

Appendix B

Focus Group Findings

A great number of focus group participants identified the need for support and education about how to effectively cope with stressful life events in addition to the need for support in dealing with the chronic stress caused by a fast-paced lifestyle and difficult economic times. Implementation and long term sustainability of strategies to impact health can change social norms so that healthy behaviors become ingrained as a “way of life”. This will be critical to helping improve the health status of the population.

Community Health Status Assessment Focus Groups

Dates and Locations Held:

- *September 2004 – Whitney Point Rotary (30)*
- *December 2004 – Vestal School District Employees (13)*
- *December 2004 – CHOW Food Pantry Interviews (28)*
- *December 2004 – UHS Stay Healthy Center (9)*
- *December 2004 – Broome Tioga Tobacco Free Coalition(7)*
- *December 2004 – Hillcrest Family Resource Center (4)*
- *December 2004 – Binghamton Family Resource Center (5)*
- *December 2004 – Mission Meltaway, Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network (5)*

What can be done to improve the health of residents?

- assure adequate flu supply - concern about limited doses of flu vaccine
- need more Medicaid dentists for adults and children
- improve access to dental care for people with no insurance
- provide low cost dental services
- Medicare is not covering health care for the elderly
- provide more affordable doctors/pediatricians for children
- increase access to specialists for low-income people
- assure prescription coverage for Medicaid recipients
- prescriptions are too expensive
- continue Free Clinic (decrease wait time and expand to accept new patients)
- improve health care access for youth if they don't have health insurance
- assure affordable health care for everyone
- improve access to mental health services
- provide free health care
- provide more health services in specific areas for those who cannot get out
- increase health care access for preventive care to those in rural areas
- provide affordable treatment for people with disabilities
- create a home like atmosphere
- provide more walk-in clinics
- provide information on vaccinations
- provide better health care and insurance options for uninsured
- provide support for families to care for loved ones at home
- provide healthy
- food at same low price as snack foods
- offer better menu choices for school lunch programs

What can be done to improve the health of residents? (continued)

- cut down on number of fast food places
- offer more Farmer's Markets
- offer low cost/no cost exercise programs
- offer fitness and nutrition classes
- promote exercise/physical fitness
- develop walkable communities with more walking trails and increase number of indoor walking areas
- extend Rail Trail from Vestal to Owego
- provide lights on Maine Endwell High School track
- offer worksite wellness programs
- offer annual physicals
- offer more health screenings/meetings
- encourage businesses to establish health and wellness programming
- improve education
 - increase education in schools
 - increase community education on all health topics
 - increase community education/courses on nutrition and fitness
 - increase community education through the radio and media
 - increase promotion/educational programming about healthy lifestyles
 - distribute pamphlets so people know where to go and what services are available
 - provide more health information on line
 - assure physicians are more knowledgeable about lupus, cancer and seizure disorders
 - provide more health information for kids
 - promote healthy eating
 - promote not smoking
 - stress importance of regular health check-ups
 - provide more health education on secondhand smoke and effects on children (by physicians)
- people need jobs
- offer more jobs with better insurance coverage
- make it easier to get services for people who lose their jobs
- provide free transportation to services or provide mobile health services
- get people off the streets
- junkies need help with rehabilitation and mental health services

What are your pressing issues or health concerns?

- lack of health care options for those with no insurance
- access to health care
- cost of health insurance
- not enough time in physician appointments for education/teaching
- paying hospital bills
- cost of dental care
- no emergency dentist or health care available for uninsured
- quality of services
- lack of Medicaid dentists
- limited treatment options for children
- keeping children healthy
- how to stay healthy while watching children
- working so hard that there is not adequate time to spend with children
- need more specialists for children (with hearing aids or heart conditions)
- need to get appointments with specialists more quickly – need referrals from primary care providers
- cost of prescriptions
- obesity
- health effects from being overweight and eating unhealthy foods (low energy, tiredness)
- need for nutrition and fitness updates
- increasing childhood obesity
- increased rates of asthma in children
- overall fitness
- yoga
- walkable community

What are your pressing issues or health concerns?

- finding time to exercise and stressing the importance to others
- HIV awareness
- diabetes
- diabetes care for the elderly
- heart disease
- high cholesterol
- high blood pressure
- bad knees
- role of vitamins
- services for the disabled
- lupus
- cancer
- Parkinson's Disease
- alcohol awareness
- treatment for alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- seizure disorders
- epilepsy
- mental health
- living alone and depression when ill
- stress management
- information for women on breast/cervical screenings and encouragement for elderly to get the screenings
- Hepatitis C
- carpal tunnel
- tendonitis
- help in controlling asthma when not on Rx
- advancing age
- financing health care in retirement
- long term health care – home health accessibility
- clothing
- food
- shelter

What is important to your community in terms of health care?

- access to health care
- need for more specialists
- quality affordable health care
- improve availability of providers (only can see certain doctors at certain time)
- decrease waiting times
- increase time providers spend with patients
- increase length of hospital stays
- increase number of Medicaid dentists and available dentists
- dental coverage -end necessity to travel outside area for dental services
- provide prescriptions for chronic health conditions for uninsured
- Medicaid health care providers
- affordable or free health insurance
- SSI does not cover all medications
- mental health services
- services for disabled adults, youth and children
- no place to go for chronic or emergency conditions
- transportation to appointments
- extend hours for physicians so people don't have to go to walk-ins and emergency rooms
- need more walk-in clinics
- provide more programs to teach people how to take care of themselves (people with heart attacks and strokes)
- provide more support for families that have chronic health conditions/issues
- improve access to free health care
- doctors are not personable, affordable or accessible
- more services for people with Medicare who can't afford supplemental insurance
- UHS not taking CDPHP and CDPHP does not have dental

What is important to your community in terms of health care?

- lower cost of prescriptions
- make sure children are taken care of - more programs for kids to keep them healthy
- health insurance for youth
- teach health concepts to children
- more services for new moms
- increase communication regarding existing programs
- increase education in schools on healthy eating and exercise
- more information for teens and a place to go o they don't get pregnant or sexually transmitted diseases for information and to talk to someone
- place for youth to go for counseling for mental health issues and depression
- not enough services
- more educational/prevention services/programs (i.e. nutrition)
- create awareness for those who may not have the ability to comprehend
- provide education on maintaining health throughout the life span
- affordable health care for the “working poor” – it is easier to get health care if you don't have insurance
- affordable health care for everyone
- food for children and the elderly
- services to take care of people at home and decrease crowding in hospitals
- healthy people and healthy community
- walking/exercise programs
- no restrictions for people for food, clothing and shelter
- more opportunities/more jobs
- access to monetary assistance
- access to mobile services
- more political involvement in health care and changes
- more programs through health department for residents
- clean air
- clean water

Forces of Change Brainstorming Sessions and Focus Groups Held:

- **June 2004 – Broome County Health Department (35)**
- **June 25, 2004 – Excellus Business Roundtable (30)**
- **August 11, 2004 – Integrated County Planning Committee (ICP) (15)**
- **August 25, 2004 – Broome County Legislators (4)**

Trends:

- population loss of younger workforce to support either end of age spectrum (youth and elderly – dependent)
- rising number of uninsured and working poor
- decrease in higher paying manufacturing jobs
- shift to service economy with lower paid jobs without benefits
- poverty – through generations
- young people not working
- need change in how corporations are taking care of employees
- shrinking number of business providing health insurance
- political leaders reluctant to enter into discussions about health care reform – requires tough decisions nobody is willing to make
- increased funding in long term care Medicaid
- increased cost of health insurance / reliance on Medicaid
- aggressive transfer of state/federal funding to Medicaid
- a tendency for NYS to offer more welfare programs than we can afford, necessitating extra local share burden of Medicaid
- too much government involvement- insurance mandates making insurance premiums go up
- hospitals running deficits several years in a row – cuts/program closings
- county budget cuts/rapid growth of mandated costs/decreased tax revenue and businesses increasing pressure on cutting services at the same time that there is a higher demand for services
- increased demographic diversity - inner city refugees /immigrants
- demographic shifts with downsizing and workforce make-up (older workforce)
- increase in number of top level administrators/executives who are commuters from outside the county
- “unsavory element” moving into inner city – increased crime and decreased resources to deal with them (unemployment, crime)
- increased number of parolee releases to community (Rockefeller Law) without community resources to support them
- increase in elderly population, especially age 85+
- aging population – lack of family support
- advanced health care technology keeps people living longer and we are seeing higher rates of chronic conditions among elderly population
- late budgets
- better informed patients, a wide gap between informed and demanding patients and those who have no idea how their habits contribute to poor health despite availability of technology and health information
- increased malpractice insurance
- health care providers may not be asking the hard questions and doing follow-up
- employees do not seek health care early enough and wait until condition becomes acute or chronic and more expensive
- much more sedentary lifestyle, especially in children
- increased public awareness and health education about diseases
- influx of residents from other urban areas who bring health issues with them
- influx of immigrants with different health expectations/standards (i.e., immunizations)
- different health standards/regulations worldwide
- waiting list to get into doctor’s offices
- nursing shortage – retention for specialty physicians
- 60% of women in the workforce – need access to health care and child care
- increased sexual activity – increase in Chlamydia rates and increased number of births
- increased number of sexual offenders
- HIV/AIDS rates flattening out
- increase in rate of breast cancer – Broome County exceeds state standard
- need for more attention to prostate cancer risks
- need for more health education about cancer

Trends: (continued)

- need for more education for males to attend to health issues earlier
- need for more education on the role of genetics on health
- increased number of cases of diabetes
- increased obesity rates
- increased cost of nutritious food – problematic for people attempting to deal with obesity
- sedentary lifestyle, people don't walk anymore - heavier youth – leading to obesity
- drinking patterns change
- declining birth rates
- lack of things for teens to do
- divorce rate
- stress level in families
- stress on 45-60 cohort - changes in quality of life/lifestyle
- changes in family structure - increase in single parent households
- less attachment to community
- increased attention to recreation
- contamination (air, water, soil) - discovering what wasn't taken care of in the past (corporations could dump toxic waste in the 1970's)
- rapid increased extreme cost in gas and heating oil – NYSEG shuts off quicker
- increasing environmental contamination issues
 - problem attracting business
 - increased stress for local people
- increased pressure on mandated testing of children / increased academic focus vs. enrichment programs
- fear/stress in many aspects of lives are impacting health
 - September 11th
 - decreased income
 - change in accustomed lifestyle
- post September 11th emergency preparation/planning +/- has put a strain on local resources
- increased efforts to promote community – marketing
- increased collaboration among providers
- greater public emphasis on self-responsibility
- decreasing state and federal (public) funding for programs

Factors:

- walking trails, but need more ways to make walking accessible - BC Walks
- large elderly segment
- aging workforce
- aging population - home alone – won't ask for help or access services
- lack of affordable and accessible housing for elderly
- environmental contamination concerns
 - food safety
 - water safety
 - contamination fears
 - quality of life perception
 - perception of vulnerability
 - loss of sense of pride in the community and mistrust of corporate businesses
- real estate values (actual or perceived)
- good resources for health and human services – we are rich in resources compared to other communities
- nursing schools and health technology training programs to support health care workforce
- positive university presence / research strengths
- emphasis on testing impacts school districts
- school nurses no longer mandated for each school building (can have one per district)
- lots of sports opportunities for both children and adults
- investment in early childhood initiatives in this community (Building Brighter Futures for Broome) will pay off in future in terms of healthy children and families
- larger (growing) ethnic and urban populations
- old infrastructure – improvements have been postponed for later generations, now we are scrambling to repair
- minimum wage – low wages - impact on health and health insurance
- educational value - excellent schools
- technology - Internet
- expansion of recreation assets at Binghamton University and Broome Community College

Factors (continued)

- changes in family structure
 - increased obligations/demands on time between work, school, family and recreation
 - the speed at which we live places physical and mental stressors on families, both children and parents
 - fast food choices are not always healthy when families are in a rush
 - children go to school tired and come home tired, just like their parents
 - meal planning – more take out and fast food, increased reliance on convenience foods – relationship to childhood obesity
 - impact on mental health system -- resources, stress
 - demands on ‘sandwich’ generation who are caregivers to their children and their parents
 - specific gender issues for caregiver responsibilities – relationship to earning potential, pensions
 - increased number of single parent families
 - increased number of divorced parents
 - increased number of blended families
 - increased number of grandparents caring for grandchildren
 - increased number of children in foster care
 - breastfeeding education and workforce policies/support
 - parental fears/safety concerns
 - peer pressure for teens /adolescent development issues
 - “lost” kids
 - domestic violence
 - crime/drugs
 - sense of community – not as neighborly
 - concern for volunteerism for quality programs for children due to demands on time, sexual abuse issues, parental fears, safety concerns, etc.
 - increased day care demands
 - increased potential for communicable diseases
 - need for affordable quality day care
- lack of transportation, sprawling county – 50 miles – transportation to health care is an issue
- rural county – but Binghamton has a lot of attention
- urban core – three hospitals
- urban core – more poverty
- price of gas
- increased malpractice insurance
- emergency room abuse – need for companionship
- US economy shift toward service sector rather than manufacturing jobs (which are going overseas)
- mass exodus of baby boomers from workforce to retirement
- jobs – prepared workforce (what kind of jobs – entry level jobs)
- New York State Budget
 - school districts/education issues
 - 10% cut in optional public health services on the table
 - possible reduction in certain grant programs
 - Medicaid costs/reform
 - mandated/unfunded services
- increased collaboration among agencies and government
- less local control in business decision-making
- rich in services / culture of activism / available entertainment
- lack strong telecommunications infrastructure to bring in business
- water and sewer limitations for expansion and affect on economy
- electrical grid/blackouts
- good transportation system in county for our size / extra shifts / infrastructure - Interstate 86 completion
- changes in community - migration of crime, STD’s, drugs, etc.
- accessibility to New York City – economic impacts for buying and selling goods
- increased travel in and out of area from other counties
- geographical size – not too big or small
- regional center for many services (home health services, public safety, etc.)
- reasonable housing and cost of living
- fairly safe community
- geography is pleasing
- history of ethnic and cultural diversity
- improving diversity in economic structure

Factors (continued)

- ❑ advertising - drug companies sponsoring events that support education
 - drug company ads on television for sexual impotence, etc.
 - increased patient empowerment
 - information overload
 - increased prescriptions from out of country (cheaper)
 - increased surgeries out of country (cheaper)
- ❑ media and politics driving public health policy - dollars following policies on:
 - sex education/abstinence only
 - gay marriage
 - Roe vs. Wade
 - perception of less separation between church and state
 - impacts on mental health
 - perception of danger level – how to filter out true risks
 - perception of control over external issues
 - numbness to danger threats
- ❑ bioterrorism issues
 - mandated dollars/resources for planning, education and equipment that could have been spent on other preventive measures
 - systems communication
 - political tension
 - negative effect on economy – fear of flying, etc.
 - migration from large cities to rural areas to stay out of “target” areas resulting in increased property values - vacant land in rural areas doubling in cost
- ❑ population/diversity - need for increased cultural competency and education
 - diversity in health care workforce -- communication issues
 - increased number of Hispanic, African Americans and Asian Americans
 - decrease in number of refugees -- due to changes in policies, bioterrorism - change in TB and other communicable disease rates
- ❑ access to health care
 - young adults – insurance coverage as they enter the workforce
 - aging society
 - housing
 - increased demands on health care resource utilization
 - Broome Rx
 - Medicaid Treatment Act for women for payment for breast and cervical cancer
 - mental health closures - effect on long term care
 - Free Clinic - impact on community
 - increased emergency visits and costs to hospitals if free clinic closes
 - increased chronic disease burden on the community
 - increased number of veterans on disability
 - nursing home availability/long term care - funds to keep them operating

Events:

- trend for non-passage of state budget each year
- sales tax legislation
- Clean Indoor Air Act/tobacco legislation / smoke free environment
- hospital consolidation of UHS and Ideal (now a senior center) in 1980's put us in a better position than other communities that are currently struggling with hospital closures
- hospitals struggling with mission/priorities in this economy
 - nursing shortages
 - malpractice insurance premiums
 - marketing of new drugs through the media
 - funding dollars are tighter
- primary care centers/walk-in clinics
- one stop shopping in primary care settings
- No Child Left Behind Act has put more emphasis and resources on academic core mandates and achievement and less resources are available to focus on health issues, education and nutrition needs in schools to enable kids to learn better – community investment in children
- potential closure of Free Clinic will increase health care costs for hospitals and limit access for uninsured
- better medical technology keeping population healthier
- assets of cancer center, health center, health department
- churches closing – economic difficulties – ethnic churches
- public panic – economic impact
- toxic plumes in Endicott and Hillcrest and possibly other areas in the county - indoor air quality due to volatile organic chemicals
- State Office Building contamination – 1981
- blackout
- 1998 Tornado
- September 11, 2001 has forced us to become better prepared for emergencies and disasters as a community and cooperate more closely; however, required training and infrastructure places large burden on local health care system – have caused a lingering atmosphere of fear and uncertainty
- loss of manufacturing jobs - IBM and Endicott Johnson
- loss of nursing schools
- Broome County legislative proposals to state regarding welfare reform and sexual predators
- legislation to lower legal Blood Alcohol Content to .08 to reduce DWI's and traffic fatalities
- zero tolerance policy for youth for alcohol and driving
- adolescent fatalities due to motor vehicle accidents
- new emerging infectious diseases – SARS
- West Nile virus
- STEPS Initiative – increased attention to proper nutrition, physical activity, etc.
- Medicaid Treatment Act – can now pay for cancer treatment for breast and cervical cancer
- Resistance to Rx antibiotics
- Free Clinic – impact of closure
 - increased chronic disease burden on community
 - increased emergency room visits
- Broome Rx
- HIPAA – sharing of information and impacts on access to care
- mental health program closures
- Home Health Agency closure - impact of change from public to private ownership
 - access/financial impacts
 - impact on jobs
- increased number of veterans
 - need for long term care and mental health needs

- stock market – pension fears, social security
- local elections and different political influences/climate