



## **Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan**

**Collaboration between:  
Mower County Health and Human Services  
and Mayo Clinic Health System**

**2020-2024**  
**December 1, 2019**



## Executive Summary

### **Community Health Assessment (CHA)**

Health need prioritization varies to a certain degree throughout Mower County. In order to ensure that each community's unique health issues are addressed, local inputs for CHA plans are essential.

Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System have a long history of reaching out to its communities for feedback, collectively identifying local health care needs and building partnerships to meet those needs. Valuable partnerships with community organizations work to improve the quality of life for those who live in the communities served by Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System. Leadership and staff from both sites serve on local boards and initiatives, including economic development and Chamber of Commerce committees, family services collaborative, community college foundation, historical societies, Red Cross and others.

Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System in Southeast Minnesota coordinated efforts with the other public health departments in Freeborn and Goodhue Counties to develop and disseminate a mailed survey.

In addition to the random mailed survey, Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System also used separate surveys and feedback mechanisms to supplement the community survey, solicit feedback from typically underserved or at-risk populations and gain general perspectives about social and environmental issues affecting health.

Key Informant Interviews were conducted in our community as well as focus groups.

Through this process, the following priorities for Mower County were identified:

# **MOWER COUNTY'S TOP THREE HEALTH PRIORITIES**

- 1. Access To  
Health Care**
- 2. Mental Well  
Being**
- 3. Chronic Disease  
Prevention**



Confusion about where to go for what, lack of mental health resources, needing more dental care and having interpreters for health care issues.



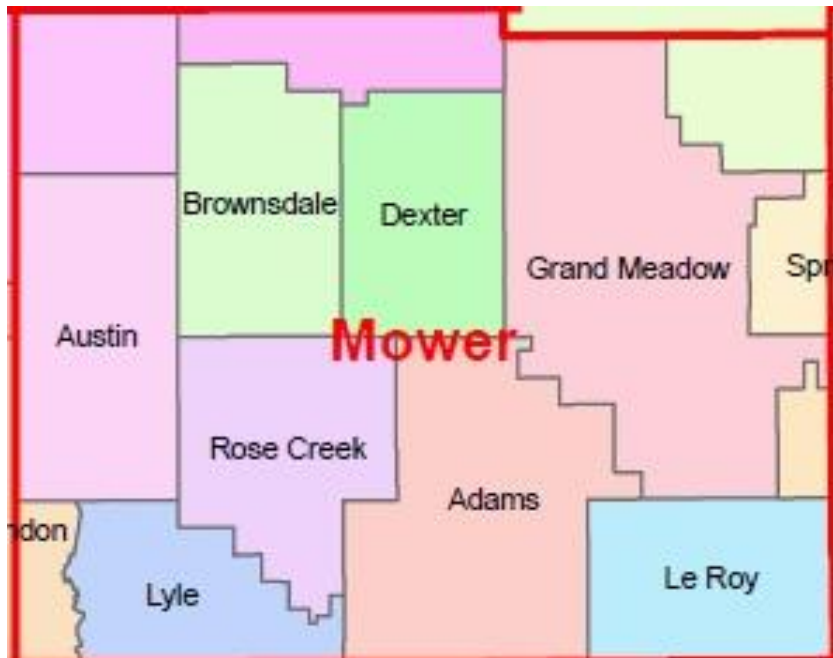
Concerned about where to access providers, stigma, lack of education and resources and affordability



Focusing on keeping people healthy, engaging and empowering individuals and community to choose healthy behaviors and reduce the risk of disease.

## SECTION II - Our Community

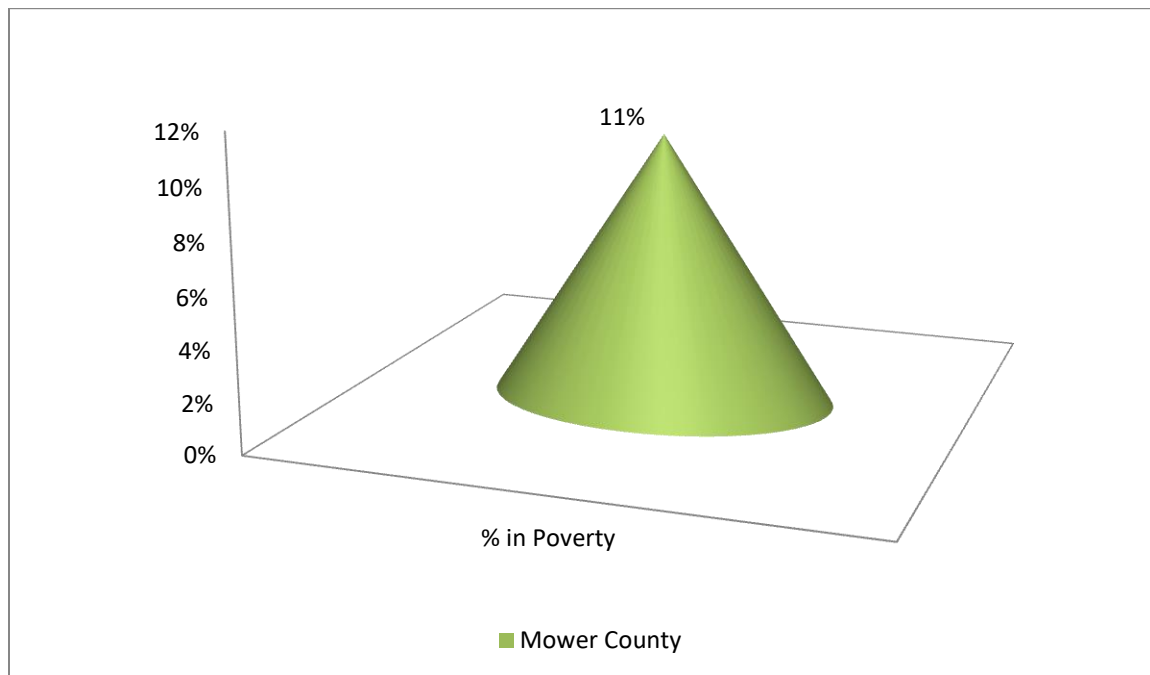
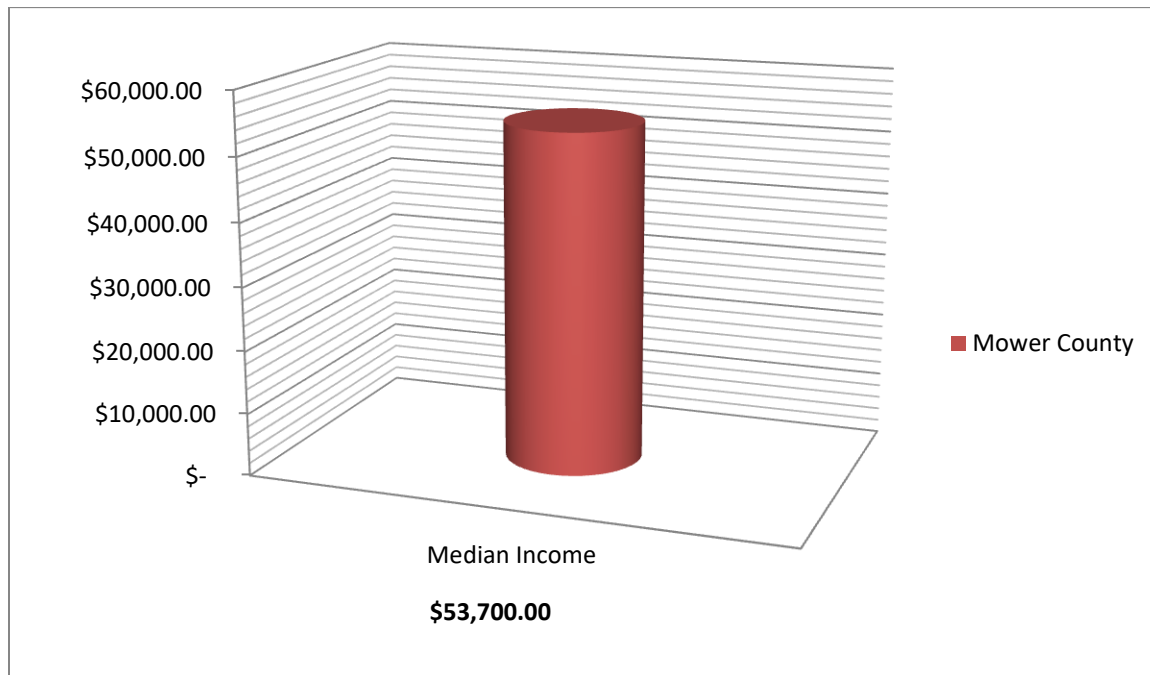
### Mower County

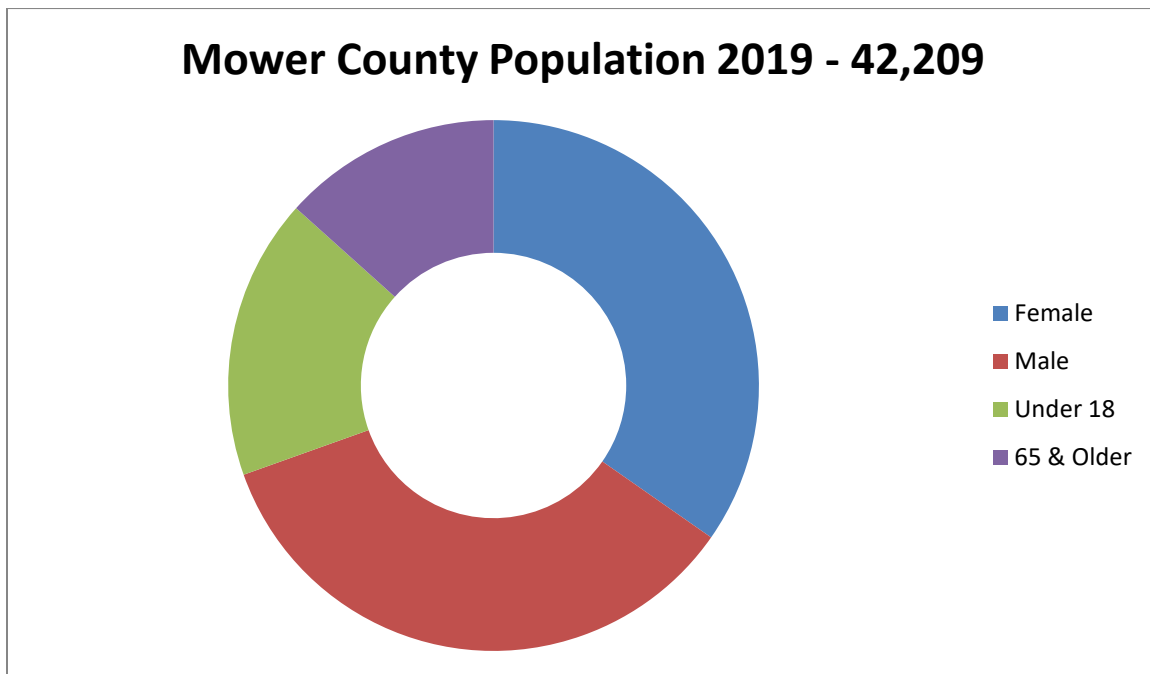
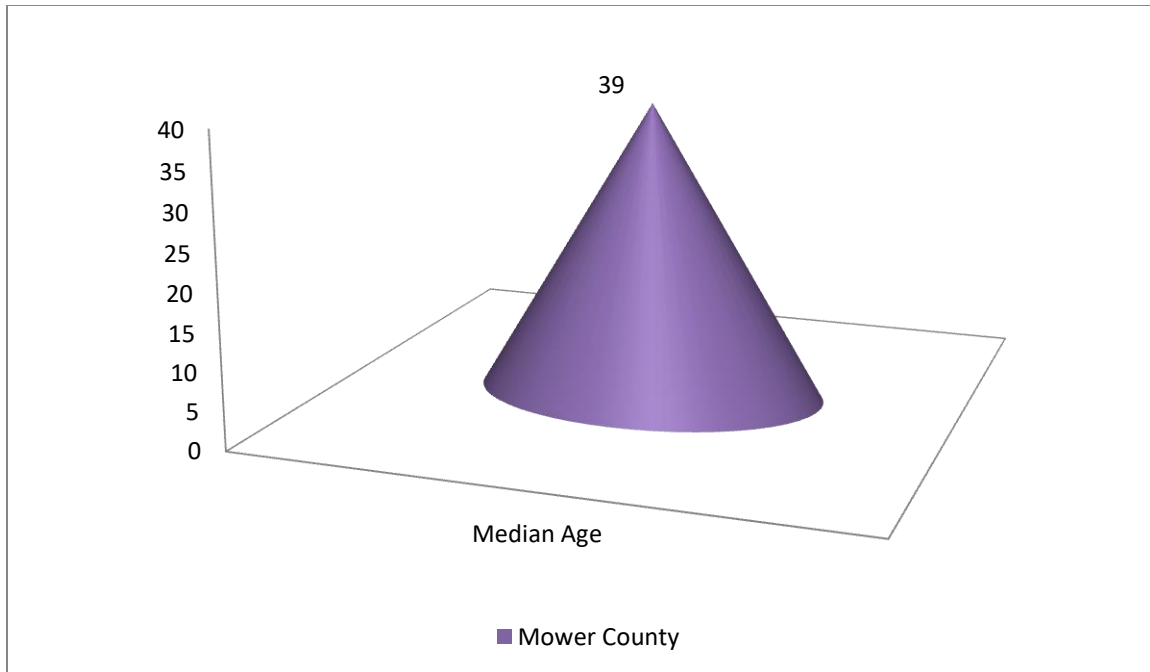


Austin is the county seat of Mower County, which is a relatively small county geographically: 720 square miles. Other features include:

- No natural lakes, but several streams and tributaries. The high water table accounts for historic flooding over the years.
- Agriculture is the county's big industry (53% taxable value).
- 64% of the county's population live in the City of Austin
- Mower County has a higher than average percentage of people over age 65
- Mower County has a higher than average diverse population
- Number one in wind energy production and generation of wind production tax
- Austin ranks high as a good place to live, according to Chamberofcommerce.org "Best Places to Live in Minnesota – 2019"
- High percentage of paved roads (90% of 400 miles)
- High number of bridges, all maintained by the county

## Demographics





Info Source: census.gov

## Assessing the Needs of the Community

### Overview

Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System community assessment process was led by the Community Health Specialist with Mower County Health and Human Services and the Community Engagement Specialist with Mayo Clinic Health System. The team worked directly with each other to conduct surveys, key-informant interviews, as well as conduct six focus groups. The team followed a systematic process to evaluate the health needs of our communities and determine health priorities.

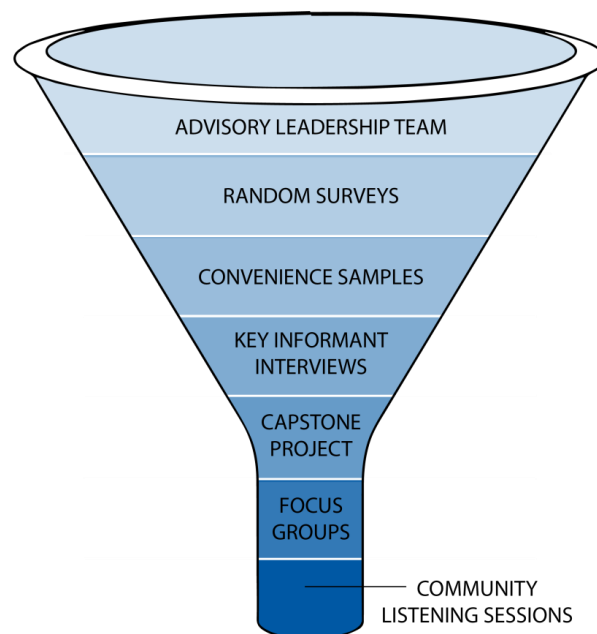
One notable difference in the approach used in 2019 was going from an opinion survey to a behavior survey. It is a challenge to compare data from an opinion and behavior survey but in years to come the behavior survey will prove to be very beneficial when trying to measure data.

### Community Input

Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System have a long history of engaging the community to identify local health care needs and build partnerships. Our leadership and staff serve on local boards, including economic development and Chamber of Commerce committees, service organizations, community college foundation, and other initiative important to the community.

### Process and Methods

Working in conjunction with the public health departments in Freeborn and Goodhue Counties and the Minnesota Department of Health, Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System took a multi-faceted approach to gathering information and identifying local health needs.



### **Random Survey**

The random mailed survey (see appendix for survey methodology) was conducted in conjunction with all three public health departments.

An initial survey packet was mailed to 4,800 sampled households in Goodhue, Mower and Freeborn counties on September 21 and 24, 2018, that included a cover letter, the survey instrument, and a postage-paid return envelope. One week after the first survey packets were mailed (October 1), a postcard was sent to all sampled households, reminding those who had not yet returned a survey to do so, and thanking those who had already responded. Two weeks after the reminder postcards were mailed (October 15), another full survey packet was sent to all households that had still not returned the survey. The remaining completed surveys were received over the next six weeks, with the final date for the receipt of surveys being November 26, 2018.

See Appendix: Survey Methodology and Sample Survey

Completed surveys were received from 1,189 adult residents of Goodhue, Mower and Freeborn counties for an overall response rate of 24.8% (1189/4800). The county level response rates are as follows:

	Percentages	Number of completed surveys received from adult residents of the county
Freeborn County	23.4%	372
Goodhue County	26.0%	413
Mower County	24.9%	396

Few respondents age 18-24 returned completed surveys, so results are reported only for adults age 25 and over.

The Minnesota Department of Health and its data analyst assisted in compiling the data by county.

See Appendix: Summary Report



### **Convenience Sample**

In addition, separate surveys and feedback mechanisms were employed within each county to supplement the community survey, solicit feedback from typically underserved or at-risk populations and gain general perspectives about social and environmental issues affecting health.

In **Mower County**, the 2018 survey was also used to poll a convenience sample of 95 additional adults. This convenience sample was done to include more people of color and under-represented groups. Respondents in the convenience sample completed the survey in the lobby of Mower County Health and Human Services and the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) clinic.

While 5% of the weighted respondents for the survey of the general adult population were people of color, 44% of the convenience sample was people of color. In the summary report, results from the convenience sample are compared to the general adult population to identify potential areas of difference in health outcomes, however differences are not necessarily statistically significant and adults age 18-24 are included in the convenience sample results, so caution should be exercised when interpreting the comparisons.



Convenience sample interviews were conducted in the Mower County Health and Human Services lobby.

### **Key Informant Interviews**

Key informant interviews were conducted in the late winter, early spring of 2019 by members of the Mayo Clinic Health System administrative leadership. These one-on-one interviews followed the same format, but allowed individuals to report their perceptions of community needs and share insight into current strategies currently being used.

A total of 12 Key Informant interviews were conducted in Mower County. The list of people includes representatives from the following community stakeholder groups:

Health and Human Services Department  
City Official  
St. Mark's Lutheran Home  
Police Department  
Sheriff  
School District  
Chamber of Commerce  
United Way  
City of Austin Port Authority  
Austin YMCA  
Little Cedar Lutheran Church  
Catholic Charities of Southern MN

See Appendix: Key Informant Interview Questions, Key Informant Summary

Insights were also gleaned from other data and assessed needs pertinent to communities in Mower County. This information allowed for further discussions in focus groups held in the spring of 2019. Topics were generated from initial reviews of data with special focus around target groups including seniors, people facing barriers to access health care and young people.

### **Focus Groups**

Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System conducted five focus groups with community groups from April-August 2018. The Dot Method was used in cartographing the top twelve priorities that were identified through the Needs Assessment. Each group was asked to think about their employment status as well as personal status and place a sticker on the three most important priority areas to them. Discussion took place after each focus group to gather input on the decisions made by those individuals on why they chose the area they did. After all the focus groups were completed Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System analyzed the results.

The list of Focus Groups are listed below:

- Mower Refreshed Steering Committee (SHIP CLT): A diverse group of community leaders representing various sectors in the community committed to improving the health of Mower County
- Riverland Community College Student Council: Riverland students age 18-23 offered perspectives from the millennial generation
- Mower County Southern Minnesota Education Consortium school social workers: Social workers represented all Mower County schools
- Mower County Public Health staff: Nurses who do home visits to patients in the county who represent a diverse background
- Austin Community Education/Adult Learners/English as a second language: Students represented languages and cultures from several different countries

## SECTION III

### Addressing the Needs of the Community - Mower County

With results from the Community Health Needs Assessment, Key-Informant Interviews, and Focus Groups, Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System prioritized the health issues of Mower County to identify the top three health priorities. Throughout this process, it was identified that Mower County priorities aligned with multiple State and National Priorities.

Mower County Health and Human Services CHIP	Healthy Minnesota 2022	Healthy People 2020	National Prevention Strategy	Minnesota Adolescent Health Plan	Governor's Task Force on Mental Health
Access to Health Care	★	★		★	★
Mental Well Being	★	★	★	★	★
Chronic Disease Prevention		★	★		

*Healthy Minnesota 2022:*

*Priority #1: The opportunity to be healthy is available everywhere and for everyone*

*Priority #2: Places and systems are designed for health and well-being*

*Priority #3: All can participate in decisions that shape health and well-being*

*Healthy People 2020:*

*Goal #1: Attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death*

*Goal #2: Achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups*

*Goal #3: Create social and physical environments that promote good health for all*

*Goal #4: Promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages*

*National Prevention Strategy:*

*Goal #1: To guide the nation in improving health and well-being of all Americans with actions across multiple settings and partners*

*Minnesota Adolescent Health Plan:*

*Priority #1: Access to high-quality teen-friendly health care*

*Priority #3: Positive connections with supportive adults*

*Governor's Task Force on Mental Health:*

*Goal #1: Immediate Improvements in Crisis Response*

*Goal #2: Immediate Improvements in Inpatient Bed Capacity and Levels of Care Transitions*

*Goal #3: Redefining and Transforming the Continuum of Care*

*Goal #5: Using a Cultural Lens to Reduce Mental Health Disparities*

### Identified Health Needs

1. Access to Health Care
2. Mental Well-Being
3. Chronic Disease Prevention

Woven throughout the priority health areas was an overall concern about the language barriers and culturally sensitive communications. These include: Lack of knowledge, understanding access, connecting to the community on the part of the diverse populations and lack of cultural understanding and the need for information on different cultures. One person explained that diverse populations were caught between two cultures.

Other issues cited include: Affordable resources, housing, transportation, meaningful employment, access to health care, legal status, underage drivers, younger family members serving as interpreters, being able to live independently, family, food choices, physical and mental health and adult disability.

### 1. Access to Health Care

Access to care was overwhelmingly cited as a health care need in Mower County. Feedback from focus groups ranged from confusion about where to go for what, lack of mental health resources, needing more dental care and having interpreters for health care issues.



As the graphic above illustrates, several other socio-economic issues affected access to care, including transportation, cultural attitudes toward health, navigating those resources that are available and having enough providers. Each one connects/overlaps with others, emphasizing the importance of communication specific to various cultures.

Many interviewees mentioned the need for more providers. Affordability was mentioned a few times. Understanding resources, the need for more mental health resources and the appropriate use of options (urgent care/overuse of emergency department) was cited. Vaccinations, nutrition education, and technology were listed. Some expressed frustration with a system that needs simplicity. Lack of immunizations in the immigrant community, poverty, occupational health and aging in place were also referenced.

### 2. Mental Well-Being

World Health Organization defines well-being as a state in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Community input stressed the importance of

mental well-being education and stress management/coping skills, both in school and with parents, in addition to seniors living alone and possibly facing isolation issues.

Mental health concerns were mentioned multiple times, including suicide and stress. Other topics referenced include the following: Parenting, students, families, drug abuse, addiction, drugs (opioids and vaping), access (especially to primary care), affordability, provider availability, understanding medical conditions and health education.

The top concern listed revolved around access and providers. Stigma and lack of education/resources rose to the top of issues that need addressing. A host of issues were listed including depression/seasonal depression, PTSD, addiction, drugs, suicide, anxiety, loneliness (seniors), broken families, abuse, and schizophrenia. Crisis help, long term housing, and county support were also listed as concerns.

### **3. Chronic Disease Prevention**

Chronic disease prevention focuses on keeping people healthy, engaging and empowering individuals and community to choose healthy behaviors and reduce the risk of developing disease. Empowering individuals to manage lifestyle factors can help prevent chronic disease onset and progression. Areas of emphasis include substance misuse and obesity/overweight, especially as it relates to the multi-cultures in Mower County.

Alcohol, with emphasis on underage drinking, was the top concern when talking about chronic disease prevention. Marijuana and vaping were also high among responses. Meth, opioids, pain pills, heroin, illegal drugs and prescription drugs were mentioned, but not as prevalent. One person stated that four out of five child protection cases involves drugs. Again, cultural issues also play a role in substance misuse. Mental health was also mentioned under chemical concerns.

### **Health Needs Not Addressed**

Understanding that all individual health and wellness efforts are interconnected with the environment, culture, people, policies, systems and programs, it's key to continue to weave in the lesser referenced issues with the priority areas. Identifying the top three areas to address will assist our community partners serving specific groups when seeking funding, determining relevancy of programming, and future direction for their organizations.

Through the assessment process, the following needs were mentioned, but not addressed directly in this Community Health Improvement Plan:

### **Socio-economic Factors**

While not an area of Mower County Health and Human Services or Mayo Clinic Health System expertise, the following socio-economic factors are important to the community. Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System will engage in a supporting

role instead of a directing role. Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System can support programs and partner with organizations that focus on these issues.

- **Education** — *Southern MN Education Consortium, Austin Positive Action Coalition, Mower County School Districts*
- **Employment** — *Chamber, Work Force Development*
- **Family and social support** — *United Way, Mower County School Districts*
- **Housing** — *APEX, United Way*
- **Income** — *Chamber, United Way*
- **Neighborhood** — *Welcome Center, City Clerks throughout the county*
- **Poverty** — *APEX, Homeless Response Team, SEMCAC*
- **Safety** — *Local City and County police and Deputies, TZD Groups*
- **Transportation** - *APEX*
- **Violence** — *Crime Victims Resource Center*

## **Prevention**

Prevention efforts are ongoing through a number of other programs throughout the county. While these are certainly important areas, they will not be a main focus of the Community Health Assessment. Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System will take a supporting role in the following prevention areas:

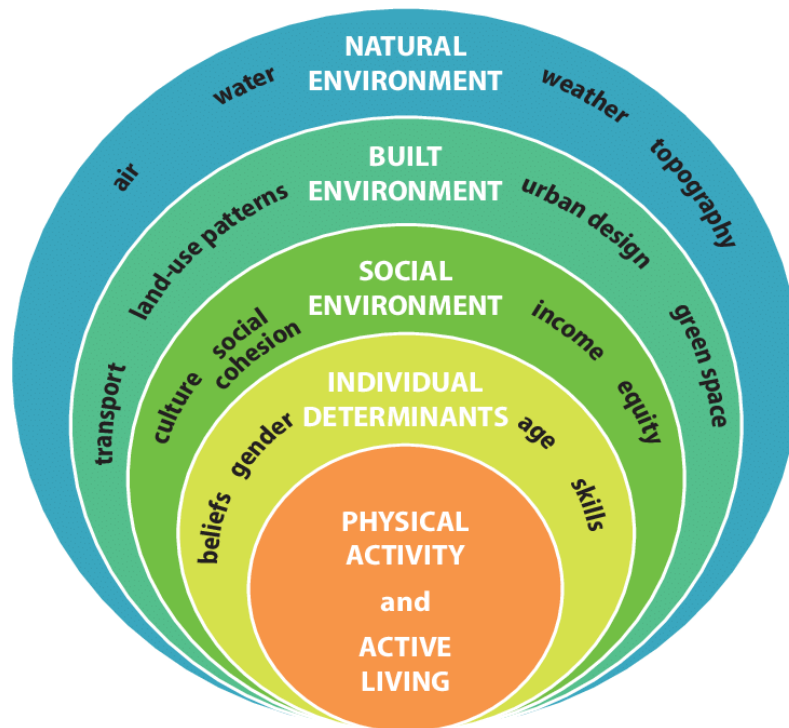
- Car seats
- Fall prevention
- Immunizations
- Prevention Education
- Texting while driving

## SECTION IV

### The Community's Plan

It is important to recognize that multiple factors affect a person's health. Where and how we live, work, play and learn are all interweaved when we assess a community's health. Social Determinants of Health will also play a factor in the overall health and well-being for the individuals within that community. The key principals that are guiding the Mower County CHIP work are the following:

1. **Social-Ecological Model**
2. **Underlying Forces**
3. **Actively Engage**
4. **Health Disparities**
5. **Health Equity**
6. **Policy, Systems and Environmental changes**
7. **Evidence-based**
8. **Promising practices**



## **The Objectives**

### **Health Priority: Access to Health Care**

**Objective #1: By December 31, 2025, decrease the proportion of Mower County Residents who report having difficulty accessing care by 20%.**

*(Baseline Mailed Surveys: 29% reporting medical care delay – 14% reporting dental care delay – 12% reporting mental health delay-CHNA)*

*(Baseline Convenience Samples: 38% reporting medical care delay – 36% reporting dental care delay – 18% reporting mental health delay-CHNA)*

**Goal #1:** Create a plan to reduce barriers to access health care for all populations.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Identify gaps in streamlined care continuum
2. Educate populations on how to access health care resources
3. Educate communities on the changes and ways to receive health care
4. Develop a community-based connect resource
5. Convene related groups to discuss barriers to health care access
6. Build relationships with local businesses to understand employee needs

#### **Measures/Data Source:**

1. Community Health Needs Assessment Survey

### **Health Priority: Mental Well-Being**

**Objective #2: By December 31, 2025, increase the proportion of Mower County youth and adults who feel their community cares about them from quite a bit to very much to 20%.**

*(Baseline Mailed Surveys: 53% reporting strongly disagree/disagree about people caring/sympathetic to those with mental illness-CHNA –*

*Baseline Convenience Samples: 40% reporting strongly disagree/disagree about people caring/sympathetic to those with mental illness - CHNA / 17% of 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> feel their community cares about them – MSS)*

**Goal #1:** Create a plan to support existing activities that build social connection and increase mental wellbeing.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Collaborate with education groups to advocate for and implement a county-wide social - emotional curriculum in all schools
2. Equip key personnel to address mental health issues
3. Work with community partners to establish education sessions and intervention programs
4. Develop programming with community organizations that reaches people in their own environment/culture

#### **Measures/Data Source:**

1. MN Student Survey
2. Community Health Needs Assessment Survey

### **Health Priority: Chronic Disease Prevention**

**Objective #3: By December 31, 2021, decrease the amount of Mower County youth drinking alcohol and vaping devices by 10%.**

*(Baseline APAC Student Survey: 20% of youth reported vaping in the last 30 days in Austin – 26% of youth reported vaping in the last 30 days in Mower County)*

**Goal #1:** Create educational activities that support healthy living and decrease vaping use.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Create opportunities to share information on the dangers of vaping to youth and adults
2. Collaborate with public health initiatives and other organizations to address health issues that can lead to decreased vaping usage among youth
3. Participate in local coalitions addressing socio-economic factors that can affect vaping usage

#### **Measures/Data Source:**

1. Community Health Needs Assessment Survey
2. MN Student Survey
3. Austin Positive Action Coalition Youth Survey



Health Priority 1: Access to Health Care			
Objectives	Strategies	Tactics/Opportunities to Collaborate	Progress/Rationale Notes
<b>By December 31, 2025, decrease the proportion of Mower County residents who report having difficulty accessing care by 20%.</b>	1: Identify gaps in streamlined care continuum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect Mower County Community Health with Epic EMR</li> <li>Create Links from MCHS to Social Workers</li> <li>Populate Aunt Bertha</li> </ul>	
	2: Educate populations on how to access health care resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in United Way Community Connect</li> <li>Create Facebook Live! Events that encourage interaction and information-sharing</li> </ul>	
	3: Educate communities on the changes and ways to receive health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host Community Workshops</li> <li>Mower Refreshed Newsletter</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	
	4: Develop a community-based connect resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with local social service agencies               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COSA</li> <li>APAC</li> <li>Austin Aspires</li> <li>United Way</li> <li>PRC</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
	5: Convene related groups to discuss barriers to health care access (insurance, transportation, language barriers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Community Health Workers to ID opportunities to “meet people where they are</li> </ul>	

		at” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salvation Army meals</li> <li>• School Conferences – to reach parents</li> </ul>	
	6: Build Relationships with local business to understand employee needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host Community Roundtables</li> </ul>	

Health Priority 2: Mental Well-Being			
Objectives	Strategies	Tactics/Opportunities to Collaborate	Progress/Rationale Notes
By December 31, 2025, increase the proportion of Mower County youth and adults who feel their community cares about them from quite a bit to very much to 20%.	1: Collaborate with education groups to advocate for and implement countywide social-emotional curriculum in all schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide letters of support</li> <li>• Collaborate with Austin Aspires</li> <li>• Mower County social worker network</li> </ul>	
	2: Equip Key Personnel to address mental health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue Mental Health Aid Training for county employers</li> </ul>	
	3: Work with community partners to establish education sessions and intervention programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Facebook Live! Events that encourage interaction and information-sharing</li> <li>• “Drive-By” Wellness talks at the Y/Austin Rec Center</li> </ul>	
	4: Develop programming with community organizations that reaches people in their own environment/culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social connectedness seminars</li> <li>• Host Mower Refreshed Live! Online education</li> </ul>	

<b>Health Priority 3: Chronic Disease Prevention</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Tactics/Opportunities to Collaborate</b>	<b>Progress/Rationale Notes</b>
<b>By December 31, 2021, decrease the amount of Mower County youth drinking alcohol and vaping devices by 10%.</b>	1: Create educational activities that support healthy living and decrease vaping use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with APAC to create positive messaging</li> <li>• Peer Groups creating videos</li> </ul>	
	2: Create opportunities to share information on the dangers of vaping to youth and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROM/Hype Night</li> <li>• National Night Out</li> <li>• MR newsletter</li> <li>• Create Facebook Live! Events that encourage interaction and information-sharing</li> </ul>	
	3: Collaborate with public health initiatives and other organizations to address health issues that can lead to decreased vaping use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with APAC to decrease vaping use in youth</li> <li>• Pursue opportunities with Austin Rec Center for well-being education</li> </ul>	
	4: Participate in local coalitions addressing socio-economic factors that can affect vaping use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APAC Mtgs</li> </ul>	

### Available Resources and Partners within the Community to Address the Identified Needs

Priority Health Topic	Community Resources/Partners
Access to Health Care	Mower County Health and Human Services Mower County SHIP IMAA Mayo Clinic Express Care Mayo Clinic Health System Children’s Dental Health Services Collateral mailed to homes Signage within clinic MCHS website Collateral shared at community events Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio
Mental Well-being	Mower County Health and Human Services Mower County SHIP United Way Austin Public Schools Austin Aspires School Social Workers Salvation Army Fernbrook Services Independent Management Services Fountain Centers Mower Refreshed Mower County Senior Center Seibel Center Gerard Academy Parenting Resource Center Austin YMCA Community Education Crime Victim Resource Center Welcome Center Cedar River Counseling Service Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Quality Case Management and Adult Rehab Services Austin Manor Catholic Charities Faith communities LIFE Mower County
Chronic Disease Prevention	Mower County Health and Human Services

	Mower County SHIP Austin Positive Action Coalition (APAC) Austin YMCA City of Austin Parks & Rec Community Education Growing Acres Help Me Grow ( <a href="http://helpmegrowmn.org">helpmegrowmn.org</a> ) Alcoholics Anonymous Well-child visits Immunization clinics School flu shot clinics Mower Refreshed
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## **Completion and Monitoring**

The Community Health Improvement Plan is a collective collaboration with Mower County Health and Human Services and Mayo Clinic Health System to organize and address the top health concerns within Mower County.

Completing and monitoring the plan will be the responsibility of Mower County Health and Human Services. Mower County Health and Human Services staff will provide leadership and support for the implementation of this plan as it relates to their roles. This plan will be shared with the following community stakeholders and partners on a quarterly basis to share in the responsibility to monitor and revise this CHIP:

1. Mower County Commissioners
2. SHIP CLT/Steering Committee
3. Community Health Services Advisory Board
4. Austin Positive Action Coalition Steering Committee

All decision making processes will be lead, webbed mapped and analyzed by Mower County Health and Human Services Staff in partnership with Mayo Clinic Health System. Updates to this plan will be added to the Progress/Rationale Notes of each priority area.

## **Appendices – Available Upon Request**

Key Informant Interview Questions  
Key Informant Summary  
Community Health Needs Assessment (Sample Survey)  
Summary Report for Mower County (MDH)  
Survey Methodology  
MN Student Survey  
Austin Positive Action Coalition Student Survey