves lifelong limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. SUD is characterized by an uncontrollable use of substances despite harmful consequences. Each of these areas requires specialized approaches, resources, and interventions.

## **Characteristics of a Healthy Community**

A healthy community is one where all stakeholders share in the responsibility and accountability of building and maintaining a viable environment where every member feels valued, empowered, and has a true sense of belonging. The following characteristics are essential for fostering such a community:

1. **Inclusivity:** Ensuring that all community members, regardless of their mental health status, intellectual abilities, or substance use issues, are included in community activities and have access to necessary services.
2. **Accessibility:** Providing accessible mental health services that are physically, financially, and culturally available to all community members.
3. **Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration among service providers, community leaders, and residents to create a network of support and resources.
4. **Empowerment:** Empowering individuals through education, resources, and opportunities to take control of their mental health and well-being.
5. **Support:** Offering robust support systems, including mental health services, educational programs, and community initiatives that address the needs of those with Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD.
6. **Engagement:** Actively engaging community members in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and the overall health of the community.
7. **Sustainability:** Developing sustainable programs and services that can adapt to changing community needs and continue to provide support over the long term.

### **Accountability and Community Building**

Building a healthy community requires a collective effort where every stakeholder plays a role. Service providers must ensure they deliver high-quality, accessible services. Community leaders should advocate for necessary resources and policies. Residents need to engage with and support their neighbors. The Wheeling Township Mental Health Board should continue to oversee and facilitate these efforts, ensuring that the community's needs are met comprehensively.

By embracing these principles and continuing to work together, Wheeling Township can create an environment where all members feel valued and supported. This collaborative effort will help ensure that the community not only addresses the specific needs related to Mental Illness, IDD, and SUD but also fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment among all its members.

In conclusion, the findings and recommendations of this assessment provide a roadmap for Wheeling Township to enhance its mental health services and build a healthier, more inclusive community. The next steps involve not only implementing these recommendations but also continuing to engage with all community stakeholders to ensure ongoing improvement and support.

The Research Team extends its gratitude to all participants and stakeholders who contributed to this assessment. Your insights and feedback have been invaluable in shaping the future of

mental health services in Wheeling Township. We look forward to continued collaboration and progress in achieving our shared goal of a healthier, more supportive community.

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## Appendices and References

### Appendix A: Survey Questions

The following survey questions were used to gather feedback from various stakeholders, including service providers, community leaders, and residents. The questions were designed to capture comprehensive insights into the mental health needs, challenges, and opportunities within Wheeling Township.

#### Survey Questions for Service Providers

1. **General Information:**
  - Name of the organization:
  - Type of services provided:
  - Number of years in operation:
  - Contact information (optional):
2. **Service Delivery:**
  - What types of mental health services does your organization provide?
  - How many clients do you serve on average per month?
  - What are the primary funding sources for your services?
3. **Staffing and Resources:**
  - How many mental health professionals are currently employed by your organization?
  - What challenges do you face in hiring and retaining qualified staff?
  - What types of training and professional development opportunities are available to your staff?
4. **Service Accessibility:**
  - What barriers do your clients face in accessing mental health services?
  - What measures has your organization implemented to improve service accessibility?
  - Do you provide services in languages other than English? If so, which languages?
5. **Coordination and Collaboration:**
  - How does your organization coordinate with other service providers in the community?
  - What challenges do you face in coordinating care for clients?
  - What improvements would you suggest to enhance coordination and collaboration among providers?
6. **Community Engagement:**
  - How does your organization engage with the community to promote mental health awareness?

- What strategies have been effective in building trust and engagement with the community?
  - What additional resources or support would help your organization enhance community engagement?
- 7. Service Gaps and Needs:**
- Are there specific populations or mental health issues that are currently underserved in your community?
  - What types of services or programs are most needed to address these gaps?
  - What recommendations do you have for improving mental health services in Wheeling Township?

### Survey Questions for Community Leaders

- 1. Community Overview:**
  - What role does your organization play in the community?
  - How does your organization support mental health initiatives?
- 2. Mental Health Challenges:**
  - What are the most pressing mental health challenges facing your community?
  - How do these challenges impact different populations within the community?
- 3. Service Coordination:**
  - How well do mental health service providers coordinate with each other and with your organization?
  - What improvements are needed to enhance service coordination and delivery?
- 4. Community Trust and Engagement:**
  - How would you describe the level of trust and engagement between mental health service providers and the community?
  - What strategies have been effective in building trust and engagement?
  - What additional measures could be taken to improve community trust and engagement?
- 5. Support for Special Populations:**
  - What specific mental health needs are there for special populations in your community (e.g., individuals with IDD, survivors of domestic violence)?
  - What services or programs are most needed to support these populations?
- 6. Recommendations:**
  - What recommendations do you have for improving mental health services in Wheeling Township?
  - What role do you believe your organization can play in supporting these improvements?

### Survey Questions for Residents

- 1. General Information:**
  - Age:

- Gender:
  - Ethnicity:
  - Preferred language:
  - Are you currently receiving or have you previously received mental health services?
2. **Service Accessibility:**
    - How easy or difficult is it to access mental health services in your community?
    - What barriers have you encountered in accessing mental health services?
    - What suggestions do you have for improving access to mental health services?
  3. **Service Quality:**
    - How would you rate the quality of mental health services you have received?
    - What aspects of the services were most helpful?
    - What aspects of the services need improvement?
  4. **Support for Caregivers:**
    - Are you a caregiver for someone with mental health needs?
    - What types of support and resources do you need as a caregiver?
    - What improvements would help caregivers in your community?
  5. **Crisis Intervention and Support:**
    - Have you or someone you know experienced a mental health crisis?
    - What types of crisis intervention services are available in your community?
    - What additional crisis intervention services are needed?
  6. **Community Engagement and Awareness:**
    - How aware are you of the mental health services available in your community?
    - What strategies would improve community awareness and engagement with mental health services?
    - How can stigma associated with mental health be reduced in your community?
  7. **Recommendations:**
    - What recommendations do you have for improving mental health services in Wheeling Township?
    - Are there specific services or programs you believe should be prioritized?

#### Additional Questions for the Anonymous Survey

1. **Overall Experience:**
  - What has been your overall experience with accessing mental health services in your community?
  - Please share any specific challenges or positive aspects you have encountered.
2. **Critical Improvements:**
  - In your opinion, what are the most critical improvements needed in the mental health services provided in our area?
  - Feel free to suggest any changes or additions that you believe would enhance accessibility and satisfaction.
3. **Community Feedback:**

- What do you believe are the most significant mental health issues facing our community today?
- How can mental health service providers better address these issues?

These survey questions were designed to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives, ensuring that the assessment reflects the diverse needs and experiences of the Wheeling Township community. The responses collected provided invaluable insights that informed the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

## **Appendix B: Sample Comments from Surveys and Interviews**

This appendix provides a summary of the key themes and representative quotes from the surveys and interviews conducted with service providers, community leaders, and residents. The detailed comments have been categorized to highlight the major challenges, opportunities, and recommendations identified by the participants.

### **Key Themes and Representative Quotes**

#### **1. Staffing and Training**

##### **Challenges:**

- "The biggest challenge for our participants and families is the availability and access to services. Long wait times and lack of transportation are significant barriers."
- "Our organization struggles with staff retention. Many professionals prefer private practice due to better pay and lower caseloads."

##### **Opportunities:**

- "Developing incentives for mental health professionals and increasing funding for training and continuing education can help address these staffing shortages."

#### **2. Service Accessibility**

##### **Challenges:**

- "It's really hard to find mental health services that speak my language. More services in Spanish and Russian would be incredibly helpful."
- "If you are on Medicaid or uninsured, it is very hard to be seen. We need more providers who accept Medicaid and offer sliding fee scales."

##### **Opportunities:**

- "Expanding multilingual outreach and services, implementing mobile units for direct service delivery, and developing a centralized referral system can improve accessibility."

#### **3. Funding and Resource Allocation**

##### **Challenges:**

- "The allocation of funding and resources remains a critical issue, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic."
- "Securing sufficient funding is a constant challenge, especially with the cessation of support from programs like the CARES Act and ARPA."



**Opportunities:**

- "Advocacy for increased funding, exploring alternative funding mechanisms, and implementing transparent funding communication can help ensure adequate resources."

**4. Coordination and Collaboration****Challenges:**

- "Coordination between providers is lacking. We need a centralized referral system to streamline the process for clients and ensure they receive the care they need."
- "A lack of coordination among service providers results in fragmented service delivery."

**Opportunities:**

- "Establishing a centralized referral and case management system, and fostering partnerships with community organizations and local policymakers, can enhance coordination and collaboration."

**5. Community Trust and Engagement****Challenges:**

- "Building trust within the community is critical. Many people don't seek help because of the stigma associated with mental health issues."
- "There is a perceived disconnect between current mental health programs and the actual needs of the community."

**Opportunities:**

- "Launching community education campaigns, facilitating regular community meetings, and ensuring visible engagement by township officials can build trust and engagement."

**6. Service Gaps****Challenges:**

- "There are not enough services to meet the growing demand, especially for specialized care like substance use disorder treatment and services for individuals with autism."
- "Specific service gaps were identified, such as the lack of services for individuals with autism post-age 22."

**Opportunities:**

- "Developing specialized programs for underserved populations and expanding services to address these gaps can improve the overall mental health service landscape."

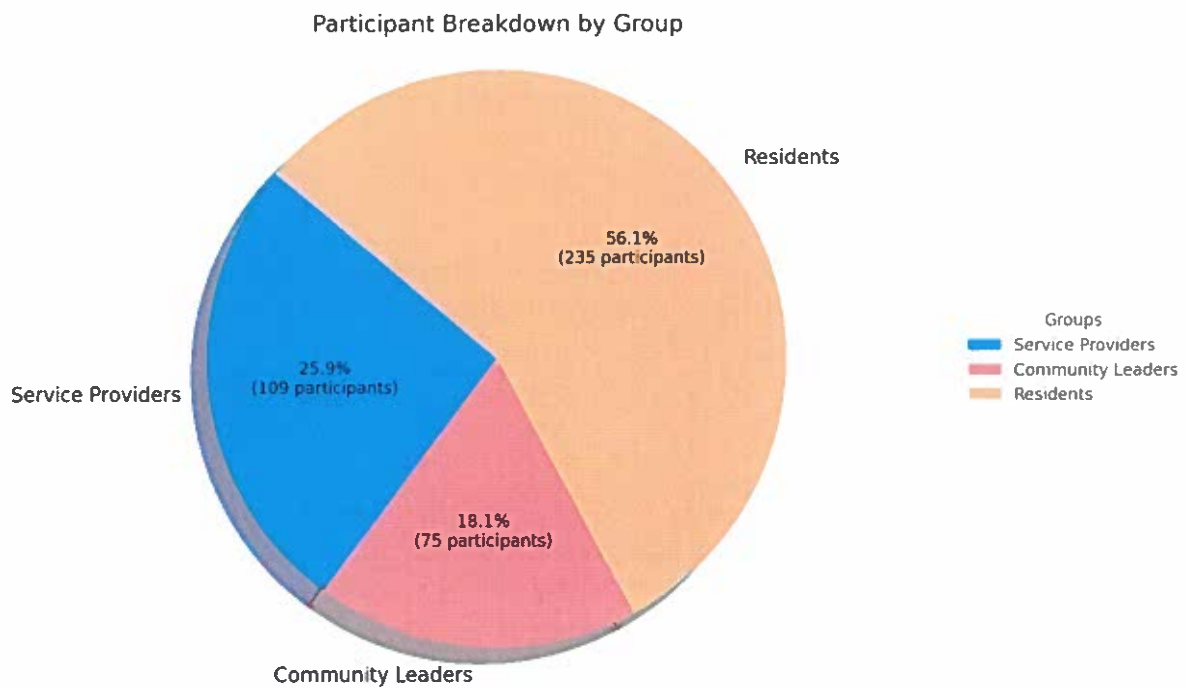
## Appendix C: Tables, Figures, and Charts

### Participant Breakdown

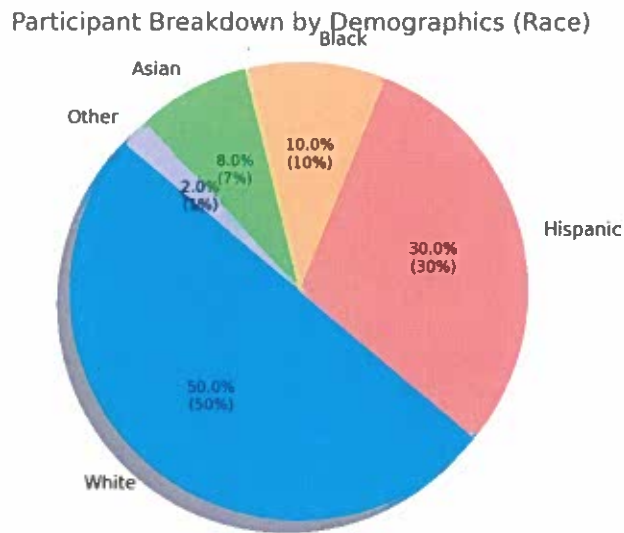
**Table 1:** Participant Breakdown by Group

Group	Number of Participants
Service Providers	109
Community Leaders	76
Residents	236
<b>Total</b>	<b>421</b>

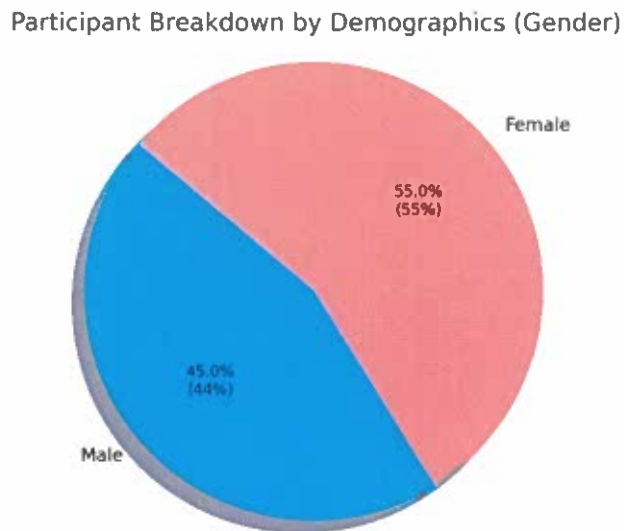
**Figure 1:** Participant Breakdown by Group



**Figure 1a: Participant Breakdown by Demographics (Race, Ethnicity)**



**Figure 1b: Participant Breakdown by Demographics (Gender)**

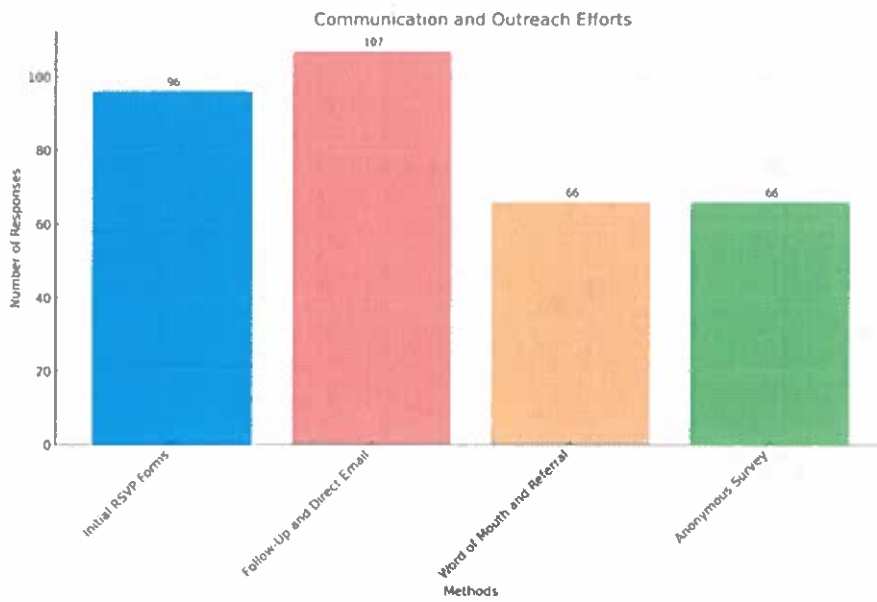


## Communication and Outreach Efforts

Table 2: Communication and Outreach Efforts

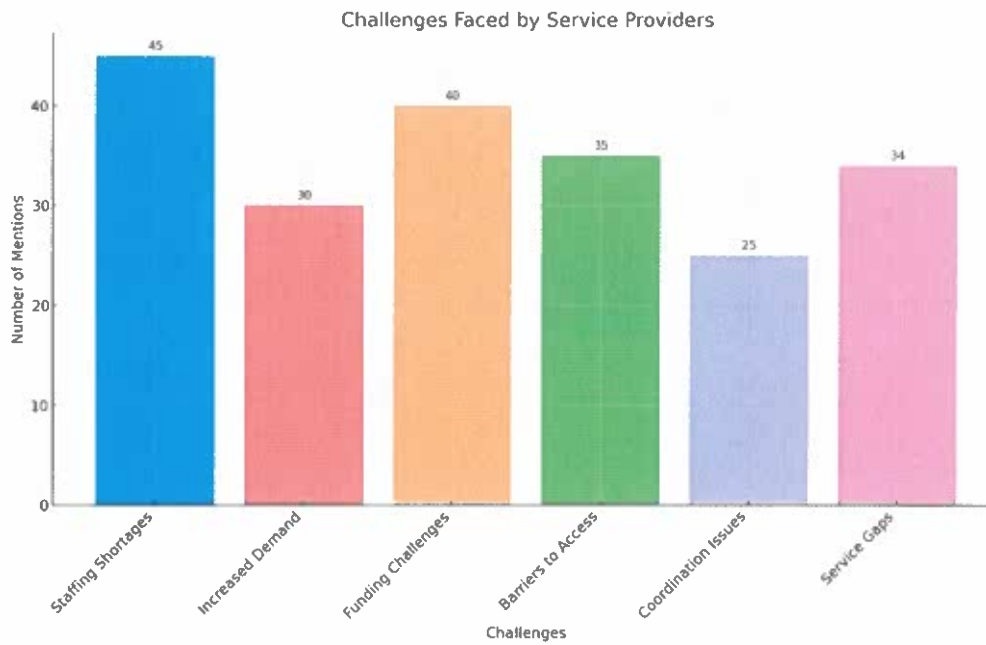
<b>Method</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>
Initial RSVP Forms	96
Follow-Up and Direct Email	107
Word of Mouth and Referral	66
Anonymous Survey	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>335</b>

**Figure 2: Communication and Outreach Efforts**

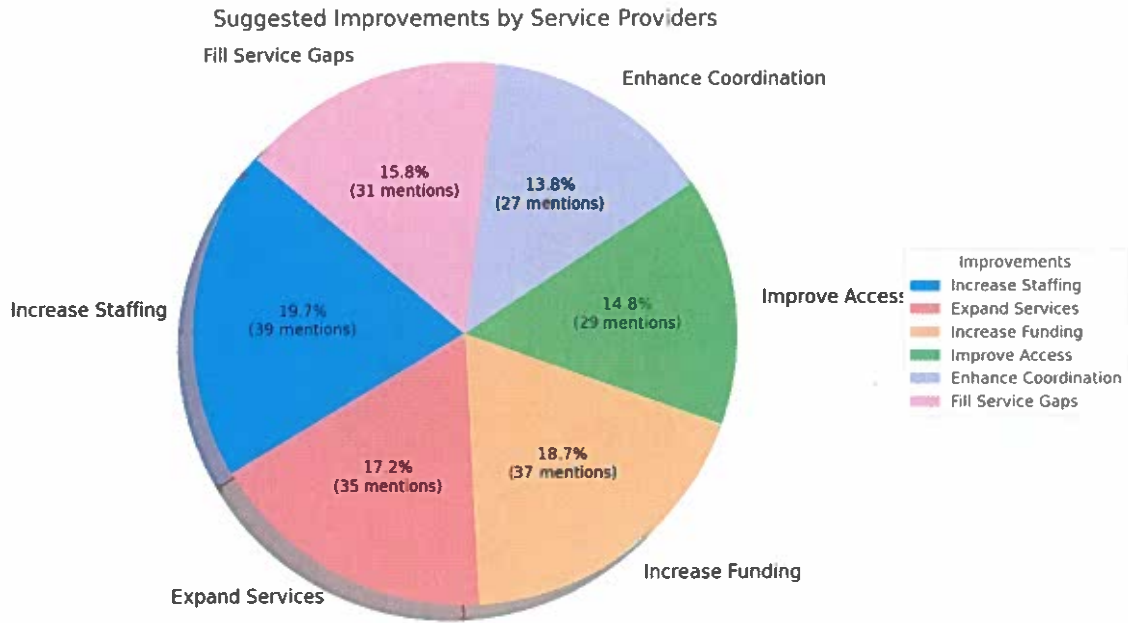


### Challenges and Suggestions by Stakeholders

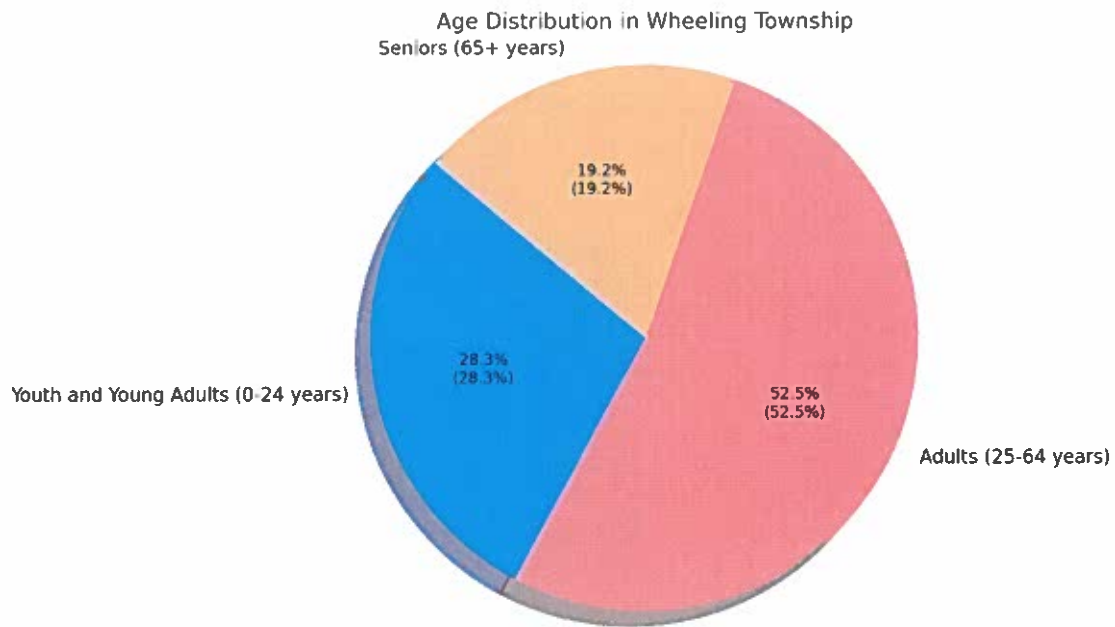
**Figure 3: Challenges Faced by Service Providers**



**Figure 4: Suggested Improvements by Service Providers**



**Figure 5: Age Distribution in Wheeling Township**



## Overall Themes and Recommendations

**Table A:** Common Themes from Overall Experience

Theme	Mentions
Medicaid	10
Availability	20
Cost	15
Logistics and Access	12
Services Offered	8

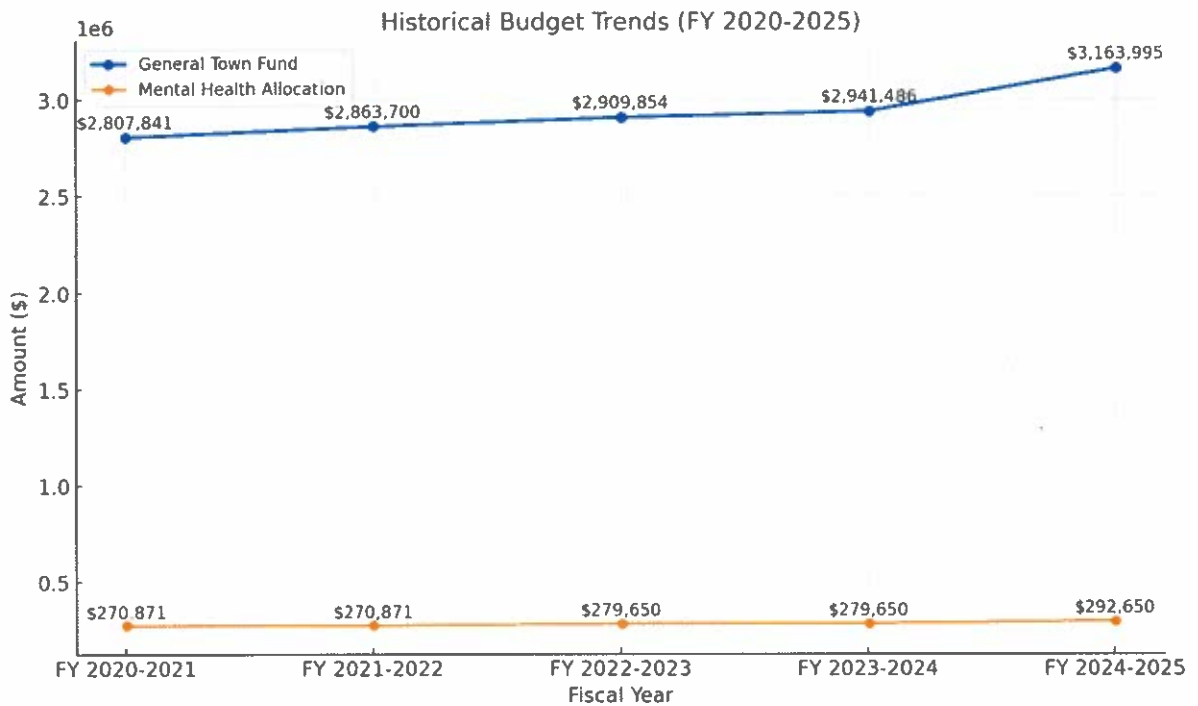
**Table B:** Common Themes from Critical Improvements Needed

Theme	Mentions
Cultural Competence	18
Availability	22
Better Information	14
Minimize Waitlist	19
Reduce Stigma	13
Access	17
More Funding	20

**Table 2:** Historical Budget Overview (FY 2020-2025)

Fiscal Year	General Town Fund	Mental Health Board Allocation	Mental Health Services
FY 2020-2021	\$2,807,841	\$270,871	Alexian Brothers (\$116,250), Avenues to Independence (\$30,000), etc.
FY 2021-2022	\$2,863,700	\$270,871	Similar breakdown as above
FY 2022-2023	\$2,909,854	\$279,650	Similar breakdown as above
FY 2023-2024	\$2,941,486	\$279,650	Similar breakdown as above
FY 2024-2025	\$3,163,995	\$292,650	Similar breakdown as above

**Figure 6: Historical Budget Trends (FY 2020-2025)**



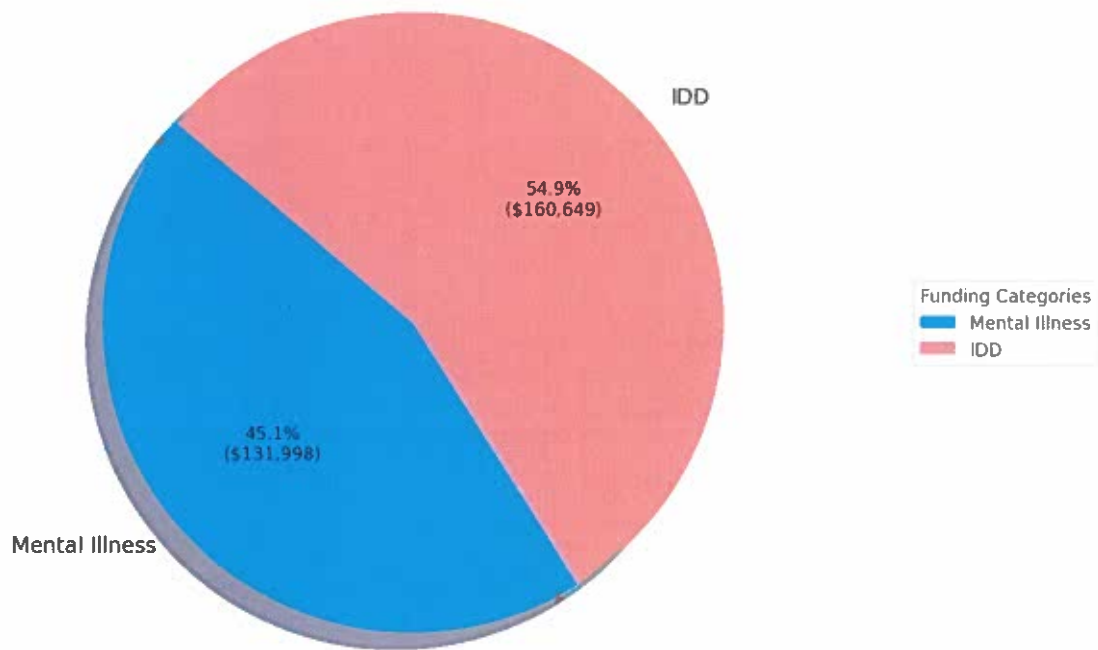
**Table 3: FY 2024-2025**

Service Category	Service Provider	Allocation (\$)
<b>Mental Illness</b>	Alexian Brothers Center for Mental Health	\$110,000
	Josselyn Center	\$22,000
<b>IDD</b>	Avenues to Independence	\$35,000
	Center for Enriched Living	\$5,000
	Clearbrook Center	\$97,650
	Countryside/Little City	\$23,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$292,650</b>

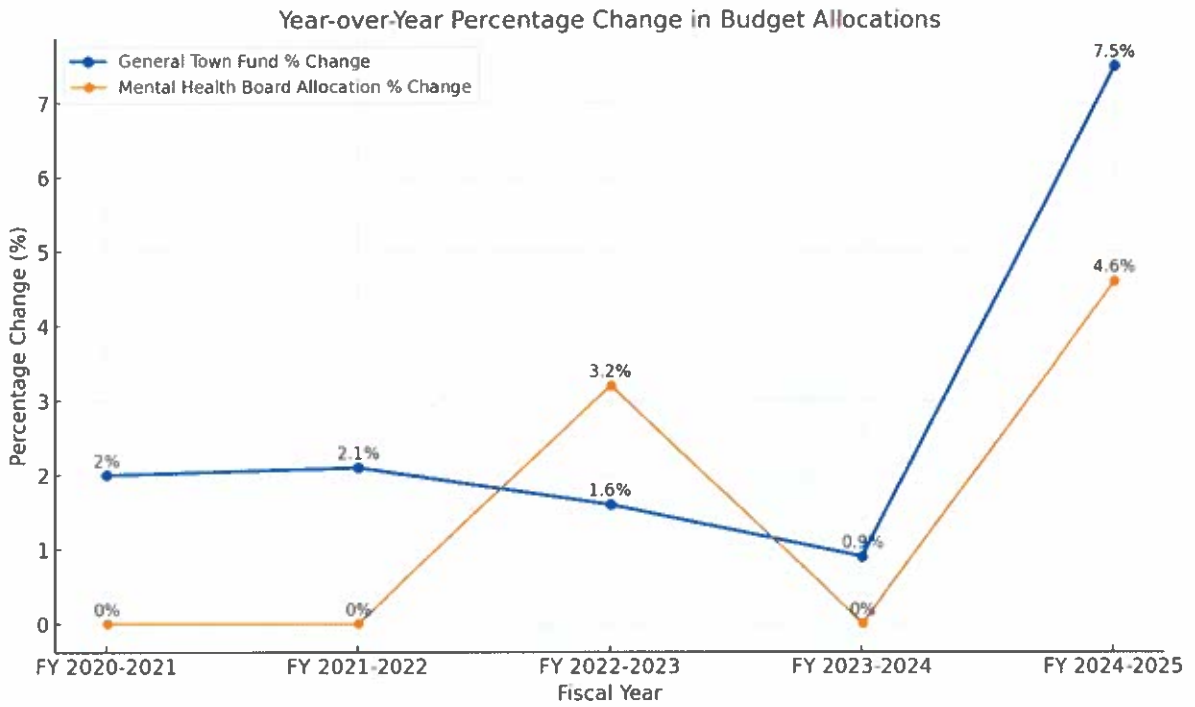


**Figure 7: Proposed Budget Allocation for Mental Health Services FY 2024-2025**

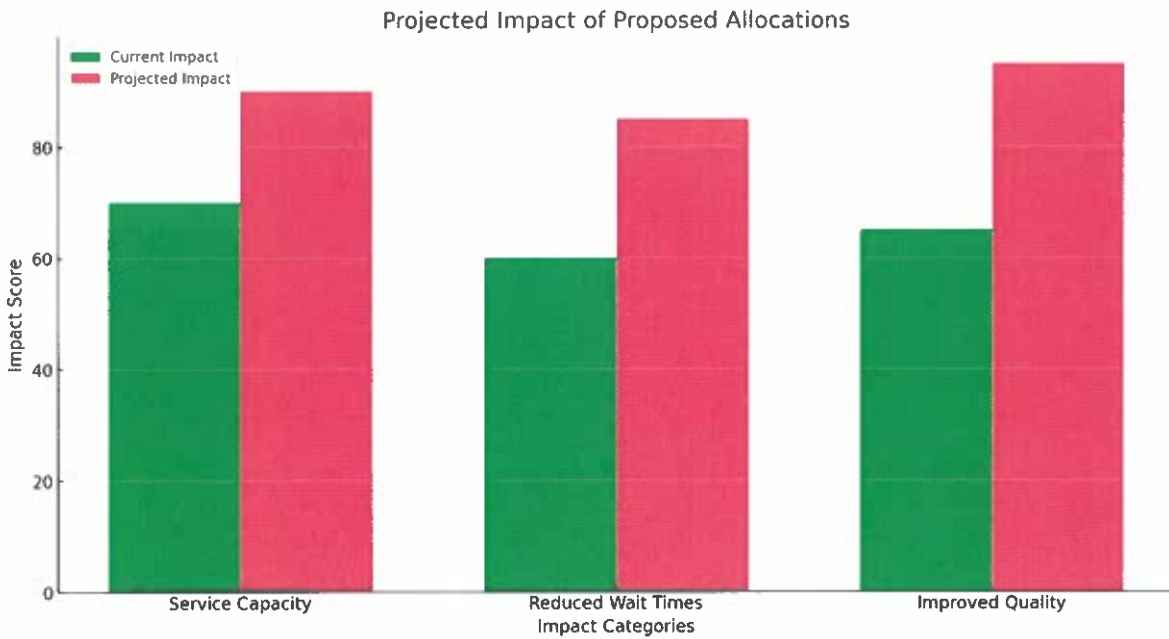
FY 2025-2026 Funding Allocation Breakdown



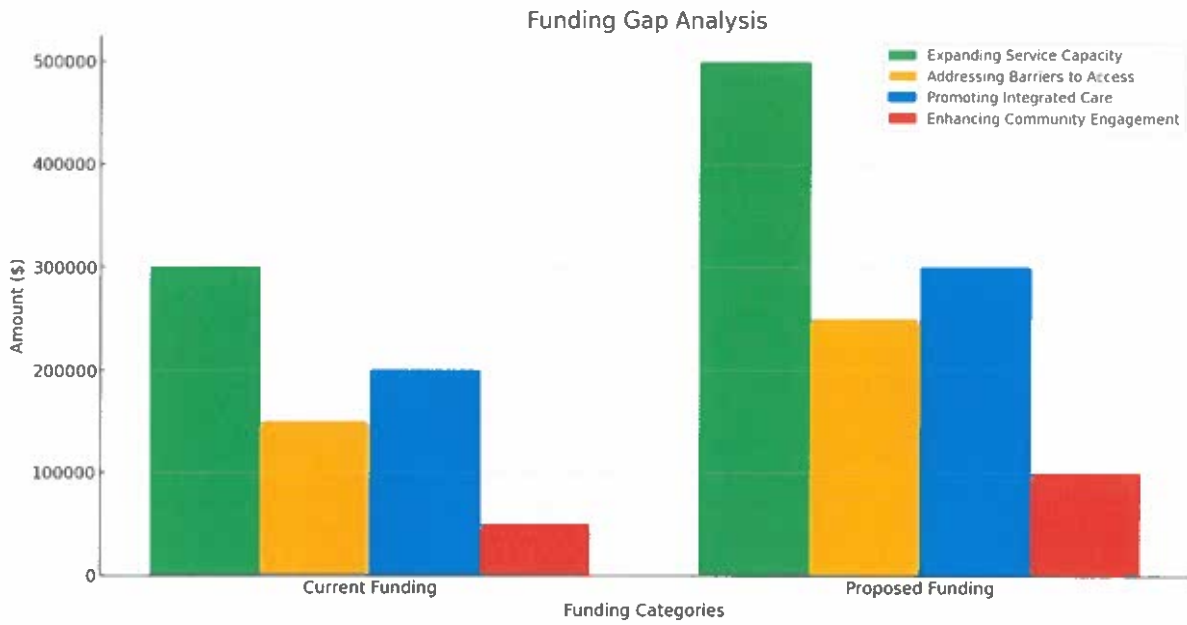
**Figure 8: Year-over-Year Percentage Change in Budget Allocations**



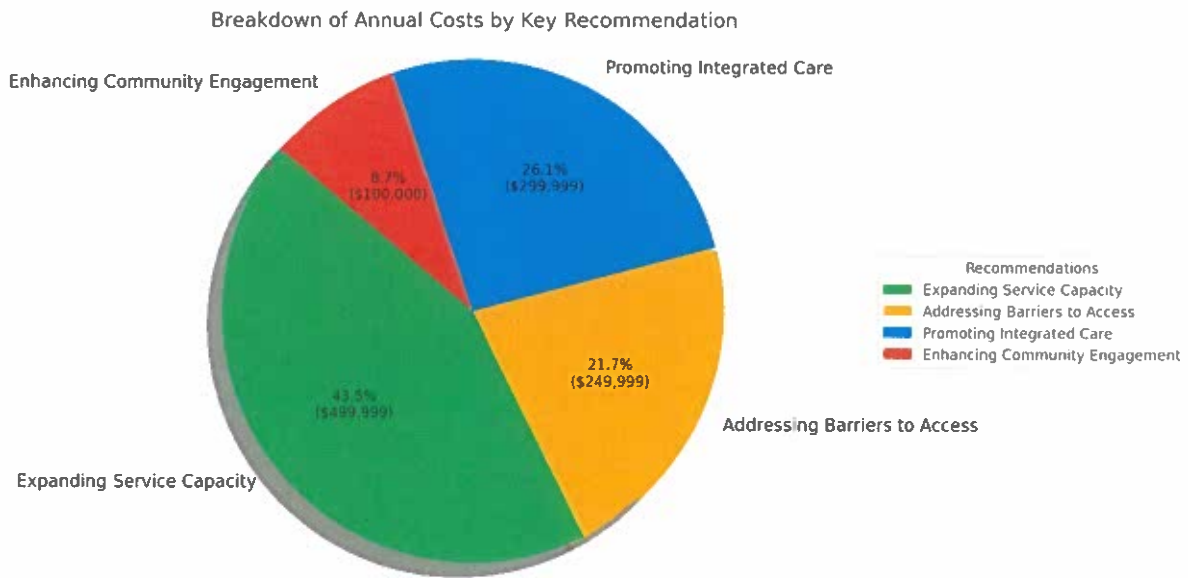
**Figure 9: Projected Impact of Proposed Allocations**



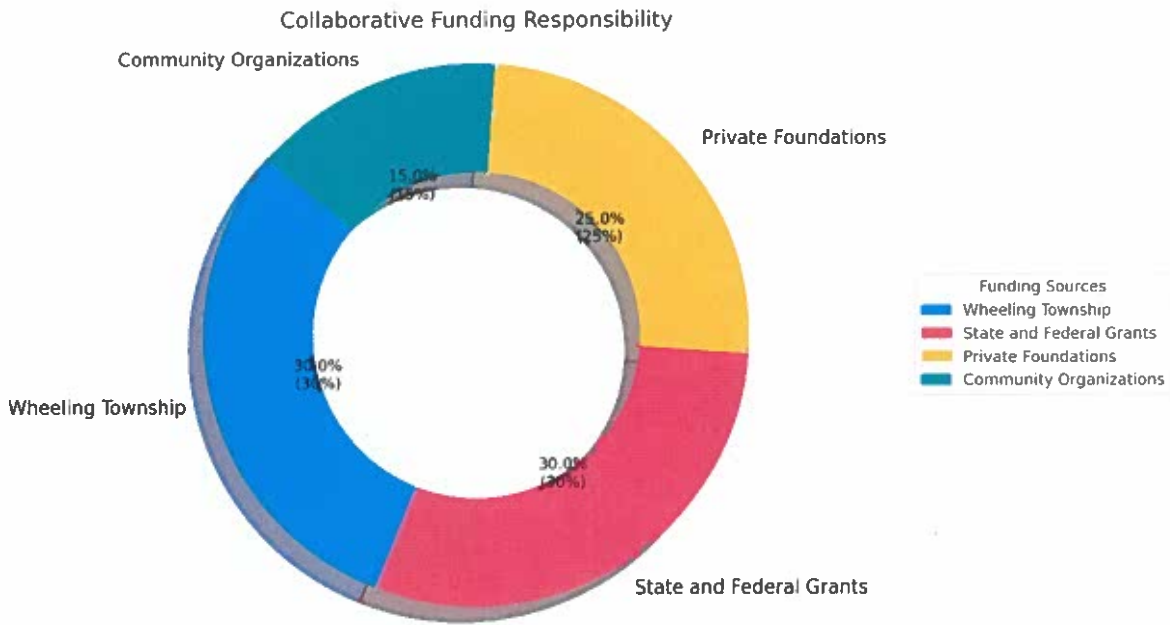
**Figure 10: Funding Gap Analysis**



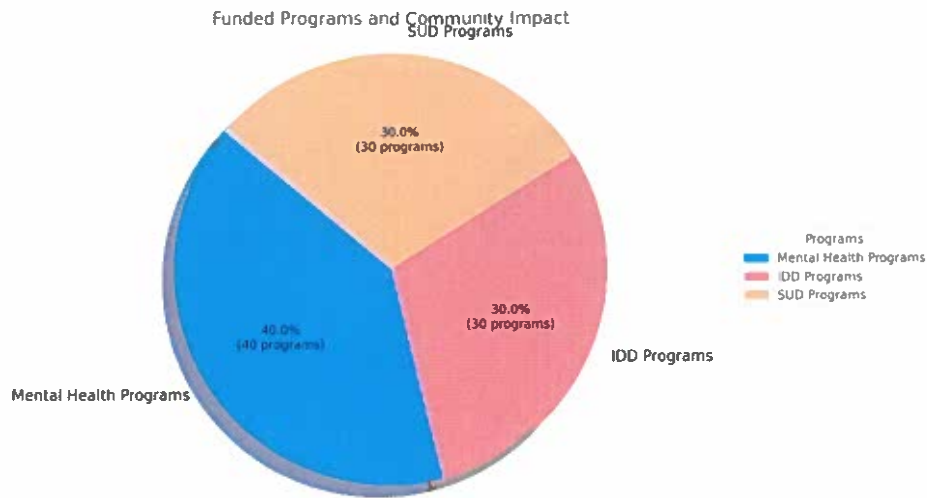
**Figure 11: Breakdown of Annual Costs by Key Recommendation**



**Figure 12: Collaborative Funding Responsibility**



**Figure 13: Funded Programs and Community Impact**



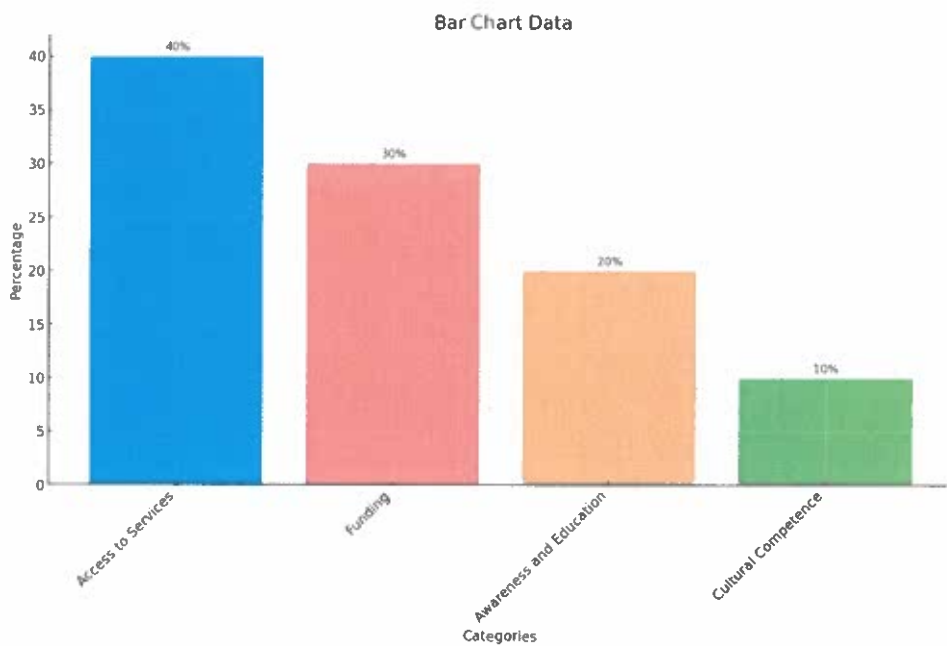
**Figure 14: Comparison of Mental Health Services in Peer Communities**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>708 Board Established</b>	<b>Mental Illness Services</b>	<b>IDD Services</b>	<b>SUD Services</b>	<b>Best Practices</b>
<b>Maine Township</b>	140,600	1972	Integrated counseling and psychiatric services	Developmental screenings, early intervention	Substance abuse counseling and prevention	Integrated care, accessibility, community engagement
<b>Niles Township</b>	112,407	1974	Comprehensive therapy and psychiatric care	Vocational training, life skills development	Outpatient counseling, detoxification services	Collaborative partnerships, focus on prevention, cultural competence
<b>Elk Grove Township (NA)</b>	94,413	1970	Confidential counseling, telehealth services	Screenings, support services	Counseling, psychiatric telehealth	Confidential counseling, telehealth services, family-centered approach
<b>Hanover Township</b>	100,092	1977	Mental health counseling, crisis intervention	Educational and vocational training	Outpatient counseling, support groups	Comprehensive funding, community needs assessment, senior-focused programs
<b>Berwyn Township</b>	57,250	1974	Therapy, crisis intervention, psychiatric care	Life skills training, vocational programs	Detoxification, outpatient counseling, support groups	Community-based services, regular monitoring, equitable access

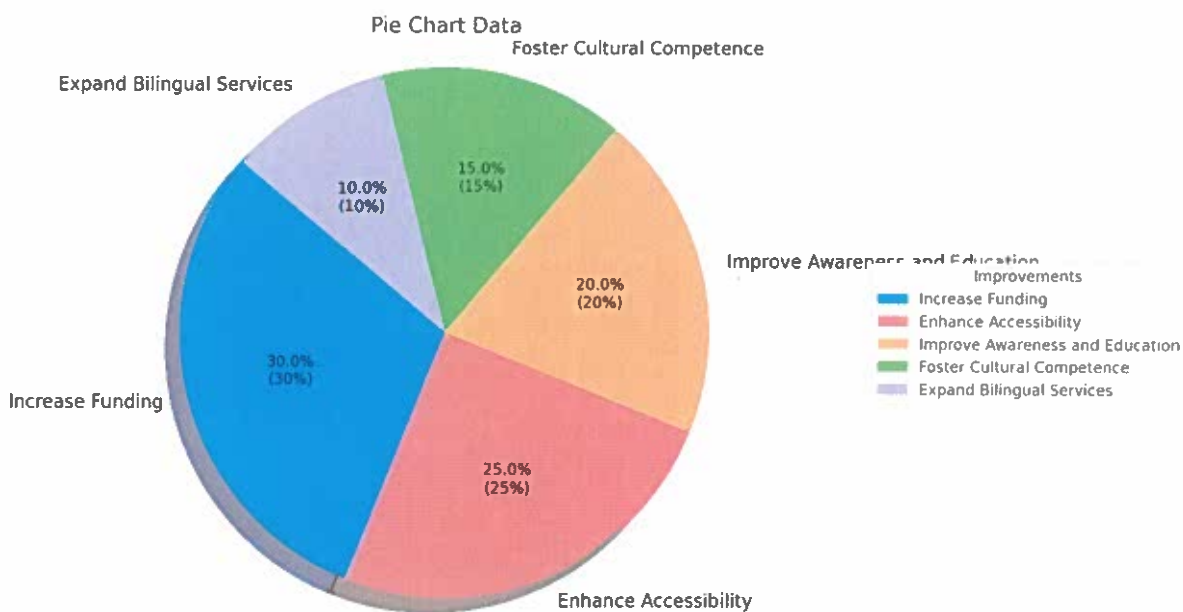
**Table 4: Comparison of Key Metrics**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Wheeling Township</b>	<b>Maine Township</b>	<b>Niles Township</b>	<b>Elk Grove Township (NA)</b>	<b>Hanover Township</b>	<b>Berwyn Township</b>
<b>Population Size</b>	155,000	140,600	112,407	94,413	100,092	57,250
<b>708 Board Established</b>	2023	1972	1974	1970	1977	1974
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$90,000	\$91,576	\$94,692	\$85,000	\$88,000	\$70,000
<b>Percentage Insured</b>	91%	92%	91.2%	93%	94%	90%
<b>Primary Care Providers per 10k</b>	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)	7.8 (State Average)
<b>Accessibility (Bilingual, Telehealth)</b>	unknown	Bilingual & Telehealth	Bilingual & Telehealth	Telehealth Only	Bilingual & Telehealth	Bilingual & Telehealth
<b>Community Outreach Initiatives</b>	unknown	7 Initiatives	8 Initiatives	6 Initiatives	7 Initiatives	6 Initiatives
<b>Outcome Tracking Practices</b>	Monthly Status Report	Client Feedback, Data Analysis	Program Evaluations, Stakeholder Feedback	Client Progress Monitoring	Performance Metrics, Client Satisfaction	Outcome Measurement Tools, Regular Monitoring

**Figure 15: Overall Themes from Stakeholder Feedback**

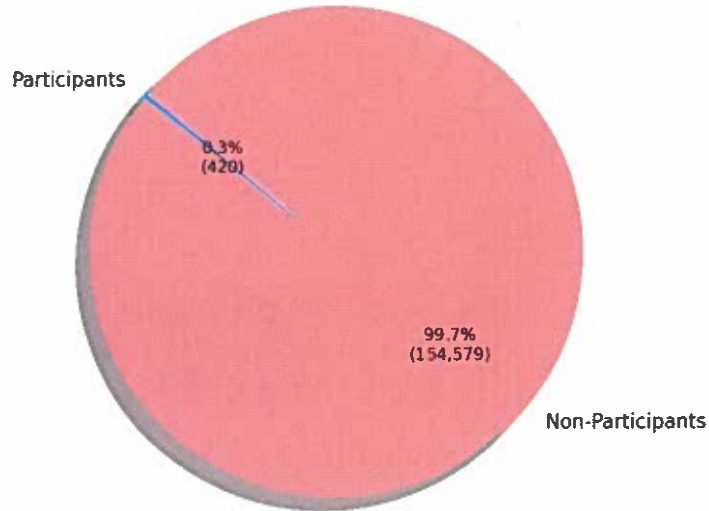


**Figure 16: Combined Recommendations**



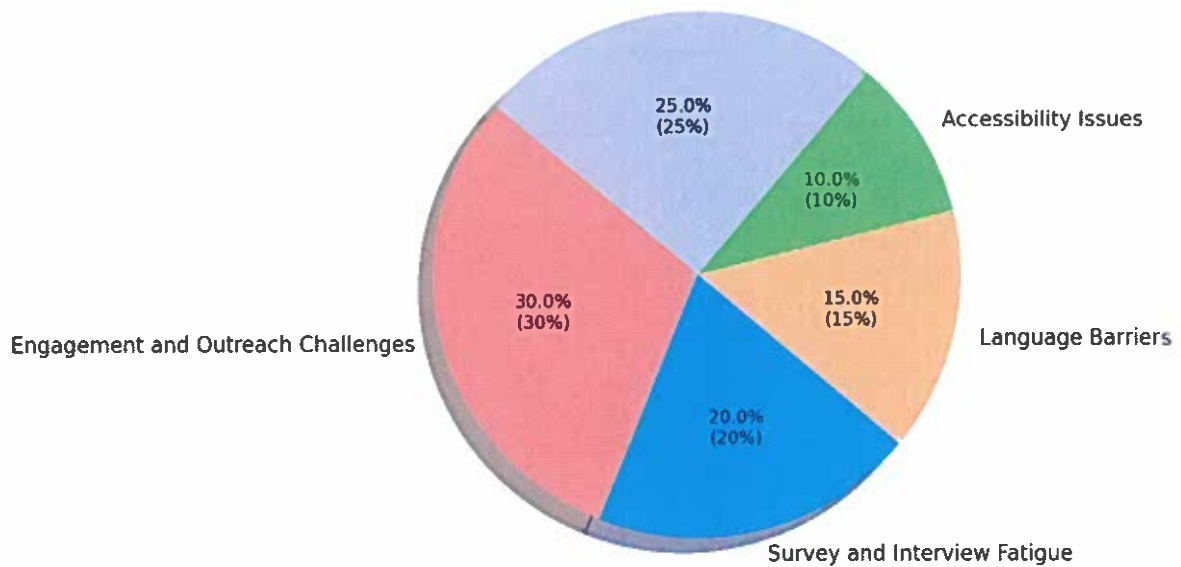
**Figure 17: Participation Rate as a Percentage of Total Population**

Participation Rate as a Percentage of Total Population



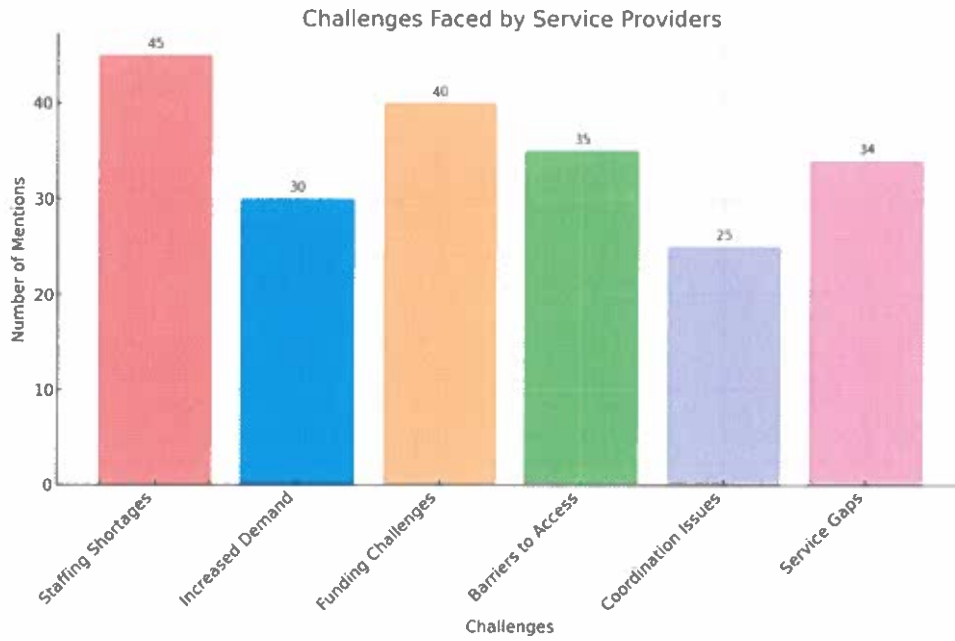
**Figure 18: Engagement and Outreach Challenges**

Engagement and Outreach Challenges

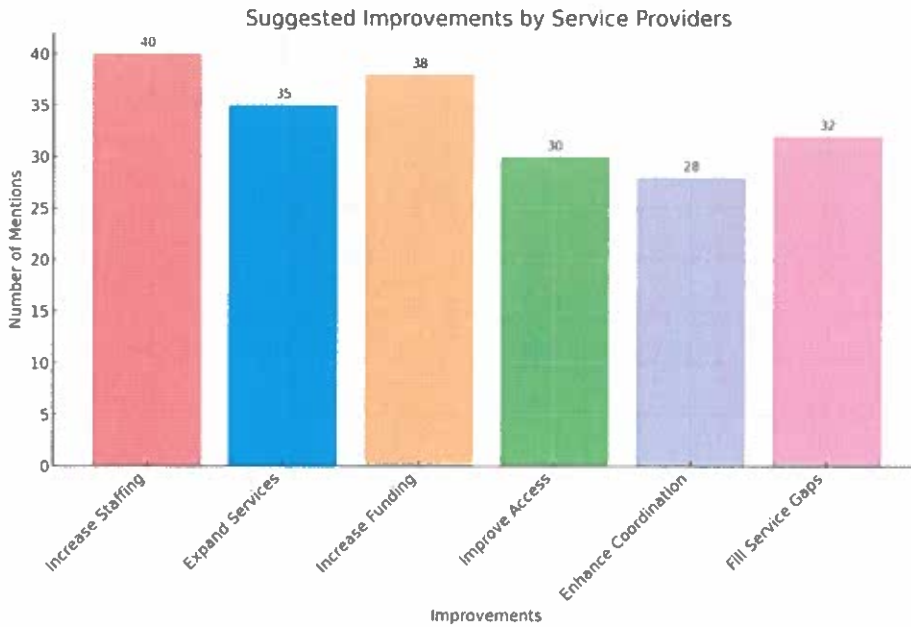




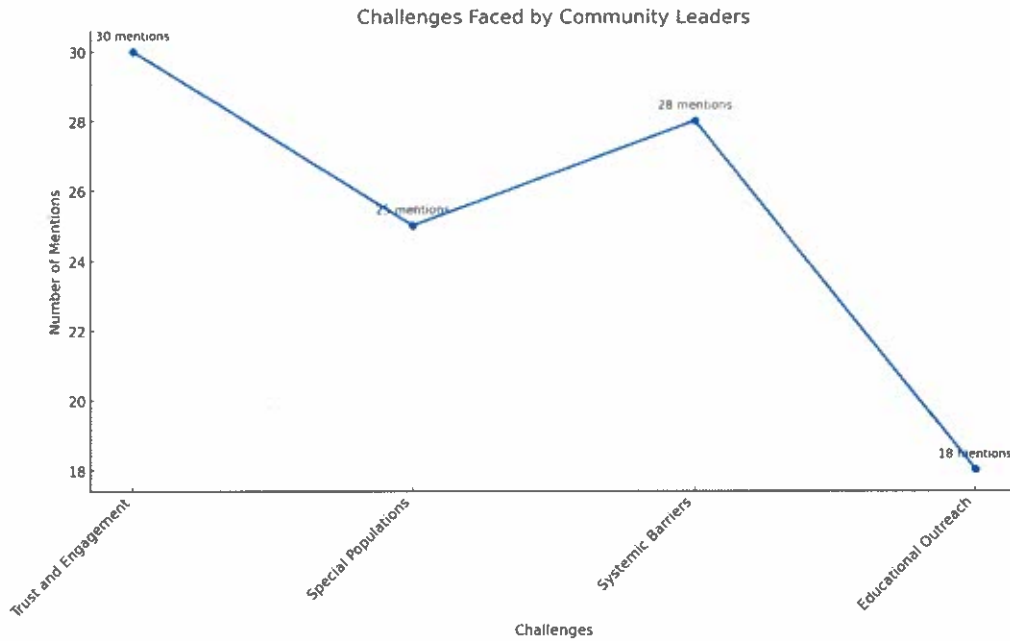
**Figure 19: Challenges Faced by Service Providers**



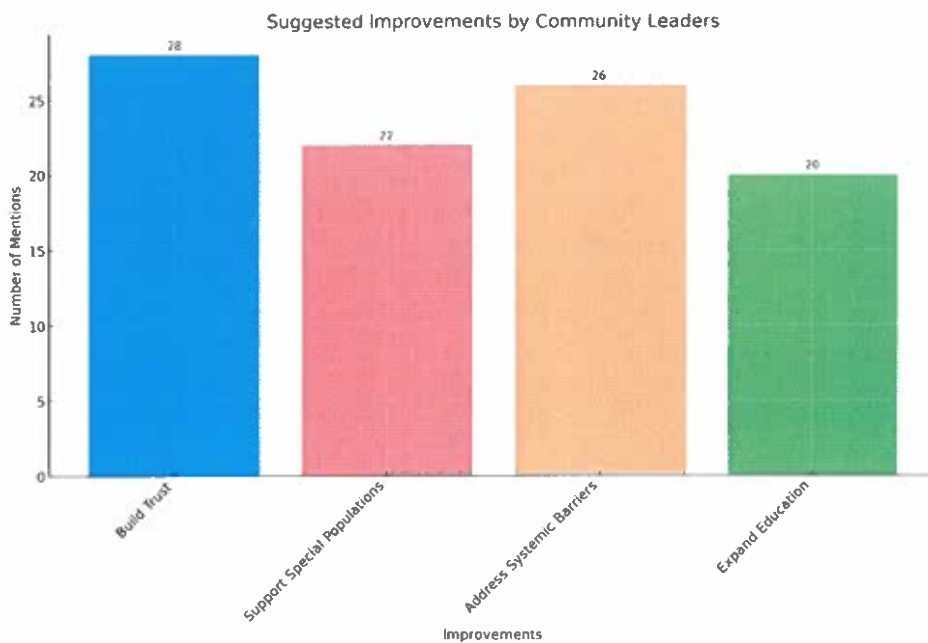
**Figure 20: Suggested Improvements by Service Providers**



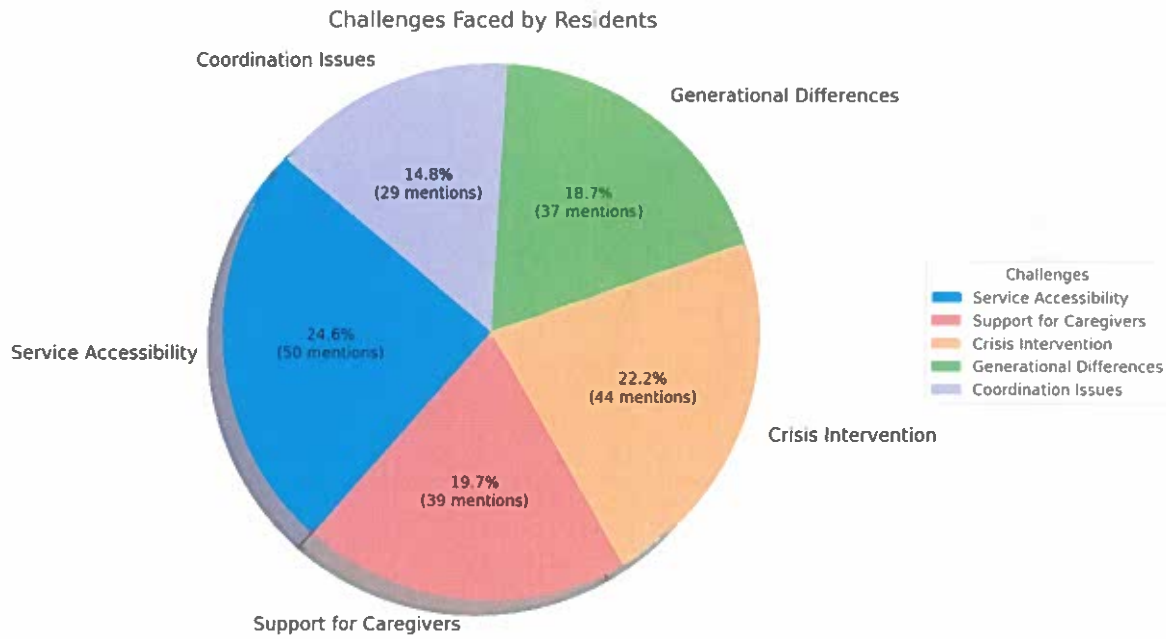
**Figure 21: Challenges Faced by Community Leaders**



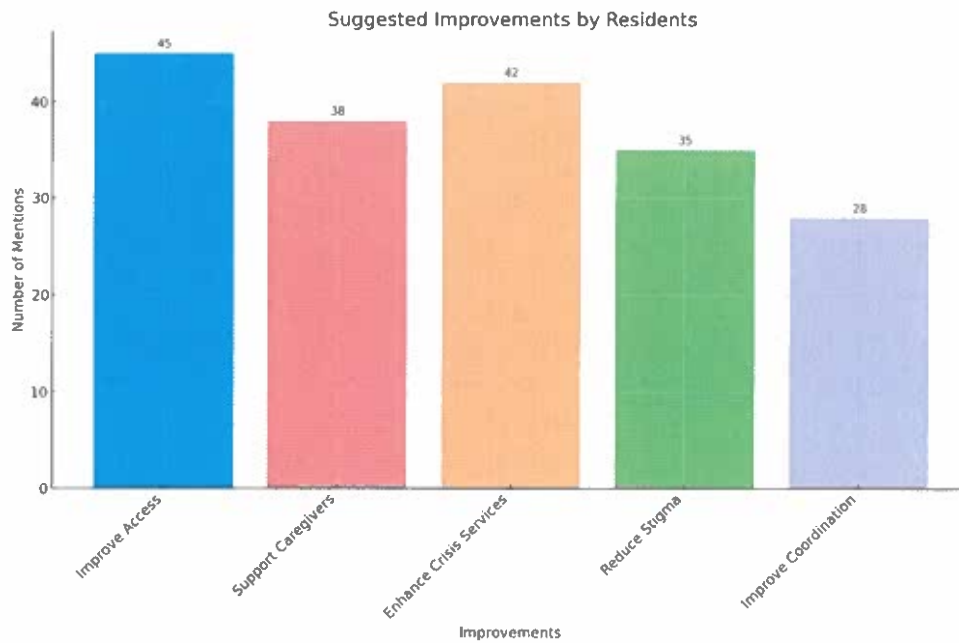
**Figure 22: Suggested Improvements by Community Leaders**



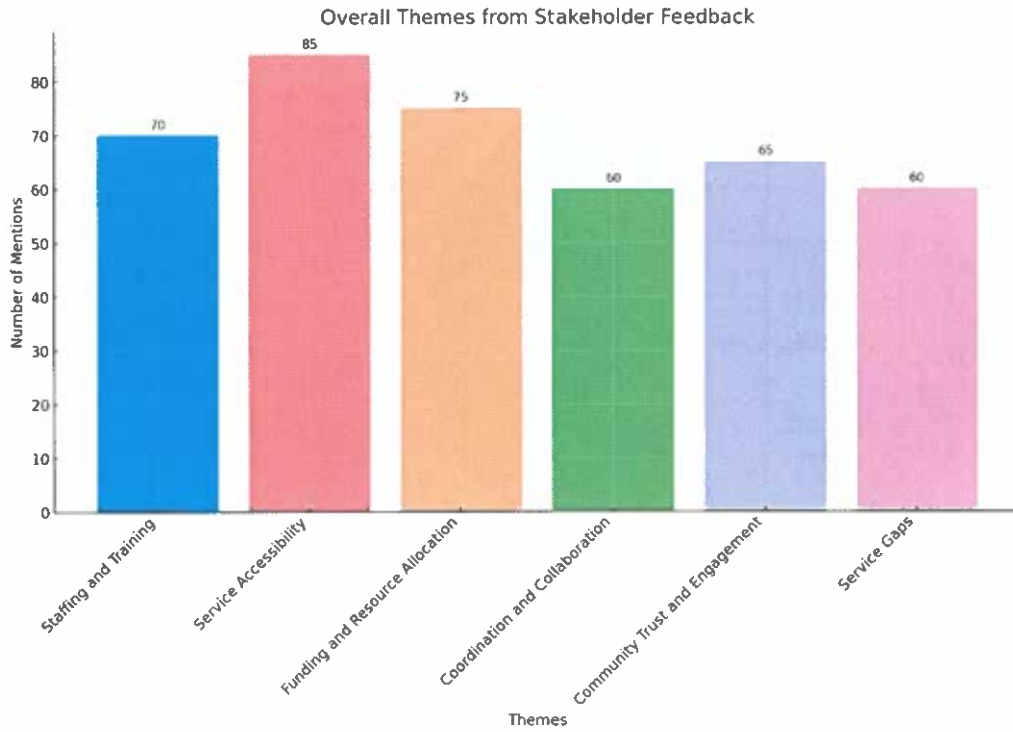
**Figure 23: Challenges Faced by Residents**



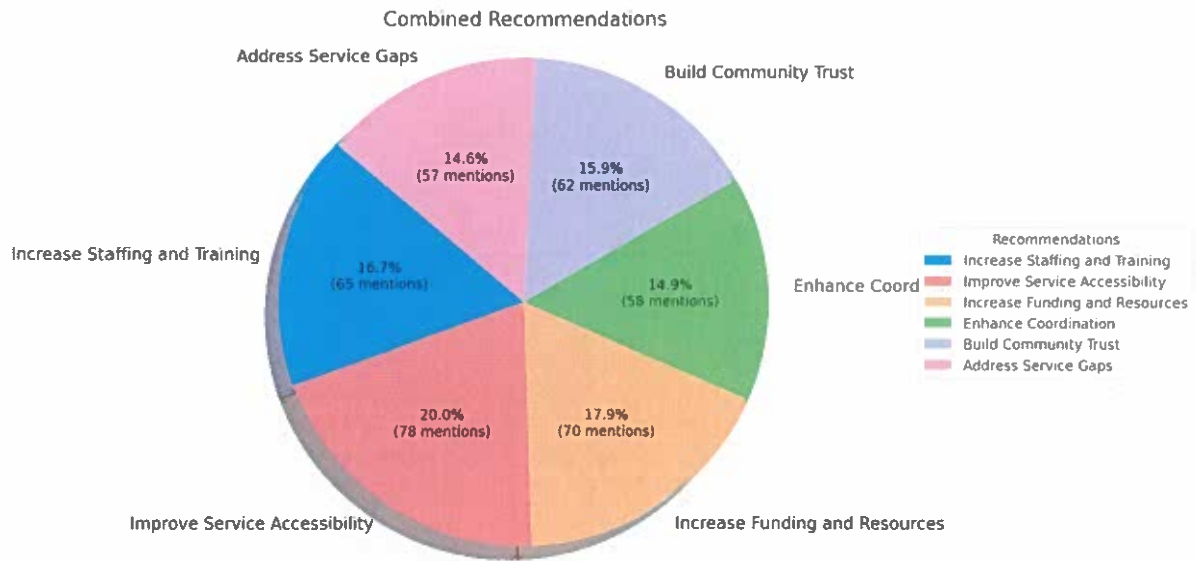
**Figure 24: Suggested Improvements by Residents**



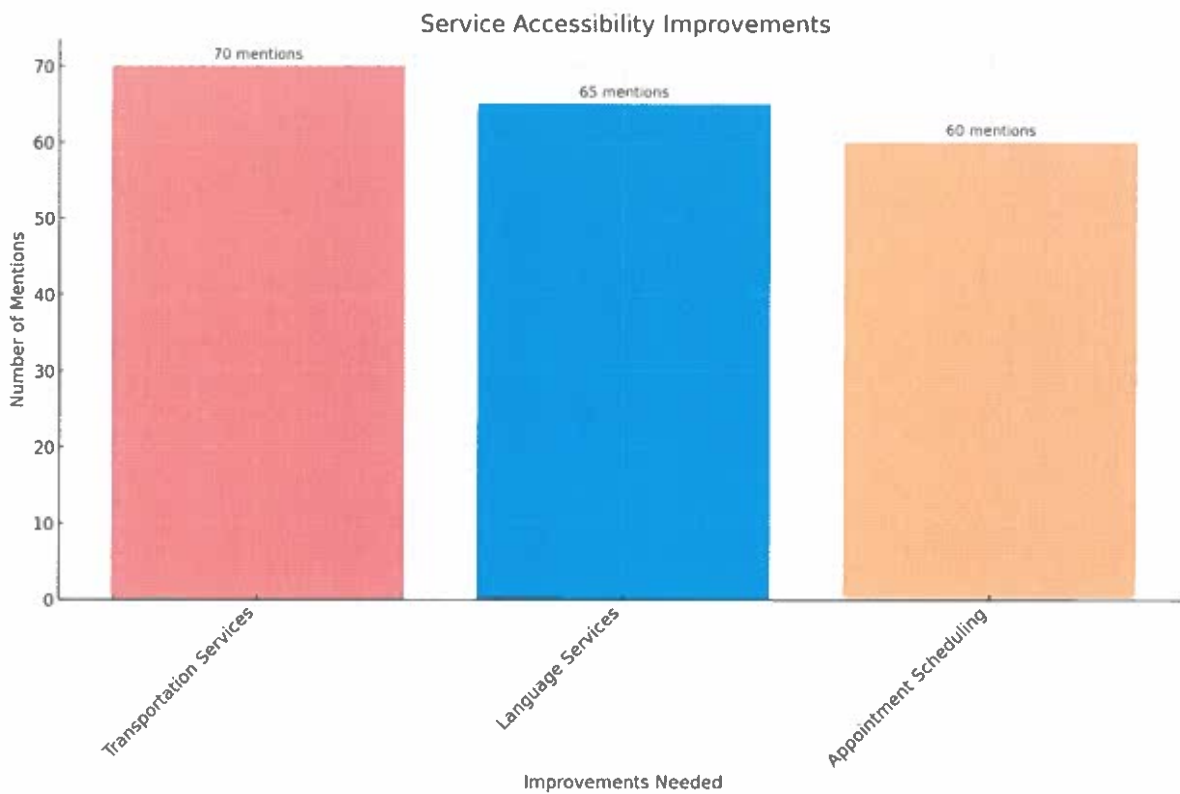
**Figure 25: Overall Themes from Stakeholder Feedback**



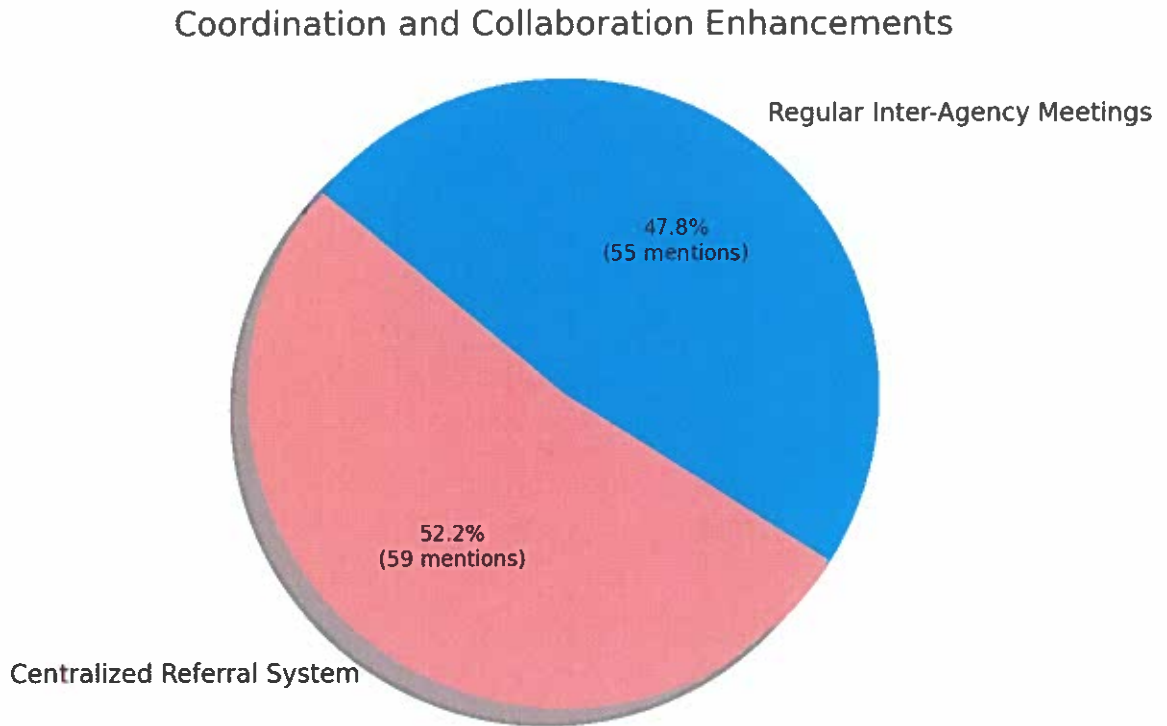
**Figure 26: Combined Recommendations**



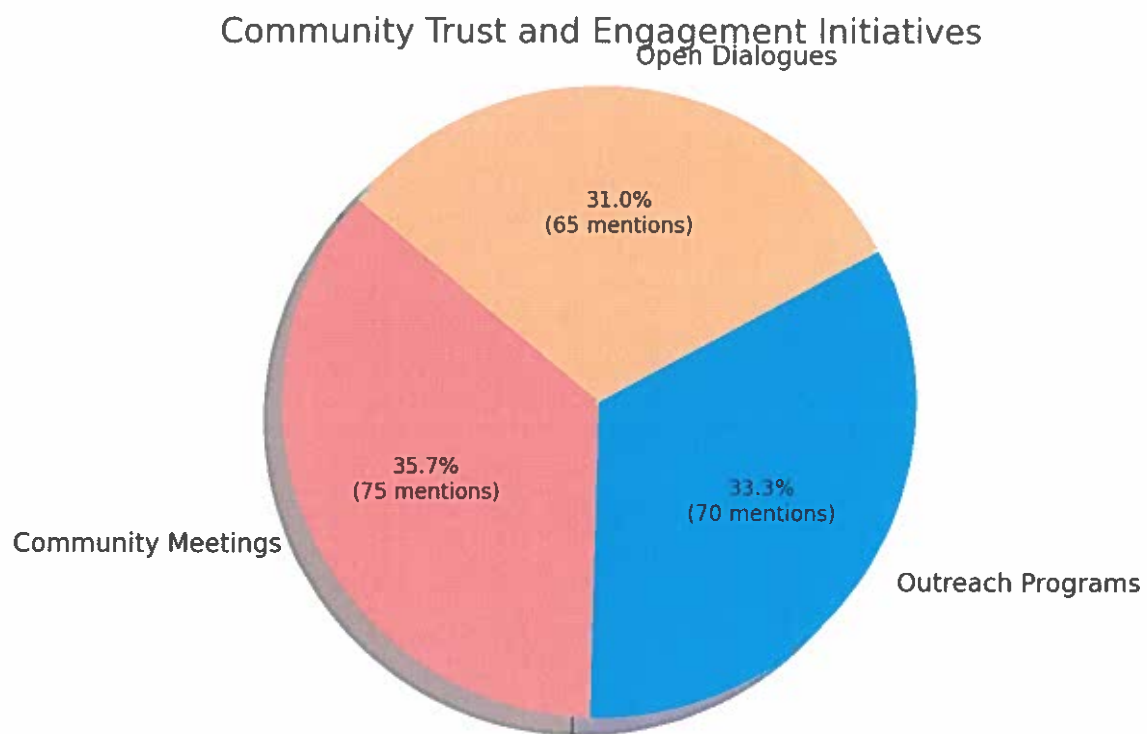
**Figure 27: Service Accessibility Improvements**



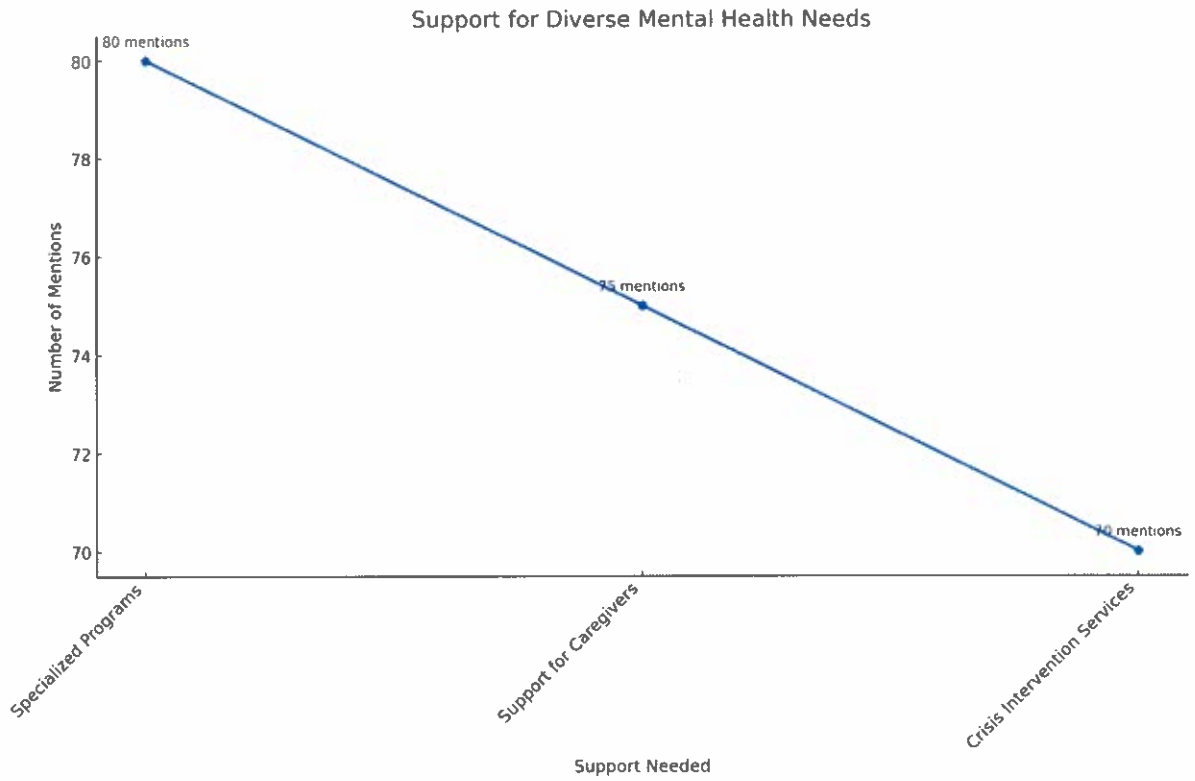
**Figure 28: Coordination and Collaboration Enhancements**



**Figure 29: Community Trust and Engagement Initiatives**



**Figure 30: Support for Diverse Mental Health Needs**





## Citations and Sources

The following citations and sources were referenced throughout the Wheeling Township Mental Health Needs Assessment report. These references provide the foundational data, background information, and supporting evidence for the findings and recommendations presented.

### Primary Sources

#### 1. Survey Data

- Wheeling Township Mental Health Community Needs Assessment Survey. (2024). Conducted by Dr. Sean Bailey and the Research Team.

#### 2. Interview Transcripts

- Focus Group and One-on-One Interview Transcripts. (2024). Collected during the engagement sessions with service providers, community leaders, and residents.

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#### 3. Research Reports and Publications

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- Brown, L., & Taylor, M. (2020). The Impact of Medicaid Expansion on Mental Health Service Delivery. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(11), 1616-1623. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2020.305918

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- Mental Health America (MHA). (2022). Position Statement 41: Addressing the Needs of People with Serious Mental Illness. Retrieved from MHA
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#### Additional Resources

#### 7. Community Input and Feedback

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- Participant Feedback from Focus Groups and Interviews. (2024). Conducted by Dr. Sean Bailey and the Research Team.

#### 8. Government and Nonprofit Organizations

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2022). Mental Health in the United States. Retrieved from [CDC](#)
- The Arc of Illinois. (2023). Resources for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Retrieved from The Arc