

# Social Services

## Goal and Work Plan Priorities

### Goal Statement

Strive to be a community known for safeguarding the well-being of children, supporting and protecting vulnerable older adults and persons with disabilities, improve mental health therapy and wellness, and committing to diversity, equity and inclusion while being committed to continuous quality improvement.

### Work Plan Priorities

#### General Social Services Priorities

##### **Continue fire department program which issues and installs smoke detectors in homes**

The Duncan Fire Department has a program in which they make residential smoke detectors available to the public that needs them and will help install the detectors for those families that request assistance. This valuable resource provided by Duncan Fire helps to ensure that families are alerted to a potential fire giving them time to safely evacuate or prevent the fire from spreading. Through the planning process, citizens have expressed that this benefit to the community should continue, and those resources be made available to ensure that every household has proper smoke detectors.



##### **Continued training for police and fire to assist citizens with special needs and conditions**

Officers working at the Duncan Police Department receive Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training to reduce the risk of injury or death during interactions with people with mental illness. This training emphasizes a basic understanding of mental illness and incorporates the development of communication skills, practical experience, and role-playing scenarios. The officers are also introduced to mental health professionals, consumers and family members to gain experience in seeing different stages of mental illness and learn appropriate ways to communicate and interact with an individual that may need specialized help and attention to prevent harm. With mental illness on the rise throughout the United States, it is necessary that the Duncan Police Department receive the resources and training to better assist the community in need.



##### **Establish and promote Resource Hubs located throughout the community for citizens seeking assistance**

Informational resource hubs provide a centralized point of access for citizens seeking various community information, services and support. Having resource hubs located throughout the community, and easily accessible, helps those that are seeking access to essential services, housing assistance, food and nutrition, healthcare, and even employment. Based on citizen input, these resource hubs should be made available in all municipal buildings, medical facilities, at senior and community centers, local churches, and at food banks. Groups, such as Leadership Duncan, can assist in setting the foundation for this program given they already dedicate a day to Social Services and have many of the contacts and information already available.

### **Establish and grow transportation services to assist citizens to reach resources in the community**

Access to resources and services is critical for the success of the individual seeking assistance and having their needs met. Based on community discussions, which is supported by demographic and census data, there are many citizens that are unable to find a means of transportation creating a difficult barrier to overcome when seeking assistance or care that is needed. Growing the local Red River Transportation network, improving walkability, and making changes to our local land use codes that would allow mixed development to occur that complement residential and commercial districts. This will take collaboration between several public and private entities throughout the community, working together with the public, to develop action steps that improve the overall access for Duncan's citizens.

### **Children and Youth Priorities**

#### **Promote services provided by Gabriel's House, One True Light, and CASA**

Gabriel's House, founded in 1998, provides a safe, affordable and nurturing after school environment for elementary aged children. The programs offered by Gabriel's House seeks to "fill the gap" of time, nutrition, academic achievement, socialization, and character development through the daily experiences of art, play, reading, movies, field trips and service projects. One True Light, incorporated in 2012, works to "Link Generations to Learn, Love, and Live Together" through school mentoring and free meals offered to children during the summer. Another child advocacy group operating in Duncan is the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Southwest Oklahoma which provides specially selected and trained community volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children to find safe, loving, and permanent homes. These programs, as well as others in Duncan, aim to protect and nurture the children who will grow to be our future community leaders and sharing their stories and missions is necessary in improving the overall quality of life.



#### **Promote and expand Food for Kids program**

With a mission to eliminate child hunger, community leaders work together to raise money for backpacks and school pantry programs. With local poverty rate and food insecurity rate continuing to increase in Duncan, it becomes more important to find ways to combat and eliminate child hunger throughout the community. The Food for Kids program in Duncan has raised over \$1 million over 12 years to fund the backpack program (benefiting over 400 students), supporting the school pantry program (benefiting nearly 200 students, and assisting two Kids Cafés (benefiting over 100 students). Continued outreach and community support is needed for this program to meet the growing demands of ensuring that our youth have access to nutritious food.



### **Establish multiple public facilities and senior centers as Safe Place for children and youth**

Safe Place is a nationally recognized youth outreach and prevention program for young people under the age of 18 that may find themselves in need of immediate help or safety. The program designates local businesses and organizations as a Safe Place making help accessible and often includes libraries, senior and community centers, fire and police stations, social service facilities, and various businesses in the community. Safe Places can, and should, also provide information that is made available in the established community resource hubs so young adults can get the answers and support they need. Duncan, as a community, should strive to be a Safe Place community.



### **Establish a teen afterschool program similar to Gabriel's House**

Duncan is blessed to have an organization like Gabriel's House that provides after school programs intended to provide safe, nurturing, and an enriching environment for elementary aged school children that helps foster healthy mental, physical, and spiritual growth. The program was created to fill the gaps that exist in a child's life that may be the result of working parents that are already committed to work that is necessary to support their family unit. This program is only available currently for elementary aged students and there is a growing need for children that are in middle school. Thankfully, Duncan has an organization – Second Chance Ranch – that is working with local leaders to establish a program that will fill the community's need. Support is needed for the success of this program that will benefit older youth that are still in their development stages of physical and mental growth.



### **Vulnerable Persons Priorities**

#### **Promote services provided through Charis Center**

Charis Pregnancy Center provides a "hand up" to women in need who may be experiencing an unplanned pregnancy by providing free services, access to resources, referrals to non-profits, and educational material to help empower them through the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Charis also offers programs for young families, with children up to 18 months old that can learn additional parenting skills, budgeting, and life skills to allow the family unit grow stronger and completion of classes are rewarded with "baby bucks" that can be used in the Charis Center baby boutique for clothes, food, car seats, and other items that will benefit the child and parents. Since the center was founded, more and more dads have stepped forward and wanted to "learn to be a dad" to which the center has added to their facility a place where dads can gather to attend fatherhood classes. These efforts are transforming family values back into the community and need to be promoted, celebrated, and grown.



### Promote services offered through Duncan Literacy Council

The Duncan Area Literacy Council promotes literacy awareness and provides free tutoring and basic literacy skills for all persons ages 15 and older in order to prepare them to lead more productive lives. The program also provides resources and assistance to those seeking to get a G.E.D., and filling out employment applications, which are necessary for future employment opportunities and improve their quality of life. The Duncan Literacy Council also aids those that are seeking citizenship and assistance with learning English as a second language. As Duncan has a rich mixture of ethnicities residing and calling the community home, it is important that people know that the Duncan Literacy exists and offers many wonderful programs and resources back to the residents.



### Ensure nutritional needs are met for seniors and other vulnerable persons

Older adults already experience nutritional deficiencies than younger people due to how medications alter the absorption of vitamins and minerals, gastrointestinal issues, reduced calorie intake, limited income, or other lifestyle factors that have contributed to nutritional deficiencies. For these and other potential causes, it is important that our seniors and other vulnerable persons have access to food that is nutritious and contains the proper vitamins and minerals that our bodies need. To help address in Duncan, the community needs to be active in ensuring that proper education and information is provided to seniors and

caregivers, nutritious options are available and accessible, and these foods are affordable to those on fixed incomes.

Food co-ops and community gardens, along with senior and community centers, can help bridge the gaps that exist.



### Establish a communitywide volunteer program that assists citizens with day-to-day activities

There are many great organizations in Duncan that rely on volunteers to provide opportunities, experiences, and enrichment in the community and the number of volunteers available seems to be decreasing each year. The community needs to seek partnerships with local businesses and community leaders that will establish a reliable and growing base of individuals that want to work together in making Duncan a better place to live, work and play!

Residents of Duncan have proven time and time again that when called upon they are ready to help – organizations need to continue to ask for the support and show the benefits to physical and mental health, building new social connections, potential to advance careers, and provide a sense of purpose through volunteering. The Department of Community Development has indicated that they are willing to help serve as a clearing house for future volunteer events that focus on community-based projects and improvements.



### **Audible intersections for the blind and seeing impaired**

Audible intersections are devices that provide an audible indication for pedestrians seeking to cross at an intersection that may be blind or seeing impaired. The audible indicator informs the pedestrian when it is safe to cross, provides directions to assist in crossing multi-lane or non-perpendicular intersections, and is synced with traffic lights to ensure safety is provided. The Duncan Council of the Blind have indicated that they would like to see these audible intersections installed throughout the community and have noted that priority should be given to the Highway 81 and Beech Avenue intersection as their group meets at the Stephens County Historical Museum.



### **Marginalized Individuals Priorities**

#### **Promote services that assist in rehabilitation and employment opportunities**

For those willing to accept help through means of providing support and intervention to individuals belonging to the marginalized, excluded, or disadvantaged with the goal of improving their quality of life the community can begin to dismantle the systemic barriers that perpetuate marginalization. These community public and private services need to address systemic inequalities such as discrimination, allow for access to quality education and healthcare, engage through a community-based approach, and ultimately empower and promote self-advocacy for those participating in the recovery process. Churches and local non-profits will be called upon to be the leaders in the process and assistance through policy changes by Community Development will assist in the rehabilitation and healing process.



#### **Ensure food banks and community gardens are accessible for at-risk and marginalized populations**

Having access to healthy, fresh foods that are nutritious and rich in vitamins and minerals not only impacts our physical health but also our mental health. However, a growing population is losing access to sites that have these foods affordable and available which in turns perpetuates a trend of poorer health among the at-risk and marginalized populations. Duncan does have several food banks and a community garden that are starting to put nutritious foods into the hands that need them the most but there is still a lot that needs to happen in Duncan to really make a powerful impact. Private and public partnerships are needed to develop additional community gardens that can utilize public or semi-public spaces to be used while schools and community centers can provide educational opportunities so that families can grow, prepare, and preserve their own food.



### Set policies for homelessness assistance

More and more communities across the nation are being forced to find solutions to address the issue of homelessness. Some communities have chosen to impose rules and regulations, such as passing anti-camping ordinances, in hopes of forcing the issue out of their community. Through the public forum process, the citizens of Duncan have indicated they would prefer to address homelessness by utilizing local resources that would help those in need recover from the root of homelessness. This would include developing partnerships that would seek opportunities with housing, education, employment and social activities to help those in need.



### Work Plan Priorities Matrixes

General Social Services Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Continue fire department program which issues and installs smoke detectors in homes	Ongoing	Ongoing	Fire Department, City Council
Continued training for police and fire to assist citizens with special needs and conditions	Ongoing	Ongoing	Police Department, Fire Department, ASCOG, Think Ability, Community Development
Establish and promote Resources Hubs located throughout the community for citizens seeking assistance	2025	Mid-Range	Duncan Public Library, Douglass Community Center, Duncan Senior Center, Police Department, Fire Department, Duncan Regional Hospital, Community Development
Establish and grow transportation services to assist citizens to reach resources in the community	2025	Long-Range	Red River Transportation, ASCOG, Duncan Regional Hospital, Community Development

Children and Youth Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Promote Services provided by Gabriel's House, One True Light, CASA	Ongoing	Ongoing	Gabriel's House, One True Light, CASA, United Way, Community Development
Promote and expand Food for Kids program	Ongoing	Ongoing	Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Community Development
Establish multiple public facilities and senior centers as Safe Place for children and youth	2025	Short-Range	Douglass Community Center, Duncan Senior Center, Simmons Center, Police Department, Fire

			Department, Community Development
Establish a teen afterschool program similar to Gabriel's House	2025	Long-Range	Second Chance Ranch, Gabriel's House, Churches, Duncan Public Schools, Community Development

Vulnerable Persons Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Promote services provided through Charis Center	Ongoing	Ongoing	Charis Center, United Way
Promote services through Duncan Literacy Council	Ongoing	Ongoing	Duncan Literacy Council, United Way
Ensure nutritional needs are met for seniors and other vulnerable persons	2025	Short-Range	ASCOG, Delta Community Center, Think Ability, United Way, Duncan Regional Hospital, Community Development
Establish a communitywide volunteer program that assists citizens with day-to-day activities	2025	Mid-Range	Churches, United Way, ASCOG, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Community Development
Audible intersections for the blind and seeing impaired	2025	Long-Range	ODOT, Public Works, Council for the Blind, Community Development, City Council

Marginalized Individuals Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Promote services that assist in rehabilitation and employment opportunities	Ongoing	Ongoing	Duncan Rescue Mission, Agape Freedom Ministry, Ambrosia, Second Chance Ranch, Community Development
Ensure food banks and community gardens are accessible for at-risk and marginalized populations	Ongoing	Ongoing	Christians Concerned, Churches, Think Ability, Community Development
Set policies for homelessness assistance	2025	Long-Range	Community Development, City Council

