Chester County Fund for Women and Girls
Improving lives through grantmaking, education, and community collaboration
“When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately; families are healthier; they are better fed; their income, savings and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is true of communities and eventually, of whole countries.”

KOFI ANNAN
FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
What is the Blueprint Report 2010?

The economic crisis and recovery we are now experiencing have uniquely affected women and girls across the country, and right here in Chester County. It is assumed by many that as one of the wealthiest counties in Pennsylvania, we are immune to the challenges of economic instability. An examination of the data in the Blueprint Report 2010 reveals that this is not the case, particularly for women and girls. However, a significant step on the path to securing all families and communities is to understand the issues women and girls face every day, and how we can work together to direct resources to target their needs.

In 2005 and again in 2010, the Fund commissioned the Blueprint Report: a comprehensive compilation and original analysis of both existing and newly collected data from over 80 local, state and national resources - focusing, for the first time, on the status of women and girls in Chester County. Through this comprehensive report, it is our hope to bring significant issues and trends to the forefront of our awareness, conversations and planning. It gives us an important glimpse into the lives of women and girls and is a critical resource for those addressing our community’s growth and development - and for anyone who lives in, works in and loves Chester County.

This booklet provides a look into the Fund’s key findings from the Blueprint Report 2010. It focuses on three key areas:

- **WOMEN**
- **GIRLS**
- **SENIOR WOMEN**

The complete report, with economic, social and health data, can be found at our website: [www.ccwomenandgirls.org/blueprint](http://www.ccwomenandgirls.org/blueprint)
Single women with children made up 90% of families served by county-funded emergency shelters in 2009.

Of women living in poverty, a higher percentage in Chester County are between the ages of 18 & 24, than in Pennsylvania or the United States.

23.8%
Chester County
15.1%
Pennsylvania
15%
United States

Nonprofit agencies report up to a 50% increase in demand for services.

“Over 85% of the women in our program have been victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse and so have the children.”

LISTENING TOUR PARTICIPANT
ECONOMIC FACTORS

1 in 4*

single women with related children under 18
lives below the federal poverty threshold

*Federal Poverty Guidelines for a
family of 3 is $17,346 in income annually.

CRIME & VIOLENCE

Forcible Rape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Rate (per 10,000)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>2.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chester County has higher rates of forcible rape and sex offenses than Bucks, Delaware & Montgomery Counties and Pennsylvania.

Sex Offenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Rate (per 10,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“So many girls are struggling with self-mutilation, cutting, eating disorders and self-loathing.”

LISTENING TOUR PARTICIPANT
DEMOGRAPHICS

Since 2005, every public school district in the county has reported an increase in children eligible for free or reduced lunch.

*72,500+ children enrolled in Chester County schools.

HEALTH ISSUES

*Lifetime use* of drugs by middle and high school girls has increased since the 2005 Blueprint Report.

Cocaine Use in Girls

*Lifetime use means at least once in the student’s lifetime.*
Nonprofit agencies report many issues making it difficult for senior women to sustain their quality of life, including:

- Limited access to transportation
- Reduced options for affordable housing
- Declining nutrition
- Dwindling retirement funds due to economic downturn
- Depression and isolation
DEMOGRAPHICS

Of women living in poverty, a higher percentage are over age 65 in Chester County than in the United States.

11.3% United States

*13.7% Chester County

ECONOMIC FACTORS

“We’re seeing an increase in homeless seniors in a county that never had them before.”

LISTENING TOUR PARTICIPANT
Who We Are

The Chester County Fund for Women and Girls is dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls, their families and communities in Chester County, through grantmaking, education and community collaboration. Since our inception in 1996, we have worked to increase awareness of the issues affecting women and girls, and awarded over $1.2 million in grants to more than 45 nonprofit organizations addressing those issues.

THE RESEARCH

The Fund is unique in that we provide a detailed and data informed lens through which to view, assess and address the needs of women and girls.

In order to accurately capture the life experiences of women and girls in Chester County, the research team reviewed over 80 regional and national data sources, filtering the information for the first time through a gender lens. The results contain data and analysis that is new or never before accessible to the general public. Chester, Bucks, Delaware and Montgomery County comparisons are provided where available, enabling us to identifying Chester County’s unique strengths and challenges. The report identifies significant trends utilizing the data from the first 2005 Blueprint Report.

The Blueprint Report 2010 also includes extensive commentary from nonprofit agencies collected during our 8 Listening Tour stops. 86 professionals, representing over 40 nonprofit and government direct-service organizations, attended and shared their knowledge of the current challenges facing women and girls. Their voices add richness and provide “on the ground” insights on emerging trends not yet reflected in the data.

WHAT THE FUND WILL DO

Based on the findings of the report, the Fund will concentrate our grantmaking initiatives in three key areas:

- Girls Positive Development
- Women and Girl’s Economic Security
- Women and Girl’s Health & Safety

Our education programs and community collaborations will center on raising awareness about the complete findings of the report, and making the data available to nonprofit and governmental organizations, policy makers, community and business leaders, educators, other funders, and the larger community.

ART BY
Kiera, age 3
10 Things You Can Do

SHARE + Raise awareness by forwarding the Blueprint Report to family and friends.

LEARN + Find out more about the many organizations serving the needs of women and girls in Chester County.

GIVE + Volunteer and contribute to local food banks and other nonprofits serving women and girls.

PARTICIPATE + Attend school board and township meetings to stay informed and add your voice to issues affecting your community.

VOTE + Learn about local political candidates, support those you like, volunteer and vote.

SAY HELLO + Take the time to get to know a teenage girl or elderly woman in your community.

QUESTION + Challenge sexist, racist and homophobic comments made by others.

TEACH + Educate girls you know about health, personal safety and having a positive self-image.

LEAD + Step into your own leadership. Run for elected office, go for a work promotion, or volunteer for a cause that is important to you. Encourage women and girls to do the same.

STAY INFORMED + Learn more about the work of the Chester County Fund for Women and Girls and our grantees, and stay informed on issues affecting women and girls by signing up for our email updates.

LOG ON + www.ccwomenandgirls.org
We would like to acknowledge our many partners whose participation has made this report possible. Thank you to our funding partners, who believed in the importance of the report and provided the resources to ensure its completion; our research and community partners, who collaborated on the data collection, analysis and release of the report; the many non-profit organizations, county government departments, foundations, volunteers and researchers, who participated in this extraordinary effort; and the county, state and national agencies, who provided data and added their perspectives to the research.

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Blueprint Report 2010
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For a list of Listening Tour participating organizations, please visit our website: www.ccwomenandgirls.org

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