Township of Bloomfield
Department of Health and Human Services
Community Health Improvement Plan
(2018-2023)
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

ADAPT (Alcohol & Drug Abuse Prevention Team)
Agape Worship Center
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Berkeley Elementary School
Bethany Presbyterian Church
Bethel Church of Love & Praise
Bloomfield Children's Library
Bloomfield College
Bloomfield Division of Public Safety
Bloomfield Fire Department
Bloomfield High School
Bloomfield Middle School
Bloomfield Municipal Alliance Committee (BMAC)
Bloomfield Parks & Recreation Department
Bloomfield Presbyterian Church (Church on the Green)
Bloomfield Public Library
Brookdale Christian Church
Brookdale Elementary School
Brookdale Reformed Church
Caldwell University
Carteret Elementary School
Christian Faith Center Inc.
City Green
Clara Maass Medical Center
Community Blood Services
Demarest Elementary School
Early Childhood Center
Education Station Day Care Center
Elite Daycare Center
Essex County Division of Community Health
Essex County Division of Welfare
Essex-Newark Legal Services
Executive Baby
EZ Ride
Fairview School
Family Day Nursery
Felicity Tower
First Baptist Church
First Class Learning and Development Center
Foundations Prep School
Franklin School
First Baptist Church
Future Generation Early Learning Center
Gentle Hands Mobile Phlebotomy Service
Glen Ridge Senior/Community Center
Heritage Village at Bloomfield
Human Needs Food Pantry
ImmediCenter
Interfaith Hospitality Network
Isaiah House
Kiddie World
Kids Corner
Kinder Towers
KinderSmile Foundation
Korean United Presbyterian Church
Language Rhythm Academy
Looking Glass Children's Center
Magical Rainbow Day Care Center
Milestone Academy
Montclair Emergency Shelter for the Homeless
Mountainside Medical Center
My 1st Time Childcare Center
Newark Community Health Centers
National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)/ Essex
Newark Emergency Services for Families
Newark Presbytery
New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition
New Jersey Department of Health, Division of Family Health Services
New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids
Neighbor to Neighbor Network
New Light Baptist Church
North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority
Oak View School
Olde Towne Optimal Health
Park United Methodist Church
Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey
Partnership for Maternal & Child Health of Northern New Jersey
Precious Moments Childcare and Learning Center, Inc.
Rainbow Montessori School
Red Carpet Kids Childcare
Rutgers Global Tuberculosis Institute
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School
Sacred Heart Church
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Saint Thomas the Apostle Church
Saint Valentine Church
Salvation Army
ShopRite of Brookdale
Shoresh Preschool
Simple Faith Church
Skyline Church
SNAP-Ed
Soldier On
Temple Ner Tamid
Temple of Radiant Light
Tiny Treasures
Tobacco Free for a Healthy NJ (TFHNJ)
Toni’s Kitchen
Trinitas Regional Medical Center
United Way of Bloomfield
University Hospital
Watsessing Elementary School
William Paterson University
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
YMCA of Montclair
YMCA of Montclair - Geyer Family Branch
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Learning how our residents live, work, and play is essential to developing and prioritizing public health initiatives and strategies to improve their health and well-being. To accomplish this, the Township of Bloomfield Department of Health and Human Services (BDHHS), in partnership with the Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services (CREEHS) at Montclair State University (N.J.), conducted its Community Health Assessment (CHA) in 2017-2018 to identify the most pressing needs and concerns of the township’s 47,391 residents.

The assessment, which included follow-up to research conducted in 2013, consisted of four resident focus groups, five key informant interviews, and responses to a survey (offered online and on paper; in both English and Spanish). The results are available here: http://nj-bloomfieldtownship.civicplus.com/423/Community-Health-Assessment.

Based on the CHA and community partner meetings, BDHHS has developed a current Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) to address identified needs in the community over the next five years. The plan, however, is ever evolving based on continued assessment of community needs and strategies implemented.

The plan describes measurable and actionable goals, objectives, and evidence-based strategies for addressing four priority areas:

- **Priority Area 1: Access to screening and health care services**
- **Priority Area 2: Active living and healthy eating**
- **Priority Area 3: Environmental risks**
- **Priority Area 4: Mental Health and substance abuse**

BDHHS and our community partners have committed to address these priorities, identify additional resources and support, as well as potential gaps, and provide ongoing feedback, so that we can together improve the health status of Bloomfield.
CHIP Priority Area 1: Access to Screenings and Health Care Services

CHA survey respondents were asked whether they “knew their numbers” (waist circumference, heart rate, cholesterol, glucose, etc.). Only about half (51%) knew their blood pressure; less than a third (32%) knew their waist circumference; and only 33% knew their heart rate. Additionally, about 40% described their health during the past 30 days as “not good.”

Furthermore, focus groups and interviews identified chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity as the major health issues facing Bloomfield residents.

In terms of access to health services, one-fourth of respondents experienced challenges that stopped them from seeking medical care, including cost (too expensive), “not open at convenient times,” and it “takes too long to receive the services or programs.”

CHIP Priority Area 2: Active Living and Healthy Eating

About one-third (31%) of CHA respondents reported they did not participate in any physical activity or exercise in the last month, up from 23% in the 2013. More than two-thirds were overweight or obese (38% and 30%, respectively).

CHA respondents noted several barriers to walking, biking and being active, including traffic congestion, unsafe driver behavior, unsafe intersections, inadequate lighting, and poorly maintained sidewalks.

In terms of healthy eating, only 26% of respondents reported consuming green vegetables at least once a day; 10% orange-colored vegetables; and 9% legumes. Only 43% consumed fruit at least once a day. Participants cited transportation, cost, quality, distance, and time as barriers to accessing healthy foods.

CHIP Priority Area 3: Mental Health and Substance Abuse

One-third of respondents reported their mental health status (e.g., stress, depression, and emotional problems) as “not good” and on average, survey participants spent 11 out of the past 30 days stressed, depressed, and/or coping with emotional problems. Respondents indicated that access to mental health services was an issue for residents, as many mental health professionals do not take insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare.

While self-reported substance use was relatively low among survey respondents, more than 1 in 4 perceived it to be a problem in Bloomfield. Prescription pain drug misuse came in first; heroin and marijuana tied for second. Focus group participants indicated there was drug use activity at local convenience stores and public locations (e.g., school playgrounds at night, supermarkets, and a local college campus). They also perceived an increase in cocaine usage.
and smoke shops selling cough syrup and other over-the-counter items that may be used illicitly as substances.

**CHIP Priority Area 4: Environmental Risks**

About 40% of respondents reported environmental living conditions as a primary concern, specifically the safety and quality of the water supply. Focus groups and interviews noted additional environmental concerns: rodents, particularly by the river; the need for more recycling and composting programs; enforcement of anti-idling laws to reduce exposure to pollution and protect air quality, particularly in front of schools; and litter and trash removal.

Additionally, the CHA reported a lack of lead poisoning awareness. In 2015, all BDHHS service areas saw a 75% increase in childhood lead poisoning cases, in part because more health care providers were able to conduct lead screenings. However, more than half of CHA respondents (57%) reported that they did not have access to lead poisoning prevention information or “didn’t know” where to obtain this information.

**Health Awareness and Promotion**

Nearly half of survey participants (46%) indicated they had not received information about health topics from BDHHS in the past 12 months. Of those that did receive the information, half reported they did not learn anything new or learned “a little” from these sources. Nearly one-third of survey respondents (32%) felt they were “neither informed nor uninformed” about BDHHS services and activities. Barriers to accessing services included the Department’s operating hours, lack of transportation, and non-English speakers who were unable to communicate with staff or locate information online.

Through local newspapers and websites, social media platforms, and our own communication channels (e.g., Health Beat radio show, newsletter, website), BDHHS will incorporate health awareness and promotion into each of the four priority areas.
Priority Area 1: Health Screenings

Given the importance of screenings in early detection of disease (when treatment is more feasible, easier, and less expensive), raising awareness and increasing the number, type, and locations of health screenings in the township must be a high priority. CHIP Priority Area 1 focuses on accomplishing these goals.

Not only will BDHHS continue to collaborate with community partners to identify additional locations for health screenings (blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol, etc.), we also plan to partner with the Center of Excellence for Latino Health (CELH) at Clara Maass Medical Center and William Paterson University’s HeartSmarts program to increase awareness and screenings in African-American and Latino communities. (Note: HeartSmarts uses a faith-based curriculum to increase knowledge of heart disease and its prevention in underserved, high-risk communities.) We also plan to coordinate two Mammography in Motion van visits each year for women in Bloomfield with limited or no health insurance.

Furthermore, Priority Area 1 will collaborate with other private and public entities to identify new and existing resources and liaise with schools and families to reach the broader public.

Goal: To increase access to health care screenings for blood pressure, diabetes, and other conditions in Bloomfield.

Objectives: See work plan.

Key Strategies:

- **“Know Your Numbers” campaign** — an initiative of the American Heart Association
- Faith-based screenings/education
- **Mammography in Motion** — The mobile van provides mammograms and clinical breast exams to eligible Essex County females. Mammography in Motion is sponsored by Screening Access of Value to Essex (SAVE) Women and Men, which is funded by the Essex County New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) program.

Performance Measures: See work plan.
Priority Area 2: Active Living and Healthy Eating

Priority Area 2 aims to address barriers to active living and healthy eating, including lack of transportation, cost, quality, convenience, and time. Active living and healthy eating have been shown to reduce the risks of chronic health problems (i.e., obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers). BDHHS will partner with state and local agencies, schools, and other organizations to bring low-cost fruits and vegetables to the township, launch “Breakfast After the Bell” programs, and promote safe walking and biking to school.

Goal: To increase access to opportunities for healthy eating and active living in Bloomfield.

Objectives: See work plan.

Key Strategies

- **Veggie Truck** — BDHHS has partnered with City Green, a Clifton-based nonprofit that brings fresh produce to underserved areas. The mobile farm stand is set up in key locations throughout the township from June to November. The veggie truck accepts and doubles federal food benefits to make it easier for low-income families to access quality fresh fruits and vegetables.

- **Breakfast After the Bell** — BDHHS has already introduced “Breakfast After the Bell” at Berkeley Elementary School and plans to expand the program to neighboring schools. “Breakfast After the Bell” re-imagines the school breakfast program by offering it at a time during which a greater percentage of students will benefit: in the classroom, after the bell has rung. The program has been promoted by No Kid Hungry, the National Education Association and Advocates for Children of New Jersey.

- **Walking Campaign** — BDHHS has collaborated with the New Jersey Bike and Walk Coalition to organize walking groups. The groups are paired with the walking tour of the Bloomfield Historic District, the tour of the Morris Canal Greenway (an envisioned 111-mile continuous pedestrian and bicycle trail connecting six counties in northern New Jersey), and the City Green veggie truck, which serves as a starting point for group walks.

- **Walk to School Initiatives** — In partnership with EZ Ride, BDHHS will enable and encourage safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environments through Safe Routes to School (SRTS). SRTS is supported by the New Jersey Department of Transportation with funding from the Federal Highway Administration. Municipalities and schools are recognized for their commitment and support of the program.

Performance Measures: See work plan.
Priority Area 3: Environmental Risks

In Bloomfield, more than three-fourths of the housing units have potential lead hazards as they pre-date 1978 when lead paint was banned. Given the danger of lead exposure to children (even low levels of lead in the blood can cause severe health outcomes), BDHHS plans to collaborate with community partners to identify additional locations for childhood lead screenings. The Department is hoping to reach more of the eligible population (i.e., children aged 6 and under who have not been screened and siblings of children who have tested positive for lead and live in the same household).

Priority Area 3 also entails providing educational outreach and information regarding the safety and quality of the water supply and other environmental concerns identified in the CHA, including rodents, litter, trash, and air pollution from idling vehicles.

Additionally, the Department will use a HUD Healthy Homes grant to improve Section 8 housing inspections by creating additional policies and protocols to assess (and improve) the environmental conditions of units. Healthy Homes grants focus on implementing low-cost, effective home hazard assessment and interventions and educating the public on how to reduce environmental exposures. BDHHS will also create and disseminate educational materials about common household environmental hazards to Section 8 residents during inspections.

Goal: To increase access to environmental health information and assessments in Bloomfield.

Objectives: See work plan.

Key Strategies

- **Childhood Lead Screening** — BDHHS, in collaboration with community partners such as ShopRite of Brookdale, KinderSmile, and the Bloomfield Public Library, will identify new opportunities to test children for lead exposure and educate residents about childhood lead poisoning and the Department’s lead testing services.
- **Environmental Education** — BDHHS will create and disseminate information on household environmental hazards, including lead, mold, asbestos, rodents, carbon monoxide, and radon.
- **Healthy Homes Initiative** — BDHHS plans to modify [HUD’s Healthy Homes Program](#) to enhance inspections of the township’s 300 Section 8 housing units. The Department will hand out educational information about common household environmental hazards to Section 8 residents during inspections.
Performance Measures: See work plan.

Priority Area 4: Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Given the connection between mental illness and the use of addictive substances, Priority Area 4 focuses on preventing and treating both mental health and substance abuse disorders. (More than one in four adults living with serious mental health problems also has a substance use problem, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.) BDHHS, in conjunction with community partners, will develop programs, trainings, and events to address mental health challenges (i.e., depression, self-harm, suicide) and substance abuse/misuse.

More specifically, Priority Area 4 includes LifeSkills Training (LST) for Bloomfield middle and high school students. LST is an evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention program for grades 6-9.

Goal: To increase access to mental health and substance abuse resources in Bloomfield.

Objectives: See work plan.

Key Strategies:

- **LifeSkills Training** — LifeSkills Training is a three-year, classroom-based substance abuse prevention program for middle/junior high school students. Students learn (1) personal self-management skills, (2) general social skills, and (3) information and skills specifically related to drug use. LifeSkills has been recognized by several governmental agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

- **Community Events** — BDHHS, in collaboration with community partners such as the Center of Excellence for Latino Health (CELH) at Clara Maass Medical Center, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey, will hold at least four community events each year, including a “Night of Conversation,” mental health first aid training, and “Talking Saves Lives.” A “Night of Conversation” is a family event designed to promote open and honest discussions about substance abuse; mental health first aid training teaches people how to recognize the early signs and symptoms of mental illness and substance misuse; and “Talking Saves Lives,” is a program dedicated to ending the stigma surrounding mental illness.

- **Partnerships** — BDHHS will identify additional opportunities to connect individuals and families to mental health-related programs and services.
**Performance Measures:** See work plan.

**Quarterly Monitoring / Annual Review**

As an integral part of the Health Department’s Performance Management Plan (PMP), the CHIP will be reviewed at minimum on a quarterly basis. Health department leaders will ensure these reviews are conducted with input from applicable community partners in each priority area. Progress of each initiative will be discussed, and revisions will be made, if necessary.

In addition, as per the PMP, an annual meeting will be held with community partners to review the status of the goals, objectives, and performance measures outlined in the CHIP. The input from this meeting will be used to produce an annual report that will be disseminated to the community partners, the media, and the public at the large.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is our hope that this CHIP will be a resource for our community partners and for others who are interested and committed to improving the health of Bloomfield residents. Going forward, it will serve as a blueprint for addressing our four priority areas (i.e., access to screening and health care services, active living and healthy eating, environmental risks, and mental health and substance abuse) and for monitoring our progress toward meeting the goals, objectives, and performance measures for each one. If you have any questions or feedback about the CHIP, please feel free to contact the Health Department at (973) 480-4024 or health@bloomfieldtwpnj.com.