

Community Health Improvement Plan for Gila County, Arizona



2012

Introduction

Gila County is known as home to 1% of Arizonans (53,597 residents) and is the 11th most populous county in Arizona. Gila County residents have a significantly lower median income as compared to the rest of Arizona residents. They are also less likely to have college degrees and tend to be older. Geographically diverse, Gila County is spread over 4,796 square miles and its population is equally diverse, particularly between Payson and Globe/Miami.

The Community Health Assessment, conducted late 2012, evaluated the County's demographics, general health, physical health, mental health, and social health. The top perceived physical health concerns included diabetes, overweight, and hypertension. The top perceived mental health concerns included substance abuse, alcohol abuse, and prescription drug abuse. The top perceived social health concerns included substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and domestic violence. Comparatively, the top diagnosed physical health concerns were overweight, hypertension, and high cholesterol. The top diagnosed mental health concerns were depression, panic disorder, and alcohol abuse. The highest rate of impact of social health concerns were bullying, domestic violence, and teen pregnancy.

Themes of barriers to health care service were seen throughout the data collected. Gila County is designated a Medical Underserved Area, and many areas within the County are also identified as Health Professional Shortage Areas. Primary care, specialty, mental and behavioral health, and dentistry services have all been recognized as underserved areas for the population of Gila County.

The Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) was developed using information gathered from the recent Gila County Community Health Assessment. This plan should be used as a guide by the community, and used as a reference and foundation for the many health improvement efforts and initiatives within this community. By implementing this plan over the next several years, more people will receive critical health services and will have a reduction in health disparities, as well as chronic diseases. The intent of this plan is to identify priority goals and strategies while fostering community partnerships to improve the health of Gila County's residents. The following priority areas of needs that emerged in the Community Health Assessment were access to care, chronic diseases, mental and behavioral health (Figure 1).

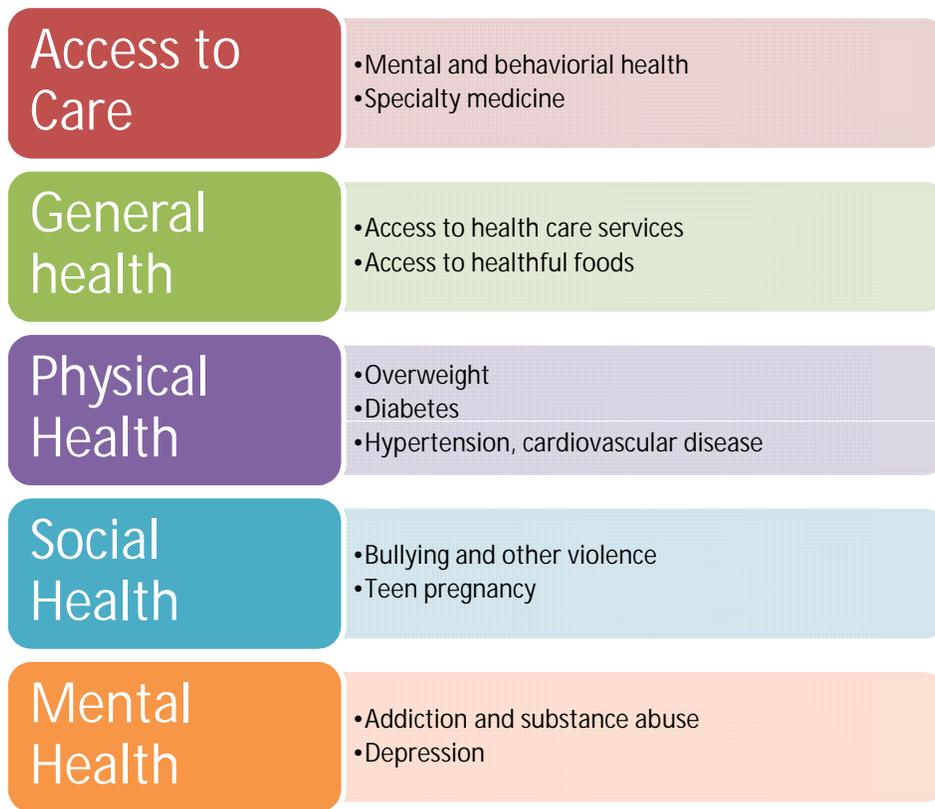


Figure 1: Areas of opportunity identified in the Community Health Assessment.

Within these three priority areas, goals, objectives, and evaluation methods have been formulated and discussed below.

Health Priority #1: Access to health care

Strategic issue/health priority #1: How do we decrease health disparities and improve the health of diverse communities in Gila County?

Vision: Gila County envisions a community where quality health services are available, affordable, and accessible to all individuals and families.

Goal: Gila County residents have on an equal basis the ability to quickly and efficiently obtain appropriate quality services from health care providers.

Strategies:

- Create collaborative approach to identifying and pursuing grant funds to address health service disparities in Gila County.
- Promote solutions to address specific health disparities in Gila County.
- Promote development of information on availability of health services.

Evaluation/Indicators:

- Increase the incentives for health care providers to practice within Gila County.
- Increase the availability of community resource guides.
- Increase the availability for educational opportunities for health care providers.

Risk Factors:

- Poverty, low socioeconomic status
- Uninsured/underinsured
- Minority groups, in particular Native American and Hispanic
- Lack of knowledge of health services available

Potential Barriers:

- Lack of funding, money
- Lack of transportation
- Time constraints
- Lack of specialty providers
- Lack of knowledge and skill
- Cultural attitudes towards health eating, body image, and health risk

Interventions:

- Increase educational/outreach efforts promoting preventative healthcare services.
- Promote the Federally Qualified Healthcare Center.
- Have a “Healthy Gila County Week” throughout the County to promote the services available.
- Completion of a second comprehensive Community Health Assessment to evaluate need and target populations throughout Gila County.

- Create resource guide available on Gila County’s website.

Supporting information: Improvements to access to specialty care and mental/behavioral health remain difficult due to the lack of providers, transportation, and funding available in the County.

Health Priority #2: Chronic Diseases

Strategic issue/health priority #2: How do we promote healthy lifestyles, including prevention, physical activities, and healthy eating, to reduce chronic disease rates?

Vision: Gila County envisions a community that promotes a healthy lifestyle throughout the lifespan including proper nutrition, physical activity and reduction in obesity.

Goal: Promote wellness and prevention activities to assure Gila County residents have an opportunity to live a healthy lifestyle.

Strategies:

- Utilize proven strategies to increase physical activity in the home, workplace, and school.
- Create collaborative plans in schools, health care providers, and business to reduce cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and being overweight/obese.
- Promote knowledge of reliable nutritional information and local resources to improve nutritional health.

Evaluation/Indicators:

- Increase the percentage of residents participating in physical activities at or above the recommended level according to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.
- Increase the percentage of residents adhering to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Increase the number of health screening opportunities for at-risk groups.
- Increase the availability of nutrition and exercise programs in schools and in the workplace.

Risk Factors:

- Poverty, low socioeconomic status
- Uninsured/underinsured
- Minority groups, in particular Native American and Hispanic
- Childhood obesity
- Physical disabilities

Potential Barriers:

- Lack of funding, money
- Time constraints
- Lack of personnel resources
- Lack of knowledge and skill
- Cultural attitudes towards health eating, body image, and health risk

Interventions:

- Advocate for healthy food choices in restaurants, schools, senior centers, and other programs providing food to the public.
 - Offer specialized training for food managers.
 - Coordinate nutrition education delivery to schools and senior centers.
 - Encourage consumption of local foods and improve accessibility.
 - Increase nutrition education to young parents.
- Coordination of local townships, physician offices, faith-based organizations, schools and media to increase awareness and knowledge of the importance of nutrition and physical activity.
 - Initiate standardized nutrition education and promote fitness education at schools.
 - Emphasize physical activities within families.
 - Increase parent awareness of community activities.
 - Support school partnerships with physical fitness funding programs and organizations.
 - Increase accessibility and opportunities for parents and adults for improving physical fitness and motivation
 - Develop health-related contests and competitions between municipalities
 - Use social media to develop healthy meals and physical activity segments to educate the public.
 - Involve organizations, including faith-based, through education and healthy cooking demonstrations.
- Advocate for environments conducive to physical activity.
 - Create/maintain walking trails, parks, and hiking trails.

Supporting information: Prevention is integral to improving community health. Being overweight, obesity and lack of exercise increases the prevalence of certain chronic diseases leading to more frequent hospitalizations, higher healthcare costs, and lower quality of life. Disease prevention must focus on healthy food choices, increasing the use of park recreation activities available to our residents, and providing culturally appropriate information on the dangers of obesity and other chronic diseases.

Health Priority #3: Mental & Behavioral Health

Strategic issue/health priority #3: How can Gila County maintain and improve access to, and awareness of mental health and substance abuse services?

Vision: Gila County envisions a community where mental health and substance abuse services are known, affordable and accessible.

Goal: Maintain and protect the availability of mental health and substance abuse services for Gila County residents.

Strategies:

- Promote effective methods for increased coordination among community providers and agencies to better utilize limited Gila County resources.
- Identify grants and other alternative funding streams to support mental health and substance abuse services.
- Enhance connectivity for those who suffer from mental illness and substance abuse to the primary care system.
- Promote community awareness of mental health and substance abuse services.

Evaluation/Indicators:

- Decrease stigma of mental health and behavior health disorders.
- Decrease the number residents that abuse alcohol and drugs.
- Decrease the number of alcohol- and drug-related arrests.
- Increase number of mental health and behavioral health services available to residents.

Risk Factors:

- Poverty, low socioeconomic status
- Stress
- Depression
- Low self esteem
- Abuse of alcohol and drugs

Potential Barriers:

- Lack of funding, money
- Time constraints
- Lack of specialty providers and resources
- Cultural attitudes towards mental health and behavioral health disorders

Interventions:

- Increase enrollment in teen and community activities/programs aimed at providing life skills.
- Increase the number of drug and alcohol prevention and treatment programs.
- Increase the number of providers and services.
- Promote the integration of mental health into primary care practice.
- Increase the awareness and enforcement of alcohol laws and substance abuse laws.

Supporting information: Much is still left to be learned about the prevention, causes, and treatment of mental disorders. Mental health is intimately linked to physical health, in particular chronic pain. It impacts all aspects of life, including work productivity, and social and physical well-being. Gila County is greatly underserved and has few providers.