

Access to Healthcare Services Macomb County At-Risk Populations

In 2015, the Macomb County Health Department (MCHD) conducted a Community Health Assessment (CHA) with community partners and stakeholders. In 2016, MCHD published the results of the CHA. MCHD reviewed the collected data and was able to identify five priority areas in which access to health care issues were evident. These priority areas stemmed from all four areas of the Community Health Assessment: Community Themes and Strengths Assessment, Community Health Status Assessment, Forces of Change and Local Public Health Systems Assessment (CTSA, CHSA, FOC, and LPHSA). Listed below are the access to health care issues identified, and the key data that supported the selection of these priority areas:

- **Mental Health**
 - 10.5% of residents uninsured (2014)
 - 53.2 % of the survey population stated Mental Health was an important health issue to address
 - According to 2015 County Health Rankings, the ratio of residents to mental health providers was 752:1, significantly higher than the State of Michigan ratio (539:1) and nearly 50% higher than the best U.S. averages for mental health provider to resident ratios.
- **Oral Health**
 - More than 26% of Macomb residents speak English less than well, or not at home
 - Oral health care was identified by non-English speakers as a priority, significantly higher than other health issues, including mental health or substance abuse.
- **Free/low cost Healthcare**
 - Lack of knowledge regarding low/free options
 - Cost is a barrier to healthcare services
- **Health Insurance**
 - 10.5% of residents uninsured (2014)
 - Possible changes to Affordable Care Act
- **Health Insurance education**
 - Throughout all aspects of the CHA, residents identified the need for more education and classes as a high priority

Within these five areas, three population groups are more significantly affected than others. These include seniors, low-income individuals and families, and non-English speakers.



1. Seniors

- a. While seniors have Medicare coverage for basic healthcare necessities, additional preventative services, as well as Part B and Part D plans, can be costly. In addition, Medicare provides no oral health care benefits, which increases out-of-pocket costs and increases access to care issues.

2. Low-income individuals and families

- a. More than 10% of residents are still uninsured. With potential changes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on the horizon, access to healthcare has caused concern among residents. The sustainability and long term application of the ACA is up for debate and also causing concern and confusion for residents who are enrolled, or need to become enrolled to receive health insurance benefits. Focus groups and survey results indicated that residents were unaware of free or low cost options in the community. While a portion of the lower income population is eligible for Medicaid coverage, the number of health care providers who are willing to accept Medicaid insured residents, is limited and fluctuates, making it difficult for these residents to find a consistent provider. In addition, the number of dental providers that routinely accept Medicaid dental benefits is low, and for those who accept patients, a limited number of appointments are available.
- b. Lower income individuals classified as “working poor” often have jobs that do not provide benefits, may have limited or no paid sick time making it difficult to attend healthcare appointments in traditional health care offices.

3. Non-English speakers

- a. Macomb County has a large non-English speaking population. Many residents are immigrants and/or refugees who are not eligible/yet eligible for health insurance benefits. For those who have been able to utilize the ACA, the potential changes to the program has caused concern among residents. The sustainability and long term application of the ACA is up for debate, and also causing concern and confusion for residents who are enrolled, or need to become enrolled to receive health insurance benefits. Many non-English speakers may also not be eligible for Medicaid, yet these individuals tend to be unaware of free or low cost health care and dental care options in the community. Cultural differences, language barriers and lack of understanding the health care system in the United States leads to access issues for non-English speaking residents of Macomb County. Non-English speakers also identified cost for both health



care coverage and prescription drugs as a significant barrier to receiving care. More than 20% of non-English speakers stated they were unable to receive the health care their needed during the last year.

MCHD recognizes that populations in Macomb County are still struggling to find and utilize healthcare and oral health services. The department aims to develop goals and objectives to address the identified access issues and the specific populations that are most affected – seniors, low income individuals and families, and non-English speaking residents. Workgroups supporting the Community Health Improvement Plan, along with the Macomb County Oral Health Coalition, will consider these factors when developing implementation strategies moving forward. Goals, objectives and actions created to address access to services issues targeting the at-risk populations will be updated as progress is made or as the data changes.

