

Calhoun County Community Health Needs Assessment: *Executive Summary*

INTRODUCTION

Three hospitals that share Calhoun County as a service area—Bronson Battle Creek, Oaklawn Hospital, and Southwest Regional Rehabilitation Center—came together to jointly conduct a community health needs assessment (CHNA), and invited several additional partners to work with them, forming an 11-member Assessment Advisory Committee. The partners in the assessment were:

- Battle Creek Community Foundation
- Bronson Battle Creek
- Calhoun County Public Health Department
- Community HealthCare Connections
- Family Health Center of Battle Creek
- Integrated Health Partners
- Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi (NHBP) Health Department
- Oaklawn Hospital
- Southwest Regional Rehabilitation Center
- Summit Pointe
- United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region

PROCESS AND METHODS

The committee reviewed quantitative data from two main sources: The Coordinating Council (TCC) of Calhoun County–Community Report Card 2011–12 and the Calhoun County Public Health Department’s 2009 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS). Data reviewed by the committee revealed several areas where the health and health-related behaviors of Calhoun County residents could be improved, and the committee identified the following major health issues.

- Overweight and obesity
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Chronic disease
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Addiction
- Smoking
- Access to care
- Teen pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Maternal and infant health
- Oral health
- Mental health
- Deaths and hospitalizations due to injury

The Assessment Advisory Committee also sought input directly from medically underserved, low-income, and minority populations, and other community representatives. Fourteen interviews were conducted with leaders in the community representing community service providers, health care providers, medically underserved populations, minority populations, rural populations, and business. Eight focus groups were held with people representing various populations and geographic areas in the county:

- Albion community
- Battle Creek neighborhoods
- Families with young children
- Local government staff
- NHBP tribal population
- Rural communities
- Senior citizens
- Teenagers

The interviews and focus groups were used to explore community members' perspectives about important health issues, factors that contribute to these issues, resources that are available to help community members be healthy, and suggestions for addressing important health issues in the future.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Based on the quantitative data and the input received from community members, the committee identified a set of ten priority health issues for Calhoun County. Priorities were selected and ranked based on three overarching criteria: the importance of the issue to the community, whether and how the issue is related to other health issues, and how the county compares to state and national data for that issue.

- 1. Overweight and obesity, including nutrition and physical activity:** The prevalence of overweight and obesity is growing in the county. This issue was elevated to the top of the list of priorities due, in part, to its direct impact on other health issues, including chronic conditions. The committee recognized, as did focus group and interview participants, that to address overweight and obesity, the health issues of physical activity and nutrition would also have to be addressed.
- 2. Access to care:** Committee members identified access to care as essential to the health of the community. Ranking it as a high priority is a direct reflection of their own knowledge and the needs identified by focus group and interview participants, both of which described multiple barriers to accessing health care and other services.
- 3. Chronic disease, including diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension:** Chronic diseases affect a large percentage of county residents, and early diagnosis as well as effective management are important to maintaining a healthy community. While diabetes was discussed directly in the focus groups and interviews, committee members also identified the need to help residents manage heart disease and hypertension.
- 4. Mental health:** The placement of mental health in the top five priorities reflects the level of importance placed on the issue in the focus group discussions and the impact of mental health on other health issues.
- 5. Teen pregnancy:** Teen pregnancy rates in Calhoun County have been higher than those in the state for some time. Committee members, as well as focus group and interview participants, identified it as a pressing issue for the county.
- 6. Maternal and infant health and infant mortality:** Infant mortality rates in the county are higher than in the state, and racial disparities in infant deaths persist. While not all infant deaths are preventable, the committee recognizes the importance of access to prenatal care and other services.
- 7. Addiction:** While addiction did not receive much attention in the interviews, many focus group participants identified it as an important issue. The committee included alcohol, illegal and prescription drugs, and tobacco in this issue. The committee also noted that a disproportionate number of deaths and hospitalizations due to injury are caused by accidental drug overdose.
- 8. Cancer:** Many interview and focus group participants acknowledged knowing someone affected by cancer. They noted especially that people need access to care to obtain early diagnosis and treatment.
- 9. Oral health:** More than a third of adults in Calhoun County lack dental insurance. Interviewees and focus group participants alike noted the importance of oral health care and identified lack of dental insurance and other barriers to care, especially for people with low incomes.
- 10. Sexually transmitted infections:** STIs are linked to infant mortality and also can be passed among teens (and others) who have unprotected sex. Preventing STIs is linked to efforts to reduce infant mortality and teen pregnancy.