

Vulnerable Population Description

United Way believes that all people have the right to live in a strong and caring community, and that everyone can at different times in their lives be at risk of one or a number of challenges. However we must focus our limited resources for the greatest impact. To this end we focus on those people most vulnerable to living in a state of economic, cultural, social and political poverty.

Those groups most at risk of the various forms of poverty and resulting social exclusion are - families, children and youth, seniors, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and immigrants. However, as already noted, being from this group does not necessarily make one most 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' - it is a combination of factors that increases this vulnerability¹. The various factors for each group might include:

Vulnerable families – are families that experience chronic low-income and few social supports, teen parenting or lone parenting with low income, high household mobility, homelessness, parents with low personal capacity, family dysfunction, or have experienced or witnessed abuse.

Vulnerable children & youth – are children and youth who live alone or are homeless, live in families experiencing chronic low-income, live in dysfunctional families, experience or witness abuse or trauma, lack interpersonal and social skills, have cognitive deficits or emotional or mental health issues, are not engaged in or succeeding at school, or experience low sense of belonging in school or community.

Vulnerable seniors - are 65 or older, live alone (key risk factor for social isolation, along with 75+), have low income, are single or bereaved, are in poor health, experience language/cultural barriers, and/or have transportation difficulties.

Vulnerable Aboriginal peoples – are individuals and communities that have been affected by the multigenerational impacts of colonialism, especially the effects of residential schools. These effects may include systemic racism and discrimination, resulting in chronic low income, high mobility, loss of culture, and other negative social indicators. Aboriginal peoples include First Nations (status, non-status and Bill C-31 individuals), Métis, and Inuit people.

Vulnerable people with disabilities – are individuals that have physical, cognitive or other challenges that can hamper or reduce a person's ability to carry out day to day activities, have low income, are single, are in poor health, have addiction issues, have mental health issues, and/or experience transportation difficulties.

¹ Source for some of the definitions of vulnerability is FCSS Calgary, *Outline of Proposed areas for FCSS Investments in Programming and List of Relevant Definitions*. 2010

Vulnerable immigrants – are recent immigrants to Canada (generally defined as those who arrived in the last five years), are refugees, face language barriers, have low income, are unable to obtain employment commensurate with their credentials, are stay-at-home parents or seniors, and/or belong to ethno-cultural communities with few members in the Capital Region.

Vulnerable LGBTQ –lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning individuals² who are facing harassment, bullying, prejudice and discrimination among other barriers affecting their wellbeing and equality.

² Reference: Russell, S., Kosciw, J., Horn, S., & Saewyc, E. (2010). Safe Schools Policy for LGBTQ Students. *Social Policy Report*, 24(4), 3-5. Retrieved October 29, 2014, from http://srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/spr_24_4_final.pdf