

LIVE HEALTHY NAPA COUNTY

Michelle Key

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Live Health Napa County is a shared vision among public agencies, private businesses and community based organizations that are committed to promoting the health and well-being of the residents in the community. The idea began as a public health driven project and was implemented in 2012. A plan was developed to address four priority areas: Wellness and Healthy Lifestyles; Social Determinants of Health; Sustainable Partnerships; and Access to High Quality Health Care. LHNC is not just for clients that receive services from the Health and Human Services Agency, it is for all of Napa County's estimated 142,456 residents. Many of Napa County's residents receive benefits and services from the department in which they have an immediate need and this collective approach allows the resident to receive services from a holistic perspective. A healthy community is a happy community.

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Background

Live Healthy Napa County (LHNC) is collaboration among partners that include Health and Human Services, Public Health, educators, private businesses, public safety and other government entities whose shared vision is to improve the health and quality of life for citizens in Napa County by increasing awareness of health inequities and the social determinants of health. The ideology is that by changing the existing system, you will also change the culture. If the system doesn't change, the outcomes don't change. Over 150 partners are involved in championing this cause.

Health and Human Services is divided into six subdivisions, Alcohol and Drug Services; Child Welfare Services; Comprehensive Services for Older Adults; Mental Health; Public Health; and Self Sufficiency Services. The one common link for each of these subdivisions is that they often provide services to the same clients but each entity only addresses its immediate need without much support for other challenges that client might need assistance with. In 2014, Napa County's Self Sufficiency Services provided support for over 33,000 clients.

Currently, another pressing issue for Napa County residents, as with many others in the San Francisco Bay Area region, is the exponential cost of housing. LHNC is continually looking for more engagement and partnership, particularly from the private sector, to move the needle on this issue.

Napa County

When most people think about Napa County, they often envision this utopia that is filled with nothing more than vineyards, lush green hillsides, and some of the world's most exquisite wines and wineries because this is how the area is portrayed in the media. While it is undeniable that this is a beautiful area located in the North Bay, it is not exempt from unemployment, affordable housing shortages, poverty, food deserts, homelessness and other issues that impact the quality of life of its residents. According to the latest data from the U.S. Census, the population is approximately 142,456 which is 8.7% of Alameda County's estimated population of 1,638,215. Approximately 34% of Napa County families with children under 18 are living below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Live Healthy Napa County

Live Healthy Napa County started as a public health driven project in 2012. The Public Health Department worked with various partners to do community health assessments that yielded good information but did not address poverty, education and social determinants of health. Data showed inequities in health as it related to ethnicity and income and that this was not just a public health problem. The assessment also identified methods for communication and data sharing; ways to maximize and share resources; strategies to combat obesity, the use of alcohol and drugs; ways to address mental health issues; and how to improve access to fresh, nutritious food. In order to get a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the community, community members and other stakeholders were incorporated into the conversation. The idea is that the community can better articulate and understand the needs and challenges in their communities and determine their priorities, goals and outcomes. As a result of these conversations, a vision

was created. A Community Health Assessment included focus groups from the community to find out exactly what they wanted and four priority areas were identified for the vision:

Improving Wellness and Healthy Lifestyles; Addressing the Social Determinants of Health; Create and Strengthen Sustainable Partnerships for Collective Impact; and Ensure Access to High Quality Health Services and Social Supports at Every Age.

In Alameda County, the Public Health Department conducted a County Health Assessment with community based organizations and other collaboratives to gain an understanding of core health challenges and health and social inequities in the county. Priorities were developed but much of the focus has been on data collection and not enough in the area of actionable items.

Improving Wellness and Healthy Lifestyles

As part of the LHNC collaboration, stakeholders agreed on some mutual areas that were important to their community. Many of the areas of concern needed to be policy driven with support and advocacy from local government departments, non-profits and citizens themselves. Obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer are major concerns for the community; therefore, policy recommendations that enhance school-based physical activities and healthy food choices for students, restrict smoking in public areas, and increase taxation on alcohol and tobacco were all part of this effort.

The topic of obesity was the first issue of focus because of its pervasiveness, contribution to other serious chronic diseases and its impact on younger people. Stakeholders collectively agreed upon a vision for specific ways to educate the public and deal with this health crisis through the identification of resources, establishing performance measures and plans for follow-up on outcomes. It was agreed that this could be facilitated with the following support:

- Advocacy for safe playgrounds, more parks and other options for exercise and physical activity
- Collaborations with businesses and farmers' markets to make healthy food available
- Community education
- Develop partnerships that would advocate for policy change

Some of the strategies that were identified and accomplished to help facilitate the goals of this initiative were: increasing community and school gardens; creating a "Food Day"; quarterly healthy eating and nutrition classes; promoting and marketing a Rethink Your Drink campaign to encourage drinking water instead of sugary sweetened beverages; and providing at least one Active Living class that promotes physical activity.

Addressing the Social Determinants of Health

This is the second priority area. Economic stability, neighborhoods and environment, education, health care, and social and community context are the lenses that this issue is viewed through.

Most people associate health with an illness or disease and less often as a state of mental, social, and physical well-being. Napa County recognized that in order to maximize the likelihood of positive outcomes for the community, they needed to address the conditions that make up the social determinants of health in a holistic manner. Social, physical, environmental and economic circumstances that people are in can have a huge impact on health. Many of the people that are disproportionately negatively impacted are non-Whites, less educated, female, disabled or discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Unemployment, crime, poverty, homelessness, food deserts and blighted neighborhoods are examples of social determinants that have a significant impact on health outcomes. These issues often outweigh health issues and disease and have a negative impact on average life expectancy.

Create and Strengthen Sustainable Partnerships for Collective Impact

In order for LHNC to be sustainable, it must include: collective action from all collaborators, advocacy for funding and a Bill of Rights for Napa County's Children (which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in April 2015). Strategies for this effort include collecting quality data on unrepresented populations and developing strategic initiatives that include the entire community's best interest.

Ensure Access to High Quality Health Services and Social Supports at Every Age

Preventable health and dental care for Napa County residents is a collective vision for all stakeholders but this is an area that is faulty and most resort to emergency care options. Many residents are uninsured or rely on Medi-Cal for their health care needs. Medi-Cal services continue to be minimal and focus less on preventative care, such as routine disease screenings, and the availability of providers is not increasing at the same pace as the demand for service. Stakeholders are advocating for improved access to dental services, especially for children, increased access to community based mental health and social services and initiatives that improve the quality of care for a lifespan. There is collective agreement that strategies need to be proactive and preventative in order to address health issues and disparities, especially among residents in the community that are disproportionately disadvantaged.

Challenges and Successes of Live Healthy Napa County

The LHNC collaborations are not without challenges ---and some are a work in progress --- but progress will be made by focusing on the desired outcomes and their commitment to the community's well-being. Some of the challenges include:

- Agencies that are territorial with their resources
- Difficulty in collaborating without a steady funding source
- Insufficient transportation for citizens to access services
- Scarcity of services for people living in outlying areas of the county where the population is not as dense (e.g., Calistoga, American Canyon)
- Limited mental health services and ability to obtain preventive care due to lack of primary care doctors especially for residents covered under Medi-Cal
- Ability to engage populations, such as the elderly, immigrants and those with limited or no English

The efforts of the collaboration have been beneficial to the community, and many residents have benefitted from services they were previously unaware of or believed to be not entitled to. Various contributing factors to some successes include:

- The robust non-profit network and safety net system in the county
- A collaborative community
- A supportive philanthropic community
- Excellent health care clinics
- Supportive Health and Human Services leadership
- Effective communication

- A progressive County Board of Supervisors

Goals and Performance Measures

In order to determine whether or not a project is actually doing what it intends to do, there must be goals and performance measures incorporated into the process. Performance measures are indicators of how well goals and objectives are being met and provide a basis for recommendations for improvement or expansion. LHNC has been able to capture some of these measurements, such as:

- The number of obese people that are designated to a lower weight category
- Reported increases in physical activity
- Number of comprehensive policies adopted
- Increased funding allocations to this project
- Self-attestations
- Number of homeless that get housing
- Increased enrollment of uninsured children and adults into health insurance
- Number of individuals that become self-sufficient through employment

Conclusion/Recommendation

Napa County is much smaller than Alameda County, and the ability to engage and coordinate efforts and resources are major contributors to the project's success. During partner meetings, there generally are representatives from the key collaborators in attendance to report on a specific topic and clearly articulate key issues, challenges and solutions. This coordinated effort has proven to be crucial in moving some of the issues through the Board of Supervisors as well

as for effective advocacy for funding, resources and legislative initiatives. Since this an ambitious effort, I would recommend that Alameda County Social Services review and research what the Public Health Department has developed, assess the feasibility of a full immersion into this partnership and determine what tools, resources and funding would be required in order to develop and sustain it.

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