



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
WYANDOTTE

Recommendations for a Better Future

Community Meetings
Wyandotte West Library • Donnelly College
October 18 and 19, 2011



Introduction

Recommendations for a Better Future

Healthy Communities Wyandotte is a county-wide initiative to involve local leaders and citizens in improving the health of people in our community.

HCW got its start in 2009 when Mayor Joe Reardon and Joe Connor, director of the Wyandotte County's Public Health Department, convened community leaders and researchers to discuss health data that ranked Wyandotte County last in the state for overall health.

In June 2010, Mayor Reardon and the Public Health Department convened agencies and organizations to discuss top health concerns. Their input, and that of county residents, formed the starting point for the HCW initiative.

Since November 2010, local leaders and citizens have been working together to tackle the health concerns of people who live, work, attend school and operate businesses in Wyandotte County. At HCW's highest level, the Steering Committee has met monthly to establish overarching goals and timelines and to coordinate the crafting of recommendations for a healthier community. Committee members from government, health care, education, community development, faith-based programs and nonprofit organizations form the backbone of the initiative.

More recently, five Action Teams – communications, education, environmental infrastructure, nutrition, and health services – have united residents, experts, and community leaders in brainstorming ideas for local improvements in each area. The recommendations that follow in this document are the fruits of their labor, and they are meant to provide a road map for how Wyandotte can address issues that have a direct impact on the well-being of people in our community.

Today, we ask for your honest feedback. Which of the recommendations from each Action Team should be considered immediate priorities in Wyandotte County? How can they be improved? Are there additional recommendations you can suggest? We hope you'll join us in answering these questions and in making Wyandotte a better, healthier place for everyone.



Executive Summary

Recommendations for a Better Future

Communications Action Team

1. Create a healthier community by sharing information and stimulating discussion to change behavior.
2. Position HCW as the ultimate resource for advancing health among all community members.
3. Ensure continuity of effort through coordination among all HCW work groups.

Education Action Team

Every student and family will have access to quality education and support services that promote readiness for school, future education, and subsequent careers.

1. Establish roles, responsibilities, and expectations to promote quality education and high achievement.
2. Integrate health and well-being into education.
3. Construct a comprehensive system to support quality education and high achievement.
4. Recognize and reward quality education and high achievement.
5. Create pathways to careers and post-secondary education.

Environmental Infrastructure Action Team

Build, redesign, and better utilize Wyandotte County's environmental infrastructure to provide opportunities for healthy and active living.

1. Provide physical activity opportunities throughout the county.
2. Improve neighborhood safety through infrastructure developments.
3. Create stronger neighborhoods through infrastructure developments that promote social connectedness.
4. Pursue policy changes that ensure improvements to environmental infrastructure.
5. Launch an educational campaign to inform the public about infrastructure improvements and strategies to lead an active life.

Nutrition Action Team

Improve Wyandotte County's food environment so that all residents can and want to eat healthy food.

1. Promote healthy eating through school food policies and programs.
2. Launch a culturally-sensitive healthy lifestyle campaign that focuses on good nutrition.
3. Increase physical access to healthy foods.
4. Make nutritious food more affordable.
5. Launch an education, marketing, and policy campaign to counter the influence of unhealthy food.

Health Services Action Team

Increase access to quality, affordable mental and oral health services in Wyandotte County.

1. Increase oral and mental health awareness and education.
2. Improve access to mental and oral health by increasing and enhancing advocacy and policy efforts.
3. Increase the county's oral health workforce.
4. Create a system of oversight and evaluation to ensure cultural competence within and equitable access to health services.



Acknowledgments

Recommendations for a Better Future

Healthy Communities Wyandotte would like to thank the following organizations and programs that provided valuable input and resources to these recommendations:

Unified Government of Wyandotte County / KCK	Parents as Teachers
Wyandot, Inc.	Juniper Gardens Children's Project
Project EAGLE	Cultivate Kansas City
Kansas State University Research and Extension	Mental Health America of the Heartland
Community Health Council of Wyandotte County	Douglas County Dental Clinic
REACH Healthcare Foundation	Duchesne Clinic
Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City	Indian Springs Dental Clinic
University of Kansas	Susan G. Komen for the Cure – KC
University of Kansas Medical Center	Riverview Health Services
United Way of Wyandotte County	Lina Burnett
El Centro, Inc.	Southwest Boulevard Family Health Care
Livable Neighborhoods	Operation Breakthrough
Wyandotte Health Foundation	Hemberger Pediatric Dental
Kansas Health Institute	Heartland Regional Alcohol and Drug Association Center
Rosedale Development Association	Mt. Carmel Redevelopment Corporation
Kansas City YMCA	Jenkins & LeBlanc
Kansas City, Kansas Community College	Quindaro Family Health Care
Turner Parks and Recreation	Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition
Kansas City, Kansas Housing Authority	Kansas City Community Gardens
Downtown Shareholders – Kansas City, Kansas	Society of St. Andrews, West
USD 500 – Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools	Rosedale Healthy Kids Initiative
USD 202 – Turner School District	Organization for Community Preservation
USD 203 – Piper School District	Oak Grove Neighborhood Association
USD 204 – Bonner Springs/Edwardsville School District	Jefferson's Farms
Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas	Episcopal Community Services
The Family Conservancy	Strugglers Hill-Roots
Project EAGLE	



Communications Action Team

Recommendations for a Better Future

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

People who live and work in Wyandotte County face four main barriers to getting information that could improve residents' health:

1. Wyandotte County's media landscape is fragmented and offers no major news source that focuses exclusively on the county. As a result, residents have no organized, streamlined way to access reliable information.
2. Many institutions that were accustomed to receiving regular news coverage in Wyandotte County – including the county health department and various nonprofit organizations that impact the county's health – no longer get that coverage.
3. Shrinking news coverage makes it difficult for the county's residents to stay informed about events and trends that could affect their health. It also makes it difficult for health-related organizations to spread information about ways to improve the community's health.
4. Due to differences in language, knowledge, culture and education level among Wyandotte County residents, it's necessary to communicate information in multiple ways. The needs of each audience have to be addressed to achieve effective communication.

Given these barriers and challenges, any communications plan that aims to improve the collective health of Wyandotte County must use multiple vehicles for getting information to the county's residents. From press releases to social media, speakers' bureaus to grassroots campaigns, the plan must be designed to reach as many people as possible while remaining sensitive to the different languages, cultures and values represented by the county's diverse population.

A successful communications plan can have a tremendous impact on the county's overall health. Information about medical care and health providers, for example, may assist people in seeking health care and necessary medical services. Communicating information about risky behaviors and healthy living opportunities may also help people change their behaviors. Additionally, announcements about community events, job openings, and educational support services may lead to improvements in socioeconomic factors. Lastly, effective local communication about nearby food outlets and recreation facilities may change the way people interact with the physical environment and, in the long term, perhaps change the environment itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a healthier Wyandotte County by sharing information and stimulating discussion to change behavior.
 - Increase awareness in Wyandotte County about what it means to live in a healthy community.
 - Use mass media (e.g., Google Fiber, TV, radio, print, social media; create a media contact list and establish relationships with the reporters and editors on that list.)
 - Create a system for coordinating messages regarding health promotion and health policies among HCW stakeholders.
 - Participate in community events (e.g., health fairs, immunization drives)
 - Create and distribute promotional materials (e.g., magnets, billboards, brochures, newsletters)
 - Identify the county's various "audiences" and create health promotion messages tailored to each.
 - Increase individual actions that encourage healthy lifestyles.
 - Create dedicated HCW community events (e.g., 5K run/walk, physical activity competitions)

- Identify and engage key community influencers (e.g., ministers, celebrities, notable leaders) to deliver messages about healthy lifestyles.
- Create a system for recognizing and rewarding outstanding personal action toward health (e.g., business sponsorships, community awards, gift cards, annual celebrations)
- **Position Healthy Communities Wyandotte as the ultimate resource for advancing healthy living among all community members.**
 - Increase awareness of Healthy Communities Wyandotte as a central resource for community health.
 - Drawing on information from HCW stakeholders, create a database to house information on programs, policies, research, and data that influence health in Wyandotte County (e.g., searchable web-based information clearinghouse)
 - Publicize HCW through media, promotional materials, and presentations (e.g., social media, speakers bureau, neighborhood meetings, schools)
 - Increase the perception of Healthy Communities Wyandotte as a valuable asset for community health promotion.
 - Create and use standardized brand materials and procedures (e.g., consistent messaging, HCW style guide)
 - Establish and follow protocol for publicizing all successful HCW projects and products
 - Increase community engagement in Healthy Communities Wyandotte.
 - Register and train community leaders to use the online database
 - Establish an incentive program for contributing to the online database
 - Establish and publicize regular opportunities for public discourse and feedback that feature a key influencer (e.g., the mayor, police chief, superintendents)
- **Ensure continuity of effort through coordination among all Healthy Communities Wyandotte work groups.**
 - Create policies and procedures for the Communications Action Team to support the work of Healthy Communities Wyandotte.
 - Implement communications strategies for other HCW work groups.
 - Establish a procedure for sharing research and plans across all work groups.
 - Create standards for work groups to use when preparing publications for use by HCW.
 - Establish a procedure for requesting communications assistance.
 - Create a marketing/communications office, staffed with two paid employees and interns.



Education Action Team

Recommendations for a Better Future

GOAL:

Every student and family will have access to quality education and support services that promote readiness for school, future education, and subsequent careers.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, “there is a well-known, large, and persistent association between education and health. This has been observed in many countries and time periods, and for a wide variety of health measures. The differences between the more than the less educated are significant: in 1999, the age-adjusted mortality rate of high school dropouts ages 25 to 64 was more than twice as large as the mortality rate of those with some college.” Furthermore, research suggests that “one more year of education decreases the probability of dying within 10 years by at least 3.6 percentage points.”

The 2011 *County Health Rankings* indicate that only 60% of students in Wyandotte County graduate from high school on time and only 42% of adults in the county have some post-secondary education. These low rates of educational attainment put Wyandotte County residents at greater risk for poor health outcomes and premature death.

In addition to death and illness, education also impacts many other health factors such as Wyandotte County’s unemployment rate, the proportion of children who live in poverty, and the amount of violent crime. In addition to these socioeconomic factors, people with more education also tend to have healthier behaviors – they drink less, smoke less, use fewer illegal drugs, exercise more, and eat healthier. Furthermore, people with better education are more likely to receive preventive care and diabetes or hypertension treatment. Overall, a better education helps everyone live a healthier, longer life.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. Recommendations listed in this document pertain to the whole of Wyandotte County and concern “p-12+” education – that is, education that starts prenatally and continues throughout the life course.
2. It will be crucial for all residents, professionals, and organizations in Wyandotte County to work together to accomplish these collective goals. Therefore, partnership should be seen as an integral piece of every recommendation, strategy, priority, and example.
3. Educators, community members, community organizations, parents and students all play crucial roles in each piece of these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish roles, responsibilities, and expectations to promote quality education and high achievement.
 - Collaboratively identify and define roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
 - Help everyone in Wyandotte County understand how they influence education and achievement.
 - Create buy-in to roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
 - Create a system of accountability for each role, responsibility, and expectation.
- Integrate health and well-being into education.

Please feel free to e-mail us at healthycommunitieswyandotte@gmail.com or like us at www.facebook.com/HCWyc

- Encourage all schools to meet the exemplary standards of Kansas' School Wellness Policy Model Guidelines.
 - Guidelines are available at: http://www.kneat.org/SNP/SNP_Docs/SNP_Guidance/Wellness_Policies/Wellness_Policy_Guidelines_Booklet_V10.pdf
- Promote and integrate health literacy into educational curriculum across content areas.
 - Example: Provide at least 15 hours of classroom nutrition education as learning experiences integrated into subject areas such as math, science, language arts and social studies.
- Offer health screenings (e.g., BMI and diabetes testing) with appropriate educational resources or referrals.
- Partner with community health institutions to communicate the importance of early childhood development and school readiness.
 - Utilize local programs such as Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start and Project EAGLE to disseminate information about developmental milestones for children to parents and caregivers.
- Create a framework system for assessing health at learning centers.
 - Partner with USD 204 to develop easy-to-understand health report cards that can be used across the county to help families understand the health of their children.
- **Construct a comprehensive system to support quality education and high achievement.**
 - Identify a comprehensive system of family support services.
 - Examples include parenting classes, after school programs, early childhood education.
 - Provide children and families with resources and referrals that meet their short- and long-term needs.
 - Normalize health and support services by offering them on-site through knowledgeable and approachable professionals.
 - Examples include school nurses and social workers.
 - Explore the use of remote interventions via Google Fiber and other technology.
 - Examples include virtual classrooms and distance learning opportunities.
 - Provide professional development opportunities to community members related to education and other social determinants of health.
 - As an example, provide continuing education credits to teachers to help them learn about how education, income, and social support are all closely linked to health.
- **Recognize and reward quality education and high achievement.**
 - Establish a coordinated, countywide system for monitoring, evaluating, and publicizing educational outcomes and achievement.
 - As an example, create a Mayor's Scholars Program to honor students who maintain a certain grade point average or complete a certain set of classes.
 - Partner with local businesses and organizations to celebrate students, teachers, and schools that demonstrate educational excellence and improvement.
 - Examples include sponsorship programs, educator of the year awards, and county scholarships.
 - Create an incentive system that rewards high school graduates with assistance to pursue post-secondary education.
 - Examples include the Kauffman Scholars Program and the Dotte Promise.
 - Partner with local businesses to publicize the link between high achievement and job attainment.
 - Help students understand the benefits of working hard in school and how it can pay off through high-paying, fulfilling, local job opportunities.
- **Create pathways to careers and post-secondary education.**
 - Ensure that students have the knowledge and skills to pursue higher education or vocational aspirations that result in jobs.

- Partner local businesses, schools, and institutions of higher learning to align curricula, key competencies, and skills.
- Introduce potential career paths as early as middle school by featuring role models who can motivate and help make coursework feel relevant.
- Launch a media campaign to promote parent engagement, a culture of high expectations, and the message “you can achieve anything.”
- Create mentorship or apprenticeship programs between local business and hard-working students.
 - Examples include Gear Up and Youth Build.



Environmental Infrastructure Action Team

Recommendations for a Better Future

GOAL:

Build, redesign, and better utilize Wyandotte County's environmental infrastructure to provide opportunities for healthy and active living.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Wyandotte County's outlook for health is concerning. Health outcomes help us understand how healthy we are right now, and health factors measure how healthy our community will be in the future and those elements we can influence to improve health. The Healthy Environmental Infrastructure Action Team will address the following health outcomes and factors in Wyandotte County:

- Poor and fair health (19%)
- Poor physical health days (3.7 per 30)
- Child and adult obesity (12% and 36%)
- Inadequate social support (27%)
- Homicide rate (22 per 100,000)
- Access to recreational facilities (6 per 100,000)
- Physical inactivity (31%)
- Diabetes (11%)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide physical activity opportunities throughout Wyandotte County.
 - Build, redesign and better utilize sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use trails.
 - Build, redesign and better utilize existing public facilities (e.g., parks, playgrounds, school grounds and community centers) while continuing to plan for future needs.
 - Research existing agreements and partnerships in the Kansas City metro area that have been utilized to develop community centers.
 - Partner to develop programs for seniors, adults, and children in Wyandotte.
 - Promote policy and program changes to improve access to natural areas in Wyandotte.
- Improve neighborhood safety through infrastructure developments.
 - Ensure that all neighborhoods have adequate lighting and trash receptacles.
 - Institute safety changes on high-pedestrian traffic thoroughfare streets (e.g., traffic-calming measures, wider sidewalks and high-profile crosswalks).
 - Increase the safety of bus stops (school and transit).
- Create stronger neighborhoods through infrastructure developments that promote social connectedness.
 - Ensure that all trails, sidewalks, and multi-use trails connect within the county and to surrounding counties.
 - Prioritize and encourage the development of neighborhoods that have an educational, commercial or public destination within ½ mile of residential areas.
- Pursue policy changes in Wyandotte that ensure improvements to environmental infrastructure.
 - Collaborate to support and strengthen community-based Parks and Recreation boards.

- Encourage partnerships between public entities and private businesses to promote the creation and improvement of community centers.
- Create a public system of prioritizing infrastructure improvements based on population served, safety concerns and the needs of vulnerable populations.
 - Promote efficient collaboration between school districts and the Unified Government.
 - Create a comprehensive system of timely communication and follow-up that heightens accountability among the Unified Government and WyCo residents.
- Launch an education campaign to inform the public about infrastructure improvements and strategies to lead an active life.
 - Educate the public about the benefits and ease of leisure-time physical activity.
 - Promote the use of public facilities in Wyandotte County.



Nutrition Action Team

Recommendations for a Better Future

GOAL:

Improve Wyandotte County's food environment so that all residents can and want to eat healthy food.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 18,062 people living in 13 census tracts in Wyandotte County have low access to food. In urban tracts, the USDA defines "low access" if at least 1/3 of the tract's residents reside more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store. These low access communities are also referred to as "food deserts."

Physical distance, however, is only one barrier to eating healthy food in Wyandotte County. Other impediments include the high price of healthy food, social practices that limit healthy food intake, cultural norms that do not incorporate foods typically grown in Kansas, and a shortage of perceived or actual time that encourages the consumption of unhealthy foods. Additionally, not everyone in Wyandotte County understands how to prepare healthy food from scratch, possesses the knowledge to make informed decisions about nutrition, or feels capable of leading a healthy lifestyle. Lack of nutritional knowledge and empowerment contributes, in turn, to a low countywide motivation to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. Finally, incentives to eating unhealthy food also abound, making it difficult for residents to prioritize nutritious food over fast food. These incentives include the fast-food marketing that drives corporate profit, low prices, an abundance of unhealthy food vendors, and community influences that associate social esteem with an unhealthy diet.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. There is a need to improve nutrition among Wyandotte County residents. Creating or amending policies and programs that improve the food environment may facilitate more nutritious eating habits and lead to better health among community members.
2. Partnerships among county leaders, organizations, institutions, and residents will be crucial if we hope to improve nutrition in Wyandotte County. It's important that the community join together and assist one another in making Wyandotte County a better place to live.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Promote healthy eating through school food policies and programs.
 - Institute farm-to-school programs to supply all school food programs with fresh produce.
 - Analyze current and advocate for school district policies that allow and encourage partnerships between schools and producers.
 - Examine potential federal, state, or local policy barriers to good nutrition and food access.
 - Create programs that foster partnerships among local producers and schools to establish convenient, affordable food channels.
 - Focus farm-to-school efforts on Head Start, child care centers, and other organizations that can be accessed easily for producer/consumer partnerships.
 - Encourage all schools to create school gardens so that students learn how to grow healthy food and why it's important to eat healthy food.

- Develop district policies and partnerships to promote school gardens by mitigating legal liability and maintenance concerns.
- Encourage school districts to invest time and resources into securing grants and other funding sources for gardens.
- Ensure that school gardening activities align with state standards.
- Allow students to accrue service hours through gardening activities.
- Expand the existing School Gardens program and create additional relationships between it and Wyandotte County schools.
- Ensure that all schools meet the exemplary standards of Kansas' School Wellness Policy Guidelines.
 - Develop a community accountability plan/program to monitor school nutrition program to ensure the provision of healthy food.
 - Empower parents and community members to advocate for best-practice school food programs.
 - Reduce competitive foods (i.e., unhealthy or nutrient-poor foods in vending machines and a la carte lines, and at events and fundraisers) served in and around educational environments through changes in local and state policy.
- Train educators to model healthy behaviors in and around school grounds.
 - Advocate for policies that encourage educators to use alternatives to candy and food-based achievement incentives in the classroom.
 - Provide resources and incentives to help educators model health behaviors in learning environments.
 - Advocate for policies, resources, and incentives that encourage healthy behaviors in and around school grounds among children and adults.
- Implement curricula and policy changes in child care centers, after-school programs, community recreation facilities, and schools that educate children and adults about healthy food.
 - Encourage schools to offer home economics and cooking classes.
 - Integrate nutrition education into existing physical and health education classes.
 - Create regular, fun community activities that introduce healthy foods to young people.
 - Establish nutritional standards for foods served in non-school education environments.
 - Highlight the availability of local continuing education and classes for credit that focus on wellness and nutrition among children and adults.
- Launch culturally sensitive healthy lifestyle campaigns that focus on good nutrition.
 - Support and strengthen partnerships to promote healthier eating.
 - Utilize community centers, schools, and faith-based organizations as central outlets for healthy lifestyle education and activities.
 - Create interactive information systems and printed materials that detail where all residents can access healthy food (retail and hunger relief outlets).
 - Distribute educational materials about local gardening and farming.
 - Increase promotion of local food programs (e.g., farmers markets, urban farms, beans 'n greens).
 - Encourage healthier food at community events.
 - Encourage the Unified Government to adopt policies that promote the purchase of healthy, local food for public events and that require caterers at such events to provide healthy food.
 - Utilize community and neighborhood centers as resources for modeling and leading healthier lifestyles.
 - Launch a campaign to require and promote the availability of healthy food choices at public events (include a mass media publicity component).
 - Offer incentives (e.g., recognition or endorsement) for restaurants that promote healthier, more affordable, local options (e.g., by increasing the prevalence of healthy food on their menus, serving age-appropriate portion sizes, or making the default standard option healthy – apples instead of fries, milk instead of soda).
 - Establish standards that outlets must meet or exceed in order to qualify for free HCW promotion.
 - Work with the state-level departments to better advertise existing resources (e.g., Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program) and enroll eligible residents.
 - Make healthy menu choices easily identifiable.

- Use stickers and promotions to highlight nutritious options.
- Publicize new USDA guidelines and other online nutrition resources that provide examples of healthy food choices.
- Launch a mass media campaign to encourage food empowerment and nutrition literacy.
 - Use economic comparisons to stress the affordability and cost savings of healthy eating.
 - Create advertisements and station them on city billboards, public access kiosks (in UG Buildings, vehicles and its website) to promote healthy lifestyles.
 - Encourage residents to use food assistance programs to buy healthy foods for themselves and their families.
- Increase physical access to healthy foods in Wyandotte.
 - Amend zoning codes and inspection regulations to make it easier for residents and producers to grow and distribute healthy food where they live.
 - Establish and support organizations that help residents assess and remediate their soil.
 - Increase the ease of leasing or purchasing property from the UG Land Bank, especially in high-poverty areas.
 - Relax codes that dictate conditions for the storage of equipment and supplies for urban farming.
 - Advocate for making urban agriculture a desirable amenity among neighborhood groups and within traditional neighborhood development guidelines.
 - Advocate for policy changes that make it easier to own small livestock (e.g., chickens) in the city.
 - Encourage more vendors to produce and sell fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods.
 - Adopt ordinances or by-laws that promote healthy food vendors and mobile fruit and vegetable vendors in low-income or geographically isolated neighborhoods.
 - Partner with faith-based and other community organizations to increase food distribution channels (e.g., mobile healthy food carts, produce trucks, farm stands).
 - Fund programs that provide technical and financial assistance to urban farmers, community gardeners, and personal gardeners.
 - Provide funding or access to equipment (e.g., refrigeration and wash stands) for urban farmers who wish to sell at farmers markets.
 - Create incentive programs to attract supermarkets and grocery stores to underserved neighborhoods (e.g., tax credits, grant and loan programs, small business/economic development programs).
 - Create incentive programs to enable existing small food store owners in underserved areas to carry healthier food items (e.g., grants or low-interest loan programs to assist the purchase of refrigeration equipment to store fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products; free publicity; a city awards program; or linkages to wholesale distributors).
 - Advocate for state-level policy change to eliminate caps on food preparation demonstrations at farmers markets.
 - Revise transportation policies and programs among the UG and local businesses to make accessing healthy foods within Wyandotte easier.
 - Realign bus routes or provide other transportation, such as mobile community vans or shuttles, to ensure that residents can access supermarkets or grocery stores easily and affordably through public transportation.
 - Create remote supermarkets whereby residents can call in or electronically submit grocery orders and pick them up without delivery charges at nearby public facilities.
 - Centralize existing statutes and regulations around buying, selling, and transporting food.
 - Financially assist the efforts of local entities to comply with these statutes and regulations.
 - Advocate for changes to statutes and regulations that make it easier for people to buy, sell, and transport food in Wyandotte.
 - Amend Wyandotte's planning documents to ensure that food production and distribution organizations are treated as important considerations when developing and revitalizing neighborhoods.
 - Prioritize healthy food production and distribution development projects that use public land.
 - Develop a Wyandotte Food Charter that establishes a vision for our future food system and outlines values and principles related to that system.

- Partner with the UG to set aside locations dedicated to the distribution and growth of healthy foods in Wyandotte's Master Plan.
- Support breastfeeding programs.
 - Encourage local businesses to create lactation stations in their workplaces.
 - Encourage local restaurants to allow breastfeeding in their facilities and to have breastfeeding blankets on-hand for mothers who want them.
 - Establish campaigns that support breastfeeding in the community.
 - Offer free, convenient breastfeeding classes for families.
 - Create mother-to-mother support groups and peer counseling programs for breastfeeding babies.
 - Integrate breastfeeding support and education into existing public health programs targeted toward new families.
 - Set up a round-the-clock breastfeeding hotline.
- Make nutritious food more affordable.
 - Support and promote the expansion of community garden programs that encourage the cultivation of healthy foods among residents.
 - Encourage residents to garden in their own yards and provide start-up funding for growing materials (e.g., seeds, shovels).
 - Partner residents interested in local food production with established growing networks and organizations.
 - Recruit new growers through a multilingual publicity and educational campaign.
 - Partner with the Greater KC Food Policy Coalition to advocate for policy changes that promote the expansion of urban growing (e.g., zoning, public land use regulations, land disposition, water permits and prices, special use permits, and code enforcement).
 - Expand nutrition assistance programs to help all residents purchase affordable foods.
 - Promote the use of WIC and Senior Farmers' Market vouchers, and SNAP benefits in settings where fruits and vegetables are sold.
 - Fund outreach programs to help qualifying low-income residents enroll in nutrition assistance programs.
 - Fund outreach, education and transportation to encourage residents of lower-income neighborhoods and nutrition assistance program participants to use farmers' markets and farm stands.
 - Advocate at the state level for the acceptance of WIC vouchers and EBT cards at farmers' markets.
 - Encourage the establishment and use of direct-to-consumer marketing outlets such as farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture subscriptions.
 - Advocate for policy changes that make establishing farmers markets easier and less expensive for growers.
 - Partner with local hunger relief organizations to ensure that emergency food assistance is always available for those who need it.
 - Advocate for policy changes at local, state, and federal levels to facilitate better nutrition.
 - Partner with the State of Kansas and the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/KCK to reduce food tax and create tax-free holidays on healthy food.
 - Teach women about the health and economic benefits of breastfeeding and how to breastfeed.
 - Partner with the Public Health Department and local health care providers to encourage prescriptions for healthy food along with supplying farmers' market vouchers.
- Launch an education, marketing and policy campaign to counter the influence of unhealthy food.
 - Discourage the UG from treating restaurants that serve high-calorie, nutrient-poor food as economic development tools, but rather, encourage the UG to invest in local food systems that provide healthy food options to community members.
 - Create a UG Food System Commission that incorporates representation from elected officials and residents, and that employs a food policy director (within the UG) who oversees and spearheads food policy activities.
 - Create a ratio requirement (per mi²) for unhealthy restaurants to grocery stores and farmers' markets.

- Amend zoning policies related to the advertisement of unhealthy foods and development of unhealthy restaurants near venues frequented by children and families (e.g., playgrounds, schools, places of worship).
- Create policies to limit toys as accompaniments to and incentives for high-calorie, unhealthy foods.
- Provide tax incentives to encourage the development of healthy, locally-owned restaurants and businesses.
- Develop community-based group activities that link procurement of affordable, healthy food with improving skills in purchasing and preparing food (e.g., community kitchens and post-secondary learning opportunities in the area of wellness and nutrition).



Health Services Action Team

Recommendations for a Better Future

GOAL:

Increase access to quality and affordable mental and oral health services in Wyandotte County.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Among adults living in Wyandotte County in 2010, 28.3 percent reported not having visited a dentist in the past year and 27.2 percent reported not having had their teeth cleaned in over a year. This type of inadequate oral health care in the county may contribute to the 40.9 percent of adults who also reported, in 2010, that one or more of their permanent teeth had been removed due to tooth decay or gum disease.

Oral health isn't Wyandotte's only area of improvement in the area of health services, though. Data from the 2011 *County Health Rankings* and feedback from residents in 2010 also indicate that the county has room for improvement in the areas of mental health and cultural competency. Data from the *Rankings* show that the number of adults who report having "poor mental health days" per month is almost one-third higher than the state rate (3.2 every 30 days). Residents also told us, during community listening sessions in June 2010, that mental health and mental illness carries a sizeable stigma in Wyandotte County and that people refrain from seeking services due to this negative perception.

Lastly, many residents expressed concern about their treatment when seeking health services in Wyandotte County. They spoke of being belittled, harassed, and patronized by clinicians and administrative staff, and of language barriers that made it difficult to understand the medical recommendations provided to them. Addressing each of these issues – oral health, mental health, and cultural competency – will be crucial if we hope to improve the health of our community.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. One way to improve health outcomes is to increase access to quality, affordable care.
2. Strategic collection of data should inform strategies and outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Increase oral and mental health awareness and education.
 - Evaluate and enhance education and outreach efforts to provide residents with information about mental and oral health prevention, providers, and accessing services.
 - Create a clearinghouse of oral health information (e.g., provide information on available dentists, types of insurance accepted, specialists).
 - Support and enhance existing community efforts around mental health.
 - Identify and eliminate barriers to accessing mental health services.
 - Bolster and expand efforts to collect information about mental health in Wyandotte.
 - Promote oral health care prevention and treatment through a public education campaign.
 - Strategically target and engage community organizations (e.g., schools, child care providers, assisted living facilities) to join a campaign to promote good oral health.
 - Partner with school districts and the health department to develop a dental screening card, encouraging families to visit the dentist in the summer to get ready for school.
 - Partner with medical providers to help promote early oral health care and prevention.

- Partner with school nurses to establish or enhance development of a network of parents to support, encourage, and facilitate oral health education, prevention, and treatment.
 - Strengthen existing partnerships between mental health and faith-based organizations.
 - Support and build upon existing collaborative efforts between the mental health and justice systems.
- Improve access to mental and oral health care by increasing and enhancing advocacy and policy efforts.
 - Advocate for dental homes for all residents as a way of ensuring timely and adequate, quality oral health care and prevention.
 - Advocate for state policymakers to prioritize the establishment of mental health homes (integrated care and care coordination) for residents.
 - Continue to advocate on the state-level for more local dentists and/or registered dental practitioners.
 - Support state-level partners working to educate legislators about the importance of mid-level oral health providers.
 - Support local partners and residents to continue researching, discussing, and addressing Wyandotte's oral health needs.
 - Shape and influence policies to support appropriate funding and resources for mental health services.
 - Create an annual Wyandotte County Mental Health Agenda to guide state and local mental health policy improvements.
 - Establish sustainable partnerships and collaborations between dental care providers and other health care professionals to ensure continuity of comprehensive oral health care.
 - Explore models of effective case management through local partners.
 - Create a partnership plan between community health workers and oral health professional to improve capacity for providing culturally responsive oral health care.
 - Support community partners as they educate legislators about the importance of access to and funding for mental health services.
 - Develop a mental health council to unite mental health providers and other sectors, and to increase their advocacy power.
 - Build local capacity to and encourage engagement in grassroots advocacy through community training workshops.
 - Partner with local entities to pilot a local reimbursement or incentive system for providers who care for patients with public insurance.
 - Encourage the Unified Government to partner with local foundations to create supplementary Medicaid reimbursement programs.
 - Use tax incentives to encourage all oral health care providers to accept a certain number of Medicaid beneficiaries per day.
 - Streamline Medicaid administrative procedures (i.e., eligibility, treatment approval) to improve access to care.
 - Advocate for higher Medicaid reimbursement rates at the state level.
- Increase the oral health workforce in the county.
 - Focus on recruiting more dentists through the state and county.
 - Partner with statewide organizations and coalitions to support advocacy efforts to increase workforce development.
 - Establish a Dental Professional Recruitment Program to explore methods of attracting newly certified oral health care professionals to Wyandotte.
 - Provide financial incentives and resources (e.g., scholarships, loan forgiveness programs) that encourage the expansion of the oral health workforce.

- Launch a campaign to educate policymakers about the need for funding to support oral health students in Wyandotte, and the need for additional funding for loan and scholarship programs.
- Ensure adequate resources for publicly funded oral health education and training programs to meet current and future labor demands for oral health providers.
 - Meet with policymakers to promote the financing of residency programs in public health settings using reimbursement streams through Medicaid and Medicare.
 - Promote and support recruitment or apprenticeship programs starting in high school.
 - Identify best practices that demonstrate a measureable improvement to the oral health workforce that can be replicated and expanded.
- Increase the number of dental providers working in safety net clinics and the number of oral health safety net programs.
- Create a system of oversight and evaluation to ensure cultural competence within and equitable access to health services.
 - Encourage health care organizations to ensure that patients receive effective, understandable, and respectful care that is provided in a manner compatible with their cultural health beliefs, practices, and preferred language from all staff members.
 - Encourage health care organizations to implement strategies to recruit, retain, and promote diverse staff members and leaders that are representative of the service area's demographic characteristics.
 - Encourage health care organizations to ensure that all staff across all disciplines receive ongoing education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery.
 - Mandate that health care organizations must offer and provide language assistance services, including bilingual staff and interpreters, at no cost to each patient with limited English proficiency at all points of contact, in a timely manner during all hours of operation.
 - Require health care organizations to provide patients, in their preferred language, both verbal offers and written notices informing them of their right to receive language assistance services.
 - Mandate that health care organizations assure the competence of language assistance provided to patients with limited English proficiency by interpreters and bilingual staff. Family and friends should not be forced to provide interpretation services.
 - Require health care organizations to publicize easily understood patient-related materials and post signage in the languages of commonly encountered groups within the service area.
 - Support health care organizations in the development, implementation, and promotion of a written strategic plan that outlines clear goals, policies, operational plans, and management accountability mechanisms to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services.
 - Encourage health care organizations to conduct initial and ongoing organizational self-assessments of cultural competence-related activities and to integrate cultural and linguistic competence-related measures into their internal audits, performance improvement programs, patient satisfaction assessments, and outcomes-based evaluations.
 - Encourage health care organization to ensure that data on the individual patient's race, ethnicity, and preferred language are collected in health records, integrated into the organization's management information systems, and periodically updated.
 - Encourage health care organization to maintain a current demographic, cultural, and epidemiological profile of the community as well as a needs assessment to accurately plan for and implement services that respond to the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the service area.
 - Encourage health care organizations to develop participatory, collaborative partnerships with communities and utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate community and patient involvement in designing and implementing cultural competence-related activities.

- Encourage health care organizations to ensure that conflict and grievance resolution processes are culturally and linguistically sensitive and capable of identifying, preventing, and resolving cross-cultural conflicts or complaints by patients.
- Support health care organizations in regularly publicizing information about their progress and successful innovations regarding cultural competence standards and in providing public notice about the availability of this information.