

# Putnam County

## Community Themes and Strengths Assessment 2016-2017

To better understand and meet the needs of our growing community, the Partners for a Healthy Putnam County, facilitated by the Putnam County Health Department, conducted a Community Health Assessment (CHA). The Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP) process was used as the method for ensuring that comprehensive data was collected for the CHA. One of the four assessments that are part of the MAPP process is the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment. This assessment consists of talking with community members and surveying stakeholders to gather a better understanding of the community's concerns and opinions regarding the health of Putnam County. This information allows for a better understanding of how the quality of life is perceived in the community and what resources are available to improve the health of our residents.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with community members from different backgrounds. The diverse focus group participants were asked to respond to a series of questions relating to the health and quality of life in Putnam County. All of the groups were asked the same key questions. The opening question was optional as an "icebreaker" to help the groups become more comfortable with the process, if needed.

The following groups participated in the focus group discussions:

- Parents of at-risk youth
- Parents of Head Start students (Leipsic and Ottawa)
- Senior Citizens (Leipsic and Ottawa)
- At-risk youth
- Guidance Counselors
- Elementary Teachers
- Food Pantry participants
- Youth from PARTY (Putnam Adolescent Response Team for Youth)
- Leipsic Ministerial Group
- Police Chiefs

Overall the groups felt that Putnam County is healthier than other communities in the area. Putnam County is a friendly and supporting community and is a safe, clean place to live. There were some common areas of concern that were identified throughout the groups. Universal themes noted were the following:

- increase in addictions (alcohol and drug) and how children/families are affected
- mental health and concerns with access to services
- lack of transportation
- challenges for schools and parents (behaviors, etc.)
- obesity (sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating)
- high cancer rates

Below is a summary of the responses from the focus groups. The responses tallied could not include every response given, but rather the group consensus.

*Opening Question #1(optional): What do you like best about living in Putnam County?*

- Friendly and welcoming communities and organizations
- Family is here and community members look out for and help one another
- Safe and clean place to live

*Key Question #2: How would you describe the health and quality of life in Putnam County?*

- Quality of life above average in Putnam County
- Better than most communities, but seeing increasing issues with obesity, mental health, and addictions
- Good safe schools
- Lack of recreational facilities (youth spend too much time with electronics and not enough time outside)
- Lack of transportation
- Cancer rate concerns
- Family networks are present
- Concerns about alcohol use and how it is not considered a problem
- Older population is often in good health

*Key Question #3: In your opinion, what are the most critical health and quality of life issues in Putnam County?*

- Addiction on the rise (alcohol, and drugs [heroin])
- High cancer rates
- Mental health issues, particularly with child/ young adults (lack of providers, schools seeing more mental issues with fewer resources)
- Bullying
- Drug issues and the effect on the children of users
- Effects of social media and television on psychological and emotional health

*Key Question #4: In your opinion, what would improve the health and quality of life in Putnam County?*

- Transportation services
- Parenting programs (on behavior issues, coping skills for children/ young adults, social skills)
- More mental health facilities/ resources
- Increase availability of mental health counselors at schools
- More fresh fruit and vegetable options
- Leipsic Community Center will be offering a clinic, pharmacy, cooking classes, etc.

*Key Question #5: In your opinion, what key resources already exist in the community that could contribute to improved health and quality of life in Putnam County?*

- YMCA, Peak and other fitness centers
- Council on Aging, PC Health Department and Veterans Services
- Pathways, Counseling Matters and Putnam County Ambulatory Care Center
- Leipsic Community Center and Food Bank
- WRAP (Wraparound program provides family assistance for at-risk children), Help Me Grow, Big Brothers/ Big Sisters and WIC

- Churches with programs to help with home improvement, health related activities
- Food Pantry
- Re-entry help for those getting out of prison (Gilboa church)
- Community gardens
- Celebrate Recovery (New Creation)

*Closing Question #6: Considering everything we have discussed, what is the most important issue you would like to see the Partners for a Healthy Putnam County address as part of the community's health improvement planning efforts?*

- Transportation
- Addiction (Alcohol and Drugs)
- Bullying
- Mental health services (depression, mental health of children)
- Parenting education (behavior issues, ADHD, discipline, work ethic, communication)
- Nutrition and Exercise (combating obesity and educating our children)

## Key Informant Survey

As part of the Community Health Status Assessment, groups of key informants in the county were identified and were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding the health and quality of life of the Putnam County community. The key informants were comprised of county physicians, mental health providers and businesses.

Themes similar to those identified in the focus groups were also noted by the key informants. Some of the top health issues in which there is concern included:

- mental health (depression, anxiety, etc.)
- diseases related to lifestyle choices (obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes)
- addictions (drug dependency, excessive alcohol usage, overeating, tobacco)

Mental health was discussed multiple times in the key informant surveys. Informants acknowledged a lack of resources to help residents address and cope with their mental health. There is a shortage of psychiatrists and there are no in-patient mental health facilities in Putnam County. The resources that are available are limited by wait times, location and lack of transportation. There is also a concern that residents have limited means to pay for services.

Obesity was a recurring theme in the key informant surveys. Obesity is seen as a common thread between many of the health conditions (hypertension, type-2 diabetes) in which Putnam County residents face. Contributing factors to obesity include the following: lack of education on food choices, sedentary lifestyles, and poor mental health.

Addiction was identified as a struggle for the county's residents. A difficult component of addiction is being able to acknowledge that a problem exists. As pointed out by the key informants, many Putnam County residents are unaware that the frequency in which they engage in unsafe behaviors ranks them in an addiction category. This struggle is intensified by the lack of local addiction treatment centers, inadequate education, and limited support-networks.

Below is a summary of the questions that were asked of the key informants:

1. *In general, what do you think are the top 3 health issues in our county? Does this mirror the health problems you see in your practice?*
  - Mental Health Issues (anxiety, depression, poor relationship choices)
  - Diseases related to lifestyle choices (obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes)
  - Addiction (drug dependency, alcohol, over-eating, tobacco)
  
2. *What do you see as your role in conjunction with the public health system (health dept., mental health, schools, healthcare systems) in addressing these problems?*
  - Educating, promoting, and empowering healthy choices and lifestyles
  - Directing to appropriate resources (i.e. counseling, in-patient, medical specialists)
  
3. *As a physician/mental health practitioner, you are likely refer patients to other practitioners. What are the biggest barriers in helping your patient get the types of care they need?*
  - Transportation (no vehicle or no money for gas)
  - Financial restraints (lack of qualifying insurance, outstanding medical bills)
  - Limited availability of medical specialists in close proximity (long wait times to get into practice, none located in the area, particularly lack of psychiatrists and in-patient mental health facilities)
  
4. *The community health survey showed 74% of adults in Putnam County are overweight or obese versus 67% in Ohio and 65% in the U.S. What can/should be done by you or others in our community to address the obesity issue?*
  - More indoor recreational facilities (indoor playgrounds, walking tracks, biking tracks)
  - Sidewalks for bike riding, walking, etc.
  - Education on portion sizes, definition of obesity, etc.
  - Education on dietary meal plans that target specific diseases
  
5. *The community health survey showed 44% of Putnam County adults had 5 or more drinks on an occasion in the last month compared to 18% in Ohio and 16% in U.S. What can/should be done by you or others in our community to address the alcohol issue?*
  - Education on standard drink sizes, definition of alcoholism
  - Start education at an early age
  
6. *Data from local sources such as EMS runs, mental health addiction services, and death certificates indicate a growing drug addiction problem. What can or should be done by you or others in our community to address the drug issue?*
  - In need of more addiction service resources
  - Early education on dangers of drug misuse
  - Development of a County Drug Court