**Progress: Access to Quality Health Care**

Before the 2014 expansion of coverage under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 100,000 to 120,000 Denver residents were uninsured. Hispanics were uninsured at the highest rates. Since January 1, 2014, more than 86,000 residents are estimated to have gained coverage. Those with Medicaid coverage and those who remain uninsured continue to face challenges accessing care, particularly specialty care.

**Highlights**
- Many more people in Denver have health care coverage now than in 2013, due to Medicaid and Connect for Health Colorado.
- The Mile High Health Alliance is working to assure that people have access to comprehensive and coordinated care.

**What do Differences in Health Measures Mean for the Community?**

Health differences across communities or population groups are called health disparities. Many factors may be associated with health disparities, such as income, education, race, ethnicity or access to health care. Communities can advocate for and make changes to encourage healthy behaviors. For example, providing local places to exercise, healthier food options in public places, and smoking cessation programs in the workplace can help individuals achieve better health. Working together to decrease health disparities can improve quality of life.

*SOURCE: Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing, Connect for Health Colorado, DDS Department of Health and Human Services, Kaiser Family Foundation*

**District 11’s Health Highlights**

This report describes the health of District 11 residents in four public health priority areas: life expectancy, tobacco use, childhood obesity and mental health.

**Demographics**

- Average Age: 40
- Average Income: $60,951
- Almost half of residents are White (43%). One in four is Black. Half identify as Hispanic.

*SOURCE: ESRI 2015 Demographic Estimates*

**Life Expectancy**

- District 11 life expectancy is 79.7 years, 1.1 years longer than Denver overall (78.6 years).

**Tobacco Use**

- 14% of District 11 young adults (18-24 years) use tobacco, 3% lower than Denver overall (17%).

**Childhood Obesity**

- 22% of public school children (21-17 years) in District 11 neighborhoods are obese, 6% higher than Denver overall (16%).

**Mental Health**

- 14% of District 11 adults have been diagnosed with depression, which is common across all districts in Denver (13%).

*BeHealthyDenver.org*
Life Expectancy

Evaluating differences in life expectancy is one way to measure overall health and compare health by council district. Life expectancy reflects a person’s health, genetics, behaviors, race, gender and community. About 70 percent of factors affecting life expectancy and health can be modified or improved.

Differences in life expectancy between districts show that place matters. Community policies that address health equity (e.g., access to health care, recreation, transportation or healthy food) all play important roles in improving health for residents.

Highlights

• The average life expectancy in Denver is 78.6 years but varies as much as six years between districts, from 75.4 to 81.4 years.
• Districts with lower life expectancy often have higher levels of poverty and lower levels of education.

Tobacco Use

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in Denver. Smoking rates are highest among young adults, ages 18-24 years-old. Young adults entering the work force directly from high school are more than twice as likely to smoke than those entering college.1 Smoking rates among this age group have remained relatively unchanged from 2001 to 2012.2 One way to decrease smoking rates is to prevent underage youth from ever starting to smoke.

Highlights

• People who don’t start smoking tobacco by age 21 years are very unlikely to ever become a chronic smoker.2
• Access to cessation services and use of smoke-free policies can reduce tobacco use in the workplace.
Childhood Obesity

Obesity, a common and preventable condition, is related to unhealthy eating and physical inactivity. In Denver, one in six children is obese; however, the percent varies widely by council district. Exercise and nutritional habits are learned early. Dietary choices contribute to obesity: a 2013 survey reported that 25 percent of 7th and 8th graders drink one or more sugar sweetened drinks per day. The number of students in 2013 achieving the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day decreased every year as grade increased from middle school to high school.

Highlights
- Healthy eating is supported by providing healthier food and drink options in all public areas.
- All children should have access to quality physical education to meet daily requirements for physical activity.

Mental Health

Good health includes positive mental health. Depression is not just “feeling blue.” Depression is a medical disorder, just like diabetes or thyroid disease, that affects thoughts, feelings, behaviors and relationships. It is associated with both poor physical health and unhealthy behaviors, like thoughts of suicide and substance abuse. Depression influences sensitivity and reaction to pain, which can lead to overuse of controlled drugs. These may delay diagnosis and treatment. At least one in 10 adults in Denver is diagnosed with depression.

Highlights
- Depression, a common condition in Denver, is highly treatable.
- In 2013, more than one-third of community members reported having felt one or more days of poor mental health in the past 30 days.
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Resources and References

More information about health topics and resources to support community work is available through BeHealthyDenver.org.