

# Sheboygan 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 Sheboygan 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 Sheboygan County Community Health Survey conducted through a partnership between Aurora Health Care, Lakeshore Community Health Center, Sheboygan County Health & Human Services - Division of Public Health, St. Nicholas Hospital, United Way of Sheboygan County, and UW-Extension Sheboygan County. The Sheboygan 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 Sheboygan County were identified by the six organizations listed above. Aurora Health Care, Lakeshore Community Health Center, St. Nicholas Hospital, and UW-Extension Sheboygan County invited the informants to participate, and conducted the interviews from May - July 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 Sheboygan 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:** Twenty-two key informant interviews were conducted in Sheboygan 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 Sheboygan County data (e.g., community health surveys and secondary data reports).

### **A. Focus Area Ranking**

A total of 22 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. Importantly, not every informant ranked five issues (some key informants identified three or four issues).

<b>Focus Area</b>	<b># Key Informants Ranking Issue Among Top 5 Health Issues</b>
Alcohol and Drug	16
Chronic Disease	5
Communicable Disease	0
Environmental and Occupational	1
Growth and Development	4
Mental Health	19
Nutrition	4
Oral Health	7
Physical Activity	6
Reproductive and Sexual	2
Tobacco	6
Access	9
Injury and Violence	4

### **B. Top Five Health Issues**

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

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

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 five priorities for the County are marked with this thermometer symbol:



### **C. General Themes**

It is important to note that since the last release of this report in 2012, there has been a minor shift in the highest ranking health issues. Mental health, Alcohol and Drug, Oral Health, Physical Activity and Tobacco were all identified as top health issues in both 2012 and 2014. Nutrition, however, was no longer ranked within the top five health issues in 2014, and was instead replaced by Access.

A wide variety of organizations are currently working to address the majority of the top ranked health issues in Sheboygan County. Many organizations and initiatives are currently involved in prevention, promotion and treatment efforts, and are also working together to expand upon inter-agency partnerships to improve these issues. While respondents mentioned numerous existing strategies for most of the top ranked health issues, for Physical Activity, only a limited number of groups or initiatives were consistently listed.

A lack of understanding of the top health issues and a lack of knowledge of existing community resources were identified as critical challenges in the County. Limited financial resources were noted as a pressing challenge as well. Even in cases where personal financial resources were not a barrier towards care, the limited capacity of health care providers to serve those in need was evident. In addition, cultural influences and social norms were stated as main challenges in combating the key health issues.

Increased funding and a general increase in education on the highly ranked health issues were identified as necessary strategies for improving the health of the County. Educational efforts and awareness campaigns are needed for all ages and across all segments of the population. Particular educational programming emphasized for youth was Alcohol and Drug related, programming emphasized for health care providers was related to Access, and programming aimed at increasing education for the entire community was key for Mental Health, Oral Health, Physical Activity and Tobacco.

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 hospital systems, health care providers, law enforcement officials, public health professionals, schools, and faith-based organizations all working together. In particular, the organization Mental Health America, was frequently mentioned as a stakeholder, pointing to its potential as a key partner in addressing many of these inter-related health issues.

## D. Issue Summaries



### **Alcohol and Drug**

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

*Existing Strategies:* Programs such as AA, Genesis, DARE, and the Sheboygan County Heroin Initiative have been working to address this issue. The Healthy Sheboygan County 2020 Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) Committee, along with various health care providers and law enforcement efforts were commonly noted strategies used to address alcohol and drug abuse.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Interviewees reported the cultural acceptance of drinking and its status as a social norm in the state of Wisconsin as a main challenge. Also, a lack of knowledge, resources, treatment options, and capacity were cited as barriers.

*Needed Strategies:* Key informants suggested an increase in education on alcohol and drug usage, specifically focusing on youth, as well as educating school staff, parents, community members, and health care providers. Generally speaking, participants discussed the need for more information to be available to the community, and for there to be an increased awareness about which specific drugs are issues in Sheboygan County. Respondents believed that coordinating efforts within the community and across different agencies would be a useful strategy to pursue.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be working with Mental Health America, other local hospitals, additional mental health and general health care providers, law enforcement agencies, schools, civic organizations, churches, and public health agencies to address this issue. One respondent also identified tavern and restaurant associations as a group to include when working to combat alcohol and drug issues in the community.

### **Chronic Disease**

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

*Existing Strategies:* Hospitals, clinics, public health agencies, and the Lakeshore Community Health Center were identified as active within the community. One participant also reported the use of billboards with health related messages that encouraged screening and doctor visits as an existing strategy.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Lack of financial resources and insurance, along with the cost of medications were listed as top barriers against improving chronic disease. The number of primary care physicians and their limited capacity to accept patients is a challenge as well. Multiple participants also noted the effect the culture of the community has on chronic diseases and one

particular respondent stated that there is a “disconnect between reality and perception of health status.”

*Needed Strategies:* Families and the community as a whole are in need of additional education that focuses on disease prevention and healthy options and activities. In addition, increased funding through grants and government supported payment plans are strategies to help prevent and/or manage chronic disease.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with other local hospitals, and health care providers working in hospice, long-term care, and acute care to address chronic disease. Public health personnel, employers and faith-based organizations were listed as influential partners as well. Culinary groups such as Nourish and the local farmer’s markets were also noted as key allies.

### **Communicable Disease**

Communicable Disease was not ranked as one of the top health related priorities for the County. Neither strategies, 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:* Zoning regulations and incentives to farmers were two strategies noted for protecting local water sources.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Incentives provided are not competitive in the current market, and current state laws have different standards for every industry.

*Needed Strategies:* More regulations and larger incentives.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with farmers, city staff, environmental groups, the Sheboygan River Partnership, Sustainable Sheboygan County, and the City of Sheboygan Sustainability Committee.

### **Growth and Development**

Growth and Development was ranked as a top health issue by four key informants.

*Existing Strategies:* Interviewees identified Birth to Three, Head Start, and other programs geared towards first-time parents as existing assets in the community.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Lack of funding, parenting skills, time, and transportation to get to locations that provide growth and development services were some of the noted barriers in addressing this issue. The stigma associated with the use of early childhood services (ages 0-5) was also cited as a challenge.

*Needed Strategies:* Responses about needed strategies included providing further education to parents on parenting skills, increasing access to parenting classes, and normalizing early childhood programs.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with schools, daycare providers, counselors, social services, churches, non-profits, public health personnel, health care providers, and organizations such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and the Boys and Girls Club.



## **Mental Health**

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

*Existing Strategies:* There are a plethora of existing programs and organizations working to address mental health issues in the County, including Mental Health America, the Lakeshore Community Health Center, Community Conversation, the Healthy Sheboygan County 2020 Committee on mental health, the AODA, the Mobile Crisis Response Team, and Bridgepoint Health. Mental health care providers, guidance counselors, public services, the church community, and public education and awareness events such as Mental Health Screening Day were also noted as existing strategies.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Although there are many existing strategies in place, the barriers that exist within the County reduce their effectiveness. The denial and stigma associated with mental health, the lack of understanding of mental health issues, and the lack of personal and financial resources to obtain services is prevalent in the community. Transportation to and from services, along with problems with continuity of care for individuals who have persistent mental health issues are current challenges.

Insurance barriers are also an immense challenge for individuals with and without insurance. For those with insurance, often times insurance companies have limited coverage for mental health care; and for those without insurance, finding a professional to provide services can prove difficult. The supply of mental health care providers does not meet the demand, partially due to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining professionals into a field that is not highly desirable.

Furthermore, for mental health providers in the area, another barrier is their lack of knowledge of existing community resources. Finally, respondents emphasized the overall lack of mental health providers for children and adolescents as a pressing challenge.

*Needed Strategies:* Additional strategies necessary to address the issue include running an anti-stigma campaign, increasing educational programs for the general public revolving around mental health issues, increasing the number of providers (especially for youth populations), increasing funding to address mental health, and creating more transitional programs like halfway houses. Participants also emphasized the importance of coordination and cooperation across different levels of care and within the community; further integration within the community is needed.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with health care providers (medical and mental health), other area hospitals, public health personnel, law enforcement agencies, schools, employers, faith-based organizations, and family members. Respondents also suggested working with community organizations and initiatives such as Mental Health America, Lakeshore Community Health Center, the Department of Health Services, and the Mobile Crisis Response Team. One participant also felt that partnering with the patients themselves would be beneficial in order to gain insight from their personal experience with mental health issues.

## **Nutrition**

Four respondents included Nutrition as a top health issue for the County.

*Existing Strategies:* WIC/FoodShare, school meal programs, the free summer meal program, local food banks/pantries and the program Nourish are all existing strategies addressing the issue of nutrition.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Cost of healthy foods is a barrier, and often leads to low income families purchasing cheaper and less healthy foods like fast food. A lack of nutrition knowledge was also cited as a barrier. In addition, for those who use food pantries for sustenance, the limited pantry hours serve as a challenge.

*Needed Strategies:* Educating children, parents, and the community as a whole on healthy eating habits and consuming a balanced diet is key. Providing practical approaches to families for maintaining a nutritious diet and teaching these families how to prepare healthy food is also key.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with schools, food banks/pantries, farms, farmer's markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) structures, public health personnel, food suppliers, health care providers, senior centers for the elderly, the Family Resource Center, Nourish, and UW-Extension.



## **Oral Health**

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

*Existing Strategies:* Respondents emphasized the Lakeshore Community Health Center’s dental program as a key strategy to address oral health issues in Sheboygan County. This health center is the only local provider that serves individuals on medical assistance (e.g., Medicaid and BadgerCare) and those who have no insurance. The Dental Access Committee and the Give a Kid a Smile program were noted as well.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Despite these resources, participants felt that finding an adequate number of dentists to work with clients on medical assistance is a major barrier. Participants also discussed the overall limited capacity of dental care providers in comparison to the number of people who need care.

*Needed Strategies:* Respondents commented that further education for the community on oral health and increasing reimbursement for dentists to encourage their willingness to accept BadgerCare patients could help address this issue.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with Lakeshore Technical College and K-12 schools, Lakeshore Community Health Center, dentists, public health professionals, Head Start, and the Sheboygan Dental Association.



## **Physical Activity**

Six key informants included Physical Activity as a top health issue for the County.

*Existing Strategies:* The Non-motor Transportation Group, traffic calming measures, Walk to School Days, trail systems, paid state parks and the YMCA were all noted as existing strategies for addressing physical activity issues.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Respondents discussed that a variety of socioeconomic factors affect physical activity levels, including a lack of education. Individual behaviors and cultures can be a barrier as well. One participant stated that “kids don’t just go play,” while others noted winter and the weather as a main barrier.

*Needed Strategies:* Overall most participants felt more education was needed. One participant suggested creating walking clubs to particular destinations like local farmer’s markets. Other participants mentioned creating more bike routes and increasing funding as necessary strategies to address this issue.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with schools, health care providers, and organizations such as the Family Resource Center, UW-Extension, Head Start, the YMCA, Nourish, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Sheboygan County Interfaith Organization.

### **Reproductive and Sexual Health**

Two key informants included Reproductive and Sexual Health as a top health priority for the County.

*Existing Strategies:* Classes offered in schools such as health class and a “social problems class,” are working to address this health issue. Church youth groups, public health campaigns, and Safe Harbor were also listed as existing strategies.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Current challenges include disseminating information, educating parents, the mindset that reproductive and sexual health are “private matters,” and media portrayals of these topics.

*Needed Strategies:* Strategies identified as being in need by the participants were increased education on the topic, vaccine and prevention programs, and the creation of a safe place for kids to go and talk comfortably about these issues.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with Planned Parenthood, schools, public health organizations, churches, law enforcement, health care providers, and parents.



### **Tobacco**

Six key informants included Tobacco as a top health priority for the County.

*Existing Strategies:* State tobacco laws for smoke-free zones and companies’ smoke-free policies are in place and play a critical role in addressing this issue. Public health campaigns, education on the risks and consequences of smoking, and smoking cessation activities also help to address tobacco use in the County.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Participants mentioned that there are cultural influences for tobacco use and the perception that it is “cool to smoke.” The fact that smoking is habit forming and addictive is another main challenge.

*Needed Strategies:* Participants felt strongly that more education for parents, teachers, youth leaders, and the community in general, has potential for successfully addressing this issue.

Legislating tobacco-free zones and the elimination of unnecessary harmful ingredients from tobacco products, along with enforcing laws (such as not selling to minors), are crucial as well.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with public health professionals, schools, businesses, health care providers, and other hospital systems. One participant also felt that partnering with smoke shops and gas stations would be beneficial.



### **Access**

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

*Existing Strategies:* Participants identified the Lakeshore Community Health Center, Mental Health America, and the Employee Assistance Program as existing community resources. Other strategies in play are collaboration across agencies and creating awareness that access is an issue.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Bureaucracy, paperwork, costs, and funding were all noted challenges. A lack of knowledge, resources, and successful navigation of existing resources to get appropriate access to services at the right time were identified as other barriers. One participant also noted that language barriers and lack of child care at appointments affect access as well.

*Needed Strategies:* Increased funding and education for providers on services offered in the community are needed. The use of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter was also proposed as a strategy to address access issues in the County.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with the entire medical community, including acute, long-term, hospice, and community care providers. Respondents felt it important for hospitals to partner with the Department of Health Services, insurance companies, and employers. Specific organizations noted to collaborate with were the Salvation Army, United Way, and Safe Harbor.

### **Injury and Violence**

Injury and Violence was ranked as a top five health issue by four key informants.

*Existing Strategies:* Domestic and sexual abuse services and shelters are available, such as those provided by/at Safe Harbor. The County also has crisis lines and health care professionals including Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners that address issues of injury and violence.

*Barriers and Challenges:* Main challenges include under-reporting of violent incidents. Victims may be afraid to report them or are not always believed once they have reported an incident. Injury and violence are often hidden issues, and screening for domestic violence is also challenging.

*Needed Strategies:* Participants felt that an awareness campaign is needed to bring attention to the issue and to educate individuals about the law in these types of cases. Additional education and resources were also mentioned as an area of need.

*Key Community Partners to Improve Health:* Hospitals should be partnering with Safe Harbor, Bridgeway, schools (at all levels), counselors, law enforcement, mental health professionals, and other health care providers.

## Appendix A

### Sheboygan County Key Informants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Jose Araujo	Community Service Project Manager	Partners for Community Development
Aaron Brault	Director	Sheboygan County Planning & Conservation
Kevin Bruggink	Superintendent	Oostburg School District
Dr. Howard Croft	MD Emergency Medicine	St. Nicholas Hospital
Amy Culver	Social Work	Health and Human Services
Patty Fallon †	Health and Nutrition	Sheboygan County Head Start
Mark Hillesheim	Service Line Director, Employer & Retail Services	Prevea
David Hughes	CFO	Lakeshore Community Health Clinic
Jason Kaat	Youth Minister	Redeemer Lutheran Church
Todd Kronberg	Police Liason Officer	Plymouth School District
James Lammers	Program Coordinator	Crisis Center – Sheboygan with Family Services Northeast Wisconsin
Christine Larson	Director of Operations (RN)	Aurora Health Care
Gina Lemmenes	Director of Nursing	Pine Haven Christian Home
Diane Liebenthal	Program Supervisor	Health and Human Services
Amy Onsager	Hospice Administrator	Sharon Richardson
Todd Priebe	Sheriff	Sheboygan County Sheriff

MaryAdele Revoy	Coordinator of Resource and Development	Family Resource Center
Sherri Samuels-Fuerst	HR Administration Director	Sargento
Pam Sandee <sup>†, ††</sup>	Clinic Coordinator	Salvation Army
LuAnn Travis	Executive Director	Family Resource Center
Ann Wondergem	Director of Operations & Program Management	United Way
Mai Xiong <sup>†††</sup>	Southeast Asian Outreach Coordinator	Safe Harbor

**†** 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