

A Health Needs Assessment Study of the Minority Population in Elkhart County

by the

Indiana Minority Health Coalition

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Executive Summary

This report presents results of a comprehensive community health needs assessment for minority populations in Elkhart County, directed by the Indiana Minority Health Coalition with technical assistance from the Indiana University Bowen Research Center. Initial project planning activities began in 2003, with most of the data collected in 2004. The purpose of this needs assessment study was to:

- Perform a comprehensive, community-based health needs assessment of minority populations in Elkhart County
- Identify the real and perceived health-related issues of minority groups across age, gender, socio-economic, and geographic categories
- Examine the wide spectrum of factors impacting the health and well being of the minority populations in Elkhart County
- Identify opportunities and initiatives to better meet the health needs of the minority populations

Data for the health needs assessment were collected from existing data containing health indicators, targeted population surveys, focus groups, and key informant surveys.

Existing data from birth and death certificates were gathered and analyzed for minority groups. The analysis of these existing data for Elkhart County indicated that disparities exist by race and ethnic group. It also revealed that most rates need to be improved to meet the Healthy People 2010 Objectives.

Targeted surveys were developed and administered to 238 local residents in a variety of settings (i.e. churches, community centers, ethnic food markets, grocery stores, health fairs, neighborhood events, and retail stores) to obtain community input on important health issues, needs, values, and beliefs. Some of the results from the surveys highlighted that racial and ethnic minorities perceive diabetes and substance abuse as part of the top five worst health problems in their neighborhood. Blacks specifically noted high blood pressure, stroke, and heart disease as part of the top five worst health problems; whereas, Hispanics mentioned infectious diseases, cancer, and HIV/AIDS. These results indicated that a quarter of Blacks and more than a third (39.3%) of Hispanics indicated they had difficulty obtaining the services of a doctor, nurse or other health professional in the past year. For Blacks, the top five barriers attributed to accessing healthcare included: lack of insurance, lack of money, lack of transportation, medical care not covered by insurance, and waiting too long for an appointment. For Hispanics, the top five barriers attributed to accessing healthcare included: lack of insurance, lack of money, language barriers, not having a Social Security Number, and lack of transportation.

Local residents from selected minority populations with an understanding of significant needs, solutions, and expectations were identified to participate in focus groups and/or key informant interviews. Results from focus groups and key informant interviews indicated that Elkhart County community residents perceive cancer (breast, ovarian and other types), diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, HIV/AIDS, and mental health as major health problems. These results also highlighted that the most frequently noted barriers to accessing healthcare

encountered by minority residents in Elkhart County were: culture, communication between provider and patient, lack of health knowledge and promotion, personal and economic situation, and system problems. Additionally, the findings provided information on what some minority residents of Elkhart County perceive as ways to improve both healthcare access and health status. Suggestions for improving healthcare access and/or health status for minority residents included: improve healthcare access, improve communication between and educate the community and providers, make individuals more aware of available resources, improve the healthcare system, and provide translators and interpreters.

It is hoped that the findings in this report will provide the catalyst to bring communities together to discuss existing differences in health indicators and ultimately to better develop strategies to reduce them so that all Elkhart County residents can achieve the highest possible level of health status. In addition, this report can be used by policy makers, providers and program administrators to focus interventions on those areas that are of most concern to the minority population.