

**Mobilizing for Action
Through Planning and Partnerships
(MAPP)**

REPORT OF FINDINGS

**Polk County, Florida
2007**



This project was funded by the Polk County Health Department for the Polk Health Care Alliance and prepared by Research, Strategy & Analytics (RSA), LLC.

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Summary of Assessment Findings

This report provides a summary analysis of the four **Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP)** assessments completed for Polk County, Florida.

MAPP is a strategic approach to community health improvement.

This process helps communities improve health and quality of life through community-wide strategic planning. The MAPP process was developed by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). MAPP is also part of the Florida Department Health's community health improvement planning initiative. Community participation leads to collective systems thinking and, ultimately, results in effective, sustainable solutions to complex problems.

MAPP challenges the community to develop and achieve a shared vision for a healthy community. This process involves identifying and prioritizing local health issues, identifying resources for addressing them, taking action to improve health, and evaluating progress towards achieving the shared vision of a healthy community.

Goals of MAPP

The overarching goal of MAPP is to improve the health of communities. However, other goals exist such as:

- To provide tools to health system partners so that they may work cooperatively
- To bridge the gap between the local health system and the consumer
- To allow system partners to focus on key factors that contribute to health outcomes – health promotion and disease prevention, access to care, continuous quality improvement, and social and community activism.
- To create a long-term vision and strategic plan for improved health for the community.

MAPP brings four assessments together to drive the development of a community strategic plan.

1. **Local Health System Assessment** measures the capacity of the local health system to conduct essential health services.
2. **Forces of Change** identifies forces that are occurring or will occur that may affect the community or the local health system.
3. **Community Themes & Strengths** identifies themes that interest and engage the community, perceptions about quality of life, and community assets.
4. **Community Health Status Report** analyzes data about health status, quality of life and risk factors in the community.

The MAPP assessments help to identify major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the local health system. This is accomplished by gathering and analyzing data and information from multiple sources and perspectives, including health system consumers, health practitioners, social service agencies, and community leaders. Once all these assessments are completed, specific common themes emerge which will help guide the decision-making processes of both the health community and the individual health consumer.

Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

A CHIP is a formal strategic plan for health outcome improvement. Strategic issues are identified and prioritized from the findings of the four MAPP assessments. The community formulates goals and specific strategies for each of the strategic issues. These goals and strategies provide a comprehensive picture of how local health system partners will achieve a healthy community.

For Polk County, the first CHIP will be a three-year strategic plan, from 2007 to 2010. These dates are aligned with Healthy People 2010 goals and objectives. *Healthy People 2010: Understanding and Improving Health* serves as the basis for the development of state and community plans to improve health.

The Polk Health Care Alliance will be holding strategic planning workshops to develop the Polk County CHIP in the Spring of 2007.

Summary Findings of Polk's four MAPP Assessments

As compared to Healthy People 2010 goals and objectives and state rates in most major diseases, causes of death, and personal health behavior, Polk County needs improvement.

Healthy People 2010 is a comprehensive set of disease prevention and health promotion objectives for the nation to achieve by 2010. These health objectives are designed to identify the most significant preventable threats to health and to establish national goals to reduce these threats. The Florida Department of Health collects statewide data on births, deaths, reportable diseases, and personal health behaviors. Although Polk County is better than the state for some health indicators and has met or exceeded a few of the national objectives, there is still much work to be done to have a healthy Polk County. The Community Health Status Report findings identify specific health status issues of Polk County.

Population projections for Polk County are high, particularly for specific sub-groups, which will increasingly challenge the health system infrastructure in the future.

Polk County is experiencing phenomenal rates of population growth, particularly in the age 18-64 group, as well as among Hispanics and families at lower socio-economic levels. Additionally, as the population begins to age, the rates of both chronic diseases and deaths from all major causes will increase, creating a greater need for health system resources. Polk County also has significant rates of poverty within population sub-groups.

Poverty is a key indicator that impacts all areas of quality of life and can significantly impact the local health system, as well as, health outcomes for individual consumers. Residents at low income levels may be challenged with lower educational levels and lower-paying jobs, which may not provide health insurance benefits. If health insurance benefits are offered, people may not be able to afford to pay for the insurance. Many of these new residents at low income levels may qualify for indigent health care services. This may place an added strain on the existing local health system and require the need to expand resources to meet health care needs of these population sub-groups and low income families. Demographic trends of Polk County can be found in the Community Health Status Report.

Health disparities exist among different segments of the population in Polk County.

Health disparities must be addressed to improve health outcomes in Polk County. The Community Health Status Report indicates that several demographic groups in Polk County are not as healthy as others in the population. The report provides information about rates of disease and death for whites and blacks and, where data was available, for Hispanics. There is also some information available by age groups, gender, and socio-economic levels.

There may be multiple factors that contribute to health disparities including:

- Lifestyle habits (such as diet and exercise)
- Lack of knowledge about health issues and the health care system
- Personal and cultural beliefs about health and health care
- Beliefs and perceptions about the health care system
- Inadequate access to health care services
- Lack of culturally sensitive health interventions

It should be noted that data specific to the Hispanic population has only recently been captured and will need to be followed to address disparities that may be identified.

As Polk County is projected to see growth in the Hispanic population it is important that health status indicators are monitored for this population.

A high percent of Polk County residents lead unhealthy lifestyles and are at increased risk for disease and death.

Having a healthy lifestyle is the first line of defense in preventing disease and illness and improving quality of life. Healthy behaviors reduce the risk of disease and premature death. A significant percentage of residents of Polk County report having high blood pressure, being overweight or obese, smoking, not eating enough fruits and vegetables, nor getting enough physical exercise.

A healthy lifestyle requires a commitment to following healthy behaviors which include:

- Eating a healthy diet
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Being physically active
- Quitting smoking
- Obtaining routine medical and preventive health care
- Taking maintenance or preventative medications as prescribed.

Research has shown that increased efforts in this area will prevent chronic diseases that can lead to disability or death and improve health outcomes. Information on unhealthy behaviors can be found in the Community Health Status Report.

Individuals in Polk County should practice personal health care behaviors such as obtaining routine medical care and seeking preventive health screenings to help improve health outcomes.

Health practitioners, agencies and advocates agree that persons have a responsibility in their health care. To do this, individuals must have the ability to know when, where, and how to access the health care system. They need to be able to obtain regular check-ups and receive health screenings in an effort to manage and monitor their health status. This also includes receiving health information that will inform, educate and empower them to make informed decisions regarding their health care.

Healthcare Access can be hindered by multiple barriers, including but not limited to:

- Fear of medical procedures
- Beliefs that medical care is only needed when an individual is sick
- Lack of adequate health insurance
- Lack of financial resources to pay for health care services
- Lack of adequate, affordable transportation to and from health facilities
- Lack of knowledge about which doctors to choose, and where to go for health care

The results of the Community Themes and Strengths report indicate that people in Polk County, completing a community health survey, acknowledged their responsibility, want to access the health care they and their families need, and do, for the most part, adhere to their family physician's advice and prescribed medical regimens. These results were statistically significant at all income levels, races, and gender.

The community-at-large has a significant responsibility in ensuring that people have access to health services and live in environments in which they can be healthy.

The community's responsibility includes ensuring sufficient access to health care facilities and practitioners, and advocating for a healthier community as a whole.

According to a recent study conducted by the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, it is estimated that in 2004, 74,347 Polk County residents (age 0 to 64) are uninsured and have limited access to adequate health care resources. This encompasses the largest growing population group for Polk County.

Researchers at the Lakeland Campus of the University of South Florida conducted a health care study in 2003. This study estimated that:

- 50% of Polk County residents qualify for and receive care through Medicaid and/or Medicare.
- 25% of Polk County residents are without health care insurance or are inadequately insured (underinsured).
- 28% of Polk County residents are paying for private health insurance out-of-pocket or on a sliding fee-scale.

Through efforts of the Polk Healthcare Alliance and the passage of the half-cent sales tax, the health care safety net in Polk County has been expanding. Indigent health care services are available through the Polk Health Care Plan, Polk County Health Department, a growing network of Federally Qualified Health Clinics, and volunteer community health clinics. However, with the current demographics of Polk County and the projected growth in the number of low-income residents, the health care safety net will continue to be challenged to meet the needs of these individuals.

The community's responsibility also includes becoming familiar with and advocating for designing future housing developments that promote healthy lifestyles and making existing neighborhoods safe and healthy.

Community health education activities need to expand to target populations with significant health disparities.

The Local Public Health System Assessment identified the need for expanded health education targeting health disparities within specific health populations. In addition, the Community Themes and Strengths report showed significant knowledge gaps in the lower socio-economic groups in knowledge about how to improve their health, including health programs, where to go for health care, and knowledge about how to access mental health and substance abuse services.

Individuals at lower socio-economic levels often have a "knowledge gap" pertaining to health. This may be due to receiving less formal education, having inadequate reading levels, or lacking technological skills and the resources to access health information (like the Internet).

Effective health education efforts within the community will not only improve knowledge, but will help persons adopt healthy behaviors that improve overall health outcomes.

Health system partners need to monitor and advocate for local, state, and national policies that help advance the vision of being a healthy community.

Since approximately half of the population in Polk County qualifies for and receives care through Medicaid and/or Medicare, health system partners need to closely monitor proposed changes to these governmental programs as well as any proposed changes to sales tax and property tax laws.

According to findings of the Forces of Change assessment, key informants identified Medicaid and Medicare reform as a significant issue potentially impacting the local health system.

Furthermore, monitoring the proportionate share of health care funding allocated through federal, state, and local governments is necessary to ensure that the local health system is sustainable as Polk County grows.

In addition to policies regarding health care financing, energy needs to be focused on policies addressing local health priorities. This would include:

- Introducing policies that improve health status (e.g. smoke-free environments)
- Analyzing the potential impact of legislative and regulatory action on critical local health issues, and
- Communicating findings to help guide policymakers in making more informed decisions.

Health outcomes data and policy information needs to be examined from a systems perspective, to address potential implications of policy changes with the policy-makers. There is a barrier between the information housed within the various entities of the local health system and the process of sharing the data to guide actions. Since data are housed in multiple databases, or “silos” among many health system partners, there is a need for better sharing, analyzing and communicating findings from these multiple sources for more effective community health planning.

Next Steps

Throughout this report we have highlighted the major findings from the four MAPP assessments. The full results of each of the four assessments are provided in the remainder of this document. This report and the four MAPP assessments were created to provide a foundation for community health improvement planning in Polk County. The Polk Health Care Alliance will be holding strategic planning workshops to develop the Polk County community health improvement plan (CHIP) in the Spring of 2007. This strategic plan will be used to guide health system partners as they work together to meet the shared vision of making Polk County a healthy community.

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Additional copies of this report may be obtained by contacting the Polk County Health Department, at (863) 519-7900, ext. 1064 or RSA at (863) 529-5907. This report may also be found via the world-wide-web at www.PolkHealthCareAlliance.org.