Community Health Improvement

Community Health Improvement is about making our community more vibrant, resilient, and equitable.

Health is complex and influenced by the health care we receive, our own health choices, and our communities. In fact, research tells us that where a person lives, the quality of their education, availability of parks, trails and open spaces, stability of housing and economic security and social relationships all have the largest impact on a person’s long-term health.

What Goes Into Your Health?

The factors that influence health fall into four main categories:

1. Socioeconomic Factors (40%)
2. Physical Environment (10%)
3. Health Behaviors (30%)
4. Health Care (20%)

Investigation and investment into each of these categories is important for improving the health of a community.

-The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Community Health Improvement describes the efforts of a community to improve its local health conditions. The process is a long-term, repeating cycle of assessing community health needs, developing appropriate action plans, and mobilizing resources to carry out action plans. The overall goal is to employ local knowledge, community stories, multiple sources of data, and the actions of everyone from community volunteers to elected officials to improve the health of Whatcom County.

Works together
Engage the community
Communicate
Sustain improvement results

1. Organize
2. Assess needs & resources
3. Focus on what’s important
4. Choose effective policies & programs
5. Act on what’s important
6. Evaluate actions

Community Health Improvement and Community Descriptions

Seven Principles of Community Health Improvement:

• Multi-sector collaborations that support shared ownership of all CHI phases, including assessment, planning, investment, implementation, and evaluation
• Proactive, broad, and diverse community engagement to improve results
• Shared definition of community that encompasses both a significant enough area to allow for population-wide interventions and priority areas to address disparities among subpopulations
• Transparent processes to improve community engagement and accountability
• Use of evidence-based strategies and encouragement of innovative practices through evaluation
• Evaluation to inform continuous improvement processes
• Use of high-quality data pooled from and shared among diverse public and private sources

Community Health Improvement: 1st Cycle (2011 to present)

**WHAT TO WORK ON**
- **Community Connection and Resilience**
  - Foster community voice and engagement
  - Cultivate a culture of compassion and understanding
  - Respond collectively to community substance use and mental health challenges
- **Child and Family Well-Being**
  - Strengthen emerging families
  - Support early learning
  - Help youth thrive at home and school
- **Healthy Active Living**
  - Expand access to healthy food
  - Create more safe places to walk, bike, play and connect
  - Limit exposure to tobacco, alcohol and other harmful substances
- **Health Care Access and Service Delivery**
  - Ensure access to essential health care services
  - Connect people with complex healthy conditions to needed supports
  - Enhance patients’ experience of care

**WHAT'S BEING DONE**
- [some multi-sector work happening around Whatcom County]
  - ACEs/trauma-informed trainings in most school districts in Whatcom County
  - Behavioral Health Specialists and family resource coordinators in school districts
  - Compassionate Community Resolution
  - Forum on Addiction
  - Expansion of evidence-based programs
  - Even Start (initiative focused on prenatal – age 3 population and their families)
  - Healthy Food Access
  - Healthy Places to bike, walk, play and connect (place-based)
  - Healthy Planning
  - Youth substance use prevention programming
  - Increasing access to insurance and dental services
  - Cultural humility
  - Care coordination

Community Health Improvement: 2nd Cycle (began in 2016)

**2nd Cycle Process**
- Community member and partner engagement
  - Occurs during each phase of Community Health Improvement

**Community Health Assessment**
- Community Descriptions
  - Place-based snapshots of how health and well-being are being experienced around Whatcom County

**Community Based Participatory Action Research with Opportunity Communities**
- Community decides upon priorities and strategies to make the largest impact for health improvement

**Community Health Improvement Plan:**
- Data update and county-wide implementation plan that builds upon the work from the first cycle of Community Health Improvement
- Addresses emerging issues identified during the Community Health Assessment
- Includes Implementation Plans developed by Opportunity Communities through the Participatory Action Research process

**Includes existing reports and plans such as:**
- PeaceHealth's 2016 Community Health Needs Assessment
- ALICE (United Way)
- Prosperity Project (Opportunity Council)
- Comprehensive Plans (County and City)

**Opioid Response Plan**
- **Even Start**
  - Child & Family Assessment
  - Generations Forward Future Search conference

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