



Issue 15 - Health & Human Services

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Issue 15, the Health & Human Services Issue?

Cuyahoga County and its partner agencies provide basic services to those members of our community who are most in need, especially children and seniors. Currently, funding for these programs is provided in part through a 4.9 mill levy that will expire at the end of 2008. But this March 4th, county voters will be asked to approve Issue 15, a replacement and reduction of that levy, bringing the actual millage down to 4.8 mills. The County uses these dollars to fund programs and services essential to a healthy community and to build the foundation for economic development.

Who Does Health & Human Services Help?

Issue 15, the Health & Human Services issue, helps county residents in every neighborhood, of every age and in every walk of life. More than 200,000 people are served by Cuyahoga County's Health & Human Services every year. The dollars raised by this issue provide critical health and human services for all Cuyahoga County citizens - you, your family, your neighbors – precisely at the time that you need it most.

Health & Human Services helps protect the most vulnerable among us, like our children. It provides protection and care for abused and neglected children, adoption services, resources for quality early child care and education through access to health services and treatment programs for emotionally disturbed children. It helps prepare our children for success in school and in careers later in life.

For our seniors, Health & Human Services supports programs that provide hot meals and access to adult day care, and it protects seniors from abuse and exploitation, along with home health care assistance and services that allow seniors to live independently, like financial counseling and transportation services.

For every county resident, the Health & Human Services issue helps us in our time of need, when emergencies occur. The issue protects access to MetroHealth Medical Center's Comprehensive Burn Care Center and maintains Metro Life Flight Services. It provides support to the Level 1 Trauma Center at MetroHealth Medical Center – the only one in the area. It also supports rehabilitation services for those recovering from crippling injuries and strokes, poison control services and provides counseling for those facing serious mental health or abuse problems.

Why is the Issue 15 on the ballot this year?

With a struggling economy, resulting in lost jobs and lost benefits including health insurance, we need local health & human services more than ever. The County has been careful and conservative with Health & Human Services funds, and the 2008 Health & Human Services budget calls for cuts of more than \$17.5 million. Despite this careful budgeting, the economic downturn and cuts in State funding have put our critical Health & Human Services at risk. By passing Issue 15, we can avoid even more painful cuts to programs upon which thousands depend.

How much does Issue 15 cost?

If approved, Issue 15 will replace and reduce the current 4.9 mill levy with a 4.8 mill levy beginning in January 2009. This replacement & reduction levy will generate an additional \$18.6 million annually to help ensure the continuation of vitally important services for our most vulnerable citizens. The additional cost to homeowners will be just \$2 per month for every \$100,000 of home valuation.

Where does the money go?

Health & Human Services funds can only be used for health and human services provided by the agencies and organizations that operate on the front lines in each community. From large organizations like MetroHealth Medical Center to the neighborhood shelters that care for abused women and children, we can make a difference in the lives of our fellow citizens on March 4th by approving the Health & Human Services Issue.

What happens if Issue 15 doesn't pass?

If Issue 15 fails, the crucial safety net that protects our most vulnerable citizens will fail, leaving thousands of children and families at considerable risk. Critical programs will suffer severe cuts including protection for abused children, home health assistance and hot-meal programs for seniors, and emergency services like Life Flight which can mean the difference between life and death.

Why does the County need more money after the recent sales tax increase?

The 2007 sales tax increase is designated specifically for use on the construction of an exhibition hall connected to a new Medical Mart. The funds raised from that increase cannot be used for Health & Human Services, just like Issue 15 funds cannot be used for any other purpose except for Health & Human Services.

Didn't we just vote on a Health & Human Services issue?

Cuyahoga County's critical Health & Human Services are funded in part by two separate levies. The March 2008 issue will ask voters to replace the 4.9 mill levy and reduce it to 4.8 mills. In 2006, Cuyahoga County voters overwhelmingly approved the replacement and reduction of the 3.0 mill levy. This resulted in a 2.9 mill levy. Both of these levies are crucial to maintaining the services and programs that protect thousands of Cuyahoga County residents – that's why voters have supported these issues so strongly for decades.

How can I get involved?

Cuyahoga County voters have shown their support for Health & Human Services for decades, and this support continues today, as strong as ever. The need for these vital services grows every year, while an economic downturn and cuts in State funding continually threaten the programs that our citizens depend on. All levies are difficult to pass, especially in a slow economy, but services like foster care for abused children and protection and care for seniors are the kinds of services that our community cannot do without.

Your contribution of time, money, and support will make the difference on March 4th. Find out how you can volunteer. Call the Issue 15 campaign office at 216-925-5451.