

Health Care Community Input

Methodology

In an effort to solicit input from the health care community, a written survey was distributed to all County Health Departments in the region and to seven hospitals/clinics. In the case of health departments, the survey was completed by the agency director. For the hospitals/clinics it was left up to the individual institutions to determine who would be best suited to fill out the survey. The survey asked the following five open ended questions:

- 1) What are the most pressing health care issues facing residents of our region?
- 2) Have solutions to any of these issues been identified?
- 3) Are there changing trends that are making it more difficult to meet the health Care needs of residents?
- 4) Could local units of government play a role in helping to better address health care needs?
- 5) Are there any health care issues that could be addressed (or better addressed) at the regional level?

West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission staff contacted each of the surveyed entities by telephone to provide information on the comprehensive planning process, and the desire to gain additional input from the health care community, prior to distribution. The survey was then emailed and returned electronically.

Results

The results of the survey revealed the following highlights:

- There was consensus on the top issues facing the region. They include access to health services/lack of health insurance, alcohol abuse, obesity, and limited options for mental health.
- Other issues mentioned by multiple respondents included suicide, cigarette smoking, motor vehicle injuries, nitrates in drinking water, Lyme disease, sexually transmitted diseases, aging population with more chronic illness, poor nutrition, and communication with immigrant populations.
- The trends that have made it more difficult to address these issues are an aging population in need of assistance, a distressed economy leading to people losing jobs and health insurance, an increased homeless population, more single parent households, loss of resources and services to address needs, less charitable giving, and a need for better public transportation.
- Efforts are underway in all counties to deal with these problems. In many cases collaborative coalitions have been formed. These coalitions include governmental departments, private health care providers, nonprofits, etc. Addressing these issues at a larger geographic area is also important and is being initiated in many areas as well.

Input Usage

The results of the survey reinforce many of the issues identified through planning meetings for RIGC and TAG members. The issues cross element lines and will most

likely be addressed within multiple components. More specific goals and objectives relating to health care would be included in the Utilities and Community Facilities Element.