

2021 Needs Assessment Summary Review and Recommended Actions

April 2021

Methodology & Background

Our organization continually examines health needs in the community and performs a deep dive into credible data as it is presented to us. Historically, we have supported a needs assessment effort undertaken by STEP (a community action agency), utilized regional data prepared by the health systems, and data made available through the state department of health. In addition, the Center has always relied heavily on our own patient data.

At this time, there is no new community needs assessment report available to review. The most recent report available was conducted in 2019 by UPMC. STEP's needs assessment is underway, but a report will not be available until later this year. Accordingly, we have relied heavily on data made available by Community Commons, a non-profit organization that is often utilized for community needs assessment projects.

Below is a summary highlights of available community data. The complete report is available on the board portal or you may request a paper copy from administration.

Demographics

Ethnicity / Race / Disability / Limited English Proficiency

The data suggests that a changing landscape in our service area exists and underscores the need for the Center to enhance our current cultural competency training program and to thoughtfully consider these individuals as we evaluate existing and new services.

Urban / Rural

The data highlighted that about 36% (42,121) of the county population is considered rural. To the Center, this fact means that we must consider other means to entice rural residents to seek care.

Veteran Population

The veteran population represents just less than 10% (8,898) of the total county population. We should continue our effort to provide access to care for this population.

Income and Economics

Children Below 100% Federal Poverty Level

Lycoming county leads both the state and the nation in the percentage of children below 100 percent of the federal poverty level. This indicator is relevant because poverty creates barriers to access to health services, healthy food, and other necessities that contribute to poor health status. Of the 4,669 children living below poverty, 37.7% are non-Caucasian.

Housing

Evictions / Substandard Housing

The rate of eviction and substandard housing unit rates in the county clearly support the Center's support of the Medical/Legal Partnership we entered about two years ago.

Public Housing

Given the number of individuals living in public housing, the Center should evaluate healthcare needs, in cooperation with other healthcare partners, to determine if we have or could have services needed by residents.

Homelessness

There are six homeless shelters in Lycoming county with 72 residents. We are providing routine primary care services for the largest and plan to attempt to engage the other five within the next 12 months.

Clinical Care and Prevention

The interpretation of the data strongly suggests that the Center continue to place a significant emphasis on maintaining and even improving outcomes as measured through our Clinical Quality Measurement process.

One specific area that stands out is the rate of Hispanic or Latino preventable hospitalization rate. The data suggests that perhaps our clinical care team should explore potential opportunities to work with our community partners to address this need.

Another specific data point that needs to be called out is the suicide rate. Lycoming county's rate is 18.7 per 100,000 population as compared to 14.5 state-wide. While the Center's behavioral health staff is acutely aware of the issue and works with BH partners in the region, consideration should be given to allocating additional resources.

The final measure that should be called out is obesity. The data shows Lycoming county to be 6.6% above the state and 7.5% greater than the national average. Although obesity is a focal point with our primary care providers, the effort is not actively measured as part of our Clinical Quality Measurement process.

Oral Health

Oral health is an integral component of an individual's health and well-being. Having poor oral health is related to a range of diseases in both adults and children.

Despite developments in oral health knowledge and practice, disparities are evident in oral health access, utilization, and health outcomes.

To address these disparities, River Valley is committed to developing oral health programs that are responsive to the specific needs of our populations. Our programs will be designed to:

- Increase access to oral healthcare
- Provide oral healthcare services
- Increase utilization of services
- Improve oral health outcomes
- Improve oral health literacy,
- Reduce barriers to accessing care
- Raise awareness about oral health
- Adapt and implement promising and evidence-based approaches
- Build networks of oral health partners in communities

In particular, our rural population typically has lower dental care utilization, higher rates of dental caries, lower rates of insurance, higher rates of poverty, fewer dentists per population (Lycoming County's ratio is 1988 to 1), and greater distances to travel to access care. Improving the oral health of rural populations requires practical and flexible approaches to expand and better distribute care, including approaches tailored to remote areas. Solutions include providing timely oral health education, caries risk assessment and referral, preventive services, and offering behavioral interventions. Increasing the flexibility and capacity of the oral health workforce for rural areas may be achieved by solutions that overcome distance barriers including mobile clinics and telehealth technology. Other barriers that are to be addressed include:

- Inadequate number of dentists who accept Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program or who have discounted fee schedules
- Insufficient or lack of dental insurance benefits
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of childcare
- Insufficient levels or lack of access to water fluoridation

- Lack of awareness about oral health
- Geographic barriers to care
- Poverty
- Cultural barriers and stigma

Covid – 19 Immunization

Lycoming County lags the statewide percentage (25.3%) of fully vaccinated residents in the effort to vaccinate for immunity against the COVID-19 virus. **As of 4/16/2021, the state reported that the weekly test positivity rate in Lycoming County was 9.3% and the weekly rate of new cases was 177.4 new cases per 100,000 people, thus Lycoming County continues to experience substantial transmission of the virus.** The Pennsylvania Department of Health defines substantial transmission as either a weekly rate of new cases per 100,000 people above 100 OR a weekly COVID-19 test positivity rate above 10%. Lycoming County has had 10,952 cases of the coronavirus with 270 deaths. River Valley has been devoting resources and energy to the delivery of testing and vaccines from the beginning of the pandemic and will continue to define efforts to meet this need. In addition, the long-term effects of this pandemic will require development of unique services to meet the needs of the County's residents, from those with continued compromised and developing health issues to the mental and emotional fallout suffered by others. Those solutions will require the wholistic and comprehensive delivery of medical and behavioral health services.