

Howard County's Local Health Improvement Coalition: 2012-2014 Local Health Improvement Action Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About Howard County's Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC)

VISION

All residents of Howard County will have access to health care and health outcomes will be equitable for all.

MISSION

Howard County's Local Health Improvement Coalition works to achieve health equity in Howard County and to identify and reduce health disparities.

VALUES

- Evidence-based
- All stakeholders have a voice
- Inclusive of Howard County's diverse community
- Collaboration
- Transparency

Local Health Improvement Priorities 2012-2014

Howard County's LHIC has set three top priorities as the main focus of its work aimed to reduce disparities and improve outcomes.

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| <p>PRIORITY #1: Increase access to health care.</p> <p>PRIORITY #2: Enable people of all ages to achieve and maintain a healthy weight through healthy eating and physical activity.</p> <p>PRIORITY #3: Expand access to behavioral health resources and reduce behavioral health emergencies.</p> |
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The *2012-2014 Local Health Improvement Action Plan* is based on the three priorities set by the LHIC and the corresponding measures, goals, and strategies for each priority area. The priorities were chosen with consideration of the following prioritization criteria:

- High levels of disparities related to this health outcome.
- Improving this issue would affect large populations.
- Addressing the priority can improve a number of different health outcomes.
- There is a high cost and long-term impact of not addressing the issue.
- Organizations in the LHIC can make change happen related to the priority.
- Results can be quantified.

PRIMARY OUTCOMES: Disparities will be reduced and outcomes will improve in the three key priority areas. Specifically:

1. Access to health care will be increased and delays in accessing medical care will be reduced.

2. More people will achieve a healthy weight
3. Behavioral health services are available and fewer behavioral health emergencies occur.

RELATED OUTCOMES:

- Improve collaboration and shared vision between key stakeholders and systems – the hospital, school system, health department, nonprofit community, etc.
- Increase funding for addressing health disparities and improving health outcomes.
- Health and wellness services will be more accessible and appropriate for people of different cultures, language ability, and immigration status.
- Ensure local data is available on health disparities and their causes, including issues of race and ethnicity, undocumented status, income level, gender, and other factors.
- Raise awareness among residents of health disparities and their causes.
- Health access will be inclusive of services for mental health, substance abuse, and will meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- Develop and adopt new policies to improve health equity.
- Coordinate and publicize existing health, health education, and wellness services in Howard County.

OVERARCHING LHIC STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS DISPARITIES

- Include more people and organizations affected by disparities in the LHIC and other efforts to reduce disparities.
- Outreach and gather data on health needs of specific populations including diversity in terms of income level, gender, race, ethnicity, language, and immigration status, as well as other characteristic such as veterans and military families, commuters, and farmers. Address gaps in data on health outcomes for Hispanic and Asian populations.
- Reach out to faith-based communities and nonprofit human services organizations.
- Devote more resources for language access.
- Ensure strategies are culturally and age appropriate.

Local Health Planning Resources and Sustainability

Howard County's Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) includes 50 actively engaged and dedicated stakeholders from across Howard County representing a variety of key agencies, organizations, and communities affected by health disparities. Upon first convening in December 2011, the LHIC took immediate steps toward setting and achieving its vision. The LHIC began its work to improve health equity in the Howard County community by undertaking a transparent, inclusive local health improvement process that continuously engages diverse stakeholders, provides a more clear understanding of the prevalence and causes of local health disparities, and uses a 2-year action plan aligned with the State Health Improvement Process (SHIP) as the framework for improving local health outcomes. The LHIC submitted its *2012-2014 Local Health Improvement Action Plan* to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on March 1, 2012. With continued support and technical assistance from the Howard County Health Department, the LHIC will track and evaluate the implementation of the *2012-2014 Local Health Improvement Action Plan*. The LHIC is committed to working within the County over the long term as it recognizes that achieving health equity will take time and perseverance.

March 1, 2012

