

Racine County Health Needs Assessment



A summary of key informant interviews

2012

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**Center for Urban
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Working together to improve the health of communities



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Introduction

This report presents a summary of public health priorities for Racine 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 Racine County community health needs assessment (CHNA) survey conducted through a partnership between Aurora Health Care, Wheaton Franciscan 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 Racine County were identified by Aurora Health Care and Wheaton Franciscan. These partners also invited the informants to participate and conducted the interviews. 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 summaries provided to the Center for Urban Population Health, this report presents the results of the 2012 CHNA key informant interviews for Racine 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 provides a summary of the strategies, barriers, and partners described by participants. Themes that crossed health topics are also presented.

Limitations: Twenty-eight key informant interviews were conducted in Racine 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 Racine County data (e.g., CHNA surveys and secondary data reports).

A. Focus Area Ranking

A total of 28 key informants were asked to rank the 5 major health-related issues in their county from a list of 13 focus areas identified in the State Health Plan. 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 check 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.

Focus Area	# Key Informants Ranking Issue in Top 5	# Who Ranked Health Issue as #1 Priority
Alcohol and Drug	19	6
Chronic Disease	10	3
Communicable Disease	4	1
Environmental and Occupational	6	3
Growth and Development	4	1
Mental Health	16	2
Nutrition	8	1
Oral Health	7	2
Physical Activity	7	2
Reproductive and Sexual	6	1
Tobacco	7	0
Access	6	4
Injury and Violence	4	2

B. Top Five Health Issues

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

1. Alcohol and Drug
2. Mental Health
3. Chronic Disease
4. Nutrition
5. Tie – Oral Health
Physical Activity
Tobacco

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



C. General Themes

The health issues that the key informants indicated as important for Racine County cross all age groups, and affect residents at home, work, and play in the community.

Within Racine County, there are some differences in opinions about the existence of strategies to address these health issues. For five of the health issues, at least one informant reported no existing strategies to address the issue, while other informants were able to list partnerships, organizations and programs already addressing the issue. More information would be needed to understand whether lack of awareness, different meanings to each health topic (e.g., the interpretation of Violence and Injury, Chronic Disease, and Environmental and Occupational are three key examples of health topics with countless interpretations), or different opinions about the effectiveness and relevance of existing strategies led to these discrepancies. In addition, differences in reporting may point to additional strategies needed by the community. Some respondents talked about a lack of mental health services, and others said that many services existed but it was difficult to connect community members to these services. Perhaps this points to the importance of having a central hub to receive and process referrals for services.

At a community level, poverty and unemployment were consistently identified as key challenges that impact health. Many of the suggestions to address the health challenges for Racine focused on providing free or reduced-cost services, or changing policies to be more business-friendly while also encouraging employers to encourage healthy and safe behaviors for their workers.

Education was listed as an additional strategy for twelve of thirteen health issues that affect Racine County, including recommendations for broad community-wide campaigns as well as targeted classes or messaging for those who are most affected by the health issue. In general, suggestions for those needing information included all age ranges, with youth and seniors mentioned as needing information related to Violence, Physical Activity, and Nutrition.

For many of the health issues, respondents pointed to the importance of increased community collaboration, including hospitals as well as social service, private businesses, schools, and health-related advocacy organizations, in addressing health issues at the community level. Several collaborations were named as important partners and seem critical to engage in efforts to improve the health of Racine County.

D. Issue Summaries



Alcohol and Drug

Nineteen key informants ranked Alcohol and Drug as a top five health priority.

Existing Strategies: There are many existing programs in the community that provide referrals, interventions, support groups (including Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous), education and awareness. Law enforcement and, more specifically, Community Orienting Policing (COP) houses, were also mentioned. Programs that provide alternatives for youth were noted as prevention opportunities, including homework assistance, movies, bowling, skating, and dancing.

Barriers and Challenges: Denial, excuses, and a culture that views the issue as an acceptable lifestyle choice allows for little change. Alcohol and drugs like heroin are easily accessible and cheap, whereas treatment options are costly.

Needed Strategies: Increasing insurance coverage, screening, and early prevention efforts were suggested strategies for this issue. Parental awareness is required to address this issue. Stricter law enforcement, education, and coordination between schools and law enforcement might also help tackle the issue.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with human services, schools, law enforcement, occupational health, physical therapy and faith-based organizations. Specifically, informants mentioned Love, Inc., Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Milwaukee and Kenosha African American Coalitions.



Chronic Disease

Ten informants ranked Chronic Disease as a top five health priority for the County. Interviewees pointed to multiple chronic diseases, including periodontitis, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease.

Existing Strategies: Education through hospitals and the Health Department, including reminders to participate in preventative care, were named as existing strategies. The Minority Women Health Initiative, the Parkinson's Awareness Initiative, and the Diabetes Prevention Awareness Initiative are other active programs in Racine.

Barriers and Challenges: There is a lack of available care, information, funding, and understanding surrounding this issue. Programs are not coordinated and thus lack uniformity in approach. Respondents felt there is difficulty connecting community members with programs and that individuals wait too long to address health issues. Chronically ill individuals are turning to the internet for treatment.

Needed Strategies: Efforts across the healthcare system that stress the importance of living a healthier lifestyle and facilitate earlier diagnosis will be key to addressing chronic disease.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with Aurora Wellness Center, churches, schools, child cares, and insurance companies. Trusted community leaders also have an important role to play in this issue.

Communicable Disease

Communicable Disease was ranked as a top five health issue by four interviewees.

Existing Strategies: Few specific strategies were named, with one respondent noting they could not think of any. The Health Department and hepatitis services were named as strong partners.

Barriers and Challenges: Societal stigma and challenges to educating youth and the community were noted as key challenges.

Needed Strategies: Key informants recommended increasing communication to the public and education of parents and students alike.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with schools and social service organizations.

Environmental and Occupational

Six key informants included Environmental and Occupational Health as a top five health priority.

Existing Strategies: Employer occupational health programs (including physicals) and the Health Department's advocacy for related policy changes were noted as current strategies addressing relevant environmental and occupational health issues.

Barriers and Challenges: Key informants felt many work environments are not employee friendly. Education about environmental risks would be beneficial. Businesses have many changes to make to promote a healthier work environment (e.g., smoke-free zones, vending machines).

Needed Strategies: Respondents suggested policy change would be needed, with one interviewee specifically suggesting making regulations more reasonable to balance both occupational safety and economic growth. Additionally, a community falls program is needed.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with the health department, legislators, and the senior service group.

Growth and Development

Four interviewees ranked Growth and Development as a top five health priority.

Existing Strategies: Initiatives from the YMCA and the United Way were named as current programs. Educational efforts, including programs that have teen mothers speak to students, were also noted.

Barriers and Challenges: Interviewees felt messages about development have not been consistent and that existing developmental screening efforts are too cursory.

Needed Strategies: Informants suggested strategies centered on awareness and prevention. Neighborhood-based programs were specifically mentioned as a promising approach.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with the Racine Unified School District, the United Way, the YMCA, and the larger community.



Mental Health

Sixteen key informants ranked Mental Health as a top five health priority.

Existing Strategies: County and private psychiatrists, counselors, and psychologists are critical to meeting the mental health needs of residents in the County. Programs like Love, Inc. (financial mentoring), NAMI, and COP houses are also helpful.

Barriers and Challenges: While some reported a lack of services, other informants reported that the larger barrier is getting individuals connected to existing services. Access is limited by community stigma and misinformation about mental illness, delays in diagnoses, and financial barriers.

Needed Strategies: Programs that promote awareness and understanding of mental health are needed in Racine. Specifically, educational efforts could provide strategies to identify and respond to neighbors or family members with emergent mental health issues. Respondents suggested a need for training the police, corrections, and government officials on how to work with persons with mental illness. Community safety nets and more mental health providers are needed.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with county board members, the school system, United Way, NAMI and Family Services of Racine. Faith-based organizations, behavioral health clinics, support groups, and the media are other suggested partners.



Nutrition

Eight informants ranked Nutrition as a top five health priority.

Existing Strategies: Currently, progress is being made to reduce the number of vending machines in the work place. The number of Farmers Markets has increased. Recipe sharing, meals for children, and nutritional education is in place. Love, Inc. operates a food pantry.

Barriers and Challenges: It's difficult to get people involved in their nutrition, be it because of lack of understanding or the willingness to participate in programs. Availability and affordability of convenience stores and fast food restaurants doesn't help the cause.

Needed Strategies: Informants focused on education for youth, including school-based programs and media promotions. Broader community changes, like vending machines, access to dietitians, and providing incentives to encourage healthier eating, were also suggested. Health systems and fitness centers could offer discounts to be more accessible.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with schools, the health department, local media and fitness centers.



Oral Health

Seven key informants ranked Oral Health as a top five health priority for the County.

Existing Strategies: Emergency rooms now take patients who present with oral health problems. Preventative care is improving, and several clinics are available in the community – Racine County Health Center and the Marquette Dental Clinic. Love, Inc. offers funds for oral health care, especially emergencies.

Barriers and Challenges: Dentists already have an overwhelming number of patients and thus are unable to care for new patients. Some dentists do not accept state insurance. If left untreated, oral health problems will lead to other health problems.

Needed Strategies: Community-wide education, Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement policies, increased insurance coverage of oral health care, and more providers willing to see uninsured patients are needed.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with the Racine Health Department, Racine Dental Society, government officials, and local dentists. Effective efforts will also require changes in legislation.



Physical Activity

Physical Activity was ranked as a top five health priority by seven key informants.

Existing Strategies: Schools, YMCA, senior living centers, and the Aurora Wellness Center currently address physical activity.

Barriers and Challenges: Physical activity is important for many reasons, but it is not comprehended as such. Incorporating activities into daily life can be difficult for some as they may not have access to services. In general, physical activity may not always result in immediate changes, which can be frustrating for individuals. *“It’s[about] not understanding how to remain committed to it.”*

Needed Strategies: Respondents suggested motivating the community through education and awareness. Upgraded facilities, community walking groups, and reduced rates for fitness clubs were some specific recommendations.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with the YMCA, the Racine Unified School District, Aurora Wellness Center, and programs for older adults.

Reproductive and Sexual Health

Six respondents reported Reproductive and Sexual Health as a top five health priority for the County.

Existing Strategies: Programs like the Racine Birthing Project, the YMCA, and the Life Course Initiative for Healthy Families are all educating the community on healthy living strategies. Efforts to reduce drug and alcohol use were also identified as playing a role.

Barriers and Challenges: Lack of financial resources and health insurance were described as key challenges. There are few businesses that are breastfeeding friendly.

Needed Strategies: Awareness and education are needed across the community and especially for teens. Educational strategies should emphasize the importance of being healthy before getting pregnant.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospital should be partnering with schools (elementary through high school), public health, the Racine Health Network, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), Komen Foundation, Head Start, and the YMCA.



Tobacco

Seven respondents reported Tobacco as a top five health priority for the County.

Existing Strategies: The smoking ban is effective in restaurants. Efforts are underway to ban smoking in public parks and beaches. In addition, there are employee smoking cessation programs.

Barriers and Challenges: Tobacco use is an acceptable and addictive behavior. It is hard for most to quit and programs that help individuals quit are costly.

Needed Strategies: The restrictions of where and when a person can smoke need to be tighter, banning smoking in personal automobiles on otherwise smoke-free campuses. Community education – focusing on both youth and parents – is needed.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with schools, the DARE program, and physicians in the community. The American Heart Association and UW-Extension were named as other potential partners.

Access

Five respondents indicated that Access is one of the top five major health concerns.

Existing Strategies: There is ongoing work within the Health Care Network. Additionally, discount plans and physicals offered through community clinics and Aurora Health Care were noted as

current strategies. The Affordable Care Act was noted as a nation-wide opportunity relevant to Racine.

Barriers and Challenges: Many agree that lack of information and transportation are key challenges. Mandated coverage requirements will present challenges to businesses; it may be cheaper to pay a fine than to provide required coverage, which will force more residents onto government-funded programs. Lack of coverage during periods of unemployment is a current challenge to residents as well.

Needed Strategies: Providing awareness of available services to schools and the entire County community were efforts suggested by the key informants. Broader health system collaboration may be valuable. One respondent noted that there may be “hidden resources” that could support broader coverage and access to healthcare services in the community.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospital should be partnering with Racine Community Health Clinic, business owners (including the self-employed), assisted living facilities, and schools.

Injury and Violence

Four respondents indicated that Injury and Violence is one of the top five health issues facing the County.

Existing Strategies: Laws and an increase in police presence are existing strategies for Racine.

Barriers and Challenges: The culture in this community views violence as a police problem. One informant noted that the police do not have enough time to devote to injury and violence because of all the additional issues facing law enforcement. The lack of falls prevention program was noted as another challenge related to injuries in the County.

Needed Strategies: Across the issues relevant to injury and violence, partnerships with health care systems need to be strengthened. Education is another key community strategy, across the community and more specifically for victims and perpetrators of violence.

Key Community Partners to Improve Health: Hospitals should be partnering with the police department, schools, women shelters, and other social organizations.

Appendix A

Racine County Key Informants

Name	Title	Organization
Bev Baker, MS	Family Living Educator/ Department Head	Racine County UW-Extension
Cindi Baumeister, BA	Director	HyPro, Inc.
Dottie-Kay Bowersox, MSA	Health Officer	City of Racine Health Department
Bob Brandow	Post President	Waterford Lions
Jeff Collen	Chief Executive Officer	YMCA of Racine
Lt. Aldred Days	Lieutenant	Racine Police Department
Rolando DeLa Cruz, MD		Aurora Burlington Clinic
Rose Dolatowski, RN, MS		Burlington School District (Western Racine)
Eric Henderson	Principal	Catholic Central High School
Art Howell	Chief of Police	Racine Police Department
Jeff Koenen	2 nd Lieutenant	Burlington Rescue Squad
Richard Lodle	Fire Chief	City of Burlington Fire Department
Colleen Lois, RN	Manager	Chestnut Club (Western Racine)
Jan Ludtke	Executive Director	Burlington Area Chamber of Commerce
Dave Maurer	President and Chief Professional Officer	United Way of Racine County
John Niederer	Firefighter/EMT, Fire Inspector	Village of Bristol Fire Department; City of Burlington Fire Department
Michael O'Donnell, RN, EMT-IV	Dean	Gateway Technical Institute (Western Racine)
Hope Otto, MPH	Division Manager	Racine County Human Services (Western Racine)
Sister Margaret Pietsch, MS	Principal	St. Charles Hispanic Program
Bill Schoessling	Executive Director	Love, Inc.
Michelle Sommers	Unit Nursing Supervisor	Wisconsin Veteran's Home
Georgann Stinson	President/CEO	Professional Women's Network for Service, Inc.
Tom Terry	Medical Examiner	Racine County Medical Examiner's Office
Rob Tomal	President	Rotary-Burlington Chapter (Western Racine)
Barb Tylenda	Executive Director	Health Care Network, Inc.
Cindy Wishau	Director HR	Edstrom Industries
Henry Zimmermann, DDS	Dentist	Dental Practice