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Continuous cycle of improvement: Assessing community health in 2014

*Be Healthy Denver* focuses on improving the health of all Denver residents.

In 2014, more than 100 representatives from local health organizations and community partners were convened to conduct a community health assessment (CHA) for Denver. The *2014 Health of Denver Report* identified three underlying themes regarding our community’s health:

1. **Equity:** Significant differences in health outcomes exist between some neighborhoods and demographic groups in Denver. These health disparities show where opportunities exist to collaborate and improve health in specific areas or populations.

2. **Prevention:** Many of Denver’s leading causes of death, disease and injury are preventable. By focusing on prevention and what happens in the world outside the clinic or hospital, many diseases and injuries can be avoided.

3. **Importance of place:** Health is intricately linked to the places where residents live, work, learn and play. Social and economic situations, environmental conditions, personal behaviors, community assets and access to care all play key roles in the overall health of a community.

Making changes to improve health

The report highlights factors we can modify that would positively influence health outcomes, including: 1) access to care, 2) personal behaviors, and 3) social, environmental and economic conditions.

Factors Influencing Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifiable Factors</th>
<th>Non-Modifiable Factors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access to care</td>
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Why conduct a community health assessment?

A CHA is conducted every three years to measure progress toward improving Denver’s health. This process identifies areas of concern, and helps guide local, city and state health organizations on where to focus resources and efforts in future years.

Denver’s last CHA was completed in 2011; much has happened since then. The *2014 Health of Denver Report* acknowledges the growing recognition of the need to transform how we view health—from a concentrated focus on medical care to one that includes the role of the broader community and environment in health.

Key trends in Denver’s health

As strategies, programs and policies affect Denver’s population, new health trends emerge. The *2014 Health of Denver Report* includes the following:

<table>
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Progress since 2011: Improving and driving change in Denver

Conducting a CHA is the first step in developing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), which provides a structured approach to addressing public health issues in a community.

- The CHIP identified two priority areas that would benefit from citywide intervention:
  1. **Healthy eating and active living**, including the built environment.
  2. **Access to care**, including behavioral health.

- Outlined clear goals and detailed action plans to address these issues.

Only one year into Denver’s five-year CHIP, major progress has occurred:

- More than 65,000 residents obtained health insurance (more than half of the previously uninsured) following the implementation of the ACA.
- The Mile High Health Alliance, a forum for collaborative work between health care providers and social service providers, was created.
- Healthy food is now more accessible in grocery and corner stores in areas of Denver that face food insecurity.
- Many Denver institutions are making healthier food and beverages available through organizational policy changes and commitments to providing healthier food for employees and visitors.

Led by Denver Environmental Health, a department of the City and County of Denver, and Denver Public Health, a department of the Denver Health and Hospital Authority, *Be Healthy Denver* is a citywide effort and it includes many other partners. Continued progress toward achieving CHIP goals requires ongoing partnership throughout the city to improve access to care and increase the number of children at a healthy weight in Denver.
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### Challenges

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<td>Obesity</td>
<td>Although childhood obesity is no longer rising, one in six children is obese.</td>
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<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Many are still not accessing care due primarily to cost and stigma.</td>
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<td>Hepatitis C</td>
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