

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

by the

Indiana Minority Health Coalition

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May 2005

Executive Summary

This report presents results of a comprehensive community health needs assessment for minority populations in Lake 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 Lake 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 Lake 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 Lake 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 102 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 Blacks perceive high blood pressure and strokes, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and respiratory conditions as part of the top five worst health problems in their neighborhood. These results indicated that more than one-quarter (27.6%) of Blacks indicated they had difficulty obtaining the services of a doctor, nurse or other health professional in the past year. For African Americans, the top five barriers attributed to accessing healthcare included: lack of money, lack of insurance, medical care not covered by insurance, waiting too long for an appointment, and waiting too long in doctor or clinic office.

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 Lake County community residents perceived HIV/AIDS, diabetes, heart conditions, and strokes as major health problems. These results also highlighted that the most frequently noted barriers to accessing healthcare encountered by minority residents in Lake County were: culture, communication between provider and patient, lack of education, lack of health knowledge and promotion, personal and economic situation, and system problems. Additionally, the findings provided information on what some minority residents of Lake 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 access, improve communication between and educate the community and providers, increase provider services, increase employment and educational level of the community, and make people more aware of available resources.

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 Lake 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.