



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

**ANALYSIS OF
COMMUNITY
AWARENESS
OF SERVICES AND
RESOURCES IN EAST
COUNTY**

2018

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ABOUT THE FELLOW

Carlian Odae is a first generation Ghanaian American who grew up in Hyattsville, MD. She is currently a dual degree Master of Social Work and Public Health student at the University of Pennsylvania. She is passionate about improving the quality of life for communities by connecting and educating communities on social and health services and programs. Before graduate school, Carlian spent a year working as a Public Ally with AmeriCorps and an additional year as a program coordinator with a mentoring non-profit agency she worked with as a public ally where she served low-income families in the DC metro area. In her free time, Carlian enjoys yoga, tennis, traveling and learning about new cultures.



ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF SERVICES AND RESOURCES IN EAST COUNTY

This report examines community awareness of services and resources available to East County residents in order to develop strategies to improve outreach and methods and community engagements.

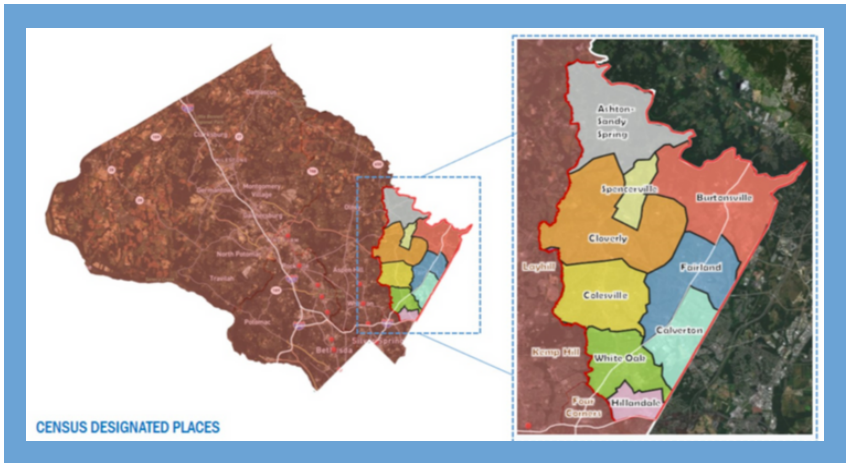
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Marlene Michelson, JoAnn Barnes, Angela Cabellon, Michelle Jefferson, Jewru Bandeh, Nicholete Smith-Bligen, Janki Patel, Montgomery County Council and Staff, Department of Health and Human Services, East County Regional Service Center and East County Residents.



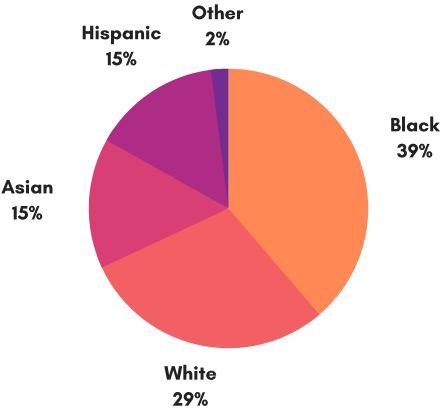
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EASTERN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Eastern Montgomery County is also known as East County. East County is home to **101,348 residents**(1). **71%**(2) of East County residents are a part of the minority demographic. The majority of immigrants living in East County are from: El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Vietnam, Korea, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, mainland China and Jamaica(2). East County has the highest minority population than all of Montgomery County.



EAST COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS



ARE EAST COUNTY RESIDENTS AWARE OF THE REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER?

One integral resource placed in the middle of East County is the **East County Regional Service Center (ECRSC)** located on Briggs Chaney Rd in Fairland. ECRSC houses several vital agencies providing meaningful services.

- **MobileMED** provides primary health care services to uninsured and low income Montgomery County residents on a sliding fee scale.
- **WorkSource Montgomery** offers workforce development to individuals, including workshops focused on resumes, interviews and professionalism.
- **The Charles W. Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center** coordinates citizenship classes, English conversation classes, tech workshops for seniors and pro bono legal services.
- **Montgomery College** supplies a plethora of services: computer classes, child development courses, academic and career counseling and workshop based on community needs.
- In addition, the ECRSC has a care coordinator and income assistance program specialist from the **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)** and a client services coordinator from **Family Services Inc.** to service East County residents.

***Unfortunately, the ECRSC is not open every day of the week, but rather on specific days for the different partners.**

East County Regional Service Center		
Partner	Days	Time
MobileMED	Wednesdays	1pm -9pm
	Thursday	8:30am - 5pm
Worksource Montgomery	Monday - Friday	9am - 5pm
Charles Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center	Tuesday	5pm - 9pm
	Thursday	9am - 5pm
	Saturday	8:30am - 2pm
Montgomery College	Tuesday	5pm - 9pm
	Thursday	9am - 5pm
	Saturday	9am - 2pm
Family Services Inc. Client Care Coordinator	Tuesday - Friday	9am - 5pm
Department of Health & Human Services	Tuesday - Thursday	8am - 4:30pm
DHHS East County Care Coordinator	Monday - Friday	9am - 5pm
MC Bar Foundation Pro Bono Legal Clinic	1st Thursdays of month	5:30pm - 8pm

In addition, HHS has also spearheaded the **East County Opportunity Zone**, which includes 4 committees: Health & Wellness, Faith & Community Organizing Workgroup, Youth & Parent Engagement Sub Group and Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development, consisting of both governmental and not-for-profit agencies collaborating to enhance services in East County.

East County offers a variety of services, so it seems that a lack of community awareness is the issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Allocate appropriate staffing to open the East County Regional Service Center with consistent business hours.

2. Centralize information regarding East County Regional Service Center page on the county's website

3. Organize a grand re-opening of the East County Regional Service Center to improve community awareness.

4. Increase collaborating with local agencies to host more community-based events, such as street fairs, to inform the community about services in East County.

"GIVEN THE POPULATION OF EAST COUNTY, HAVING MORE HUMAN PERSONNEL AT THE CENTER DURING THE WEEK WILL INCREASE COMMUNITY UTILIZATION."

Partner representative at ESRCS

"I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE SERVICES THAT HHS HAS TO OFFER."

Parent at Galway Elementary
Parent Engagement Night

RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

East County is home to 101,348 residents and is composed of the following neighborhoods and towns: Cloverly, Ashton - Sandy Springs, Colesville, Fairland, Burtonsville, White Oak, Calverton, Spencerville and Hillandale.

Similar to Montgomery County demographics, East County is a majority minority area with 38.8% Black, 29.2% White, 14.9% Asian, 14.7% Hispanic, and 2% Other. Roughly 71% of East County residents are minorities. An estimated 20% of East County residents were born outside of the United States. The top 10 countries of origin (from most to least) include: El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Vietnam, Korea, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Mainland China and Jamaica(2). Based upon people served at East County Regional Service Center, the most spoken languages of community members served includes Spanish, French and Amharic.

Given the demographics of the residents in East County, allocation of resources and services is essential to supporting this diverse population. Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) offers assistance and resources to families and communities all over the county independently and in partnership with local agencies. HHS' core services are to "protect the community's health, protect the health and safety of at-risk children and vulnerable adults and address basic needs including food, shelter and clothing (3)."

With the knowledge of HHS' role in the county and of East County, this research project will analyze community awareness of services in East County, specifically the East County Regional Service Center and the East County Opportunity Zone, in order to develop strategies to improve community engagement and outreach methods.

• Aims •

Analyze Community Awareness

Examine community awareness of services offered in East County

Develop Outreach Strategies

Utilize analysis to create effective outreach methods for HHS to implement

Improve Community Engagement

Brainstorm recommendations to assist with increasing community engagement

• Methodology •

This study was conducted by performing 4 integral steps. First, I began with learning about Eastern Montgomery County, the areas considered as part of East County and the demographics of the region. Second, I researched three main services providers within East County including the East County Regional Service Center (ECRSC), East County Opportunity Zone and local non-profits and agencies housed in the ECRSC. Third, I administered service awareness questionnaires to East County community members. Lastly, I conducted surveys with partner representatives serving East County residents.

In order to understand the scope of community awareness, I reviewed County Statistics and data in addition to documents pertaining to East County. I worked out of the ECRSC and examined the resources and assistances offered. I interviewed partner representatives regarding the area. I also attended community events to conduct surveys to community members regarding awareness of services.

FIND

I: Abundance of services at East County Regional Service Center

- Houses 8 partner agencies/representatives to serve East County residents

II: East County Opportunity Zone

- Developed by the Department of Health and Human Services to enhance services available in East County

III: Limited Community Awareness of Services

- Based upon questionnaires administered at East County community events to 45 community residents, many echoed the sentiment of lacking knowledge about resources in the area

IV: Barriers Inhibit ECRSC's Full Potential

- Through my observations of the ECRSC, I recognized a few barriers that hinder the utilization of the center such as inconsistent hours and limited staff

Finding I: Abundance of Services at East County Regional Service Center



The center functions as a link to the County Executive's office. It offers problem-solving assistance to neighborhoods, individuals, businesses and County Agencies."
-Montgomerycountymd.gov

Quick Facts

- Located in Fairland Area
- Situated near East County Community Center
- Accessible via bus
- East County Citizen Advisory Board represents voices of residents
- Hosts 8 local partners
- Service providers support clients and offer resources in languages spoken by community members
- **MobileMED** provides primary health care services to uninsured and low income Montgomery County residents on a sliding fee scale. Mobile Med is staffed with a multilingual staff "of 35 plus 75 volunteer physicians; languages include Spanish, French, Amharic, Chinese and Farsi"(4). Mobile Med also leverages partnerships, such as Aspire Counseling, Chinese American Senior Service Association, Islamic Education Center and Ibn Sina Health Foundation and many more to serve hard to reach populations.
- **WorkSource Montgomery** offers workforce development to individuals, including workshops focused on resumes, interviews and professionalism. Their mission is, to meet: the talent attraction, development, and retention needs of strategic industries; meet the needs of the underemployed and unemployed; and develop career pathways that lead to sustainable wage jobs and support a thriving mission(5).
- The **Charles W. Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center** coordinates a variety of services for immigrants. "The Gilchrist Center is a gateway for County immigrants: they can obtain information and referrals to programs and services offered by government agencies and community organizations, strengthen their life skills through English and basic computer classes, and increase their knowledge to prepare for civic life and/or U.S. citizenship"(6).
- **Montgomery College** supplies services and courses to enhance professional and personal development. These services includes: computer classes, child development courses, academic and career counseling and workshop based on community needs.
- In addition, the ECRSC has a care coordinator and income assistance program specialist from the **Department of Health and Human Services** and a client services coordinator from **Family Services Inc.** to service East County residents and connect community members to resources.

Finding II: East County Opportunity Zone

The Department of Health and Human Services has spearheaded the East County Opportunity Zone (ECOZ). ECOZ is composed of 4 committees (**Health & Wellness, Faith & Community Organizing Workgroup, Youth & Parent Engagement Sub Group** and **Economic Opportunity & Workforce Development**) with allows local and governmental agencies to collaborate on how to enhance services in East County. The logos under each committee represent the partners collaborating within that specific focus area.



Finding III: Limited Community Awareness of Services

Given the variety of services through the East County Regional Service Center and the Opportunity Zone, it seems that East County is rich in services. Through questionnaires conducted at community events, I wanted to learn more about the residents' knowledge regarding services within their community.

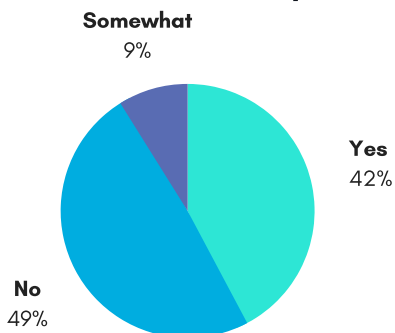
Lack of community awareness and knowledge about services was a reoccurring theme that presented itself during the questionnaires I administered to community events in East County. The events I attended were: a) parent engagement at an elementary school, b) Montgomery County Parent Teacher Association meeting and c) National Night Out.

A majority of the community members surveyed were of parents who were connected to one or another community agency. Parents were frequently connected to their child's school or a religious entity.

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

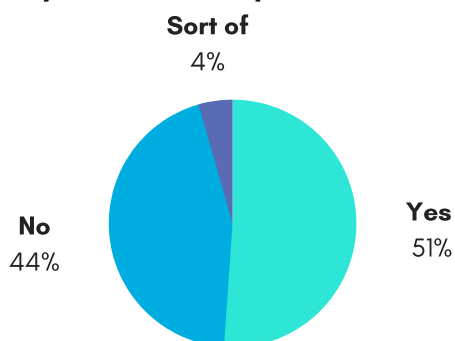
I conducted questionnaires at 3 East County Community events: parent engagement at an elementary school, b) Montgomery County Parent Teacher Association meeting and c) National Night Out. I interviewed 45 parents and community members regarding their awareness of services in the area. Below are the results.

1. Are you aware of the services and resources that the Montgomery County Health and Human Services has to offer your family?



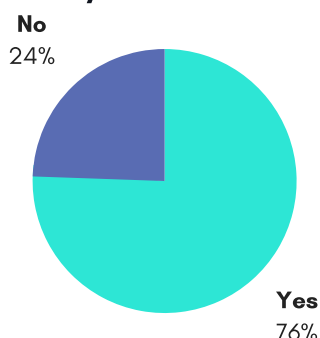
- Almost half of the participants felt that they did not know about services in their area
- The yes category consisted of individuals who has either utilized services in the past or heard about them through word of mouth or flyers from different sources
- *The variability in responses reveals that stronger community based efforts needs to be implemented in order to update residents on services the county has to offer*

2. Are the services and resources that Montgomery County Health and Human Services easily accessible to you?



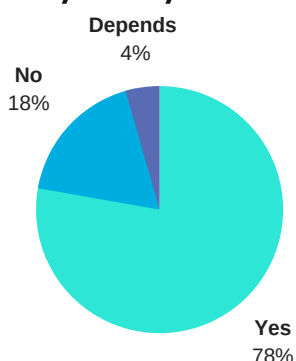
- Over half of the participants felt that services were accessible to them
- Those who responded with a no explained that because of their lack of knowledge they do not believe services are accessible

3. Are you connected to any community agencies (church, non-profit, school/pta, service center) where you receive services and resources for your family?



- A majority of participants were connected to a community agency such as spiritual entities, schools and PTA
- Almost a fourth shared that they had no community connections to any type of organization
- *Given that a majority of residents are connected to a community agency, strengthening partnerships with these entities can assist with increasing community awareness*

4. Would you be interested in attending resource and informational events hosted by Montgomery County Health and Human Services?



- A majority shared interest in an informational event we learn about the resources available within East County
- *Since many community members stated a likelihood of attending an informational events, it seems like a starting point to enhancing community engagement*

CARLIAN ODAE, 2018 SUMMER FELLOW

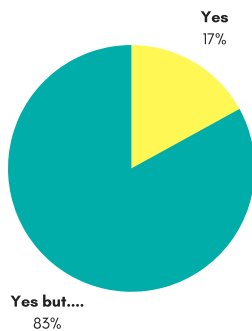
Finding IV: Barriers inhibit ECRSC's Full Potential

Another interesting observation I recognized during my research is the relatively low utilization of the Regional Service Center by East County community members. Potential barriers that the center is facing is the lack of consistent hours and limited staffing. The hours of the center are segmented and many of the service providers work independently within the collective space. There is also a small number of staff who work to manage the ECRSC. In addition, community awareness plays a large role in the limited utilization of the center as well as non-distinct signage signifying the presence of the ECRSC.

PARTNER REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY RESPONSES

I conducted surveys with partner representatives regarding their thoughts on the East County Regional Service Center; all of which have worked at the center for over a year. Below are the results.

1. Do you think the community is aware of the regional service center?



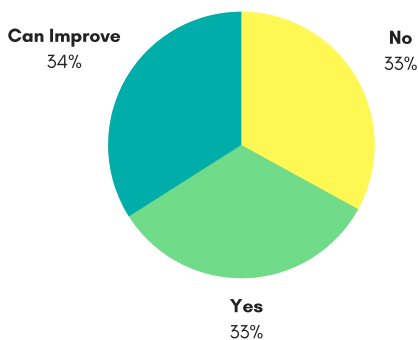
RESPONSES:

Yes but...

- decline in services changed community awareness
- unsure about what happens here and hours
- know about the center but not much about programming

** Partners expressed that although there is awareness of the ESCRS there is limited understanding regarding what the center offers*

2. Do you think the community utilizes the center effectively?

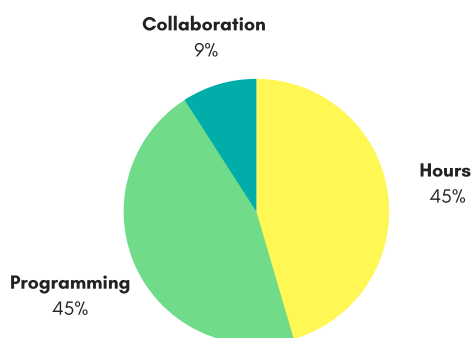


ADDITIONAL RESPONSES:

- face-to-face contact with residents will increase community usage
- conducting more outreach at different community events
- should be more foot-traffic because of location

** Thoughts behind how utilization can improve offered from Partners*

3. If you could make any changed to the center, what would it be?



CHANGES:

1. Hours

- Fully operational (Mon - Fri; 9am - 5pm) with staff
- Consistent hours with all organizations present

2. Programming

- Have programs occur frequently, 2-3times a week

3. Increased Collaboration

- communication between providers about services offered

** Partners offer recommendations on changes they would implement*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 ALLOCATE APPROPRIATE STAFFING TO OPEN THE EAST COUNTY REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER WITH CONSISTENT BUSINESS HOURS.
- 2 UPDATE THE EAST COUNTY REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER PAGE ON THE COUNTY'S WEBSITE.
- 3 ORGANIZE A GRAND RE-OPENING OF THE EAST COUNTY REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY AWARENESS.
- 4 INCREASE COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL AGENCIES TO HOST MORE COMMUNITY-BASED EVENTS, SUCH AS STREET FAIRS, TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY ABOUT SERVICES IN EAST COUNTY.
- 5 INCREASE REPRESENTATIVE AGENCIES IN THE CENTER TO EXPAND THE NUMBER OF SERVICE PROVIDERS AVAILABLE TO EAST COUNTY RESIDENTS AT EAST COUNTY REGIONAL SERVICE CENTER.

FUTURE RESEARCH

EXTENSIVE RESEARCH ON PROGRAMS IN EAST COUNTY

CONDUCTING A FULL SCALE ANALYSIS OF SERVICES, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND NON-PROFIT AGENCIES IN EAST COUNTY TO UNDERSTAND THE RESOURCES ALREADY AVAILABLE IN THE AREA

ANALYZE COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF SERVICES

EXAMINING COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF THE AVAILABLE SERVICES IN EAST COUNTY AND INVESTIGATING EAST COUNTY COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE REGARDING WHAT IS AVAILABLE

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The opportunity to learn about Eastern Montgomery County has been an eye-opening experience. It has expanded my knowledge about the community and a small portion of resources available to community members living in the area.

Based upon my limited analysis of services in East County, specifically the East County Regional Service Center (ECRSC) and the East County Opportunity Zone, I was able to understand how these two entities operate in order to service East County residents. With the flexibility provided by my supervisor, I researched a topic that is useful to the county and aligns with my academic background. In my project, I administered questionnaires to community residents regarding their knowledge of services and asked for recommendations they believed would be beneficial to implement to improve community awareness. I also gained valuable insight from the partner representatives who shared their thoughts about the ECRSC and the community's utilization of the center.

All of these components allowed me to dive into a tiny piece of what East County has to offer its residents and engage with a finite amount of its community members. My research highlights the perspective of a few opinions which cannot represent all of East County. Given the small scale of my project, a deeper analysis must be conducted on East County and its residents to fully understand what resources are available in the area and its accessibility to the residents. I have grown to love the East County area and would love to support efforts to extensively conduct research in East County.

The ability to participate in the Montgomery County Fellows program has been a profound opportunity which has expanded my mind. All of which would not have been possible without Marlene Michealson, the Montgomery County Council members and staff, Michelle Jefferson, JoAnn Barnes, Angela Cabellon, Nicholette Smith-Bligen, Jewru Bandeh and the Department of Health and Human Services.

With tremendous gratitude,

Carlian Odae

SUMMER FELLOW, MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
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