



LAKE COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

September 2013

Introduction

The Lake County community health needs assessment—available as a full report at <http://health.co.lake.ca.us>—provides the foundation for policymakers, community organizations and advocates to more strategically plan services and make needed improvements in Lake County; it also informs funders about directing investments toward areas and populations of highest need. The assessment process included extensively reviewing existing data, and conducting surveys, focus groups and interviews to obtain the community's perspectives about health needs and potential solutions for responding.

Highlights of Findings

Demographics

- Lake County is becoming increasingly diverse. About 17% of the population identifies as Hispanic.
- About 21% of residents are over age 65, nearly double the proportion of seniors in California as a whole.
- Close to 8% of Lake County's total K-12 enrollment are reported to be English-learners.
- Slightly more than 86% those aged 25+ have more than a high school education, a more favorable rate than the state.

Socioeconomic Factors

- Economic development is stagnant in Lake County. The recession continues to have a painful impact on families and children.
- About 34% of children (one-third higher than the state average) and 9.3% of seniors—close to 8,000 individuals—live below the poverty level.

- The jobless rate was 13% in April (double that of 2006), about one-and-a-half times the state rate, lowering the proportion of people with employer-provided health insurance.
- Part of the fall in employment-sponsored insurance may be reflected in a shift to more individuals (25% in 2009) covered by Medi-Cal.
- About 33% of low-income adults report *not* being "food secure." Having limited resources for purchasing food has a direct impact on health.
- Transportation issues impact access to services. In all Lake County cities and towns, the percent of *renter-occupied* households with no vehicle (in many cases 5 times the rate as *owner-occupied*) ranged from 7%-30%.

Key Resource Factors

- Lake County ranks low relative to the number and type of physicians and dentists that are needed to serve the whole community.
- Community-based clinics play an essential role as safety net providers but sometimes have long waits for appointments, especially for limited mental health services.
- Lake County residents make twice as many emergency department visits as the statewide average.

Key Health Factors

Communities commonly measure their health against statewide averages and national objectives to track and gauge progress. With regard to Lake County:

Lake County residents fare *better* than other Californians when it comes to:

- AIDS incidence.
- Chlamydia incidence.
- Death from diabetes.
- Children's access to dental services.

Lake County residents are *more likely* than other Californians to:

- Have higher rates of drug (including prescription) use.
- Have higher rates of obesity.
- Have coronary heart disease.
- Die from lung cancer.
- Die from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis.

- Die from suicide.
- Die from a motor vehicle crash.
- Not enter care early enough to have adequate prenatal care.
- Be a teen mother.
- Not get screened for breast cancer.
- Start kindergarten without a complete set of immunizations.
- Be an adult arrested for alcohol violations.

Lake County residents are *about as likely* as other Californians to:

- Have asthma.
- Be born at low birth weight.
- Initiate breastfeeding in the hospital after delivery.

Input from the Community

Focus group participants and the 994 residents who completed a Community Health Survey reported exercise, eating fresh produce and not smoking as the 3 top-mentioned health habits that contributed to maintaining their personal health.

The findings below are consistent with other related needs assessments about Lake County.

Unmet Health Needs

The highest-ranked unmet health needs were for:

- Drug and alcohol-related problems.
- Affordable mental health (for stress, anxiety, depression) services.
- Affordable medical and dental care.
- Nutritional (better diets, weight control, access to food) and preventive health education.
- Transportation issues (including out-of-county transports).
- Urgent care facilities.

The barriers below were *usually* a problem or issue when seeking services for more than 25% of those who filled out a Community Health Survey:

- Finding free/reduced-cost health care services.
- Finding an office/clinic open during non-work hours.
- Finding a provider to take Medi-Cal or other type of insurance.
- Ability to take off work and not lose pay when self or family member is sick.

Suggested Strategies and Solutions

The community input process, backed by data, suggested areas where additional support was needed to improve health in Lake County:

- Expand mental health services.
- Support more affordable medical services.
- Promote healthier eating (gardens, cooking classes) and provide food as a basic need.
- Create year-round activities for all youth.
- Expand substance abuse services (including residential facilities).
- Conduct major public education campaign targeted to increasing awareness/prevention.
- Provide more supportive services for seniors (especially homebound, frail, low-income).

Recommended Priorities

After evaluating all the findings, the Collaborative agrees an important opportunity exists in Lake County for all health partners to focus on the key priorities below. Some of the same strategies can be used to address the needs where these areas overlap.

- Promotion and support of healthy choices/healthy behaviors.
- Promotion and support of emotional and mental well being.
- Prevention and treatment of use/misuse of legal and illegal substances, including prescription drugs and medications.
- Promotion of collaborative relationships among Lake County health and human services providers.

Suggested strategies for support regarding the priority areas are described in the full report.

Visions for future community support in all areas will require identifying effective leadership, raising awareness of stakeholders and determining how to involve them, and collaborating among agencies.

Produced by the Lake County Collaborative of Health Organizations and Funders

**St. Helena Hospital Clear Lake
Sutter Lakeside Hospital
Lake County Health Services
Lake County Behavioral Health
Lake Family Resource Center
Lake County Tribal Health Consortium
Health Leadership Network
Veteran's Affairs
First 5 Lake County
Mendocino Community Health Clinic, Inc.
Area Agency on Aging, Lake & Mendocino Counties**

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