

Loudoun County, Virginia

**2013 Mobilizing for Action through
Planning and Partnership Assessment:
Community Health Assessment**

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Introduction

What is MAPP?

Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) is a community-wide strategic planning tool for improving community health and the community-wide public health system. This tool, facilitated by public health leadership, is designed to help communities prioritize health issues and to ultimately identify resources for addressing them.

The MAPP model comprises a roadmap of four assessments designed to build a healthier community by providing critical insights into healthcare challenges and opportunities throughout the community. The four MAPP assessments include:

- I. Community Themes and Strengths Assessment
- II. Local Public Health System Assessment
- III. Community Health Status Assessment
- IV. Forces of Change Assessment

Individual Assessments

The **Community Themes and Strengths Assessment (CTSA)** focuses on better understanding community issues and concerns, perceptions about quality of life, and a map of community assets. This assessment addresses the questions:

- I. What is important to our community?
- II. How is quality of life perceived in our community?, and
- III. What assets do we have that can be used to improve community health?

The **Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA)** focuses on providing a framework to assess capacity and performance of the local public health system, which can help identify areas for system improvement, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that a strong system is in place for addressing public health issues. It addressed the questions:

- I. What are the components, activities, competencies, and capacities of our public health system?, and
- II. How well are the 10 Essential Public Health Services being provided in our system?

The **Community Health Status Assessment (CHSA)** provides an understanding of the community's health status and ensure that the community's priorities include specific health status issues (e.g., high lung cancer rates or low immunization rates). It addresses the questions:

- I. How healthy are our residents?, and
- II. What does the health status of our community look like?

The **Forces of Change Assessment** (FCA) performed in Loudoun County in September 2013 and focuses on the identification of forces such as legislation, technology, and other issues that affect the context in which the community operates. The forces are grouped into the following categories: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Scientific, Legal and Ethical. Forces are a broad all-encompassing category that includes trends, events, and factors. This assessment, within the scope of these above forces, addressed the questions:

- I. What is occurring or might occur during the next five years that impacts the health of Loudoun County and its public health system?, and
- II. What specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?

Community Health Assessment

The four MAPP Assessments form the core of the MAPP process. The Community Health Assessment provides linkages between each of these individual assessments and helps identify themes that will form the basis for revising Loudoun County's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Methods

The **CHSA assessment** involved a review of key Loudoun County data that impacts and describes the health of our residents. Data reviewed included demographic characteristics, access to care, quality of life, recreation, environmental health, behavioral risk factors, social and mental health services, maternal and child health, morbidity and mortality, and infectious diseases. This assessment is included as Attachment I.

As part of the **CTSA assessment**, the Loudoun Health Council reviewed the Health Check survey created in 2008 and decided to utilize the same survey without changes for better comparison of responses over time. English and Spanish language versions of the survey were posted on the Loudoun County website www.loudoun.gov/healthcheck and hard copies of the survey with survey response boxes were distributed to the Loudoun County Public Schools, Loudoun County government agencies and select private entities. Electronic links to the survey were distributed through press releases, social media, the Loudoun County Alert System, and through directed mailings to homeowners associations, private schools, the faith community and healthcare providers. Targeted efforts were made to reach new residents and other hard to reach populations. Responses were accepted from September 20, 2013 through December 31, 2013 and were evaluated using the analysis tools in SurveyMonkey and through Microsoft Excel. Detailed methodology is included in Attachment II.

The **FCA assessment** involved a series of focus groups conducted from September 9th through September 13th representing a wide number of public and private health and human service agencies, county agencies, public schools, law enforcement, safety net groups, the Loudoun Health Council and consumers was identified. Each session lasted two hours and was conducted throughout the county during the morning, afternoon, and evening to attract maximum attendance. Using brainstorming and force field analysis tools, all forces were extensively discussed. Participants in each group then voted their individual top five priorities. Detailed methodology is included in Attachment III.

The **LPHSA assessment** involved the Loudoun County Health Department (LCHD) as the lead organization, with LCHD's Health Educator serving as the Assessment Coordinator. The Loudoun Health Council was identified as the key LPHSA representatives to review the ten essential public health services, divided into two small workgroups with each workgroup reviewing five Essential Services consecutively over the course of the day on December 12, 2013. Once the workshops were completed, the results were compiled by LCHD staff and entered into a spreadsheet obtained from the Public Health Foundation. Detailed methodology is included in Attachment IV.

Results

Detailed results and limitations for each individual assessment are included within that assessment's attached report. Importantly, the results from the individual assessments were correct as of the time of their completion in 2013 and may not as accurately reflect the current status of Loudoun County.

The **CHSA assessment** showed that Loudoun is a rapidly growing and diversifying county in the national capital region. While it is the nation's wealthiest county with highly educated citizens, there is a growing subpopulation of low income, mainly immigrant, residents with limited access to care; this presents an ongoing challenge to the county's safety net services. Travel and traffic remain a continuing challenge as does maintaining a clean and healthy environment. Loudoun County is taking concrete steps to assure and improve the quality of its air and water. A byproduct of maintaining Loudoun's natural habitat has been an increase in reported Lyme disease cases. Loudoun County remains an excellent place to live and to raise children, with quality schools, low crime rates, low rates of reportable diseases and many available parks and community services. Tobacco and alcohol use remain a continuing challenge among Loudoun County youth, though not out of proportion with the region.

In the **CTSA assessment**, excellent schools, low crime/safe neighborhoods, and good jobs and a healthy economy were the items viewed as being most important to create and maintain a healthy community. Lyme disease, cost of healthcare and availability of healthcare within Loudoun County were the health concerns viewed by respondents as most important for our community to address. Bullying, drug use and gang involvement were the behaviors viewed being of greatest concern to our community's well-being.

Respondents most strongly agreed that Loudoun County provides a good quality of life, is a good place to raise children, provides quality education, and is a healthy and safe community. They disagreed that housing or healthcare was affordable in Loudoun or that they were prepared for a public health emergency. Respondents overall viewed themselves as being healthy; they have good access to medical and dental care, with urgent care centers playing an important role in accessing care when regular doctors' offices are closed.

Hispanic and Black CTSA respondents were more likely not to have a college degree, not be insured and to have incomes under \$50,000. These subgroups were more likely to prioritize access to healthcare as a concern, less likely to have seen a primary care provider or dentist in the previous year, and more likely to have used a safety net provider to receive care. They were also less likely to agree with statements about the quality of life and education in Loudoun County or to be concerned about Lyme disease.

Compared to those in 2008, current CTSA survey respondents were less likely to be under age 40 and more likely to be between 40 and 54. They were also more likely to prioritize excellent schools, good jobs, Lyme disease and bullying as key issues or concerns. Current survey respondents provided slightly more positive responses overall to each quality of life statement than in 2008 and were also more likely to have used an urgent care center.

The **FCA assessment** involved a total of 247 collated topics discussed. Social issues ranked highest in number and Ethical issues were the lowest ranked. The most discussed topics consuming the majority of time among all groups included:

- All Forces: Unknown consequences of the Affordable Care Act Implementation on current health services, employees, and residents of Loudoun County.
- Economic: Transportation access and affordability issues since local travel bus tokens have been deleted, fees have increased, and more frequent bus transportation and routes need to be initiated to correlate with the Metro train to Dulles Project.
- Social/Legal: Immigration issues in access of care, decreasing safety net services, and recognition of worth.
- Scientific: Vaccine beliefs that are barriers to vaccine acceptance by residents perceived to impact the current level of herd immunity.
- Social: Insufficient primary care resources.
- Environmental: Environmental concerns especially the potential for food and water contamination with increased development. Also discussed was the positive impact of farm markets on nutrition. One group expressed concerns that the growth in viniculture would promote unsafe driving by intoxicated consumers.
- Political and Economic: Improvement in the grant system to support county agencies when federal support stops, and restructuring of some human service agencies under more appropriate departments to improve efficiency.

The highest scores in the **LPHSA assessment** were for: Essential Service (ES) 2: Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems and Health Hazards (95.1%); ES 6: Enforce Laws and Regulations that Protect Health and Ensure Safety (95.1%); and ES 9: Evaluate Effectiveness, Accessibility, and Quality of Personal and Population-Based Services (81.7%). The lowest scores were for: ES 4: Mobilize Community Partnerships to Identify and Solve Health Problems (61.5%); ES 3: Inform, Educate and Empower People about Health Issues (52.8%); and ES 10: Research for New Insights and Innovative Solutions to Health Problems (34.7%). Of the Loudoun public health system's 10 Essential Services, 30% scored within the optimal range and an additional 60% had significant activity. Of the 30 Model Standards, 45% scored within the optimal range and an additional 30% showed significant activity.

Loudoun's previous LPHSA assessment was completed on February 4, 2009 and the report of results is available online at www.loudoun.gov/healthcheck. The 2009 assessment was completed by Loudoun County Health Department staff and did not include input from other components of the local public health system. Compared to 2009, the current assessment shows significant improvement in the local public health system's activity in evaluating effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services (ES 9). There were also improvements in ES 1 (Monitor Health Status), ES 2 (Diagnose and Investigate), ES 6 (Enforce Laws) and ES 8 (Assure Workforce). The current assessment shows significant reduction in the local public health system's activity in informing, educating and empowering people about health issues (ES 3) and in researching for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems (ES 10). There were also lower activity scores for ES 4 (Mobilize Partnerships) and ES 5 (Develop Policies/Plans).

Themes

The four assessments raised a number of issues, strengths and areas of concern for those who live in Loudoun County. These issues fell into seven (7) themes, some of which are interrelated and include:

- 1. Access to Care:** While Loudoun County residents in 2013 were fortunate to have a lower rate of uninsurance (8.4%) than the state or national average, it still represented over 26,334 people without insurance and a significantly larger group of people who were underinsured. Key stakeholders expressed concern over an insufficient amount of primary care resources in the County. Residents also viewed the cost of health care and the availability of health care within Loudoun County as some of the health concerns most important for our community to address. Seniors, those with lower incomes, less education and in western Loudoun County were more likely to express difficulties accessing health care.
- 2. Timely Use of Preventive Services:** In addition to issues related to access to care, the assessments showed concerns related to utilization of preventive services. For example, only 76% of residents had visited a dentist, 65% had a routine checkup and 37% had a flu shot within the previous year. 57% were overweight or obese and 78% had any physical activity in the previous 30 days. Male and non-white residents were more likely to have postponed preventive

services. Additionally, some children and adults are not being vaccinated on time, while others are receiving no vaccinations due to safety concerns. Residents viewed obesity as one of the health concerns most important for our community to address, and lack of exercise and poor eating habits as behaviors/risk factors of greatest concern to our community's well-being.

- 3. Children's Health, Wellness and Safety:** Loudoun's population under age 18 (30%) is significantly greater than that of the state or the nation, with approximately 5% of children uninsured. It is estimated that over 5,000 Loudoun teenagers use tobacco, over 8,000 consume alcohol, over 7,000 are overweight or obese, and over 6,000 felt sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row. Residents viewed excellent schools, safe neighborhoods, and a good place to raise children amongst the most important to create and maintain a healthy community, while bullying, drug use, gang involvement and childhood obesity were the behaviors/risk factors of greatest concern to our community's well-being.
- 4. Clean and Healthy Environment:** The environment is an important aspect of Loudoun County, with vibrant town, county and regional parks, multiple camping and hiking opportunities, and many residents relying on wells and onsite septic systems. Loudoun is included in the EPA's Washington DC nonattainment area for meeting national standards for air contaminants and exhibits ozone code orange and red days each summer. A clean and healthy environment and the ability to safely walk or bicycle throughout the county, particularly with Loudoun's continued growth and development, are viewed by residents and key stakeholders as key to creating and maintaining a healthy community. Lyme disease and access to outdoor space for exercise and fresh air were viewed amongst the health concerns most important for our community to address.
- 5. Substance Abuse:** 15% of Loudoun residents are binge drinkers and 9% are current smokers. Drug and alcohol use/abuse were viewed by residents as behaviors of greatest concern to our community's well-being. Loudoun County provides limited access to substance abuse services to low income residents.
- 6. Affordable Housing:** Affordable housing was more commonly selected amongst Black respondents, those living alone, uninsured and those with household incomes less than \$50,000 as important for creating and maintaining a healthy community. It was also viewed as a concern by key stakeholders.
- 7. Maximizing Partnerships:** An essential function of local public health is to mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems. This includes constituency development, identification of system partners and stakeholders, coalition development, and formal and informal partnerships to promote health improvement. These assessments showed a community of residents and businesses that is well educated, technology focused and sharing a number of health priorities, presenting multiple opportunities where improved partnerships can help address the identified themes.

Summary and Next Steps:

The 2013 MAPP public health needs assessments provided significant, actionable information on those issues most important for the county to address. The information was derived from objective health-related data, from surveys of Loudoun County residents, from key community stakeholders and from an evaluation of the local public health system and coalesced into seven themes.

This assessment will be posted online for review and input from the public. The Loudoun Health Council will take the lead in incorporating information from this Community Health Assessment and comments from the public into a revised Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for community action.