

Healthier Together – St. Croix County is ready for action

Healthier Together-St. Croix County is ready to implement the Community Health Improvement Plan 2009-2014. The plan represents the collective work of many dedicated individuals who have worked to find creative ways to improve health across the county, including local solutions for local problems.



Healthier Together-St. Croix County (formerly St. Croix County Community Health Improvement Process — CHIP) is ready to implement the Community Health Improvement Plan 2009-2014. The plan was unveiled after a year spent educating, mobilizing and aligning partners, creating a strategic framework for local health improvement activities, and continuing dialogue within communities.

In February 2010, communities across the county learned the results of the then recent community needs assessment. Five top health priorities were identified: access to primary and preventive health services; overweight, obesity and lack of physical activity; adequate and appropriate nutrition; alcohol and other substance use and addiction; and tobacco use and exposure.

In addition to multiple workshops and leadership orientation sessions held this past year, five task forces and over 100 community members have been involved in action, implementation and evaluation, planning to move St. Croix County's community health improvement process forward.

"We're fortunate to have the commitment from so many organizations and the ability to work well together," says Wendy Kramer, St. Croix County Public Health Officer, Healthier Together, co-facilitator. "It didn't happen overnight, it took time."

Efforts resulted in the creation of a formal community health improvement plan, designed by community stakeholders and partners, who are ready to put it into action. The plan, as it's now referred to, represents the collective work of many dedicated individuals who have worked to find creative ways to improve health across the county including local solutions for local problems.

Approach

The approach taken was to develop intervention strategies that best address the identified health needs:

- Focus on improving health factors and health outcomes in St. Croix County;
- Engage a network of multidisciplinary, multisectoral stakeholders at all levels;

- Use data to identify and measure health impact;
- Increase program reach and impact county-wide (through replication of models created);
- Concentrate on local area solutions that communities can benefit from;
- Support programs or policies recommended in both the Wisconsin and national health plans; and
- Do more than educate about healthy lifestyles. Initiate change strategies that require participants to “do” and empower residents to make the right decisions and are realistic given the time and resources available.

The success of each goal is based on outcome measurement to track progress and project impact. Evaluation will remain important to ensure goals/objectives are meaningful and measurable. Lessons learned will help guide future actions.

Community engagement

Healthier Together members encourage everyone to take a few minutes and review the plan, find a health topic of interest, and ask themselves, ‘how can I help?’

There are many opportunities within the plan for individuals or organizations to get involved. Among them are:

Farm to School programs, farmers markets, access to healthy foods, physical activity and nutrition programs for adults/youth, adolescent alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) treatment services, Parents Who Host Lose the Most campaign (alcohol), WI Wins Program (tobacco), cessation services (tobacco quit program), fluoride swish and/or fluoride varnish programs in schools, exploring Health Care Network (health care professional service provision for un/under insured county residents), just to name a few.

“What better time to do so,” says Karen Hansen, Hudson Hospital & Clinics, Healthier Together co-facilitator. The plan implementation coincides with Community Health Improvement Week, June 5-11, as announced by the Association for Community Health Improvement (ACHI).

It is the first ever national recognition week to raise awareness and increase understanding of community health improvement activities and the people, organizations and coalitions that lead them. The week highlights the importance of improving health in our own towns, cities and counties. Even the healthiest places have room for improvement. St. Croix County, ranked second healthiest in the state this year (County Health Rankings), is no different.

Community health – why important?

“Community health is important first and foremost because health is largely a product of everyday physical and social environment, and behaviors,” Hansen said. “Supporting strong health through community interventions, programs and policies is a smart way to have a positive impact, all complementary to individual medical care.”

Learn more

To view an online version of the plan, visit www.hudsonhospital.org/community or www.co.saint-croix.wi.us/publichealth. Print copies of the plan will also be accessible at all St. Croix County library locations early July.

For more information, to request a print copy, to schedule a Healthier Together representative to speak to your organization, or if you are interested in participating in any of the plan initiatives, contact:

- Co-facilitator Karen Hansen, Hudson Hospital & Clinics, (715) 531-6056, karen.m.hansen@hudsonhospital.org.
- St. Croix County Public Health's Wendy Kramer, (715) 246-8363, wendyk@co.saint-croix.wi.us.