

State of the County's Health Report

Summary

This is a yearly report that gives a snapshot on the health status of our county. The report provides an overview of the progress of our efforts toward improving the priority areas identified in our Community Health Assessment.

The five health priorities identified with our Community Health Assessment process are:

- Influenza
- Asthma
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Mental Health

Alexander County Health Priorities

1. Influenza

The Flu (Influenza) is a leading cause of death in Alexander County. With the impending potential for a flu pandemic our community has focused efforts to improve interventions. Accomplishments to date include:

- Collaborating with community partners on our local pandemic flu plan.
- Outreach education efforts to prepare our citizens with personal home plans.
- Developed and disseminated preparedness education packets to over 2,000 homes.
- Provided multiple community presentation on pandemic flu preparedness.
- Distributed preparation and family ready checklists to all students.
- Exercised our mass vaccination and preparedness plans.
- Flu vaccination clinics have been provided throughout the county.

Potential areas for future interventions:

Our community will continue to educate and prepare for potential flu pandemic. More work needs to be done to ensure that our community is knowledgeable. Many of our citizens are financially unable to prepare surplus in the event of an emergency. Therefore our community must continue to develop contingency plans for most vulnerable populations.

2. Asthma

Asthma is the most common chronic condition in school age children in our community. According to the annual school health report more school days are lost from asthma related illnesses than any other condition. Accomplishments to date include:

- Developed an Asthma Coalition
- Asthma Coalition has distributed 1000 clipboards to coaches. Clipboards are printed with Asthma information.
- Developed and provided Asthma education program to all coaches in Alexander County Recreation Department.
- Asthma Coalition has developed asthma coalition logo and strategic plan.

Potential areas for future interventions:

Asthma coalition's next steps include seeking funding for Air Quality flags for every school. Air Quality flags would increase awareness and assist in Asthma Management of our students.

The Coalition will continue to address improving asthma management to reduce hospitalizations. With better asthma control, those affected can live a healthier, more active lifestyle.

3. Cardiovascular Disease

Heart disease and strokes are the most common cardiovascular disease. The economic impact of cardiovascular disease for our community continues to rise.

Sedentary lifestyles, high fat diets and increased Body Mass Index are leading contributors. Our student populations continue to have higher BMI's. Our latest BMI screening in 2006 revealed 46.5% of our seventh graders were considered overweight. Accomplishments to date include:

- Grant obtained to improve county walking track and fitness stations added
- Collaboration with partners to reduce fat and sugar content of school meals. Healthier menu options offered.
- Eat Smart Move More Programs offered in Alexander County
- County employee wellness program enhanced

Potential areas for future interventions:

We must continue to develop more accessible walking tracks in all our communities. More work needs to be done to educate our community on reducing risk factors for cardiovascular disease

Continue to collaborate with community partners to increase awareness of prevention.

Strategies to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease

4. Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sexually transmitted diseases remain a major public health challenge in Alexander County. While substantial progress has been made in diagnosing and treating sexually transmitted diseases, an estimated 300% increase was seen in new infections for 2005. Accomplishments to date include:

- Commissioner appointed Task Force developed to explore interventions.
- County wide education program developed and presented at over 10 sites.
- Media outreach and awareness campaign completed.
- Luncheon attended by over 80 prominent citizens to raise awareness.

Potential areas for future interventions:

Efforts must continue to raise awareness and educate citizens on prevention strategies. We must continue to work with our community partners to identify at risk populations for increased education, prevention efforts and enhanced screenings.

5. Mental Health

Mental health is defined in Health People 2010 as encompassing the ability to engage in productive activities and fulfilling relationships with other people, to adapt to change, and to cope with adversity. Mental health is an integral part of personal well being. Accomplishments to date include:

- Public Health advocate serves on the Regional Mental Health Board

Potential areas for future interventions:

The continued expansion of health services is a tremendous need for Alexander County. With expansion of services a focus area on substance abuse interventions need to be at the forefront. Access to Mental Health services has been greatly reduced with the implementation of Mental Health reform. Over the last year our local Emergency Department closed and eliminated another safety net for mental health services. It is obvious much work must be done to address this focus area.