

*Social Services***Indicator Briefing**

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Although this report attempts to quantify the social implications of Nevada's current economic condition, the multitude of factors which cannot be readily quantified should neither be dismissed nor overlooked. There is no dollar value that can be assigned to the stress of unemployment – or underemployment – when households sit down to pay their bills each month, move money from place to place, make minimum payments and watch as their savings evaporate. There is no monetary value that

can be easily assigned to the stress of lost financial independence after a lifetime of hard work and self-sufficiency.

The social safety nets developed during the past century are designed to provide temporary assistance to individuals and families. But, what happens when “temporary” runs out by choice or fiscal necessity? Moreover, these nets are not designed to address the longer-run implications of these hardships. Like the Great Depression, the Great Recession is likely to be change people's views, attitudes and outlooks for decades to come.

Southern Nevada's unemployment rate has not benefited from the same trends being reported nationally, where unemployment dropped from the peak of 10.1 percent in October 2009 to 9.0 percent in December 2010. The unemployment rate in the Las Vegas-Par-

adise metropolitan statistical area (MSA) rose to 14.9 percent in December 2010, up from 14.3 in the prior month and 13.0 percent in December 2009, marking a new all-time high for the region.

The Las Vegas MSA also retained the top spot in terms of labor force unemployment when comparing the 30 largest metropolitan areas, with Riverside and Sacramento coming in a distant second and third at 13.9 percent and 12.5 percent, respectively. Despite the recent unemployment rate increase, the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) anticipates continued stabilization in the local job market characterized by slow economic growth and establishment-based employment in the Las Vegas MSA increased by 1,900 jobs in December.

Elevated unemployment levels among resi-

dents has forced many families to enroll in social assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a program designed to provide temporary assistance to needy families to care for dependent children in their own homes or in the homes of relative caretakers. The Nevada Division of Welfare and Supportive Services reported a total of 32,470 grant recipients during December 2010; up 10.3 percent when compared to same month prior year.

In addition, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) reported significant increases year-over-year (+25.3 percent) with 324,658 Nevadans participating in the program during the month of December 2010 (latest data available). Akin to the legacy food stamp program, SNAP helps those in need to buy food needed to maintain good health. Note that in order to qualify for benefits, SNAP recipients must have near-poverty incomes and typically include low-income workers, unemployed persons, disabled or elderly persons, persons receiving other public assistance, or homeless persons. In total, 1 out of every 8 Nevada residents currently qualifies under this definition.

Three Square provided pantry meals to 57,032 families during November 2010 (latest available data); a number that increased 7.6 percent year-over-year and nearly doubled from the 31,735 households served two years ago. Three Square serves as a central location for the Las Vegas metropolitan area where food can be collected and then distributed to non-profit and faith-based

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