

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER MENDOCINO COUNTY

— The Community Health Improvement Plan and Project —

Mendocino County's **Community Health Improvement Project (CHIP)** is a collaborative effort among citizens and organizations to improve local health and the factors that influence it.

The CHIP builds on the **Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA)**, completed in early 2016. Both are projects of Healthy Mendocino, sponsored by the Alliance for Rural Community Health, Frank R. Howard

Memorial Hospital, Mendocino County Health & Human Services Agency, North Coast Opportunities, and Ukiah Valley Medical Center. Additional partners, funders, and participants are welcome!

How Healthy Are We? What We Learned from the CHNA

The CHNA report takes stock of local health and well-being, and provides an information base and impetus for community members and organizations to set priorities and goals and develop plans to improve local health. It is based on four sources:

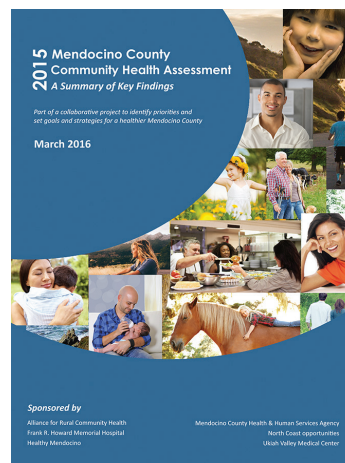
- Authoritative data on our health, well-being, and population characteristics (healthymendocino.org)
- A survey of local residents (online/print, English/Spanish; roughly 1500 responses)
- Interviews with local leaders in government, education, business, health care, and other sectors
- A workshop at which community partners assessed essential public health needs, assets, and services

The CHNA presents information on the health of our population, with details on specific age, geographic, economic, racial, and ethnic groups; access and barriers to health care and social services; the factors that influence health ("determinants of health"), including education, income, housing, family life, and the environment; and community assets and strengths.

Read more about the CHNA at www.healthymendocino.org

How Do We Compare to Other Areas?

In overall health status, Mendocino County ranked 40th of 57 California counties in the County Health Rankings, a respected yearly analysis by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. This was a drop from our previous ranking.



In Our County, How Do Different Population Groups & Regions Compare?

There are wide disparities in health status, well-being, and access to services among different age, racial and ethnic, and income groups and among different regions. It is said that when it comes to health and life expectancy, your zip code is more important than your genetic code; and in different parts of Mendocino County, life expectancy ranges from age 70 to age 83.

5 Priorities for Improving Health in Mendocino County

On June 8, more than 100 residents from across the county took part in a Community Health Improvement Planning workshop in Ukiah. They joined the CHNA/CHIP Planning Group in choosing a set of priority issues based on their severity, impact on personal and community health, and potential for collective action to address them. Action Teams were formed for each issue.

Poverty

Housing

Mental Health

Childhood Obesity & Family Wellness

Childhood Trauma

FIVE PRIORITIES

FOR IMPROVING HEALTH IN MENDOCINO COUNTY

POVERTY

Challenge: Poverty has a profoundly negative impact on health. Nearly 30% of the county's children live below the federal poverty level, compared to 23% in California, and 57% are eligible for a free lunch. 20% of county residents live in poverty, compared to 15% in the state. Elders, a growing segment of the county population, are also at risk. Too many local jobs don't pay enough to cover basic expenses. Some employers have trouble finding qualified people to take available jobs.

Vision: High quality of life and economic self-sufficiency for all; entrepreneurship and wealth-creation opportunities; strong locally-owned businesses; more and better jobs; empowerment combined with responsibility.

Possible Strategies:

- Move toward a livable wage to boost the economy.
- Increase training on financial literacy and other life skills.
- Expand access to the earned income tax credit.

HOUSING

Challenge: Housing for both rental and purchase costs more than many can afford. The stock of housing of all types is limited. New development is costly; permits and fees take considerable time and money; and zoning can be a barrier. CHNA survey respondents named the cost of housing and food as major barriers to meeting their families' needs. The rate of homelessness in the county is very high—an estimated 1,032 homeless persons in 2015—and housing assistance and emergency shelter are limited.

Vision: Affordable, safe, appropriate housing for everyone in every income bracket.

Possible Strategies:

- Conduct an inventory of available land/assets and relevant housing-development projects in the county.
- Educate community leaders and government about the vital importance of housing as a determinant of health.
- Promote city and county action to increase housing stock, especially for low- and moderate-income persons and families.

MENTAL HEALTH

Challenge: Mental health is a top concern of CHNA interviewees and survey respondents. It is strongly linked to homelessness: 41% of local homeless people report having a serious mental illness. There are gaps in local mental health services, especially wrap-around and full-service models. Stigma interferes with willingness to seek assistance, and with community understanding.

Vision: County-wide mental health consciousness is reflected in a proactive, no-shame view of the issues. Communities, agencies, and schools take a comprehensive approach to care and case management. People with mental illnesses and their families and health practitioners have access to needed treatment and case management resources across the continuum of care.

Possible Strategies:

- Educate the community about mental illness to reduce stigma and increase resilience.
- Expand treatment and case management options and access.
- Improve prevention for all residents and all mental health conditions.



CHILDHOOD OBESITY/ FAMILY WELLNESS

Challenge: Children and youth are populations of concern for many survey respondents and interviewees. 41% of the county's children are overweight, and the trend worsens as they get older. 59% of local children do less than 1 hour of activity a day. Some families lack access to affordable, nutritious food while fast food is relatively cheap and accessible. Childhood obesity is linked to adult obesity and many serious chronic illnesses.

Vision: Healthy, active children in healthy families; wide access to healthy food and safe recreational opportunities.

Possible Strategies:

- Increase public awareness of relevant community programs and resources.
- Change the health environment at workplace, recreation, and community meeting venues, offering access to healthy foods.
- Engage the community in the Safe Routes to Schools initiative as an effective way to improve family and community health.

CHILDHOOD TRAUMA

Challenge: Childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have an extremely negative impact on the health, safety, and well-being of individuals and our community. They lead to harmful health behaviors, poor performance at school and work, and higher risk for serious health conditions in adulthood. The county's rates of child abuse and domestic violence calls for help are among the highest in California. Thousands of children are being raised by grandparents, and 28% of county households face severe housing problems.

Vision: All children grow up in stable and supportive families, and families have support in times of crisis.

Possible strategies:

- Educate community members and leaders about the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).
- Increase support for at-risk families, including parents struggling with substance abuse.
- Develop and promote local policies that strive to prevent childhood trauma.

LEARNING FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES

Mendonesians can learn a lot from the broadly-defined community health initiatives taking place in other communities, both nearby and around the U.S. Here are examples of projects in which many sectors—government, business, schools, health care, public health, social service, and more—are working together toward common goals.

Healthy Food

Vance County is a rural North Carolina county that lacks access to healthy food. After its CHNA identified the availability of food retail outlets as a barrier to healthy eating there, local leaders partnered with a University of North Carolina researcher to train community members to be store auditors. The findings from a pilot project are now being incorporated into several community engagement activities.

Housing

Napa County's Live Healthy initiative developed four priority areas and action teams through a process similar to ours. Its Healthy Aging Initiative is working on housing, transportation, and other needs of seniors. A multi-sector collaborative on housing and homelessness aims for "rapid rehousing" and supports respite care for recently-ill people who are or could become homeless. The initiative is also studying workforce housing, and held a community housing summit in June 2016.

Economic Wellness

In Sonoma County's Health Action initiative, community teams are working toward ten goals in the areas of health care improvement, educational attainment, and economic wellness. In the Economic Wellness Initiative, community, business, labor, and agency leaders coordinate projects on asset-building, income protection, jobs, and housing.

MOBILIZING FOR ACTION

What can we do about Poverty, Housing, Mental Health, Childhood Trauma, and Childhood Obesity & Family Wellness so that every person in every part of Mendocino County has a chance to thrive?



OUR GOALS

- To identify gaps that need filling and opportunities to be seized
- To spark interest among fellow community members and show them how they can contribute
- To build connections
 - across the regions and communities of our County
 - between people in need and available resources
 - among existing programs and initiatives
 - between community members and opportunities to be change agents
- To improve the health and well-being of every person in every part of Mendocino County



EARLY STEPS

As we develop our Community Health Improvement Plan for 2016-2019, the Action Teams working on each issue are:

- Conducting inventories of existing programs and resources
- Talking with subject matter experts and recruiting more team members
- Setting actionable and measurable objectives for a three-year effort
- Crafting and starting to carry out action plans

GET INVOLVED - JOIN US!



- **Join an Action Team.**
- **Volunteer for a task such as research or communication on a priority you care about.**
- **Have your organization or agency adopt an objective in a priority area.**
- **Help with public information or fundraising for the entire CHIP project.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Contact Patrice Mascolo,
Healthy Mendocino Coordinator**
707.467.3228 • healthymendocino@nco.org

Follow the CHIP action on Healthy Mendocino
www.healthymendocino.org/CHNA_CHIP