



2012 Greater Worcester Community Health Assessment

The Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance is a coalition of six municipalities (Holden, Leicester, Millbury, Shrewsbury, and West Boylston and Worcester) working together to advance the health of the greater Worcester community. As part of this effort, a comprehensive Community Health Assessment (CHA) was conducted in 2012, led by the City of Worcester's Division of Public Health and UMass Memorial Medical Center. The CHA used community forums, surveys, and state data to identify the health needs and strengths of the Greater Worcester community. This information was then used to identify priority areas for future health improvement work of the Alliance communities and their partners.

Overarching Themes and Conclusions of the 2012 CHA

Though there is a wide variation within the Greater Worcester community in race/ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status and community size, the following common themes emerged around specific health issues:

Community Demographics

"In Worcester, we have a lot of different people living together. That has its challenges, but people also celebrate others." *

- The Worcester area has a similar age distribution to the state. For every 10 residents, approx. 2 residents are ≤ 19 years of age and 1 is ≥ 65
- There is large variation in racial and ethnic diversity in the area. Overall, the non-White population ranges from approximately 7% in Holden to 40% in Worcester
- Worcester is the most ethnically diverse city in the region, with approximately 10% of the population identifying as non-Hispanic Black and 22% identifying as Hispanic

Health Care Access

"Language and cultural barriers are something that we are starting to experience more. I am concerned that families who are of lower socioeconomic status and English is not their first language, will have issues with access." *

- 44.5% of respondents reported "not being satisfied with public transportation to health services"
- Surveys found the greatest obstacle to accessing care to be "lack of evening/weekend services"
- 26% of 3rd graders in Worcester County have untreated tooth decay due to lack of access a dentist

Health Outcomes

"Everyone in MA has insurance but access to [the] healthcare system is not equal." *

- Leading causes of premature death (< 75 years old): cancer and circulatory system diseases
- 36% of adults are diagnosed with high blood cholesterol in their lifetime
- The most common chronic diseases identified among those surveyed were high cholesterol and hypertension

Substance Use and Abuse/Mental Health

"We could be happier if there was less violence and drug use." *

- 6% of adults reported heavy drinking as a part of their lifestyle
- Approximately 16% of adults surveyed identify as current smokers
- 18.6% of 12th grade students in Worcester reported having used non-prescribed prescription drugs at least once in their lifetime
- 43.4% of respondents were not satisfied with alcohol/drug treatment services for youth
- 13% of adults reported experiencing 15 or more days of poor mental health in past month

Healthy Eating/Active Living

"When you don't have a lot of money; you can't buy the good foods." *

- 25.6% of adult respondents reported eating the recommended 5+ fruits/vegetables a day
- Many residents linked low physical activity to a lack of safe areas to exercise nearby
- Lowest income residents self-report the highest rates of overweight and/or obesity

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Following the completion of the 2012 CHA, the City of Worcester Division of Public Health in partnership with UMass Memorial, Common Pathways, and over 90 other community partners came together to draft the Community Health Improvement Plan, utilizing the data from the CHA, with a firm commitment to the long-term health and well-being of the vibrant and diverse community members of our region, drafted the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP is structured around five principal domains with specific, measurable objectives to advance Worcester to the healthiest city in New England by the year 2020.