

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Hampshire Attorney Generals' office is responsible for assuring that all health care organizations that claim to be charitable organizations benefit the public. Charitable organizations are required to conduct a community assessment every five years and to submit a plan and annual updates on how funds are being used to address issues and barriers that related to the health of those served.

This report represents not only a legal obligation, but a dedicated effort on the part of the *Healthy Manchester Leadership Council* partners to assess and reveal the health-related determinants and status of Manchester area residents, to provide a model with strategic imperatives from which to plan, and to hold themselves accountable for responding to and improving the health status of its residents by the year 2015.

The Healthy Manchester Leadership Council, a partnership chaired by Manchester Health Department and composed of several Manchester area health and social services agencies, is committed to "measurably improving the quality of life for all Manchester residents." Part of this mission is accomplished by measuring quality of life. With consultation and funding from other local and state organizations and foundations, the *Healthy Manchester Leadership Council* partners embarked on this 2009 Community Assessment. The focus of this assessment is on the Manchester Health Service Area (HSA) as defined by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, and includes the towns of Auburn, Bedford, Candia, Deerfield, Goffstown, Hooksett, New Boston, and the City of Manchester.

Economic, social, health, education, public safety, and physical environment information is presented in this report and was collected from a variety of sources. Trends, comparisons among Manchester City, towns in the Greater Manchester HSA, and New Hampshire State data are presented. When possible, Healthy People 2010 Objectives and CDC Health Protection Goals are used as benchmarks. Quantitative information (measurable numerical data) was collected from national, state, and local governmental sources. Qualitative information (opinions, perceptions, thoughts) was derived from conducting structured focus groups with area residents, business leaders, and key providers of health care.

The population of the greater Manchester HSA is growing in size, and living longer; is increasingly multicultural with residents reflecting a variety of nationalities, languages, ethnic traditions, religious beliefs and ideologies; and is composed of many different family structures.¹ The Manchester HSA has the largest population and number of jobs, but also has the lowest average income levels in the state. Increasingly, incomes are failing to meet the costs of living, including the costs of staying healthy and preparing for emergencies. Poverty is highly associated with risky behaviors, educational attainment, health status, employment, and self-reported quality of life. Residents experience discrepancies in health and health care access that are associated with their age, incomes, educational attainment and neighborhood.

This assessment identifies a variety of health-related concerns in Manchester City and the Health Service Area including heart disease, mental health, ambulatory-care sensitive conditions, health risk behaviors, sexual health, substance abuse, emergency department use and premature death.

Inadequate transportation, high cost of health care, and medically underserved areas exist in the region, as does under and overuse of existing health services resulting in a financial burden for the whole community.

Future community health improvement efforts require the “intentional” design of communities oriented around health promotion, disease prevention and population well-being. This needs assessment is an early stage of the Manchester Health Service Area’s community health improvement planning process (CHIP). The findings are intended to inform the public, and local governments, providers, hospitals, and other community organizations as they embark on their work of making and planning for a better and healthier Manchester Area.

