



Lake County General Health District

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LAKE COUNTY GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

LAKE COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH SURVEY FINDINGS SPUR ON NEW PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMS

A survey to aid in determining Lake County's health needs and direct future public health services was taken between November, 2010 and March, 2011. A report of the findings was created and is titled the 2011 Lake County Community Health Assessment (LCCHA). The LCCHA will be distributed to community agencies, community leaders, and businesses during the month of October. The 136-page report can also be found by visiting the Lake County General Health District's website at www.lcghd.org.

The report will be used for many purposes by community agencies, including assessing the health of Lake County residents compared to other residents in Ohio. Lake County is fortunate to have a lesser degree of health concerns than other counties in Ohio, but has plenty of work ahead to be as healthy as the leading states in the United States.

The effort to collect the information was led by Deputy Health Commissioner Ron Graham of the Lake County General Health District. "Our intent was to cost-effectively collect health data that would benefit everyone: from community agencies to the young and the elderly. I am confident we accomplished that and exceeded our expectations".

Participation in the LCCHA was voluntary and limited to Lake County residents 18 years of age or older. The survey was administered face-to-face and online and was available in both English and Spanish. Participant names were not associated with survey responses. The LCCHA was separated into the following sections: Demographics, Quality of Life, Community Problems and Issues, Physical Health, Mental Health, Immunization Assessment, Prescription Medication Assessment, Healthy Living, Family Health, Preparedness, Personal Health Attitudes, and Community Health. Some of the findings of the LCCHA were that:

- Over half (53.4%) of all respondents identified adult obesity as a top health problem facing Lake County, followed by drug addiction (44.4%), childhood obesity (42.2%), and mental health issues (42.2%).
- Over (60%) of respondents identified alcohol and drug abuse as the top unhealthy behaviors in Lake County.
- The next most common responses included lack of exercise (46.7%), poor eating habits (42.3%), and smoking/tobacco use (38.6%).
- The two most commonly identified community issues that had the greatest effect on life in Lake County were unemployment (59.4%) and affordable health services (41.7%).
- Over half of the participants (52.3%) agreed that it is the responsibility of both the individual and the community to improve the health of a community, while (41.7%) believed the responsibility rested with the individual.

- When asked what they believed to be the best ways to improve community health, the most common responses included providing health insurance to all community members (45.9%) and walking trails (41.2%).

Twenty-three percent (23.2%) of respondents were smokers or used tobacco products, with African American males reporting the highest use (43.6%). Over 20% of respondents reported that they were regularly exposed to secondhand smoke. As with current tobacco use, African American males (48.6%) were most likely to report being exposed to secondhand smoke. Deputy Health Commissioner Graham added that "we are seeing many of the trends as a nation, and minorities often experience significant health disparities when compared to their Caucasian counterparts". The assessment was also designed to provide data specific to gender, various income levels, and age in an effort to maximize the potential use of the study in order to benefit as many agencies and communities as possible. In order to combat such public health problems effectively, the Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change (ACHIEVE) Initiative's (www.lakecountyohio.gov/achieve) executive leadership team led by the Lake County General Health District will oversee resources needed to reduce these disparities.

The 2011 Lake County Community Health Assessment was the first step in a two-part planning process. Step two, currently underway, involves the creation of a Community Health Improvement Plan, which will identify and prioritize goals and objectives for improving the health of all Lake County residents based on the indicators contained in this report. It is the thought that by taking a leadership role in county and regional health, the Health District will create a system for communication, program development, and coordinated prevention that requires agencies to interact continually.

The data collected has already resulted in new programming for the Health District and Lake Health. The Health District has established a Healthy Lifestyles Initiative, which launched on October 3, 2011. This initiative will provide weight management, promote community resources, and encourage physical activity options for children and their families dealing with adopting healthy lifestyles.

The Health District is also currently developing grants for community gardens in several communities to increase access to fresh vegetables. The Health District and Lake Health are also in the development stages of a county-wide childhood obesity play geared toward school-aged children, parents/caregivers, and businesses to assist the public's awareness that obesity is the number one concern of Lake County residents and the problems to which our children currently struggle to cope.

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