

OSWEGO COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT 2014 - 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public health is the practice of promoting health, preventing disease, and prolonging life in the community through communication and collaboration. The Community Health Assessment, along with the Community Health Improvement Plan, is a powerful tool to collect data, customize information, and provide practical considerations for developing an improvement plan. This document has been prepared to follow NYS DOH's guidance and to meet the State Aid requirements.

Geographically, Oswego County is in a rural area. It is bordered by Lake Ontario to the north and on the south by Oneida Lake. The county is subject to heavy lake-effect snowfalls from Lake Ontario in the winter and the threat of mosquito-borne diseases from the swamps near Oneida Lake in the summer.

Demographically, white non-Hispanic is the predominant ethnic group with more than 96% in the county population of over 122,000. Approximately 61% of the population lives in the rural area, compared with 12% for the state and 19% for the nation. In the last 10 years, total population in the county has been stable. Migrant workers, necessary for the agricultural industry, add a seasonal demographic change to the county.

Socioeconomically, Oswego County experienced difficulties, such as a high unemployment rate, high poverty rate, and low education attaining rate, as the global economy changed in the past decades. Economic hardship hits the rural population more than the urban. It is generally agreed that socioeconomic disadvantages are linked to poor health outcomes in a community.

In terms of population health, Oswego County has high death rates from lung cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory diseases. It is alarming that the county has the highest adult smoking rate and obesity rate among all its neighboring counties, and highest school student obesity rate in the state. Obesity and smoking are associated with lung cancer, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, and diabetes. The heavy disease burden from these deadly conditions in the county could be alleviated by community behavioral changes.

This report details the health status of Oswego County residents based on the most recent data available. The key findings are:

- Oswego County has a smaller **uninsured population** (8.64%) compared to the state (11.55%) and the nation (15.05%).
- A community survey showed that the percentage of residents who claimed that they have a doctor for their **primary care** needs increased from 91% in 2010 to 95% in 2012. This increase is despite the physician to population ratio being lower in the county (1:2701) than the state (1:631) and the national (1:781) average.
- Oswego County has inadequate **dental provider coverage** for the population.
- The **adult obesity** rate (34%) is the highest of neighboring counties and higher than the state (25%). Obesity is a national epidemic, but the rate of Oswego County's increase in adult obesity is higher than the nation and the state.
- Oswego County has the highest **student overweight or obesity** rate (38% for elementary, middle, and high school students combined), among all counties in the state.
- The percentage of **diabetic adults** is higher in Oswego County (9.9%) than the state average (9.0% including NYC and 8.5% excluding NYC).
- The **diabetes mortality rate** (19.0 per 100,000) is higher than in Central New York (17.3) and the state (16.6).
- The county's **diabetes hospitalization** rate per 100,000 has been higher than that of the upstate NY region for the past several years.
- **Diabetes care** in Oswego County is better than the state and national averages, as indicated by percentage of Medicare enrollees with diabetes who have had an annual exam (85.32% vs. 84.83% and 83.81%).
- The percent of county **adults who smoke** almost every day (32%) is almost twice as high as the state (18%).

SUMMARY OF MAIN HEALTH CHALLENGES IN OSWEGO COUNTY:

- **High overweight and obesity rate among adults and school children;**
- **High smoking rate, and high alcohol and drug abuse among adults;**
- **High disease burden and life lost from cancer, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, and diabetes;**
- **High unintentional pregnancy rate and reduced percentage of pregnant women seeking early prenatal care;**
- **High rate of drug abuse;**
- **High suicide death rate;**
- **Increased incidence of STDs;**
- **Constant threat from mosquito-borne diseases and increased incidence of tick-borne diseases;**
- **Health disparities are associated with socioeconomic differences; and**
- **Unfunded or underfunded federal and state mandates drain the County's resources for improvement of local community health.**

- The percentage of **women who smoked during pregnancy** is the highest among neighboring counties (28.3% in 2012).
- Data collected at WIC sites showed that 28% of pregnant women, 11% of breastfeeding women, and 35% of post-partum women smoked, and 21% of pregnant women were exposed to second-hand smoke.
- With Medicaid as payer, 42.4% of pregnant women smoked but only 7.9% of pregnant women with private insurance smoked.
- With 216 deaths per 100,000 population, the county leads the **cancer mortality** rate in the state. On average, each week 13 people are diagnosed with cancer and five people die from cancer in the county.
- Oswego County's **lung cancer** incidence and mortality rates are the highest among all neighboring counties and higher than the upstate NY regional average (incidence: 96.5 per 100,000 population vs. 83.0; death: 71.5 per 100,000 population vs. 55.8).
- The county's **female breast cancer** incidence is the lowest among neighboring counties, and lower than that of the CNY regional average (105 per 100,000 women vs. 124). Female breast cancer deaths are the same as the CNY regional average.
- In the most years of the past decade, the county's **chronic lower respiratory disease** hospitalization and mortality rates have been consistently 33%-50% higher than those for the Upstate NY region.
- The rate of **hospitalizations for falls** has been lower than the Upstate NY average rate in recent years.
- **Unintended pregnancy** is higher (41.1%) than the CNY region (33.6%).
- **Births to teen mothers** remains steady at 2.8% of births in the county.
- **Newborns' drug-related hospitalization** rate in the county (121.8 per 10,000 discharges) is almost twice as high as that of the state (64.0 per 10,000 discharges).

CONTRIBUTING CAUSES TO THE MAIN HEALTH CHALLENGES:

- **Rural area and its subsequent socioeconomic and environmental disadvantages;**
- **People in remote areas are geographically isolated;**
- **Poor health behaviors, including smoking, excessive alcohol use, and lack of physical activity among adults;**
- **Shortage of primary care physicians, dentists, and mental health providers;**
- **Funding cuts to various service programs, such as teen pregnancy prevention, mental health support, and prenatal and post-natal care assistance, etc.;**
- **Lack of secured funding to tackle smoking and obesity issues; and**
- **Community health issues are intertwined with local socioeconomic situations.**

- Percent of **pregnant women seeking early prenatal care** in the county (75.0%) is the lowest among all neighboring counties but almost the same as the CNY regional average (75.1% in 2012). However, the county's current percentage is a reduction from the previous survey (79.0%).
- Northeastern towns have the highest percent of **women smoking prior to and during** pregnancy and the Village of Central Square has the lowest.
- It is estimated that 13,352 residents in the county, approximately 13% of the population, age 12 years and above, need **chemical dependency** service. Among the 13,352, 92% are adults and 8% are adolescents (age 12-17 years old).
- The percent adult population with **adequate social/emotional support** in the county (84.20%) is higher than that of neighboring counties and higher than that of the state average (76.10%).
- **Suicide death** rate of Oswego County (11.69 deaths per 100,000 population) is higher than that of the state average (7.11).
- Percent of adults drinking **alcohol** daily (men more than two drinks and women more than one drink) in the county (23.90%) is much higher than that of the state (15.70%).
- **STDs** have increased in the county in recent years: Chlamydia cases more than doubled, Gonorrhea more than quadrupled, and Hepatitis C increased almost 50% since 2009.
- Oswego County is located in the epicenter of **mosquito-borne diseases** in the state. In the past 42 years, three of the five fatal EEE human cases reported in the state occurred in Oswego County. In 2012, there was one case of human WNV reported. In 2013, up until October 21, one case of human WNV has been reported.
- **Lyme disease** increased more than 10 times since 2009 through August 2013.
- Oswego County adults have a higher percentage of **no leisure-time physical activities** compared to the state. Access to parks, recreation and fitness facilities are low compared to the state.
- Few of the population uses **public transit** (0.71%) compared to the state (26.65%).

Despite many challenges, Oswego County remains a well netted community. More county residents reported feeling adequate social/ emotional support in Oswego County than people in neighboring counties. At an institutional level, many health improvements were achieved by collaboration and partnership among different organizations in the county, for example reducing fall-related hospitalizations and improving primary care coverage for the county residents.

In the development of this Community Health Assessment, more than a dozen data sources were explored, numerous partners and stakeholders were consulted, preliminary data was shared with many organizations and institutes, community input was sought, and the process and the document were reported to the Oswego County Health Legislative Committee and the Oswego County Board of Health.