

Observing Your Community's Health

The Observing Your Community exercise is a tool for exploring the many aspects of your community's health. It is meant to heighten your awareness of health in your community.

What are some general observations you could make (general thoughts) that form the broad outlines of a "picture" of overall health in your community or locale?

Major Health Issues

- What are common health issues you see in your community?
 - I. Diabetes, hypertension, obesity, heart diseases, arthritis, cancer, etc.
 - II. Does your community have support groups or education classes to assist or inform people in regard to these issues?
- How prevalent is the use of tobacco, tobacco products, alcohol and other drugs in your town?
- What are the most common injuries?
- What do you observe about risks that impact health in your community: occupational, lifestyle, and recreational risks?
- What contributes the most to the lack of health in your community?
- In what ways do local churches facilitate well-being in your community or locale?

Diet and Nutrition

- Describe the selection and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables in your local stores?
- What are the fresh fruit and vegetable options at your local restaurants?
- What have you observed about school lunches and the students awareness and participation in healthy eating?
- Do you observe local people eating a large percentage of their meals at fast food restaurants or convenience store counters?
- Are there community gardens and/or farmers markets in your town?
- Do you grow any food for yourself or others? If so, do you preserve any of your produce?
- Are classes on diet and nutrition offered in the community? If so, with what do they assist community members?

Well-Being

- What is the level of optimism in the community?
- Where can people in the community exercise?
- What fitness programs and classes are offered?

What social activities are available: for elders? children? families? adults?

I. What social activities are available year-round? Seasonally?

- What services are available to help individuals achieve financial well-being?
- Are there vocational and career development classes, adult continuing education, life skills, or craft or home economics courses offered in your town or locale?

Survivability

- How far are you from the nearest emergency medical services (EMS) unit?
- What is the average EMS response time in your area?
- What is the availability of EMS certification or CPR classes?

Clinical Services

- How far away is the health clinic you visit?
 - I. What has been your experience with preventative healthcare in your community?
- Is there a licensed midwife, or homeopathic health practitioner in your community?
- Is there a parish nurse or community health worker in your town or locale?
- How far is the nearest pharmacy?
- How far is the nearest dentist? What is the level of oral hygiene in the community?

Environmental Health

- What observations can you make about the state of the water supply in your community?
- What do you observe about the overall quality of the air in your community?
- Are there opportunities for recycling in your community?
- What do you observe about the state of the land and landscapes around your community or locale?
- What elements of the environment would you identify as key to your town being a livable community?