

Defining “At-Risk”

United Way SWLA is dedicated to improving community conditions by targeting and investing resources in at-risk populations. When considering the definition of at-risk, one must first understand that at-risk reflects a chance of or probability; it does not imply certainty. In addition, at-risk is a somewhat generic term, defined in different ways by different agencies and public bodies. Ultimately, United Way SWLA must decide how to define at-risk populations for planning and response; therefore the following factors are considered possible indicators of potential barriers:

Education:

- Economic disadvantage as defined according to the USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines for Free and Reduced Lunch
- Mental or physical disability
- Medical condition that substantially limits life activities
- Low parental education levels
- Single parenthood
- Living with someone other than immediate family members
- Grade level retention
- Absenteeism and suspension and/or expulsion

Income:

- Annual income below the poverty level
- Qualify for the earned income tax credit
- Lack of secure employment
- Dependency on public assistance programs
- Homeless
- Lack of appropriate job skills
- Lack of high school diploma or GED
- Adult illiteracy

Health:

- Obesity
- Poor nutrition
- Substance abuse
- Lack of awareness of personal health baseline
- Unhealthy BMI (Body Mass Index)
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Tobacco use
- Mental wellness

By targeting the needs and challenges of the at-risk population, United Way SWLA and its partner agencies can significantly impact our community and help ensure that all individuals and families achieve their human potential through education, income stability, and healthy lives.

Education

United Way of SWLA is working to ensure a cohort graduation rate of 81% or above. The following priority areas will help increase the number of students that enter high school and graduate four years later:

School Readiness

E-1 Children start school at levels of physical, social-emotional, and intellectual development needed for school success.

Early Grade Reading

E-2 Children enter 4th grade with reading comprehension skills that provide a strong foundation for learning.

Middle Grade Success

E-3 Students successfully transition through middle school, gaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need for high school success.

High School Graduation

E-4 Students graduate high school on time prepared for college or other postsecondary training, work, and life.

Income

United Way of SWLA envisions an unemployment rate of 3.5% or less. The following priority areas will help ensure individuals secure jobs that allow them to be financially stable and independent now and through retirement:

Workforce Development

I-1 Individuals have the training and skills needed to obtain family-sustaining employment.

Adult Training

I-2 Individuals have the training to advance and obtain higher paying employment.

Financial Education

I-3 Families and individuals are financially literate.

Savings and Assets

I-4 Families and individuals build savings and accumulate assets to support long-term goals.

Health

United Way of SWLA is working to improve the health ranking of SWLA by 10%. The following priority areas will help ensure healthier youth and adults:

Safe Home and Community

H-1 Individuals live in environments that are safe, healthy and free from crime and physical hazards.

Supporting Healthy Choices

H-2 Individuals and families choose healthy lifestyles and pursue nutritious diets and regular physical activity.

H-3 Individuals and families do not engage in risky behaviors.

Access to Health Care

H-4 Individuals and families participate in preventive healthcare programs.

Access to Personal Health Assessments

H-5 Individuals complete wellness health assessments regarding their personal health risks.

Safety Net

In an effort to carry out our mission and fulfill our vision, we will continue to support programs and initiatives that address the most critical needs facing our community. The overall goal of the United Way is to support our community so that it can respond effectively and timely to those individuals and families in crisis living in southwest Louisiana. Therefore, our funding priorities are:

Independence

SN-1 Individuals and families gain and maintain independence.

Crisis Intervention

SN-2 Individuals and families have resources to overcome a crisis, physical or mental.

SN-3 The community is prepared and responds to a man-made or natural disaster.