Community Stakeholders Interview

2011 Community Health Assessment

Forsyth County, North Carolina

Analysis of Data and Preparation of the Final report by
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Methodology

From March to June of 2011, Forsyth County Department of Public Health; Forsyth Futures staff and Forsyth County Healthy Community Coalition members conducted telephone interviews with 41 stakeholders representing multiple organizations in Forsyth County. The interviewees worked in the key sectors of the community, including cultural, recreation, healthcare, education, business, law enforcement and social services.

Participating stakeholders were assured that their personal identities would be protected and would not be connected to the report during the interview consent. Stakeholders shared information about the services they provide, their perceptions on current and emerging community issues, the strengths of the community, and areas that need improvement.

Data was recorded in the written form and analyzed by counting the number of participants comments made about a topic or issue. Only the most often mentioned topics or issues are presented in this report, and illustrative quotes that reflect the themes have been included. In instances in which identifying information is included, statements were paraphrased. The interview results are summarized below.

Interview Participants

There were 41 interviews conducted. Participants from the following agencies and organizations participated in the stakeholders interviews:

Arts Council of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County
BB&T Corporation
Centerpoint Human Services
City of Winston-Salem
Data Max
Department of Juvenile Justice
Department of Social Services
Family Services, Inc
Forsyth County Government
Forsyth County Sheriff's Office
Forsyth Technical Community College
Goler Community Development Center
Goodwill Industries
Insight Human Services
Kate B. Reynolds Foundation
Mental Health Association of Forsyth County
Neighborhood Solutions
Novant Health
Piedmont Environmental Alliance
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
Senior Services
SmartStart of Forsyth County
Tanglewood Park
Temple Emmanuel
The Children’s Home
UNC School of the Arts
Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem Foundation
Winston-Salem Police Department
Winston-Salem State University
Winston-Salem Symphony
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School System
WS Sustainability Resource Center
WSSU Center for Community Safety
YMCA
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Analysis of each interview question

1. What services does your agency or organization provide for community residents?
Most agencies offered a multiple services to the community. The most-provided services were related to youth and physical health (9), mental health and/or substance abuse (8), education (5), social services (5), government and public safety(4), grants and funding (4), and the arts (4).

2. What populations benefit from the services of your organization?
Approximately half of all participants stated that their agencies benefited all populations (19), while others reported that their agencies were to benefit children and/or youth (9), and low income individuals (5).

3. What are some of the main barriers that county residents face in accessing your services?
Participating stakeholders stated that the main barriers for residents seeking to access their agencies' services were as follows:

- Lack of accessibility and awareness of services (17)
- Economic Stress/ Affordability (11)
- Transportation (8)
- Language Barriers (5)

"…stigma associated with mental illness; Lack of awareness of the Mental Health Association and its related services"
"The perception of a language barrier; Lack of awareness regarding specialty and newer services"
"…worry about transportation in centralized location particularly homebound/elderly"
"Social/economic stress factors prevent parents from seeking access & lack of awareness of mental health services"

4. What would you consider to be the major strengths in our county?
Stakeholders indicated that Forsyth County has much strength. The most often mentioned strengths are listed below:

- Caring and philanthropic nature of the community (13)
- Good health care system and two well managed hospitals (12)
- Quality schools and post-secondary educational institutions 12)
- Variety of services and resources available, including non-profits, foundations, and community agencies/organizations (10)

"We have a positively engaged community with much philanthropy and volunteerism…"
"Two major medical centers; active EMS; on the whole our community is well"
"Quality of life; local health care; local colleges and universities; strong public schools and private schools"
"…very livable place, easy to get around, people are personable.."

5a. What do you consider to be the major challenges or needs for residents that are not being addressed?
Stakeholders indicated that the major challenges or needs for residents that are not being addressed are as follows:

- Employment opportunities/Retraining & Job Skills (7)
- Financial constraint (5)
- Mental health issues (5)
- Wealth disparity (4)
- Access to healthcare (3)

"Rising rates of co-morbidities in older adults with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer; Obesity epidemic in kids – a generation of kids getting early diabetes and Type 2 diabetes"
"Gaps in service - mental health - not addressing mental health in terms of types of services"
"….increasing gap between low and high SES not being addressed in our current conversations;"
"Underemployment; Employment - We need more appropriate level compensation and skills for jobs."

5b. In your opinion, why are the major challenges not being addressed?
The most often mentioned major challenges not being addressed were as follows:

- Inadequate funding/legislatures cutting funding (11)
- Slow job growth/underemployment (3)
- Racial segregation (3)

"*….general stress of inadequate funding for HHS creates competition for funding"*
"When employers sent jobs out of county, no system (job retraining) was put into place for people to train for new jobs"
"Racial divide is not being addressed. There is no recognition that it truly exists"

6. What do you perceive to be the major health related problems in our county?
The most often mentioned major health-related problems they perceived in their county are listed below:

- Overweight and obesity (18)
- Mental health issues; lack of mental illnesses services (8)
- Chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease (8)
- Access to healthcare; no health insurance (7)
- Infant mortality (5)
- Substance abuse /addiction (4)

"….youth-unhealthy/inactive lifestyles; obesity, child diabetes, high blood pressure, stress.."
"Extreme use of emergency room for non-emergency issues due to lack of insurance."

"Smoking – RJR has been a great community partner, but tobacco is still a bad product and shows up in our infant morality rates. "
"Mental Health (due to restructuring at the state level); Obesity"

7. How would you try to reduce these health related problems?
Stakeholders gave many valuable suggestions and ideas to reduce those health-related problems mentioned in question 6 as listed below:

Obesity/overweight, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Lifestyle
"….sidewalks, easier access to walk around, how we plan our community - not pedestrian friendly- kids can't walk"
"Obesity efforts across the whole community including schools and businesses"
"More sidewalks – expanded parks and greenways, especially in poor neighborhoods;"
"Improve access to healthy foods; create more physical activity opportunities; early treatment of high blood pressure;
"….education on resources low/free recreation; physical self assessment; run/rollerblade/walk, start a walking club at work

Mental Health
"….address mental health issues, provide access to mental health care"
"Improve education in the community at large to improve understanding and knowledge about the benefits of good mental health services – this would help us all – not just those who are mentally ill."
"Mental health needs to be restructured and addressed at the state level with input from local providers;"

Chronic and/ Or Preventable Illnesses
"….implement a wellness initiative as part of insurance program"
"…programs to assist eliminating smoking habits - not a cost burden, the problem ; need more prenatal screening"
"Create more recreational opportunities that engage whole families in physical activity and other healthy habits; Make physical activity part of our culture, with more employee wellness and community support."
"Keeping diabetes and blood lipids under control; Early cancer screenings"

8. What are the strengths of the health services available in our county?
The most often identified strengths in their county were:

- Having two large hospitals (22)
- Abundant and top notch health care services (15)
- Access to health care (13)

"…excellent hospitals and physicians access is good; affordability is the issue"
"We have the best resources (hospital providers) around for major "diseases" and "injuries", but we lack services for everyday health and well-being."
"We have a broad base of specialists; Very accessible services; First rate services"
"..high quality care access, lots of organizations, best safety net"

9. What health services are needed for children and adolescents that are not being provided in our county?

The most identified health services that are needed for children and adolescents were:

- Access to mental health (8)
- Lack of education and awareness (5)
- Basic dental health (5)
- Recreation facilities and activities (4)

"….mental health long term services - few for preschool/ early childhood services."
"Outpatient mental health services are needed for adolescents. Alternatives are needed to institutions and prisons."
"*We have Brenner Children's Hospital (excellent), but we need more public awareness about the available services offered."*
"Recreational activities and facilities are needed – more outside activities to get kids away from screens – we need bigger capacity."
"…..dental care for certain populations, regular primary care"

10. In your opinion, which one service needs the most improvement in our county? (Stakeholders were read a list of 20 options from which they could select. The list included "other" and "none.")

Their selection of services was as follows:

- Availability of employment (11).
- Universal health care and more affordable health services (7)
- Counseling/ mental health/ support groups (4)
- Positive teen activities (3)
- More affordable housing (3)
- Healthy family activities(2)
- Higher paying employment(2)
- Better/ more healthy food choices(2)
- Transportation options(1)

11. In your opinion, what could be done to make the job market better for our county?

The responses varied from providing business incentives to policies as listed below:

- Business Incentives (7)
- Education (6)
- Investment in small Business (5)
- Job training in high school; trained workforce (4)
- Opportunity for entrepreneur (4)
- Better policies and effective planning (3)

"Attract businesses with reasonable taxes and investment in workforce."
"*Give incentives for businesses to locate and expand. Having good schools, medical system, and art make it attractive for businesses to locate."*
" Provide job training classes in high schools for students not pursuing college."

"We have a lot of proposals on the table on that - continue to be road blocks in policies that cause it to make it difficult"
"Improve graduation rates; literacy rates and decrease dropouts"

12. Which community organizations would you say are most active in the county?
The most mentioned active organizations were:

- United Way (16).
- Forsyth Future (10)
- Faith-based communities/ organizations (8)
- CHANGE (8)
- YMCA/YWCA (5)
- Art community (5)
- Chamber of commerce (5)

13. How would you characterize the way different races or ethnic groups get along?
Race relations were characterized as follows:

- Great diversity (9)
- Relation between different races and ethnic groups are getting better (9)
- Too much segregation in jobs, schools, neighborhoods (6)
- Lots of room for improvement and to increase understanding (5)

"There is a troubled history in Winston-Salem. Separate health care in the past created lack of trust. It has improved but lots of work to be done. Healthy efforts going on - Church groups and public health are very active in addressing this issue."
"Deep long history of racial animosity, getting along better. There has been lots of progress in worship, playing, and working together."
"…reasonably well with reservations and concerns on all sides."
"There is much history in this community. Focusing on the past and not moving forward on race issues threatens to jeopardize our future."
"We have a tri-ethnic community, race relations are modestly good. Hispanics are getting their feet on the ground, but not yet assimilated into community activities."

14. What are the things you like most about living or working here?
The most likeable features they liked living here are listed below:

- Right size (10)
- Good climate (6)
- Good quality of life (6)
- Great environment (5)
- Arts/Entertainment (5)

"…small enough community that there are still spaces to enjoy (green ways parks - Tanglewood)"
"Beautiful setting; Wonderful people; Safe place"
"..*there is a good balance of activities and cultural events, but things are still a quiet and relaxed; We have an urban feel with a rural mentality;.."*

15. What are the things that concern you most about living or working here?
The top two concerns mentioned were:

- Joblessness and unemployment in the county (10)
- Stressful economic environment (7)

"It is hard to keep the young here, they leave for jobs. We need to create an attractive environment to keep young people working and living here."
"Employment improves stability of a community; Lack of full-time jobs – underemployment."
"Economy / long term viability; Not growing as we could; Disappearing manufacturing base is not being replaced; Generate more jobs; Improve public schools."

16. Name some things that you and others do to stay healthy?
Overwhelmingly the two responses named were:

- Exercise, physically healthy and active life style (32)
- Healthy and nutritious food (17)

"Annual physical, eat healthy, exercise daily-golf/walking, activities with children."
"….exercise/walk on treadmill, got a dietician - get sleep, try to eat right, active family."
"Bike regularly; Walk the dogs, we have a very walkable neighborhood; Gardening."
"Cook from scratch; Eat lots of fruits and vegetables."

17. What are some of the main health problems that you or family members have had to deal with?
The most often mentioned health problems were:

- Cancer (14)
- Mental health (11)
- Heart-related issues (11)
- Overweight/obesity; weight control (7)
- Diabetes (6)

18. Which groups in the county do you belong to?
The most common groups mentioned were:

- Faith based Organizations/ Churches (15)
- Coalitions, Boards (13)
- Different clubs (12)
- Professional (7)
- Sorority/ Fraternity (6)

19. Is there any other information that you would like to share about community health in our county?

Below are some of the closing comments regarding community health:

"Mental health should be fully embraced as a public health issue."
"….would like community health to be seen as an economic driver on the same level as education and business economic."
"I would like to see more integrated services for mental and physical health, as they now practice as separate entities."
"Young people smoking and drinking alcohol is an issue."
"The health department needs to continue to advocate for public health in Forsyth County, and keep on keeping on."
"…access is biggest issue; homelessness not readily available; dissemination of information."