Blueprint For Action

Alliance Leaders
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Executive Summary:

The Cape Regional Wellness Alliance is comprised of community members representing education, healthcare, business, law enforcement and mental health wellness in Cape May County. The Cape Regional Wellness Alliance (CRWA) is funded by a grant from the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation administered through the New Jersey Health Initiatives (NJHI) for the goal of Building a Culture of Health in Cape May County. The CRWA will work in partnership with the Cape Regional Health Needs Coalition and other invested community members to achieve this goal.

CRWA will use this $200,000 grant over the next three years to develop and implement strategies to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences Syndrome (ACES) in the Cape May County communities of Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood, and Woodbine which, according to the 2017 rankings data from the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, are reported to have the most at risk youth. Data research, interviews with health and human service agencies, and census data were utilized to formulate three objectives that when met will successfully reduce the impact of ACES in Cape May County.

The first objective is to establish baseline data on the prevalence of ACES in these four communities by December 2017. Data collection will correlate known trauma occurrences for children ages 0 to 18, such as physical abuse, parental separation, hunger, domestic violence, substance abuse in the home, and exposure to mental illness gathered from a variety of medical, education, and law enforcement partners, census data, and surveys. This data will be used to quantify and identify previously undisclosed cases of ACES.

The second objective is to develop and implement a comprehensive community education program about ACES and its impact on the Culture of Health in these four Cape May County communities. This community education program will include training school based staff to recognize symptoms of ACES; conducting a multi-media awareness campaign to educate the public; engaging elected officials at the school, local, and county levels on the importance of providing protective factors and building resiliency programs; and developing a parent education program to encourage healthy homes. The timeline to complete this objective is June 2018.

The third and final objective is to announce a minimum of four projects that promote resiliency among the youth of Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood, and Woodbine in July 2018. These programs include, but are not limited to implementing a youth law enforcement leadership youth camp in each community; supporting the expansion of youth intervention programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters through business community engagement; expand inter-agency agreements to provide additional on-site counseling, clinical services, and support services to school children; strengthening School Based Youth Services and Family Success Center programs; creating business partnerships and engaging faith based organizations to publicize youth events and programs that build community and promote resiliency; conducting surveys and interviews to determine the health-related needs of the communities included in the
CRWA project as it relates to ACES; implementing health and education activities that promote healthy lifestyles; and finally developing a comprehensive resource guide of community health and social organizations that provide services to those in need in Cape May County.

The Cape Regional Wellness Alliance expects that this pilot program of reducing the occurrences of ACES in Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood, and Woodbine will be used as a model for county-wide implementation. The program’s ultimate success will be evident in identifying and treating today’s youth affected by ACES and seeing future generations of Cape May County residents leading healthy lifestyles, absent of the impact of ACES.

Progress and results of the Cape Regional Wellness Alliance ACES project will be communicated through the Community Health Needs coalition, whose membership has grown to over 30 organizations and members. The Alliance will further communicate through social media, website development, community forums, print media, Chamber of Commerce newsletters, regional schools’ newsletters, websites and communication channels, and through our Parish Nurse Program represented by over 60 churches in Cape May County.
Community Profile:

Cape May County, NJ, is a resort area with a year-round population of 95,897 that swells to 800,000 or more during the summer months. The county has no large industry; the largest employers being Cape Regional Medical Center and Cape May County Government. A seasonal tourist industry sustains the population. The median household income in Cape May County is below the New Jersey average, and the percentage of uninsured people in Cape May County exceeds the New Jersey average. Cape May County has an unemployment rate of 22%.

Similarly, over 22% of our population is over the age of 65. The poverty level is 11.4% and the poverty level for children under the age of 18 is 19.6%.

Cape May County ranks 19 out of 21 on the “Kids Count Rankings for Quality of Life for Youth.” The highest prevalence of low socio-economic status areas in the county include; Wildwood, Woodbine, Middle Township, and Lower Township.

A relatively homogenous ethnic mix (86% white, 7% Hispanic, 5% African American) is a non-typical statistic when related to the high incidence of; substance abuse, high school dropout rates, juvenile crime, and chronic disease rates. A comparison from 2000-2015 census data illustrates a growing percentage of children living in poverty. Lower graduation rates, higher prevalence of youth with learning disabilities, a growing senior population, and a higher prevalence of substance abuse are among many social factors warranting immediate intervention for the long-term health of Cape May County.
Introduction:

The Cape Regional Wellness Alliance was formed as a result of a four-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson, New Jersey Health Initiatives “Building a Culture of Health” opportunity. Prior to the Alliance, Cape Regional Health System was a leader in developing a Community Health Needs Assessment coalition in Cape May County. The coalition meets every two months at Cape Regional Medical Center for two hours. The membership includes representatives from:

- Cape Regional Health System
- Cape Regional Physician Associates
- Cape May County Department of Health
- Cape May County Department of Aging and Disability Services
- Cape Assist
- Cape Counseling
- Complete Care
- CURE
- Prevention Partnership
- Volunteers in Medicine
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension
- Caring for Kids
- Puerto Rican Action Committee
- Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro
- Christ Gospel Church
- Cape May County Department of Human Services
- Cape May County Chamber of Commerce
- Middle Township Police Department
- Lower Township School District
- Quality Care – Cape May Council for Young Children

Most of the members in the coalition are leaders in their organizations. Others are workers in community agencies. The focus of the coalition has been to understand, identify, and develop efforts to address the health needs of the people in Cape May County. This diverse group brings a wealth of experience and local understanding of the social conditions and trends of their individual work arenas and communities.

Through surveys, focus groups, individual interviews, and a review of healthcare provider data, the coalition identified the following six priority needs:

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences**
• Bone Issues: Falls Prevention, Exercise and Pain Management
• Cancer: Prevention, Screening and Treatment
• Diabetes and Hypertension
• Mental Health Issues/Substance Use Disorders
• Weight Issues/Nutrition

Plan Development:

Cape May County has one of the highest rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) in
the State of New Jersey. Four municipalities in the County which have been identified with the highest levels of incidence include the communities of Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood and Woodbine.

The Cape Regional Wellness Alliance was formed in 2016 following the successful submission of a grant application to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s New Jersey Health Initiatives, focused on building a “Culture of Health” in Cape May County. Tom Piratzky, Cape Regional Medical Center’s Executive Director of the hospital’s Foundation brought together a dynamic and diverse group from the community.

Known as the Cape Regional Wellness, members were representative of the following sectors: Healthcare, Behavioral Health, including mental health and addiction services, business, education and law enforcement. Alliance members are all top executives in their respective organizations and have the authority to make decisions to allocate resources and effect change through policy development. This group was committed to the Mission statement of “increasing awareness of the long term consequences of Adverse Childhood Experiences and increasing the availability of coordinated, community resources and activities in Cape May County.

The Journey began with an orientation and training through the Center for Creative Leadership for a total of four days over the course of several months. The resulting analyses of community struggles and challenges were spirited, thoughtful, informing and enlightening. Alliance members quickly realized the problems facing our county were intertwined and connected. In many cases, our respective organizations were working in silos and the result of our continued collaboration led to the recognition of the value of cooperation, collaboration and a learning process whereby each member made a concerted effort to learn about each other’s service and/or organization, thus creating a synergistic positive effect.

Essential to the Alliance’s plan development was the opportunity to learn about what had previously been done in the county to address ACES by Cape Regional Medical Center’s Community Health Needs Assessment. This assessment, conducted over the past six years, identified adverse childhood experiences as a major community concern. The rate of ACES and its impact, especially in the school systems, continues to present a challenge in all sectors
of the community, especially in the areas previously outlined.

The initial phase of plan development entailed exploring the scope of the problem and establishing the infrastructure of organizations which could play a valuable role in addressing the issues resulting in ACES.

Several of these organizations included the following: Cape Counseling Services, Caring for Kids, the Division of Child Protection & Permanency, County of Cape May, Mental Health Administrator, Cape May County Superintendent of Schools, Cape May County Council on Early Childhood and Cape Atlantic INK (Integrated Network for Kids).

The second and future phases of Plan development will more thoroughly include data collection from all data sources with known trauma (for example: physical abuse, parental separation, lack of food, violence in the home, school truancy, mental illness and substance abuse in the household).

The goal of this phase is to review a minimum of 75% of mental health and counseling service providers within the identified geographic areas to determine the extent of such disorders as ADD, oppositional defiant disorders, substance abuse, mental health, out-of-home placement, etc. In addition to the Superintendent of Lower Cape May Regional School District, Alliance members invited the Cape May County Superintendent of Schools to join the Alliance providing a county wide perspective.

Plan Development also included a review of the 2016 and 2017 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps specific to Cape May County. Ongoing consultation and collaboration with our Community Coaches, Toni Lewis, MPH, HO and Vicki Lachman, Ph.D. has likewise been critical to plan development and implementation.

Phase 3 of Plan Development included key representatives from local organizations, namely Division of Child Protection & Permanency, Caring for Kids, Cape Atlantic INK and the Council of Early Childhood Education, sharing their concerns and perspectives on trauma as it results in the proliferation of adverse childhood experiences through various stages of
Subsequent to the initial data review and collaboration with community gatekeepers, the community action plan developed three specific goals which will continue to guide our journey in creating a cultural of health in Cape May County. These goals are prioritized in the Community Action Plan (Phase 4). The Alliance is now moving into implementation, reviewing the need for resources and grant funds allocation.

In summary, regardless of the initial focus, whether it was education concerns, law enforcement concerns, business related, employment related concerns, mental health concerns or health concerns, the common denominator continued to focus on trauma and its relationship to adverse childhood experiences.

Cape Regional Wellness Alliance’s journey has just begun. With continued community involvement and community action, focused on education and policy development, we are confident that we will make a difference in creating a Culture of Health for our children and families.

Who was involved in the development of the plan:
Vicki Clark - President & CEO, Cape May County Chamber of Commerce – representing the Cape May County business community

Christopher Kobik - Superintendent of Schools, Lower Cape May Regional School District – representing the education sector of the community

Vicki Lachman, PhD - President, V.L. Associates – Alliance Team Coach - representing the veterans who live in Cape May County

Christopher Leusner - Chief of Police, Middle Township Police Department – representing the law enforcement sector of the county

Thomas Piratzky - Executive Director, Foundation, Cape Regional Medical Center – representing the healthcare sector of the community

Greg Speed - CEO, Cape Counseling - representing the healthcare sector, specializing in mental health issues and addiction services

Who will manage the implementation of the plan:
The above team of the Cape Regional Wellness Alliance will provide ongoing leadership for the implementation of the plan as they leverage the resources of the Cape Regional Community Health Needs Assessment Coalition and other community advocates.
Other information that is important to the plan:

Barriers to Community Health Services

- **Program Capacity** – Need for expansion of existing programs, services, and activities for target health needs in Cape May County
- **Cost/Insurance** – Funding availability
- **Transportation** – Lack of availability
- **Services** – Availability unknown to community residents
- **Personnel** – Number of skilled people to meet needs
- **Unemployment** – High rate of unemployment from October to May because of tourist industry during the summer months
- **Poverty** – High rate in Cape May County; high rate in 19 years of age and under

Questions or Comments:

Vicki Clark: 609-465-7181
Christopher Kobik – 609-884-3475
Christopher Leusner – 609-465-8700
Thomas Piratzky – 609-463-4040
Greg Speed – 609-465-4066

The action plan:
**Community Action Plan**

**Goal:** By March of 2019 the Cape Regional Wellness Alliance will have developed and implemented strategies to reduce the impact of ACES in the communities of Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood, and Woodbine.

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<tr>
<td>1 Data Collection</td>
<td>1.1.1 Alliance members will review service provider data (Cape Counseling Services, Cape Regional Medical Center, Cape Assist, Family Matters, Cooperative Care, Nancy Crafts Counseling, Family Matters, DCP&amp;P, Rainbow Pediatrics, and CHOP Pediatrics, Complete Care) Resources: CCS IT Data Analyst, Administrative Support to compile data.</td>
<td>Data review of 75% of mental health and counseling service providers within the identified geographic areas to determine the extent of such disorders as ADD, oppositional defiant disorders, substance abuse, mental health.</td>
<td>Review completed by July, 2017</td>
<td>Greg Speed</td>
<td>CRRA, Cooperative Care, Nancy Crafts, Cape Assist, Family Matters, DCP&amp;P, Rainbow Pediatrics, CHOP Pediatrics, and Complete Care, OB Physicians, Social workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Alliance members will collect and review public school level data including a survey of youth on their perceptions of school connectedness. Resources: Clerical support</td>
<td>Each of the largest elementary and secondary public schools within the identified municipalities will provide a data profile.</td>
<td>Review completed by September 2017</td>
<td>Survey completed by January of 2018</td>
<td>Michael McKnight, Christopher Kobik</td>
<td>CRRA, County School Superintendents and Principals, and Cape May County Office of Education</td>
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Objective 1: By December 2017 the Cape Regional Wellness Alliance will have established baseline data on the prevalence of ACES in the communities of Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood, and Woodbine.

Updated 4-6-17 (CK)
Goal: By March of 2019 the Cape Regional Wellness Alliance will have developed and implemented strategies to reduce the impact of ACES in the communities of Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood, and Woodbine.

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Illustrating manifest behaviors/symptoms of ACES such as truancy, participating in free and reduced lunch, teen pregnancy, out of school suspensions, drop outs, substance abuse, discipline problems. A School Connectedness survey will be taken by students in at least one school from each of the targeted municipalities.</td>
<td>Review completed by November, 2017</td>
<td>Chief Christopher Leusner</td>
<td>CRWAA, Local LEA’s, and Police Chief Association</td>
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1.1.3 Alliance members will collect and review law enforcement data resources: Administrative and clerical support, Cape May County Prosecutor’s Office, New Jersey Superior Court Family Division, Lower Township Police Department, Wildwood Police Department, and NJSF Woodbine Station.

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<tr>
<td>1.1.4</td>
<td>Alliance members will collect and review CDC, Census and other data sources through the RKUF, NJH, County Health rankings resource personnel (Ann Rabson) Resources: Administrative &amp; Clerical support</td>
<td>Violent/non-violent youth arrests from 2009 to 2016</td>
<td>Review completed by November, 2017</td>
<td>Vicki Lechman</td>
<td>CRWA</td>
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<td>1.1.5</td>
<td>Develop and conduct survey of businesses in county in order to gather information on awareness of employees who have children dealing with ACES Resources: Clerical support, Chamber(s) database of businesses</td>
<td>Data will include SES, unemployment, median household income, residential segregation, housing data, and age of housing</td>
<td>July 2017 - November 2017</td>
<td>Vicki Clark, CMC Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Local Chambers of Commerce</td>
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Objective 2: By June 2018, develop and implement a comprehensive community education program about ACES and its impact on the Culture of Health in the community.
Community Action Plan

Goal: By March of 2019, the Cape Regional Wellness Alliance will have developed and implemented strategies to reduce the impact of ACES in the communities of Lower Township, Middle Township, Wildwood, and Woodbine.

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<tr>
<td>2. Community Education about ACES</td>
<td>2.1.1 Develop and provide school based staff development program to all teachers, counselors, and administrators</td>
<td>50% of all staff will receive staff development programs</td>
<td>June 2018</td>
<td>Michael McKnight, Cape May County Education Specialist, Christopher Robak</td>
<td>Local public and private schools, Atlantic Cape Community College, Richard Stockton College, and CRWA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.1.2 Develop and implement PSA’s, flyers, web resources, videos, hashtags and ads about ACES and its impact throughout the identified Municipalities. Topics will also include ways to build resiliency to offset the impact of ACES and promote a Culture of Health for all in Cape May County</td>
<td>A minimum of three of these public info. resources will be used in each community</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
<td>Vicki Clark, County chamber of commerce</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce, CRWA, School Superintendents, Principals All County High School District marketing, TV Media, Desktop Publishing, Digital Design, and Media Communications classes.</td>
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<td>Resources: Student contests, scholarship funds and prizes, graphic design, social media campaign management</td>
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<td>2.1.3 Develop a resolution for Freeholders, School Boards and Town Councils committing them to raising awareness about ACES and the need to emphasize the importance of providing protective factors and building resiliency among the population</td>
<td>At least one resolution from either a School Board or Town Council will be approved in each</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vicki Clark, Vicki Lachman</td>
<td>Mayors, Councilmen, Freeholders, School Boards, League of Municipalities</td>
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<td>Resources: Pat Devaney, Human</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Services/Mental Health Administrator, Jeff Fierson, Health and Human Services Freeholder, clerical support</td>
<td>municipality</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1.4</td>
<td>Develop and implement a parent education program on building resiliency with school aged youth Resources: Review Evidence Based Practices currently in place, facilities</td>
<td>A minimum of two parent education programs will occur each year</td>
<td>Beginning July, 2017</td>
<td>Michael McKnight, Cape May County Superintendents Association, Cape Assist, Family Success Center</td>
<td>Atlantic Cape Community College, High School Building Principals</td>
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Objective 3: By July of 2018 the CRWA will have instituted a minimum of four projects to promote resiliency among youth.

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<tr>
<td>3 Reducing the impact of ACES</td>
<td>3.1.1 Develop and implement a youth Law Enforcement Leadership Youth Camp open to youth from each of the identified municipalities. Law enforcement will work with their respective school districts to identify youth who manifest behaviors/symptoms of</td>
<td>Program pilot in Summer of 2017 for Middle township, full implementation beginning summer of 2018</td>
<td>Multi-municipality program begins summer, 2018</td>
<td>Chief Christopher Leusner, Cape May County Chiefs Association</td>
<td>Elected officials from each municipality, police officers, school staff involved in peer</td>
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<td>ACES for recruitment into the Camp</td>
<td>Resources: MTPD Special Services Unit, Cape Assist Staff, Lower Twp. PD and Wildwood PD.</td>
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<td>leadership programs for consultation</td>
<td>Vicki Clark, Business community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.2 Support the expansion/capacity of Big Brothers, Big Sisters in Cape May County via engagement with the Business Community Resources: marketing services</td>
<td>Increase the number of businesses currently supporting BBBs by 10%</td>
<td>Summer, 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vicki Clark</td>
<td>Vicki Clark, Business community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.3a Develop inter-agency agreements for providing additional on-site counseling, clinical services and support services in schools Resources: Seed Grants,</td>
<td>Review potential SFTs. Set meetings with the DCP4P, DCF Executive Leadership Team. Memorandum’s of Understanding/agreements approved by at least 3 Boards of Education</td>
<td>Summer, 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>Greg Speed, Eleanor McBride, Christopher Kohik</td>
<td>Allison Blake, DCF Commissioner, School Superintendents, Christopher Kohik, Program Administrator DCF BRYO, Freeholders,</td>
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<td>3.1.3b Strengthen Resiliency Youth Programs currently offered in SBYS programs and Family Success Center Resources: SBYS staff and Management, funding</td>
<td>Develop Strategic plan to encompass Resiliency programs in both CCS SBYS programs &amp; Family Success Center</td>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>Eleanor McBride, Noel Hires, Vicki Smith, Sam Totora, Greg Speed</td>
<td>Legislators</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1.3c Advocate at the State/Department level and Business Community for increased funding for additional SBYS and/or Family Success Center programs in the targeted areas Resources: Greg Speed Liaison to DCF Commissioner, Allison Blake</td>
<td>Contact Allison Blake, DCF Commissioner and Lix Manley, Assistant Commissioner.</td>
<td>12/31/2017</td>
<td>Greg Speed</td>
<td>Greg Speed</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1.4 Create Business Partnerships to support school students in developing career ready skills and practices Resources:</td>
<td></td>
<td>6/2018</td>
<td>Vicki Clark and Scott Campbell</td>
<td>Local Chambers of Commerce and schools in targeted municipalities</td>
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<td>3.1.5</td>
<td>Engage faith based community and publicize and promote youth programs and events that build community and promote resiliency.</td>
<td>Pilot Program for Building Resiliency with Youth in churches.</td>
<td>Summer 2018</td>
<td>Youth Minister, Subject Matter Expert</td>
<td>Rev. Robert Matthews, MLK Center, Will Reenan-St. Babs Church, Goshen; Lighthouse Church, CMCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.6</td>
<td>Develop and conduct a survey/focus groups and one-on-one interviews to determine the health-related needs of the communities being addressed by the Cape Regional Wellness Alliance as it relates to ACES.</td>
<td>1,500 surveys with a target of 75% return, Four Focus Groups, one in each of the designated areas identified and thirty-five one-on-one interviews including business professionals, school administrators, healthcare professionals and community advocates</td>
<td>March, 2018</td>
<td>Tom Piratsky, CRHS</td>
<td>Cape Regional Community Health Needs Assessment Team and targeted public schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.7</td>
<td>Develop and implement an educational and interactive series on health-related issues and healthy lifestyles such as nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation and disease specific conditions, as well as those determined by the survey, focus groups, and interviews</td>
<td>Pilot a four-week Family Engagement Series for each of the designated areas identified to include a family meal, educational opportunity and recreacitonal/fitness</td>
<td>June, 2018</td>
<td>Tom Piratsky, CRHS</td>
<td>Cape Regional Health System, Cape Assist, Cape Counseling, Caring for Kids, Rutgers</td>
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<td>Resources: Cape Community Health Assessment, host facilities, staff/volunteers, food donations, funding</td>
<td></td>
<td>time.</td>
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<td>Cooperative Extension</td>
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<td>3.1.8 Develop a comprehensive resource guide of community health and social organizations providing support to individuals and families seeking assistance in various disciplines in Cape May County Resources: County Human Services, clerical services, marketing design, webpage design</td>
<td></td>
<td>September, 2018</td>
<td>Vicki Lachman, Tom Piratsky</td>
<td>Community organization s yet to be determined.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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