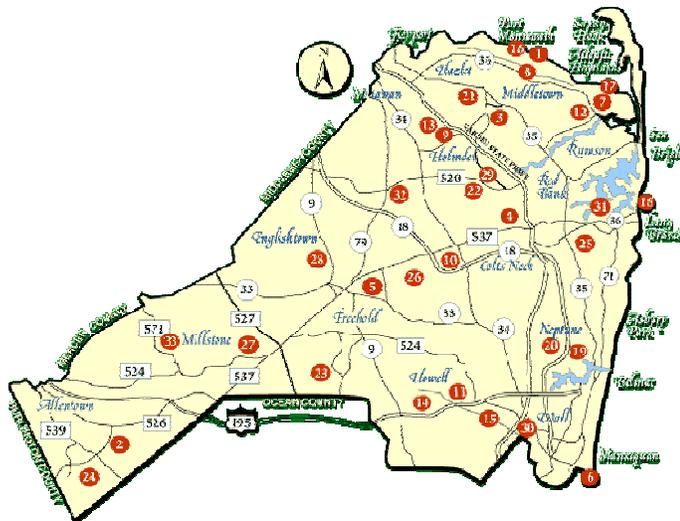


Monmouth County, New Jersey



Community Health Improvement Plan

April 2007

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April 2007

Dear Community Members,

Eighteen months ago, we embarked upon a community-wide process to develop a shared vision and improve the health and quality of life in Monmouth County. Stakeholders from area wide agencies and community-based organizations volunteered their time to participate in a community driven strategic planning process known as Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP). Throughout the planning process, community-wide consensus was continually nurtured and eventually reaped the development of a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) – a plan that is *owned* by the people of Monmouth County.

Thus, it is with great pleasure that we present to you Monmouth County's CHIP, a living document that addresses the needs of Monmouth County residents. Over the next few years, area agencies and community organizations will work together throughout the action cycle to implement programs and policies that will enhance life within the County. This is the start of optimal health for all residents. Please venture with us, because together, we *are* going to make a difference!

-The Governmental Public Health Partnership of Monmouth County

Colts Neck Health Department
Freehold Area Health Department ~ Hazlet-Aberdeen Health Department
Long Branch Health Department ~ Manalapan Health Department
Matawan Health Department ~ Middletown Health Department
Monmouth County Health Department
Monmouth County Regional Health Commission

Acknowledgements

The following organizations and agencies are commended for their involvement at various stages of the MAPP (*Mobilizing for Action through Planning & Partnerships*) process. Their commitment and enthusiasm has been critical in the success of the MAPP process in Monmouth County.

Allen Project, Inc.
American Cancer Society
American Red Cross
Bayshore Community Hospital
Brookdale Community College
CentraState Health System
CJCNANBPW, INC.
Freehold Area Health Department
Freehold Community Counseling
Freehold Regional High School District
Hazlet-Aberdeen Health Department
Keansburg Resource Network
Long Branch Concordance
Lunch Break/Red Bank
Manalapan Health Department
Meridian Health
Middletown Township Health Department
Monmouth County Community Development Program
Monmouth County Department of Transportation
Monmouth County Division of Alcohol & Drug Abuse
Monmouth County Division of Planning & Contracting
Monmouth County Division of Social Services
Monmouth County Head Start
Monmouth County Health Department
Monmouth County Mental Health Department
Monmouth County Office of Youth Services Planning
Monmouth Regional Health Commission
Monmouth University
New Jersey Department of Education
New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services
New Jersey Division of Prevention & Community Partnerships
Planned Parenthood of Central New Jersey
Prevention First
Regional Perinatal Consortium of Monmouth & Ocean Counties
Salvation Army/Asbury Park
United Way of Monmouth County
VNA of Central Jersey
"180 Turning Lives Around"

A Vision for Monmouth County

Nearly 70 individuals representing various social service agencies, government agencies, health departments, health systems, educational institutions, and not-for-profit agencies gathered at Monmouth University on September 19, 2005 to articulate a vision for the residents of Monmouth County. Attendees were educated about the MAPP process and encouraged to play an active and collaborative role in ensuring the health and well-

being of area residents. A full day of brainstorming and forward-thinking engagement paved the way for the development of a countywide vision. This vision for the future was also supported by the identification of core values that attendees deemed critical to the success of the partnership and fulfillment of the vision.

The finalized vision was adopted on October 27, 2005 and reads as follows.

“A model community committed to empowering all residents to achieve optimum health.”

Following the MAPP kickoff meeting held on September 19, 2005, the submitted list of core values was tallied and the top values/concepts were presented to committee members for

refinement and adoption. On March 10, 2006, committee members adopted the following list of core values for the MAPP process and Community Health Improvement Plan.

Core Values

- ◆ Increasingly cohesive and coordinated public health system that addresses the local, regional, and county needs
- ◆ Accountable, measurable, and data driven
- ◆ Collaborative
- ◆ Culturally competent
- ◆ Sustainable

Phase III: The Four Assessments

The MAPP process outlines a comprehensive approach to assessing the health and well being of county residents. Specifically, the MAPP framework promotes four separate assessments. *1. Forces of Change Assessment 2. Local Public Health System Assessment 3. Community Health Status Assessment 4. Community Themes & Strengths Assessment.* While each assessment may identify similar themes within their findings, each of the four assessments has a unique set of objectives and outcomes.

Monmouth County began the first assessment with the distribution of a community-wide survey in the summer of 2005. The final assessment was concluded with a series of focus groups that were conducted in the spring of 2006. The following text outlines and summarizes each assessment.

Forces of Change

On March 31 2006, 13 individuals gathered to answer two questions, “What is occurring or might occur that affects the health of our community of the local public

health system?” and “What specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?” After several hours of discussion, a vote yielded a prioritized list of the most significant forces influencing the health and quality of life in Monmouth County. The top ten forces included:

1. Funding
2. Growing number of uninsured (*specifically 18-25 age range*)
3. Transportation challenges
4. Increasing home prices
5. Growing minority population
6. Alcohol use/abuse
7. Too few specialists (*specifically for the poor*)
8. Mental health problems
9. Decrease in sense of community
10. Obesity

After forces were identified, participants examined each force in terms of threats and/or opportunities. Findings were consolidated and organized to address crosscutting issues from the other assessments.

Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA)

The LPHSA identifies strengths and weaknesses across the local public health system. Dialogue focuses around key questions such as, “What are the components, activities, and capacities of our local public health system?” and “How are the 10 Essential Public Health Services being provided to our community?”

On October 6, 2005, 15 individuals participated in a review and discussion of the LPHSA survey instrument on October 6, 2005. Following the half-day meeting, attendees completed the survey instrument and returned the completed surveys to the offices of Holleran Consulting for tabulation. Group consensus identified the following strengths and opportunities within Monmouth County.

Strengths

- *Ability to enforce public health laws & regulations*
- *Capacity to diagnose and investigate health problems and threats*

Opportunities

- *Need to develop and maintain consistent community partnerships focusing on community health improvement*
- *Not all populations within the county are being linked to the needed health services*

Community Health Status Assessment

Several approaches were undertaken to assess the health status of all residents living within Monmouth County. A countywide survey was distributed to county residents across a three month period beginning in the summer of 2005 to gather primary statistical data. Surveys were available in both English and Spanish. A total of 1,378 Monmouth County residents completed the survey that elicited feedback regarding health concerns among area residents such as cancer, alcohol abuse, and obesity.

Additionally, secondary data was gathered to reconcile data from

the community survey with existing statistics on mortality, access to healthcare, maternal & child health indicators, and cancer rates to name a few. Comparisons were made between the Monmouth County statistics and New Jersey and National data points. In addition, separate profiles were developed for selected municipalities within Monmouth County. Included in that profile were Asbury Park City, Freehold Borough, City of Long Branch City, Neptune City, and Red Bank Borough.

Community Themes & Strengths

Assessment The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment is designed to identify the thoughts, opinions and concerns of the community. In Monmouth County, a series of five focus groups were conducted; two with county residents and two with county professionals who represented various sectors of the community. The fifth resident focus group consisted of individuals from the Hispanic/Latino population. Attendees were asked to provide feedback on areas such as quality

of life, specific subpopulations status (i.e. seniors, children, and minority groups), socioeconomic opportunity, and the environment. While various themes were identified between the resident groups and professionals groups, a number of the issues were consistent across the groups. Prevailing themes were reported and used in identifying strategic issues.

Interested in more information?

Detailed summaries of the findings from each of the four assessments are available for interested parties. The reports are available by contacting the Monmouth County Health Department at 732-431-7456.

Identification of Strategic Issues

On June 14, 2006, approximately 20 individuals from the committee participated in the Phase IV session of MAPP. The meeting began with an overview of the significant findings across the four assessments from Phase III. Following the overview, a matrix that outlined the consistent

themes across each of the assessments was presented to the attendees. The group discussed related themes and strategic issues deemed significant within the county. A total of 11 strategic issues were identified, from which seven emerged as priorities.

- 1. Barriers to Health Care**
- 2. Comprehensive Health Care Despite the High Cost of Living in Monmouth County**
- 3. Tobacco, Drugs, & Alcohol**
- 4. Transportation Barriers**
- 5. Cancer Morbidity**
- 6. Growing Older Adult Population**

Development of Goals & Strategies

On September 26, 2006, approximately 35 individuals attended Phase V of the MAPP. During this meeting, workgroups identified goal statements, strategy alternatives, implementation details, and potential barriers to implementation. During that meeting, a decision was made to combine the drug and alcohol issue into one, yielding a final list of six strategic issues within Monmouth County.

Subsequent to the September 2006, the MAPP Committee met several times to refine suggested goals, strategies to address each issue, and proposed next steps for the implementation of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The following pages outline each of the six strategic issues along with the methods by which county professionals, government officials, and concerned citizens will focus energies and attention in the next several years.

1. Barriers to Health Care

Various findings from throughout the MAPP assessment support initiatives to focus on the number of barriers that exist within Monmouth County, forcing many residents to go without needed health care. *“The charity system in this county is overburdened. We need more clinic-type services for the un- and under-insured.”*

Nearly 25% of Monmouth County residents identify access to health care as one of the most important factors for a healthy community. While this is identified as highly important, 60.4% feel cost of services are a barrier to service in the county, 51.4% feel there is insufficient information about available services, and approximately 32% feel the waiting period is too long to access needed services. Additionally, “linking people to needed health services” was the lowest scoring section on the LPHSA with a performance score



of 41 and the number of uninsured within Monmouth County was the second highest prioritized force from the Forces of Change Assessment.

Language barriers present a significant challenge to the growing number of minority populations within the county. Specific mention was made of the Hispanic/Latino population, but many focus group participants noted that there are numerous other ethnic groups whereby language barriers exist. Assessment findings emphasized the need for additional bilingual social service and health care professionals as well as increased training for those individuals.

Barriers to Healthcare

Goal: To identify and reduce barriers to healthcare services by increasing access to healthcare.

Strategies	Implementation Details	Target Group	Potential Barriers
1. Educate community about alternative services	Work with hospitals to increase awareness re available services	Hospitals	Funds Resistance
	Encourage area hospitals to explore and improve ER triage models that encourage area clinics to be medical home	Clinics	
	Research national and NJ models to inappropriate ER use		
2. Increase availability of alternative services	Explore increased use of mobile clinics		
	Explore use of satellite clinics	Clinics	
	Expand the use of school based clinics by reaching out to school districts to educate and identify need	Schools	
3. Advocate importance of customer service, focusing on sensitivity, language barriers, cultural competency, and people with disabilities	Develop education program for small providers	Small providers	
	Outreach to larger providers reminding them of need for customer service	Large providers	
	Explore possibility of using a County Report Card for customer service		

2. Comprehensive Health Care Despite the High Cost of Living

Good jobs and a healthy economy are highly important to county residents. In contrast, nearly all focus group participants indicate that living a high quality of life in the Monmouth County is a challenge with the increasing cost of housing and living expenses. Many stories were shared of the inability for young families and seniors to live and work in Monmouth County. Finding those “good” jobs that are highly important to residents is becoming increasingly difficult, given the reality that many salaries within the county are unable to keep up with the cost of living.

One focus group participant indicated that it feels as if *“the middle class is being squeezed out.”* While the county averages demonstrate income levels above New Jersey and National averages, pockets within Monmouth County reveal



quite different patterns. Additionally, it is becoming increasingly difficult for long-term residents to remain in Monmouth County and for county employers to find qualified individuals who can also afford to live within the county. Many residents spend the majority of their income on housing and living expenses, with little left for healthcare priorities.

These factors have led to a disturbing number of Monmouth County children, adults, and seniors in need of more affordable health care services. The MAPP committee deems this issue to be worthy of increased attention.

Comprehensive Healthcare Despite the High Cost of Living

Goal: Increase awareness and opportunities for providing health care services.			
Strategies	Implementation Details	Target Group	Potential Barriers
1. Outreach & Education re available services	Target schools	Schools	Funding Buy-in Time Language barriers Internet vs. non-internet Resistance to sharing information Ability to access undocumented county residents
	Target community organizations	Community organizations	
	Mailings		
	Health fairs		
	Community events		
2. Assess need for clinics, nursing, and screening services	Identify and list county resources		
	Survey providers	Providers	
3. Identify and evaluate physician barriers to providing care	Utilize Public Health students to survey physicians	Physicians Specialists	
	Hold focus groups at grand rounds/hospitals	Physicians Specialists	

3. Tobacco, Drugs & Alcohol

“Six out of ten residents feel drug and alcohol abuse is one of the most significant risky behaviors in Monmouth County.”

Additionally, tobacco use was identified by nearly 34% of those surveyed as being a significant health issue within Monmouth County.



The focus group findings also revealed significant concern in the county specifically regarding teen alcohol use and abuse. Several focus group participants explained that teen alcohol use in the county is often viewed as an acceptable social activity and is condoned by a number of parents within the county. Alcohol use and abuse, in general, was identified as one of the top ten forces during the Forces of Change Assessment. According to a recent Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) study, nearly 68% of Monmouth County adults consume alcohol in an average month. This is more than 6% above the New Jersey

regional data and nearly 8% higher than the New Jersey overall statistics. Additionally, 5.1% are “heavy drinkers” and “16.5%” engage in binge drinking.

Related to drug use within the county, admissions due to heroin use represent the largest proportion of substance abuse in Monmouth County.

Tobacco, Drugs, & Alcohol

Goal: Increase the awareness of alcohol, tobacco and drug (AT&D) issues by 25% through education and awareness as evidenced by countywide alcohol, tobacco, and drug surveys.

Strategies	Implementation Details	Target Group	Potential Barriers
1. Education	Ongoing media announcements (radio, television, newspapers) focusing on availability of services, availability of AA, and costs of intoxicated driving	All county residents	Stigmas Funding Ignorance to the impact Resistance
	Strategic outreach campaign to faith-based organizations	Faith-based organizations	
	Campaign aimed at primary care physicians	Primary Care Providers	
	Conduct training conferences targeting specific professional groups	Pharmacists	
	Create county informational website		
2. Advocacy	Develop and implement a campaign to change the state's UPPL Laws	Insurance companies	
	Encourage insurers and public funding entities to provide "treatment on demand"	Insurance companies	

4. Transportation Barriers

Three out of ten respondents from the community survey identified the lack of transportation as a significant barrier to accessing services in the county. Focus group feedback and Forces of Change feedback reiterated this sentiment, with specific mention of transportation barriers for those living in rural parts of the county, too little medical transport services for low income residents, and too little public transportation routes that run east to west across the county.

“Transportation to medical appointments is horrible. There is no way for a single mom to go anywhere because they do not let you take kids. So, they don’t get the medical care they need.” Educating the public about what services exist and increasing communication between transportation providers and county residents will be integrated into the countywide plan.



Traffic congestion within the county was also viewed as a significant challenge. Monmouth County residents are significantly less likely than those throughout the state or nation to carpool to work. They are more likely to drive alone to their jobs. Among all workers within Monmouth County (*age 16 and older*), 8.8% are utilizing public transportation to get to and from work. This is compared to 10.2% for workers throughout the state of New Jersey.

Transportation

Goal: To increase access to transportation services.

Strategies	Implementation Details	Target Group	Potential Barriers
1. Assess current inventory of transportation services	Host a Transportation Summit		Funds NJ Transit is \$60M in debt Lobbying efforts seem futile
	Look at how services are booked		
	Identify stakeholders and consumers of services		
	Identify specific gaps		
2. Increase awareness of services	Identify populations in need and where they live		
	Identify best communication method for target pops		
	Distribute resources to providers		
3. Explore alternative methods to subsidize both public and private entities	Build transportation subsidies into grants		
	Research other models in neighboring communities	Neighboring communities/ counties	
	Expand eligibility for current transportation programs		
	Look for faith community to sponsor volunteer programs	Faith community	

5. Cancer Morbidity

The crude rate for cancer in Monmouth County is 578.2 per 100,000 compared to 544.9 throughout New Jersey. The age-adjusted death rates for cancer in Monmouth County also reveal statistics that are less favorable when compared to the state figures (*Monmouth County: 223.3; New Jersey: 208.3*). The most significant area of concern is lung cancer, where the Monmouth County rate exceeds the New Jersey rate.

When county residents were surveyed about the most significant health problems within the community, cancer was the most commonly identified health issue. Many focus group participants elaborated that particularly the un- and under-insured are not getting the appropriate screenings. Even in instances where free screenings are available, the uninsured population feels helpless as they will be unable to pay for the

treatment of their cancer. One of the lower scoring areas on the LPHSA was “Inform, Educate, and Empower” people.



Many articulated across the various meetings that residents need to be educated about cancer prevention and early detection despite the level of insurance coverage. In addition to lung cancer, skin cancer rates in Monmouth County are above the New Jersey rates, which supports the need for increased education among county residents regarding the use of sunscreen. This is of particular relevance in Monmouth County given the proximity to the shore and summer vacation areas.

Cancer

Goal: Work with the Monmouth County Cancer Coalition to decrease cancer morbidity.			
Strategies	Implementation Details	Target Group	Potential Barriers
1. Participation in Monmouth County Cancer Coalition	Attend meetings		Cost Time Commitment
	Share minutes with entire MAPP Steering Committee		
	Actively support Cancer Coalition activities		
2. Promote existing screening programs	Advertise and promote screening opportunities		
	Create website with links to Monmouth County Cancer Coalition		

6. *Growing Older Adult Population*

Compared to the New Jersey and National statistics, Monmouth County proportionally represents a large senior population. MAPP meeting participants and focus group attendees identified that Monmouth County is increasingly becoming a destination county for retirees from New York City, and the number of retirement and active adult communities is growing at a steady rate.



Consistent with a growing aging population is the increased demand for healthcare, which, in turn, places an additional burden on the local public health system. This increased burden on the health system is happening at a time in Monmouth County when area health care providers are struggling to recruit qualified and trained professionals.

While the senior population in Monmouth County appears to have a higher socioeconomic status and is better able to afford healthcare, the increased demand for services presents itself as the real issue.

Additionally, there appears to be a significant opportunity to better educate area seniors regarding the services that are currently available to them. For older adults, accessing services can be intimidating and confusing. Area providers and agencies have a responsibility to mitigate those challenges and remove barriers which impede access the county's health and human service offerings.

Growing Older Adult Population

Goal: To fully meet the needs of the growing older adult population within Monmouth County			
Strategies	Implementation Details	Target Group	Potential Barriers
1. Develop a countywide referral system to educate area agencies/providers on services available to seniors	Create ownership protocol for all agencies regarding ownership and responsibility to consumers	Area agencies MAPP committee	Training Cost Sustainability Labor intensive Resistance
	Educate area providers		
2. Develop a resource guide for older adults	Develop a user-friendly resource guide for county seniors to increase awareness of available services	Seniors	

MAPP & Emergency Preparedness

With respect to emergency preparedness, the MAPP process and the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan in Monmouth County has laid the foundation for an effective community-wide response to natural and manmade disasters. As vividly seen in the aftermath of 911 and Hurricane Katrina, disaster response and recovery require the participation and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders within the region.

As such, MAPP is a great avenue for strengthening relationships, expanding partnerships and planning for public health threats. Community initiatives, such as access to services and barriers to transportation, foster communication across disciplines and challenge participants to discover solutions that one day, if need be, will transcend the routine, and become the driving force behind a successful emergency response and recovery.

Success Stories

While the efforts since the MAPP visioning exercise in September of 2005 have focused primarily on gathering data and input from various Monmouth County stakeholder groups to develop the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), various participants and agencies have already begun to integrate the findings and strategic issues into improvement initiatives. Those efforts are noteworthy and a sample of them is shared below. We applaud the work of these organizations and others throughout the county who are focusing on the health and well-being of Monmouth County residents.

- *Monmouth Medical Center has developed a 24-hour medical triage service, which has resulted in a measurable reduction in emergency room visits.*
- *CentraState hosted a transportation summit after this was found to be a barrier and established a new public transportation route. CentraState also invited a member of the MAPP Steering Committee to speak to its management team regarding the MAPP process within Monmouth County.*
- *Meridian Health is exploring options for increasing the use of mobile clinics.*
- *Planned Parenthood was faced with an urgent need for transporting clients and therefore developed contracts with private services for transportation.*
- *The Regional Perinatal Consortium of Monmouth and Ocean Counties has built transportation costs for clients into grant applications and funding.*
- *The VNA has established a school-based health clinic in Keansburg aimed at keeping kids in school.*
- *The Monmouth County Health Department has coordinated a health clinic with social services clients.*
- *Prevention First has coordinated a clergy advisory committee that has models of faith-based programs for substance abuse treatment.*
- *Area hospitals have moved in the direction of customer service training where employees embrace a welcoming attitude and a “Can I do anything for you?” approach to customer service.*

Next Steps

The following workgroups have been put into place to address each of the six strategic issues. Each workgroup will meet on a regular basis to develop action plans, provide committee updates, etc. A representative from each workgroup will be elected to sit on the overall MAPP Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will meet quarterly to review workgroup progress and identify how the Steering Committee can best support the initiatives of each workgroup.

While consistent staffing within the workgroups will be critical to the success of the Community Health Improvement Plan, adding key representatives and stakeholders is highly important as well. On May 2, 2007, a meeting will be held to share the CHIP with the public and to solidify committee and workgroup representation. All interested individuals are encouraged to attend the CHIP rollout meeting on May 2nd.

The Monmouth County Community Health Improvement Plan will be refined and evaluated as necessary during the implementation phase. The various workgroups will evaluate the success of various programs and may modify goals and initiatives accordingly. While minor continuous refinement in the coming years is expected, it is anticipated that the entire MAPP process will be executed once again in approximately four years. The resulting product will be another Community Health Improvement Plan for the future of Monmouth County and its residents.



The 10 Essential Public Health Services

- 1. Monitor health status to identify community health problems*
- 2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and hazards in the community*
- 3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues*
- 4. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems*
- 5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts*
- 6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety*
- 7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable*
- 8. Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce*
- 9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services*
- 10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems*