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“Working towards a healthy and safe Putnam County”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Health Improvement Plan Sets Course for a Healthier Putnam County

On August 13, 2026, the Partners for a Healthy Putnam County met to discuss goals and strategies that are included in the 2026-2028 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The CHIP is a community-driven roadmap designed to address prioritized health concerns in the community and outline strategies that organizations, agencies, and residents can work on together. The plan reflects input and data gathered through the community health assessment process and focuses on issues that affect residents' health, well-being, and quality of life.

The newly released plan identifies three priority areas:

Mental Health & Substance Misuse

Adult and youth mental health and substance misuse continue to affect individuals, families, workplaces, schools, and the broader community. The CHIP emphasizes increasing access to screening tools, awareness of treatment resources, reducing stigma, youth mental health support, and strengthening youth substance misuse prevention efforts.

“Improving mental health and addressing substance misuse requires all of us,” Jennifer Horstman, Executive Director of the ADAMHS Board said. “Our goal is to create a community where youth and adults feel comfortable asking for help and know where to turn for support.”

Chronic Disease & Healthy Behaviors

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and other long-term conditions can have a significant impact on individuals and families. Many risk factors are influenced by everyday behaviors and community environments.

The CHIP will support efforts to encourage healthy behaviors, increase access to free opportunities for physical activity, improve access to healthy food, promote preventive care and screenings, and educate residents on how to better manage chronic health conditions.

The focus is not simply on treating disease, but on creating community environments that make healthy choices easier and more accessible.

Community Conditions: Social Isolation & Interpersonal Violence

The health of a community extends beyond medical care. Social connections, personal safety, and supportive relationships can have a significant impact on physical and mental health.

The CHIP identifies **social isolation and interpersonal violence** as prioritized community conditions. Strategies will focus on strengthening social connections through awareness of opportunities to gather and/or volunteer, intergenerational involvement, increasing support services for caregivers, educating youth on digital safety and healthy connections, improving adult communication with youth, and enhanced community awareness of interpersonal violence and how residents can respond.

Building stronger connections among residents and creating a community where people feel safe, supported, and valued are important components of overall community health.

A Community-Wide Effort

While the health department plays an important role in coordinating the CHIP, improving community health is a collaborative effort with health care providers, schools, social service organizations, businesses, faith-based organizations, community groups, local government, and residents.

“The Community Health Improvement Plan belongs to the entire community,” Kim Rieman, Health Commissioner said. “The priorities identified in this plan give us a shared direction, but the success of the plan depends on people and organizations working together.”

Residents are encouraged to become familiar with the plan by visiting www.putnamhealth.com, learn about opportunities to participate, and consider how they can contribute to a healthier community.

The public release of the Community Health Improvement Plan represents an important step forward—but it is only the beginning. The interconnection of the issues is clear and by working together to address mental health and substance misuse, chronic disease and healthy behaviors, and the community conditions we can build a healthier, safer, and more connected future for everyone.

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