Kenosha County Health Needs Assessment

A summary of key informant interviews

2014

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Introduction

This report presents a summary of public health priorities for Kenosha County as identified in 2014 by a range of providers, policy-makers, and other local experts and community members (“key informants”). These findings are a critical supplement to the Kenosha County Community Health Survey conducted through a partnership between Aurora Health Care, Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, Columbia St. Mary’s Health System, Froedtert Health, and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare. The Kenosha County Community Health Survey incorporates input from persons representing the broad interests of the community served, and from those who possess special knowledge of or expertise in public health.

Key informants in Kenosha County were identified by the five organizations listed above. Aurora Health Care invited the informants to participate, and conducted the interviews from July-September 2014.

The interviewers used a standard interview script that included the following elements:

- Ranking of up to five public health issues, based on the focus areas presented in Wisconsin’s State Health Plan, that are the most important issues for the County; and

- For those five public health issues:
  - Existing strategies to address the issue
  - Barriers/challenges to addressing the issue
  - Additional strategies needed
  - Key groups in the community that hospitals should partner with to improve community health

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 information provided to the Center for Urban Population Health, this report presents the results of the 2014 key informant interviews for Kenosha County.

The report first presents a summary of the health issue rankings, including a list of the five issues which were ranked most frequently by respondents. The next section describes the themes that presented themselves across the top ranked health topics. Finally, a summary of the strategies, barriers, and partners described by participants is provided as well.

Limitations: Five key informant interviews were conducted in Kenosha County. The report relies on the opinions and experiences of a limited number of experts identified as having 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 Kenosha County data (e.g., community health surveys and secondary data reports).

A. Focus Area Ranking

A total of 5 key informants were asked to rank up to five of the major health-related issues in their county from a list of 13 focus areas identified in the State Health Plan. (See Appendix A for the full list of informants). The table below presents the results, including a summary of the number of times an issue was mentioned as a top five health issue, and the number of times an informant ranked the issue as the most important health issue. Importantly, not every informant ranked five issues and some did not include an order ranking (e.g., included X marks, but no numbers). Those without an order ranking are included as being ranked in the top five, but are excluded from the top issue ranking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th># Key Informants Ranking Issue Among Top 5 Health Issues</th>
<th># Key Informants Who Ranked Health Issue as the Top (#1) Priority</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
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<td>Access</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injury and Violence</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Top Health Issues

The top five health issues ranked most consistently as a top five health issue for the County were:

1. Mental Health
2. Chronic Disease
3. Alcohol and Drug
4. Tie- Oral Health Access

Summaries of themes for each issue are presented below in the order listed in the table above. As a guide, issues ranked as the top four priorities for the County are marked with this thermometer symbol:

C. General Themes

Informants highlighted numerous critical challenges in the county and provided many examples of needed strategies and potential partners in improving health. While some community resources were noted, for many health concerns, respondents did not provide examples of existing strategies. Some informants mentioned that the County is working to increase the number of providers in Mental Health Services and Substance Abuse Counseling. Two informants noted ongoing programs at the Kenosha Community Health Center (KCHC). More specifically, KCHC is working to add Substance Abuse Counselors to the existing staff. KCHC is also providing dental varnishes and sealants to community members. KCHC is noted by nearly all informants as a key partner and is evidently working to fill the county’s service gaps for many health concerns.

Kenosha County faces many concerning challenges and barriers that work against improving health outcomes. An overarching theme, across many of the health topics discussed is a lack of access. This lack of access to care, management and treatment of health concerns is caused by a lack of providers in the county, limited space in existing facilities, limited number of facilities for care, long distances to providers and other transportation-related challenges and insurance barriers. Being underinsured, uninsured and having high deductibles are all insurance-related issues that prevent people from seeking and receiving adequate care and preventive services. In addition to this, insurance reimbursement policies have limited access for many individuals who receive MA/Medicaid, as many providers do not accept this insurance. Clearly, access is highly problematic, particularly among individuals with low socioeconomic status.

While some informants discussed the high prevalence of risk behaviors (e.g. binge drinking, smoking) and how this contributes to the prevalence of disease, many informants highlighted large-scale socioeconomic issues. Informants noted that the root causes of mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse and violence were important in dealing with these concerns. Respondents expressed that while the root causes, which were described as “social and economic” problems need attention, these issues are undeniably complex and daunting.
Many informants concluded that the County must begin to address the root causes of disease and instigate large-scale population health interventions that aim to mitigate issues that undergird poor health, like poverty. Respondents highlighted the need for some less broad strategies, such as; increasing inpatient facilities, increasing the number of providers for all health concerns, increasing the community’s health literacy, and increasing the number of providers who accept MA/Medicaid. Every informant stressed that the County is in desperate need of more providers. Informants also indicated that more collaboration among key partners is needed.

The complexity of the top ranked health issues cannot be successfully remedied without the collaboration and coordination of efforts across agencies. Respondents consistently noted the importance of Kenosha County Division of Health, Kenosha Unified School District, HOPE Council, Health Care Providers, Life Course Initiative for Healthy Families, YMCA and Healthy People Kenosha County 2020 all working together. In addition to these organizations, informants indicated that there are several issue-specific coalitions that can contribute to these collaborations, like; Suicide Prevention Coalition, Tobacco Coalition and Asthma Coalition. Overall, informants identified critical key partners in addressing many of these inter-related health issues.

D. Issue Summaries

Alcohol and Drug

Three key informants included Alcohol and Drug abuse as a top health issue.

Existing Strategies: One informant indicated that Kenosha Community Health Center (KCHC) is adding more Certified Substance Abuse Counselors to existing staff.

Barriers and Challenges: Informants suggested that there are several pressing barriers in Kenosha County in regard to Alcohol and Drug abuse. Firstly, while KCHC offers services, the Center is no longer receiving County funding, which may limit available facilities for people dealing with Alcohol and Drug abuse. One informant stated that there is limited space in existing facilities. Another informant pointed out that there are no in-patient service providers in the County. To add to this, informants indicated that transportation to/from support groups like NA (Narcotics Anonymous) and AA (Alcoholic Anonymous) is a challenge for many individuals. One informant suggested that an overarching barrier is the complexity of the root causes of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

Needed Strategies: An increase is community-wide collaboration may be helpful in efforts to increase services. Another potential strategy is to increase SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) screenings. One informant suggested increasing residential treatment services, as this would help address the lack of inpatient programs in the County. And lastly, one informant suggested tertiary interventions; utilizing local law enforcement and expanding drug courts in the county.
Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Informants suggested that there are many potential partners that can collaborate in attempt to address Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Kenosha County. Several informants mentioned the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and the local Health Department. Informants also suggested the following organizations/entities could be partners: Oakwood, group service (e.g. AA, NA), Hope Council, Suicide Prevention Coalition and Healthy People Kenosha County 2020.

Chronic Disease

Four informants included Chronic Disease in their top health issues for the County.

Existing Strategies: None of the informants who ranked Chronic Disease as a top five health priority for Kenosha County elucidated the existing strategies.

Barriers and Challenges: One informant indicated that both balanced diets and exercise (or lack thereof) are the most significant barriers in preventing and treating chronic disease. Another informant stated that the county has a high prevalence of behaviors that contribute to chronic disease, such as; smoking, binge drinking, lack of physical activity, STDs and teen births.

Needed Strategies: Respondents suggested a wide variety of strategies to help address chronic diseases in Kenosha County. Some broader strategies include: expansion of evidence-based programs, care transition coaches, and comprehensive med reviews by pharmacists.

Informants also suggested increasing health literacy and awareness in the county. One informant specifically suggested healthy eating education and another suggested physical activity promotion.

Participants elucidated environmental strategies to encourage exercise and healthy diets. One informant indicated that strategies ought to address limited access to healthy foods, particularly in urban food deserts. Another informant indicated that creating more comprehensive transportation systems might improve access to healthy food and also increase access to providers. One participant commented that targeting schools and creating farm-to-school programs would be a useful strategy. Respondents suggested targeting the workplace and creating more employer-sponsored wellness programs.

One key informant suggested strategies that were specific to the aging population in Kenosha. The respondent suggested: dementia training for health professionals, improving existing interventions for individuals with dementia and fall risk screening and referrals by physicians.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Informants provided many suggestions for potential partners, for example; Care Transitions Coalition, Aging and Disability Resource Center, local Health Department, Family Care Choices, WIC, local schools, Healthy People Kenosha County 2020. In addition, informants also suggested: the Transform Wisconsin Grant, Kenosha Lifecourse Initiative.
for Healthy Families (LIHF) Collaborative, Tobacco Coalition, HOPE council and YMCA/other recreational facilities.

**Communicable Disease**

Communicable Disease was not ranked as one of the top health related priorities for the County. Neither strategies, nor barriers nor key partners were described.

**Environmental and Occupational**

One informant ranked Environmental and Occupational Health as a top health issue for the County.

*Existing Strategies:* The informant did not elaborate upon existing Environmental and Occupational Health strategies.

*Barriers and Challenges:* The respondent stated that living in a commuter environment where individuals spend much of their time driving is a significant barrier to environmental health. The respondent suggested that some broader “concerning” social and economic factors (poverty, single-family households) serve as barriers to environmental health.

*Needed Strategies:* The respondent indicated that working collectively on “solid” issues (food security, graduation, literacy) across systems might help to mitigate environmental and occupational health hazards.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with Kenosha Division of Health, Kenosha county Services, Kenosha/Racine Asthma Coalition, Downtown Kenosha and the YMCA.

**Growth and Development**

While Growth and Development was ranked as a top five health issue for Kenosha County by one informant, the informant did not identify barriers, existing/needed strategies or key partners.

**Mental Health**

All five respondents ranked Mental Health as a top health issue for the County.

*Existing Strategies:* One existing strategy noted by an informant was the “TeleHealth” recruitment of Psychiatric professionals in Kenosha County. Informants stated that there are many entities that provide services throughout the county.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Although there are some existing strategies and entities who are working to address mental health in Kenosha County, many barriers and challenges reduce the efficacy of those strategies.
One pressing challenge is the lack of service providers in Kenosha County, which was noted by all informants. One informant specified that the ratio of providers to clients in the county is 1960 to 1. Respondents specified a concern for mental health professionals for children in the country.

Another barrier noted by all participants is access to care. Many different issues contribute to a lack of access; including distance to service providers, lack of inpatient services throughout the county, insurance coverage limitations and lastly, limited spaces within available facilities (KARE Center and Step Down) which has resulted in these facilities being perpetually full.

Informants mentioned a variety of other barriers/challenges, such as; Privacy laws, lack of coordination/case management, stigma and the complexity of treating mental illness. One informant suggested that all these barriers are enhanced by the fact that individuals struggling with mental illness do not always recognize the need for help and similarly, people around them may not recognize behaviors that are symptomatic of mental illness.

**Needed Strategies:** Informants noted that collaboration within the community along multiple sectors is needed in order to address this issue to share expenses and increase community providers. One informant noted that strategies are needed to address the continuity of care.

In regard to increasing the number of mental health providers, informants suggested increasing the number of psychiatrists who accept Medical Assistance (MA) and expanding the KARE center as an alternative to a Psychiatric Institute.

One respondent suggested working to address the “root causes” of mental illness and focusing on trauma-centered care and treatment. The informant also recommended using ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) assessments throughout the county.

Broader strategies targeting outreach, education and physical wellness were also noted as needed strategies.

**Key Community Partners to Improve Health:** Hospitals should be partnering with Kenosha County Division of Health Services, Kenosha Community Health Center, Kenosha Human Development Services, local Health Departments, Kenosha Unified School District and the Aging and Disability Resource Center. Other key partners include: FIMR (Fetal Infant Mortality Review), Child death review, Suicide Review coalition, Healthy People Kenosha County 2020 and NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health).

**Nutrition**

One respondent included Nutrition as a top health issue for the County.

**Existing Strategies:** There are many strategies in Kenosha County to address nutrition. Food programs like WIC and food share, Senior dining programs, Meals on Wheels, Farmer Markets, Soup kitchens, food pantries and programs for weight management were all noted existing strategies.
**Barriers and Challenges:** Despite the existence of several food programs, poverty exasperates barriers related to nutrition. Firstly, the cost of high quality food is often daunting and difficult to afford on a food program budget. In addition to this, many areas of the county are faced with “food deserts” wherein high quality of food requires traveling a distance, often a distance that is too far for families with low socioeconomic status and made even more inaccessible by limited public transit options.

**Needed Strategies:** Children and Family Services in Kenosha County could work with local corner stores in order to augment access to healthy foods. Beyond this, the informant noted that there is a need to develop innovative ways to increase access and affordability of healthy foods throughout the County.

**Key Community Partners to Improve Health:** Potential collaborators include: Kenosha County Division of Health, Children & Family Services, United Way, University of Wisconsin Extension, YMCA, Farmers, Harborside, Kenosha Unified School District and Racine Kenosha Community Action Agency.

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**Oral Health**

Two key informants included Oral Health as a top health issue for the County.

**Existing Strategies:** Within Kenosha County, there is an ongoing effort to recruit qualified providers who are willing to provide services in a hospital setting. The Kenosha Community Health Center provides dental varnishes and sealants to community members.

**Barriers and Challenges:** Despite these resources, the county must address some concerning challenges. Firstly, the vast number of individuals who need care is a challenge given the limited number of providers in the County. One informant also mentioned that there are no inpatient services for pediatric patients with rampant dental caries. And an overarching concern for the county is the insurance reimbursement rate, which limits the number of accessible providers for many individuals.

**Needed Strategies:** Respondents commented that many large-scale solutions must be developed to address the oral health “crisis” in Kenosha County. One informant suggested that increasing nutritional and dental education throughout the county would help address the crisis.

**Key Community Partners to Improve Health:** Hospitals should be partnering with the Kenosha Community Health Center, the Dental Society and the Kenosha County Division of Health.
Physical Activity

Physical Activity was ranked as a top five health issue for Kenosha County by one informant; however, the informant did not identify barriers, existing/needed strategies or key partners.

Reproductive and Sexual Health

One key informant included Reproductive and Sexual Health as a top health priority for the County.

Existing Strategies: The informant did not provide examples of existing strategies.

Barriers and Challenges: The prevalence and incidence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Infections in the county is a pressing concern. In addition to this, shifting attitudes towards HPV vaccines and administering it widely in a considerable challenge.

Needed Strategies: Both screenings and education are needed throughout the county, in particularly among youth. The County should also develop strategies related to infertility.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should work with Medical Doctors and Pediatric healthcare providers to address Sexual and Reproductive Health concerns.

Tobacco

Tobacco was not ranked as one of the top health related priorities for the County. Existing/needed strategies, barriers, and key partners were not described by any informants.

Access

Access was ranked as a top five health issue by two informants.

Existing Strategies: Participants did not describe any existing strategies related to access in Kenosha County.

Barriers and Challenges: Many barriers and challenges work synergistically together to prevent residents of Kenosha County from having adequate access to care and services. Firstly, for low-income individuals, seeking care is arduous because many people are uninsured or underinsured. Many low-income individuals face high deductibles and many who have Medicaid are limited because so few providers accept Medicaid.

Beyond impoverished populations, all individuals seeking access to care in the county are limited by the ratio of primary care providers to people, which is estimated by one informant to be 2,201: 1.
Additionally, many Kenosha County residents are dealing with chronic diseases requiring consistent care, which is made difficult by a limited number of providers and services and long travel distances. Many of these chronic diseases have been caused or exacerbated by a sharp increase in obesity rates and alcohol/drug abuse, and both of these issues require enhanced services and more providers throughout the county to mitigate the harmful impact of these issues when untreated. In addition to this, poor nutrition is rampant in the county and made worse by limited access to healthy foods.

**Needed Strategies:** Informants cited several potential strategies to address access in Kenosha County. Both informants stated that the county is in desperate need of improved access, in particular for referrals to specialty care. Also, given the ratios of providers to residents, more providers are needed throughout the county, especially mental health providers. In addition to this, the county needs more space to treat and manage health issues adequately. And while increasing accessing to care is important, one informant stated an increase in access to quality nutrition is key. Overall, the county should instigate more educational interventions for patients of all types in the county. And the issues of diabetes and nutrition require more attention, more practitioners-like dietitians, and access to the YMCA.

**Key Community Partners to Improve Health:** Informants suggested that several community collaborators could serve as partners in improving access. Kenosha Lifecourse Initiative for Healthy Families, the Kenosha County Division of Health, and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Kenosha County and the Department of Corrections for the Kenosha County Drug and Alcohol Treatment Court Program were all noted as key partners. In addition to this, individual providers and specialty services—particularly prenatal could serve as partners in this effort. One informant also mentioned that overall, any partner who might influence ‘space’ in the county, as to provide more spaces for facilities would be a useful partner.

**Injury and Violence**

Injury and Violence was ranked as a top five health issue by one key informant.

**Existing Strategies:** The informant did not provide examples of existing strategies for the prevention and treatment of injuries and violence in Kenosha County.

**Barriers and Challenges:** The County faces significant barriers related to injury and violence. First, the root causes of violence are complex and difficult to target and the informant pointed out that often issues of Alcohol and Drug abuse are a part of violence. To add to this, the county does not have enough mental health providers available to provide counseling. In addition to this, access to care services for both injury and violence is limited throughout the county.

**Needed Strategies:** For both issues, education is necessary—everyone in the community (providers, community members, law enforcement) would benefit from enhancing their knowledge of violence
and injury. Because of the links between violence and substance use, more providers are needed who specialize in addiction treatment.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should partner with mental health providers and the Suicide Prevention Coalition.
### Appendix A

#### Kenosha County Key Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary Coffey</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Kenosha Community Health Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pam Halback</td>
<td>WIC Director</td>
<td>Community Action Agency</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kenosha Director of Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>LaVerne Jaros</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Kenosha Division of Aging and Disability Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cynthia Johnson</td>
<td>Health Officer</td>
<td>Kenosha Division of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Nielsen</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>United Way of Kenosha County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† † Denotes this individual’s position/organization represents low-income populations

†† †† Denotes this individual’s position/organization represents medically underserved populations

††† ††† Denotes this individual’s position/organization represents minority populations