

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR  
FIVE SOUTH CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

# *Executive Summary*



SEPTEMBER 2012



# Project Overview



## Introduction

Healthcare providers in Central Pennsylvania are committed to understanding, anticipating, assessing, and addressing the healthcare needs of their communities. In the fall of 2011, Holy Spirit Health System, Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, and PinnacleHealth System, formed a collaborative workgroup to identify the needs of those living within Dauphin, Cumberland, Perry, Lebanon, and the northern tier of York Counties. With mutual interest in the health and well-being of residents in the region served by the three sponsors, a collaborative community health needs assessment was conducted to evaluate and understand the region's health needs. This study, conducted by Tripp Umbach, a nationally recognized leader in community health assessments, identifies specific community health needs and evaluates how those needs are being met in order to better connect health and human services with the needs of residents in the multi-county region.

The community health needs assessment (CHNA) represented a comprehensive community-wide process where Holy Spirit Health System, Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, and PinnacleHealth System connected with a wide range of public and private organizations, such as educational institutions, health-related professionals, local government officials, human service organizations, and faith-based organizations to evaluate the community's health and social needs. The assessment included data collection, interviews with community stakeholders, focus groups with key audiences, and community forums.

Tripp Umbach's independent review of existing data and in-depth interviews with local stakeholders, as well as detailed input provided by the focus groups, resulted in the identification of key community health needs served by Holy Spirit Health System, Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, and PinnacleHealth System.



# 2012 Regional Prioritized Findings

As a result of extensive primary and secondary research over an eight-month time period, community members, community leaders, and project leadership identified three regional priorities. The findings show that there is a need for additional information and services that promote healthy lifestyles and make health education and healthcare easier to access. However, each hospital's findings are unique to their service area and patient population.

## **1) Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles**

Living a healthy lifestyle which includes a balanced diet and regular exercise is a critical component of overall well being and longevity. Statistical analysis of input from community residents and leadership of South Central Pennsylvania combined with secondary data showed identified that there is a need to promote healthy lifestyles to area residents. Specifically, it was identified that more information about health and nutrition along with creating new or expanding existing programs about diet/nutrition and physical activity are needed in the area. These types of programs and services are needed to support healthy living and create long-term healthy behaviors.



## **2) Health Education**

Health education is an essential element in improving the health of the community with the appropriate information, educational reinforcement, and the proper message. Ultimately, the goals are to increase knowledge related to health and encourage people to change poor behaviors and attitudes into positive actions and lifestyle choices. The findings of the research pointed to a particular need to develop health education information that is appropriate for school aged children and messages that are culturally appropriate to reach targeted high-need populations.

## **3) Access to Affordable Healthcare**

Having health insurance is a critical component in one's ability to access affordable healthcare services. Access to healthcare is the ability to obtain the needed primary care services, healthcare specialists and emergency treatment. Based on primary survey research, **one in every 3.5 individuals in South Central Pennsylvania are uninsured** as compared to one in every 10.4 individuals in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Underlying factors identified by secondary data and primary input from community leaders and focus groups with residents resulted in the identification of the need to improve access to affordable healthcare, specifically, to dental care, mental health services, primary, and specialty care. This regional health need reinforces the necessity to improve access to affordable healthcare services.

# Secondary Data Key Findings

Tripp Umbach collected and analyzed secondary data from multiple sources, including: County Health Rankings, Healthy People 2020, Office of Applied Studies, Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Health Statistics and Research, Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, Capital Area Coalition on Homelessness, The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), etc. The data resources were related to disease prevalence, socio-economic factors, and behavioral habits. Tripp Umbach benchmarked data against state and national trends where applicable.

**Rates of childhood obesity in Dauphin, Lebanon, and Perry Counties are higher than the rest of the State.** Education about diet and exercise needs to occur at a very young age. Dauphin, Lebanon, and Perry counties all show higher rates of overweight or obese children in grades K-6 than PA; specifically in Lebanon and Perry counties, over 17% of the children in grades K-6 are obese.

**Pennsylvania's major causes of death are consistent with national trends:** The major causes of death in Pennsylvania are, #1 is Heart Disease and #2 is Cancer. It is interesting to see, however, that the study area tends to show much lower rates of each of these conditions compared to PA. Dauphin County shows a higher rate of Heart Disease than

PA, and Perry County shows a higher rate of Cancer than PA. The other four counties in the South Central PA region show relatively low rates of these conditions.

**Low levels of home ownership and lack of health insurance for residents living in Downtown**

**Harrisburg:** Downtown Harrisburg (17101) shows one of the highest rates of individuals who rent instead of own their home in the state of PA (94%). Downtown Harrisburg also shows one of the highest rates of uninsured individuals (27%) in the state of Pennsylvania, which is also a major barrier to healthcare access.

**Low levels of education and household income in Perry**

**County:** Perry County shows a very poor ranking of 66 (out of the worst possible 67) for education. Poor education is closely related to many other barriers to healthcare; sub-optimal occupation or even unemployment, low income, less access to healthy food and exercise options and less access to healthcare options, (insurance and/or care). We can see this relationship at the income level; Perry County records the lowest annual household income for the South Central PA region (\$57,625 average annual household income), substantially below the overall study area and the state average (\$65,431 and \$64,000 respectively).

**Every day in Dauphin County and in the City of Harrisburg, approximately 650 people experience homelessness.** On any given day, approximately 650 people experience homelessness in the County of Dauphin and the City of Harrisburg. Hundreds more live doubled-up in the homes of family and friends, are in imminent danger of becoming homeless, living in sub-standard and/or overcrowded housing they cannot afford.

**Unsafe sex practices in four of the five counties in the study areas:** Four of the five counties assessed for the study (Dauphin, Lebanon, Perry, and Northern York) show very poor rankings for unsafe sex across all counties in PA. Dauphin County has a rank of 66 out of the worst possible of 67 (found in Philadelphia County). This is a concern for the area, as unsafe sex practices can have far-reaching as well as long-term negative effects for individuals and the area.



# Primary Research Findings



Tripp Umbach employed a hand-distribution methodology to disseminate surveys to individuals throughout the study area. A work session was held with members of the collaborative workgroup to create a survey that would be utilized to collect input from under-served populations. The survey was designed to capture and identify the health risk factors and health needs of those within the study area. The survey was finalized in March 2012, and was available in both English and in Spanish.

Tripp Umbach, working through community-based organizations, distributed the surveys to end-users in the under-served populations. Engagement of local community organizations was vital to the survey distribution process. In total, 1,279 surveys were used for analysis. 1,175 surveys were collected in English, and 104 surveys were collected in Spanish.

**More than one out of every five individuals in the South-Central PA region does not have a doctor** (specifically, 21.9%). All respondents from the Northern York region reported having a doctor; on the other hand, only 71.7% of the individuals from Lebanon County reported having a doctor (the lowest in the region). When individuals in the region were asked why they did not have a doctor, the top reason was because they could not afford one (66.3%, approximately two in every three individuals without a doctor).

**Lack of health insurance is an issue in the region, and the problem is particularly pronounced in Lebanon County.** Lebanon County is the only county in the region that shows a majority of individuals that report not having health insurance (54.5%). A majority of individuals in the overall study region reported that not having health insurance affects their ability to get services in the area. As a result of not having health insurance, 21.8% of the individuals across the entire region report that they ignore a health problem when they cannot get care. This is concerning, as we know that ignoring a health problem can eventually escalate into a serious health concern, which can be more cost- and time-prohibitive.

**Perry County has high rates of overweight and obese children, and adults are lagging in maintaining a regular exercise program.** As identified in the secondary data, Perry County shows very high rates of overweight and obese children. When asked about regular physical activity, individuals (of all ages) in Perry County reported the lowest rate of doing regular physical activity to stay healthy; only 57% of the individuals reported doing regular physical activity in Perry County.

**Residents of Cumberland County reported they have difficulty obtaining fresh and healthy foods.** When asking individuals about healthy eating habits, individuals in Cumberland County reported having the most difficulty with being able to get fresh and healthy foods (only 80.7% of the individuals in Cumberland County felt that they were able to get fresh, healthy foods).

**The top two services that individuals report having the most difficulty finding were services for individuals with HIV/AIDS and services for individuals over the age of 60.** Individuals in Dauphin County reported the highest rate of difficulty finding services for individuals with HIV/AIDS, whereas individuals in Perry County reported the highest rate of difficulty finding services for individuals over the age of 60.

# Next Steps

With the completion of the health needs assessment, Holy Spirit Health System, Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, and PinnacleHealth System will now begin to develop individual implementation plans to leverage their organization's individual strengths and resources to best address their community's health needs and improve the overall health and well-being of residents of Central Pennsylvania.

For additional information about the study and its specific findings, please contact:

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## CHNA Fast Facts



Collaboration between three area hospitals/health systems to efficiently and accurately assess the needs of the community while reducing cost and duplication of effort.



Fulfill the IRS requirement for non-profit hospitals to conduct a community health needs assessment under The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.



Comprehensive community health needs analysis of Dauphin, Cumberland, Perry, Lebanon, and the northern tier of York Counties.



Community health priorities for each hospital and health system have been defined.

