



Missouri's Health Assessment Summary

Introduction

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services recently conducted a state health assessment to identify the health status of Missourians and areas for health improvement. The process included a thorough review of existing data, and conducting surveys, focus groups and interviews to obtain the community's perspectives about health needs and potential solutions to these issues. The full report and data sources are available at: health.mo.gov/MOHealthAssessment.



Highlights of Findings

Social and Economic Factors

- The poverty rates for Missouri and the U.S. are nearly the same, but the Southeast region of Missouri has the highest percentage of persons living in poverty in the state.
- The unemployment rate in the U.S. is 8.3 percent compared to the Missouri rate of 7.6 percent. The Southeast region has the highest rate of unemployment in the state.
- African Americans in Missouri fare worse than the general population for these factors.
 - The 2012 unemployment rate for African Americans is 12.9 percent, compared to 7.6 percent for all Missourians.
 - Over 30 percent of African Americans live in poverty, compared to 15.8 percent for all Missourians.
- The rate of uninsured Missourians, at about 20 percent, has increased in recent years. The Southwest region of Missouri has the highest rate of uninsured.

Health Factors

- Missouri's obesity rate is 30.2 percent, compared to the U.S. rate of 27.7 percent.
- Missouri's smoking rate at 23 percent is slightly higher than the U.S. rate of 21.2 percent. The smoking rate in the Southeast region is higher than the state rate.

- The life expectancy at birth for Missourians (76.9 years) is lower than for all Americans (78.1). The life expectancy at birth for residents in the Southeast region is nearly two years less than that for the state.
- Missouri's infant death rate is significantly greater than the U.S. rate but the infant death rate for African Americans is more than double the rate for all Missourians.
- Depression is a risk factor for many diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes. Missouri's depression rate (20.6 percent) is higher than the rate of 17.5 percent for the U.S. The Southeast region of the state has an even higher rate at 23 percent.
- Missouri's overall death rate is higher than the U.S. rate. The Southeast region of Missouri carries a higher burden for all deaths. The death rate for African Americans in Missouri is 15 percent higher than that of all Missourians.
- The impact of drug use in Missouri is felt in families, communities, the criminal justice system and the public health system. The Missouri drug arrest rate is significantly higher than the U.S. rate.

Threats and Opportunities

Stakeholders were asked to identify issues that could impact the health of Missourians and the public health system. These could be threats or opportunities. The three primary threats identified are:

- The economic downturn in both the state and the U.S. negatively affect services to the most vulnerable populations and undermine past achievements.
- Some lawmakers don't appreciate the value of public health and some state policies contribute to the growing economic gaps that lead to "haves and have-nots".
- Organizations compete for limited resources to meet their own missions which can reduce collaboration.

Potential opportunities include:

- Local public health agencies and their commitment to serving, assuring, and protecting the health of their clients;
- The Missouri Foundation for Health is a major force in providing funding and technical assistance that fill gaps in services and supports innovation;
- Collaboration with diverse state agencies, nontraditional partners, and stakeholders across the state;
- The national accreditation process facilitates partnerships at multiple levels and a focus on quality improvement.

Input from the community

Citizen discussions were conducted in eight regions of the state with over 100 Missourians participating. Highlights of these discussions include:

- The loss of and lack of good jobs pose a major issue for many Missourians. Citizens shared common stories about the financial and emotional pressure of lost jobs and lack of health insurance or very high deductibles.
- Living a healthy lifestyle is a challenge and less of a priority than immediate day to day needs.
- Depression and substance abuse are increasing issues that are linked to financial problems.
- There is often embarrassment related to mental health issues and lack of access is a critical issue in rural areas.
- Seniors are more at risk due to financial challenges and inadequate support systems.
- Policy makers should cooperate with each other, create fair and equitable policies and communicate more with the public.
- The public needs to be more aware of health issues, healthy behaviors and services.

Common Themes

The assessment process revealed common themes occurring throughout. When the assessment process was complete, the data and responses were analyzed for cross-cutting topics. The common themes include:

- Uninsured
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Economics
- Mental health and substance abuse
- Health services access and costs
- Modifiable risk factors including unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and tobacco use
- Commitment and collaboration through partnerships
- A competent public health and personal health care workforce
- Performance Management and quality improvement

Recommended Priorities

After evaluating the findings, state partners agreed that an opportunity exists in Missouri to focus on the key priorities below.

1. Access to health care
 - health care access, high cost of health care and high rate of uninsured
 - economy – access to resources necessary to be healthy

Stakeholders from across the state were interviewed to gain insight into the state's health issues based on their experiences in public health, community-based health services, social work and social services.

Highlights of the interviews include:

- Smoking, nutrition, physical activity, screenings and adequate prenatal care are health behaviors that require attention in most regions.
- Those without insurance have difficulty getting health and dental services.
- The poor, unemployed, underemployed, women with children, immigrants and the elderly have difficulties accessing services.
- More consumers are requesting and needing services for depression, substance abuse and other mental health complaints.
- Many agencies face funding challenges and are concerned about future financial resources in the face of fiscal uncertainties.
- Most organizations are forming collaborations and partnerships to assure that they can meet their missions.

including affordable options for good nutrition, physical activity and preventive health care services

2. Modifiable risk factors
 - obesity
 - smoking
 - mental health/substance abuse
3. Infrastructure issues
 - Mobilizing partnerships
 - Performance management and quality improvement
 - Workforce development

Next Steps

The issues identified resulted in a Missouri State Health Improvement Plan that is coordinated by the DHSS with input from over 40 internal and external partners that represent state populations and health challenges. This plan is used by health and other governmental education and human service agencies, in collaboration with community partners, to set priorities, coordinate efforts, and acquire resources. The plan is important for the development of policies and defining actions for directing efforts that promote health.

What Can Individuals Do?

Citizens can impact the health of their community by being active in their school and community about health issues, serving on health-related coalitions and other groups, writing letters to their legislators about health-related issues and modeling healthy behaviors.



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