



Mower County Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan



A collaborative strategy to improve the health of Mower County.



MOWER
COUNTY

December 2014

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Dear Residents of Mower County,

Improving health across all communities is essential to enhancing the quality of life for Mower County residents as well as supporting the area's future social and economic well-being. Over the past year and one half Mower County Community Health Services has worked to complete a community health assessment and improvement planning process. I am so grateful to the many community stakeholders representing Mower County communities, schools, businesses, Mayo Clinic Health Systems - Austin, cultural leaders, and individuals that lent their time and talents to inform the document you have before you. It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you the Mower County Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan 2014.

The Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan illustrates the power of community driven efforts and the willingness to use and expand on existing strengths to improve the health of all Mower County citizens. We have come to understand that empowering all citizens to be a part of the solution builds on the investment of health for all. This document outlines what happens when citizens come together for the greater good to build on the foundations we have in place and plant new seeds of growth in ways we perhaps never thought of before.

This is a living document and with the help of our partners, the plan will be implemented over the next five years. Throughout the document you will read about the good work of citizens collaborating to create environments that foster new ideas and potential growth in the advancement of health for all. We commit to looking at outcomes to evaluate and improve the planning process. There is no doubt that there will be challenges, but with those challenges comes great opportunity. I encourage all Mower County citizens to get involved and contribute to this effort as we seek to improve the overall health of Mower County.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kocer, BSN, RN, PHN
Director, Community Health Services Administrator
Mower County Health and Human Services

Community Stakeholders

Mower County Community Health Board Members

Commissioner Tim Gabrielson – 1st District
 Commissioner Polly Glynn – 2nd District
 Commissioner Jerry Reinartz – 3rd District
 Commissioner Tony Bennett – 4th District
 Commissioner Mike Ankeny – 5th District



Mower County Community Health Services Advisory Committee Members

Dr. Vijay Chawla	Medical Services	Medical Consultant/ Mayo Clinic Health System
Mary Kunert	Consumer	Homemaker
Cheri May	Licensed Nurse	Retired Long Term Care
Dr. Peter Green	Dental Health	Dr. Elrod, Green, and Hyland
Sara Schafer	Director	Mower County Senior Center
Miguel Garate	Advocate	Riverland Community College
Jeff Sampson	Administration	Southland and Leroy Public Schools
Jeff Baldus	Business	Austin Area Foundation
Dr. James Shaffer	Medical Services	Quick Care Clinic
Jeff Goeldi	Emergency Medical	EMS
Dr. Gene Muchow	Consumer	Former Mower County Medical Consultant
Steve King	Council Member	Austin City Council
Polly Glynn	Commissioner	Mower County
Jerry Reinartz	Commissioner	Mower County





Mower Refreshed – Statewide Health Improvement Program Leadership Collaborative Team

Gema Alvarado | Siebel Center
 Sandy Anderson | Mower Refreshed
 Diane Baker | United Way of Mower County
 Amy Baskin | Austin Public Schools
 Mark Christopherson | Mayo Clinic Health System
 Miguel Garate | Riverland Community College
 Ellen Goslee | Riverland Community College
 Jill Hart | Mayo Clinic Health System
 Lisa Kocer | Mower County Health & Human Services
 Maryanne Law-Sunde | Parenting Resource Center
 Larry Lyons | Hormel Foods, Inc.
 Shawn Martin | Riverland Community College
 Adrienne Noyola | U of MN Student
 Tedd Maxfield | YMCA of Austin
 Eric Olson | KSMQ Public TV
 Scot Ramsey | Mayo Clinic Health System
 Pastor Mike Sager | Faith Church
 Deb Smith | Brownsdale Public Library
 Karissa Studier | Mower County SHIP
 Melanie Welsh | LeRoy-Ostrander Public Schools



Additional Collaborating Partners

Dr. Richard Schindler
 Austin Area Chamber of Commerce
 Austin Area Drug Task Force
 Residents of Mower County
 Mower County Schools
 Vision 2020
 The Welcome Center
 Mower County Community Health staff
 Mower County WIC participants
 Minnesota Department of Health
 MDH Regional Epidemiologist
 MDH Regional Nurse Consultant
 Dr. Joel Schieck
 Steve Sallee, Leroy/Southland Public Schools



Mower County Community Health Services

Improving the health of Mower County residents and the communities they live in requires far more than programming, it requires a shift in culture. Creating a change in culture requires collaboration with the people in which issues are impacting. Engaging those who are directly impacted by these issues will require time and innovation but will likely increase sustainable improvement.

Creating sustainable environments, systems, and policies are key to improving the health of our county. If we work to influence the environment, it will have a direct impact on systems and policies. The journey described in this document gives insight to what the county already has in place where we live, work, play, and learn and where we need to grow.



Mower County Community Health Improvement Value Statement

Develop collaborative strategies with community partners that are solution-focused and strength-based to improve access to healthcare, community connections, and the basic needs of residents in Mower County.

Key Principles

Healthcare

Create, support, and grow affordable and timely access points for healthcare needs (home/community based services, dental, and general medical needs).

Community Connections

Create, support, and grow safe communities that foster resiliency in individuals, families, and businesses through healthy social connections that value diversity.

Basic Needs

Create, support, and grow access to healthy foods and active living opportunities.

Demographics | Mower County

Mower County is located in southeastern Minnesota. Sixteen communities, with Austin being the largest, are spread over a largely agricultural setting with small river ways offering recreation and beauty throughout the county's landscape.

The 2013 census estimated the county's population at 39,327 with continual growth projected between 2015 and 2045. This growth has already been seen with the expansion of Austin's kindergarten center and the construction of a new intermediate school to accommodate the expanding student population.

Continued growth can also be seen in the healthcare sector as Mayo Clinic Health System-Austin has expanded their clinical setting and a large local employer has implemented a substantial worksite clinic.



Income

The median household income is \$45,596 and the percent of persons in Mower County living below the poverty is approximately 14.1 percent. While 68.4 percent of the residents in the county have a high school diploma (or equivalency) or higher, poverty is still an issue with far reaching impact. Poverty has also been noted in Mower County schools with over 50 percent of enrolled students being eligible for free and reduced priced meals.

The unemployment rate in Mower County has continually been below the state average. Six industries are the main sources of employment in the county: manufacturing being the top, followed by health care, government, retail trade, educational services, lodging and food services. Sixty percent of employed Mower County residents both live and work here, while forty percent travel to neighboring counties for employment. Over five thousand people commute to Mower County for employment.

Mower County Community Health Improvement Plan embraces this as an opportunity to not only strive for the "healthiest county" but also to support health and wellness efforts in surrounding counties where Mower County residents may work, play and learn.

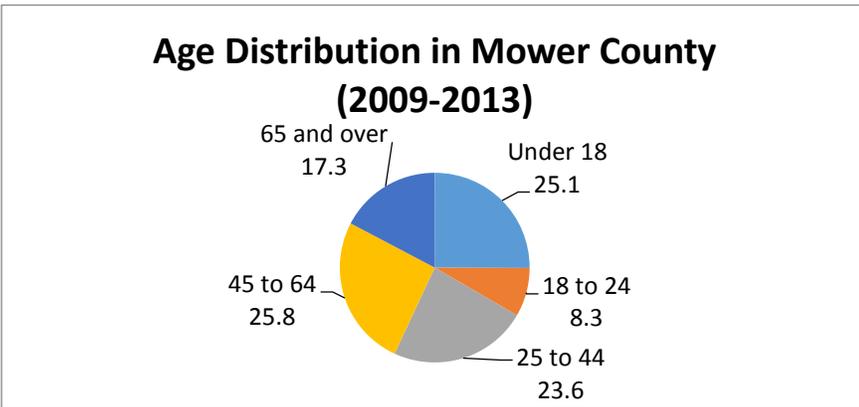
Diversity

The ethnic makeup of the county has undergone a significant change in the past ten years, especially in the community of Austin. Caucasian continues to be the primary ethnic group at 92.5% and the number of people self-reporting to be Hispanic or Latino is 10.4%. According to the Welcome Center in Austin, “Austin has recently seen a large influx of Asian refugees from Southeast Asia. The number of Karen and Karenni residents in Austin nearly tripled to 1,224 this year from 463 in 2012”.

	Total Population ¹					Population by Race/Ethnicity ¹ Year 2013				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	White	African American	American Indian	Asian	Latino*
State of Minnesota	5,266,214	5,303,925	5,344,861	5,379,139	5,420,380	4,734,133	343,718	81,661	260,868	270,545
Mower County	38,215	39,163	39,349	39,372	39,327	36,695	1,505	203	924	4,323

*Can be another race

Mower County’s age ranges are also widely distributed with a higher than state average elderly population. The percent of elderly persons above 65 years of age in Minnesota is 13.7, Mower County is well above the state average at 17.3 percent.





Top Ten Health Priorities

The following are the top ten health issues that surfaced through the survey and focus groups, listed in no order of significance:

- **Access to healthcare**
- **Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs**
- **Child and adolescent growth and development**
- **Chronic/noninfectious disease**
- **Health disparities**
- **Lack of exercise and activity**
- **Mental Health**
- **Obesity among children and adults**
- **Poor or inadequate parenting**
- **Unintended pregnancy/teen pregnancy**

Community-Driven Strategies & Planning | Top Three Opportunities

The Planning Process

A community Health Improvement Plan provides guidance to the health department, its partners, and its stakeholders on improving the health of the population within the health department's jurisdiction. The plan is a guide to defining actions to target efforts that promote health.

Mower County Community Health has a close working relationship with Mayo Clinic Health System-Austin. It is through this partnership that the top ten health priorities were brought to county-wide residents to drill the top 10 identified health issues down to three. In the following narrative the process of identifying the top three as well as measures and strategies that are in place or being developed to address these needs will be described.

The next step was to engage residents in considering the top three health issues they believed were of greatest concern in their community. This process of surveying took place through focus groups in a variety of community settings including public health staff, written surveys, and a collaborative community engagement effort by Mower County Statewide Health Improvement Program and Mower Refreshed called County Conversations. There was great intention taken to go to the residents where they live, work, play, and learn, providing environments that were comfortable and felt safe. It was in these environments and through the formats listed that participants were asked to identify the top three health concerns they believed impacted their communities the most. The level of participation was not only significant in numbers of engaged residents but in the diverse age and ethnic groups represented. The conversations gave residents a chance to identify community strengths and identify health concerns in their community.

Three priorities consistently rose to the top during focus groups, surveys, and County Conversations. Participants began to explore local community initiatives/resources that were effectively impacting the health topics they listed and where there appeared to be gaps.

The three health concerns that surfaced to the top (not in any order of significance) were:

- **Obesity among children and adults**
- **Mental Health**
- **Access to Healthcare**

Part of our process was to switch to a strength based approach. In doing so, Mower County Community Health reframed the top three priorities to “opportunities” to improve our current health status.

Mower County’s top three health opportunities:

- **Improve Nutrition and Increase Active Lifestyles**
- **Improving Mental Health**
- **Improving Access to Healthcare**

Opportunity One: Improve Nutrition and Increase Active Lifestyles

Obesity is a significant concern for residents of Mower County. The concern over both childhood and adult obesity was evident in the Community Health Assessment. Over forty percent of residents self-reported that they considered themselves overweight with over thirty percent stating they believed themselves to be obese according BMI standards. Lack of exercise was identified as a concern by almost fifty percent of participants in the assessment.

Teens who were surveyed reported that obesity amongst kids in Mower County was of high concern. “You look around school and it shows. Weight is a problem.” was a common statement from the youth. Poor eating habits, inconsistent home lives due to busy schedules, unsupervised children, and easy access to high calorie, low nutritional food at home and in social settings were mentioned frequently as influencing the rise in obesity. Stress was another significant factor related to teens and young adults that struggle with obesity. Eating as a form of coping with stress, anxiety and depression was another common theme that surfaced through the focus groups and County Conversations.

The County Conversations platform rated obesity in both children and adults as significant in the communities where conversations were hosted. Health disparities were apparent when it came to access to nutritional food and healthy food preparation. The Latinos Saludables (a wellness outreach to the Latino population through Mower Refreshed) focus group expressed the need to learn how to prepare healthy American foods as their children adapt to the American culture and desire more





Community Health Assessment & Improvement Plan

food commonly served in the U.S. “We understand how to make healthy Mexican food but not American so we buy boxes because it is easy.” Community members believed that families with parents working two, three or more jobs to pay bills were at a higher risk for obesity and often those needing to work multiple jobs were minorities.

Physical inactivity was at 24 percent for Mower County, while Minnesota as a state reported being 20 percent. Likewise, Mower County ranked higher in adult obesity levels at 28 percent compared with Minnesota overall at 26 percent. The 2013 Minnesota Student Survey revealed locally that 24 percent of females in 6th grade perceived themselves as being overweight. This percentage jumped to 33 percent of 12th grade females believing they were overweight. The rise of inactivity is reinforced by students reporting a decline in exercising or playing a sport that made them sweat or breathe hard for at least twenty minutes from 6th graders to 12th graders at a significant rate.

Improving Nutrition and Increasing Active Lifestyles		
Measurable Objectives	Collaborative Strategies	Community Partners
1. Create, support and grow initiatives that educate, equip, and empower residents with healthy strategies related to nutrition. Process measured mid-cycle (2016)	Mower Refreshed Refreshed Dining Initiative Refreshed Kids School Assemblies Harvest 5K Latino Saludables Community Conversations	Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS) Mower County SHIP
	Mower County Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Senior gardening access Healthy food access in food shelves Greenhouse- Woodson Kindergarten Center Childcare nutrition training School nutrition Worksite Wellness Initiatives	Mower County Senior Center Salvation Army of Austin Austin Public Schools Apple Lane Child Care Catherwood Home Child Care Community Learning Center Discovery Learning Center Riverland Community College Mower County
	YMCA of Austin Diabetes Prevention Program	SHIP Mower Refreshed Mayo Clinic Health System Mower County Community Health Quality Health and Wellness Clinic
	Mower County Community Health Women, Infants, Children	Austin Farmers Market
	HyVee- Health Market Sprouts Program Dietician	
	Mayo Clinic Health System Take H.O.L.D. Program	Mower Refreshed
	United Way / Austin Public Schools Backpack Program	
	Austin Public Schools Free breakfast for all students Dietician on staff	
	Community Education	
	U of M Extension 4-H Cooking Matters programming I CAN Prevent Diabetes Programming	Mower County SHIP YMCA of Austin
	Farmer's Markets	Austin Farmer's Market

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<p>2. Create, support, and grow initiatives that educate, equip, and empower residents with healthy strategies related to active lifestyles.</p> <p>Process measured mid-cycle (2016)</p>	<p>Mower Refreshed Refreshed Kids School Assemblies Harvest 5K Latino Saludables Community Conversations Get Moving Mower</p>	<p>Mower Refreshed Mayo Clinic Health System SHIP Mower County</p>
	<p>SHIP Childcare active living training Worksite wellness initiatives Active Schools</p>	<p>Austin Public Schools Apple Lane Child Care Catherwood Home Child Care Community Learning Center Discovery Learning Center Riverland Community College Mower County</p>
	<p>YMCA of Austin Diabetes Prevention Program Physical Activity Opportunities \$1 memberships for youth</p>	<p>Mower County SHIP Mower Refreshed Mower County Community Health Quality Health and Wellness Clinic Mayo Clinic Health System</p>
	<p>Park and Recreation</p>	
	<p>Vision 2020 Safe Routes to School Bike Trails Waterways Recreation Recreation Center</p>	<p>Mower County SHIP Austin Public Schools City of Austin Austin Park and Recreation</p>
	<p>Mower County Senior Center</p>	
	<p>Lake Louise State Park</p>	
	<p>Mower County Senior Center</p>	
	<p>Mayo Clinic Health System Take H.O.L.D. Program</p>	<p>Mower Refreshed</p>
	<p>J.C. Hormel Nature Center</p>	

Opportunity Two: Improving Mental Health

Mental health issues do not seem to be impacted as significantly by health disparities in Mower County as the previous priority of obesity. Residents report high prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression in all economic, ethnic, and age categories. 46.7 percent rated depression as a concern for adults and 45.4 percent rated depression as a concern for adolescents in the 2013 Community Health Assessment. The 2013 Minnesota Student Survey tells the story that depression and anxiety communicated through self-harm and thoughts of suicide are significant concerns for not only Austin Public Schools but other county districts. According to state data, Mower County residents report having 3.7 poor mental health days, while the State of Minnesota statistic is at 2.6 (County Health Rankings 2014).

According to the 2013 Minnesota Student Survey 40% of female 11th graders reported feeling very trapped, lonely, sad, blue, depressed or hopeless about the future. In that same survey 10% of the male 11th graders reported that they have thought about ending their life/committing suicide during the past year.

The focus groups and 2013 Community Needs Assessment – Mayo Clinic Health System- Austin campus, revealed mental health issues as top concerns as well. Financial concerns, relationship stressors, and undocumented status, from our Latino community members, were top stressors affecting mental health. The County Conversations also listed stress and depression as significant in their communities, impacting health and sense of safety. Unfortunately, like other rural counties, mental health services are more difficult to access.





Improving Mental Health in Mower County

Measurable Objectives	Collaborative Strategies	Community Partners
<p>1. Create, support, and grow initiatives that educate, equip, and empower residents with healthy strategies to improve mental health.</p> <p>Process measured mid-cycle (2016)</p>	<p>Mower Refreshed TAKE 5 Annual events/postcard campaign Resilience Video Project Latinos Saludables Community Conversations Refreshed Lunch & Learns Cooperative Health Action Triad (CHAT) Refreshed Kids School Assemblies</p>	<p>Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS) Austin Public Schools</p>
	<p>Community Against Bullying (CAB)</p>	<p>Austin Public Schools Faith Communities</p>
	<p>Mower County Health and Human Services Family Facilitator Program Family Home Visiting – Public Health</p>	
	<p>Austin High School REACH Program</p>	
	<p>Mower County Family Collaborative Mental Health Professional</p>	<p>Mower County School Districts Mower County Health and Human Services</p>
	<p>Catholic Charities</p>	
	<p>Parenting Resource Center</p>	
<p>2. Increase mental health awareness.</p> <p>Process measured mid-cycle (2016)</p>	<p>Mower Refreshed TAKE 5 Annual events/postcard campaign Resilience Video Project Latinos Saludables Community Conversations Refreshed Lunch & Learns Cooperative Health Action Triad (CHAT) Refreshed Kids School Assemblies</p>	<p>Mayo Clinic Health System Austin Public Schools</p>
	<p>Depression Awareness Wellness Network</p>	<p>Austin Public Schools</p>
	<p>Minnesota Student Survey Participation</p>	<p>County school districts Mower County Community Health</p>
	<p>Mental Health Awareness Walk</p>	<p>The Bridge Local Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services</p>
	<p>Adverse Childhood Experiences Research Outreach Conversations</p>	<p>Mower Refreshed MCHS</p>



Opportunity Three: Improving Access to Healthcare

Accessing healthcare has become increasingly complicated. Understanding how to connect with the appropriate level of care needed along with how to pay for the care received has been identified as a significant concern for residents from all ethnic groups, especially new immigrants to the Mower County area. Language barriers, cultural differences, and lack of health insurance leave these residents especially vulnerable to health complications because of these added barriers.

According to the 2014 County Health Rankings, Mower County’s ratio of primary care providers to patient was 1874:1. The mental health provider ratio was at 1406:1 compared to Minnesota’s ratio at 748:1. “The wait to be seen for a medical appointment makes going to Urgent Care my best option at times”, one resident stated. Access to dental care is a statewide problem, but in Mower County it is especially problematic as the ratio of dental providers to patient is 2222:1 compared to Minnesota’s ratio at 1602:1.

Though increasing actual providers requires a long term commitment both financially and in system expansion, the strategies to address this top priority are grounded in increasing understanding and collaborative partnerships to improve access. Innovative strategies have begun to take shape in Mower County.

Improving Access to Healthcare		
Measurable Objectives	Collaborative Strategy	Community Partners
1. Create, support, and grow collaborative strategies to increase access points to healthcare (dental, medical, mental health, immunizations, etc.) Process measured mid-cycle (2016)	Mower Refreshed Accessing healthcare tool	Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS)
	Mayo Clinic Health System Healthspots Nurse line Patient Portal	Austin Public Schools
	Children’s Dental Health Services	Mower County Health and Human Services Mower County Schools
	United Way 2-1-1	
	Community health workers program development	SHIP Mower Refreshed MCHS Austin Public Schools The Welcome Center Area Faith Communities
	County Conversations	SHIP Mower County Mower Refreshed Mayo Clinic Health System (MCHS)
	Sterling Smart Clinic	
	Quick Care	
	Mower County dental providers	
	Quality Health and Wellness Clinic	Quality Pork Processors Medcor
	Pharmacies in Mower County	
	Health Plans (Blue Cross Blue Shield, Medica, Health Partners, UCare, etc.)	



Mower County Health and Human Services

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Mower County Website

Protecting and Promoting Community Health, Self-Sufficiency and Well-Being through Prevention Efforts, Early Intervention and Provision of Services.