A summary of key informant interviews

2012

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Introduction

This report presents a summary of public health priorities for Washington County, as identified in 2012 by a range of providers, policy-makers, and other local experts and community members (“key informants”). These findings are a critical supplement to the Washington County community health needs assessment (CHNA) survey conducted through a partnership between Aurora Health Care, Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin, and Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. The CHNA incorporates input from persons representing the broad community served by the hospitals, focusing on a range of public health issues relevant to the community at large.

Key informants in Washington County were identified by Aurora Health Care and Columbia St. Mary’s. These partners also invited the informants to participate and conducted the interviews. The interviewers used a standard interview script that included the following elements:

- Gaps and Unmet Needs in the Community
- Barriers and Challenges to addressing these needs
- Priorities in High Demand – summarized into broad topic areas

All informants were made aware that participation was voluntary and that responses would be shared with the Center for Urban Population Health for analysis and reporting. Based on the summaries provided to the Center for Urban Population Health, this report presents the results of the 2012 CHNA key informant interviews for Washington County.

Limitations: Ten key informant interviews were conducted for Washington County. The report relies on the opinions and experiences of a limited number of experts identified as having a finger on the community’s pulse. However, responses may not be representative of the overall perception of community strengths and needs. It is possible that the results would have been substantially different if a different set of informants had been interviewed. Results should be interpreted with caution and in conjunction with other Washington County data (e.g., CHNA surveys and secondary data reports).
Participation

Ten community residents from Washington County were interviewed to gather information concerning the health of the County. Interviewees represented public health, healthcare, mental health, law enforcements, business, education, other government offices and non-profit agencies.

Gaps and Unmet Needs

The key informants identified several unmet needs in community health in Washington County. The health issues most frequently named by participants were mental health, oral health, chronic disease (more specifically, obesity, diabetes, and asthma), drug and alcohol use/addiction, and access to care for the uninsured and underinsured. These issues were noted as interrelated, with access to care aggravating many health conditions. For example, one participant noted that persons who are uninsured or underinsured have a higher chance of chronic illness because preventative measures are not readily available. Another informant suggested accessible dental care is minimal for person without insurance.

Several infrastructure issues challenge Washington County’s readiness to prevent and treat these issues. Transportation is a critical issue for the community, hindering residents’ ability to seek quality medical care. Moreover, responses suggest that while the community has grown more diverse both in terms of ethnicity and age, the community lacks some necessary tools to address health needs for all. More specifically, Spanish-speaking interpreters and transportation for older adults and persons with disabilities were specifically noted as community needs. Several respondents noted an increasing number of homeless individuals in the county. Lastly, two informants specifically mentioned that the community is interested in having a public pool to promote physical activity for children and adults.

Businesses also struggle with health-related issues in this environment. Insurance issues are challenging for the business community, especially small business who seek discounted health insurance options. Employee wellness programs are needed, as is education for business owners.

The issues surrounding drug use appear complex. Respondents noted addiction to pain medication as a key challenge, but at least one respondent felt there is also a strong need for more pharmaceutical treatments for patients. These issues are not necessarily contradictory, but perhaps speak to some of the challenges that will need to be addressed in order to alleviate drug use and addiction in the County.

Barriers and Challenges

When asked about barriers and challenges faced in addressing the issues identified above, key informants echoed many similar themes. Economic challenges at the state, private sector, and family/individual level continue to aggravate the lack of resources and services available in the community. Families are stressed and lack insurance. Respondents felt many providers do not accept
Title XIX (Medicaid) insurance. There was an acknowledgement that billing for Medicaid services is a challenge for providers, which may lead providers to refuse this payer.

Funding for transportation at the agency level is non-existent, as are public transportation options. Consequently, conditions like severe mental illness and obesity persist. Additionally, the lack of sidewalks and safe crosswalks were noted as limiting physical activity in the community.

Key informants named specific challenges related to mental health and addiction issues. The community faces an increase in individuals with persistent, serious mental illnesses (schizophrenia was named by one respondent), and younger adults are exhibiting more behavioral health issues as well. Although services exist to treat these individuals, there are waiting lists and insurance is again an issue. Law enforcement is well intentioned and working on these issues, but officers can feel challenged to handle these issues.

Priorities in High Demand

Key informants were asked to identify the top health-related priorities for Washington County. Five issues were named by at least four respondents as top priorities. In rank order, these included:

(1) Access to primary and specialty care
(2) Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco issues
(3) Dental services
(4) Prevention and early detection
(5) Transportation

Of note, mental health and chronic disease were also identified as key issues for the community.
### Appendix A

**Washington County Key Informants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brett Altergott, MS, CPRP, CPSI</td>
<td>Park &amp; Recreation Director</td>
<td>Germantown Rec. Dept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Bladehorn</td>
<td>Health Officer</td>
<td>Washington County Mental Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debi Genthe</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Interfaith Caregivers of Washington County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Goebel, BS, MS</td>
<td>Director of Pupil Services</td>
<td>Germantown School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn Grgich</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Germantown Area Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Hermann, CPRP</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Hartford Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete Hoell, BS</td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>Germantown Police Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlene Malson</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>St. Boniface/St. Gabriel Food Pantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Strachota</td>
<td>Human Services Director</td>
<td>Washington County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Walter, MS</td>
<td>Health Officer/Director</td>
<td>Washington County Health Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jenny Zaskowski</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Albrecht Free Clinic</td>
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