

A Health Needs Assessment Study of the Minority Population in LaPorte 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 LaPorte 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 is to:

- Perform a comprehensive, community-based health needs assessment of minority populations in LaPorte 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 the LaPorte County
- Identify opportunities and initiatives to better meet the health needs

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 LaPorte 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. The Black population in LaPorte County is disproportionately affected when comparing the health indicators among racial groups.

Targeted surveys were developed and administered to 46 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. The results from the surveys highlighted that Blacks perceive cancer, high blood pressure/strokes, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and respiratory conditions as part of the top five worst health problems in their neighborhood. These results indicated that more than one-quarter of Blacks 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 that attributed to accessing healthcare included: lack of money, lack of insurance, no transportation available, doctor would not take new patients, and waiting too long in the doctor's 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 surveys. Results from focus groups and key informant surveys indicated that LaPorte County community residents perceive the following as major health problems: arthritis, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, hepatitis, hypertension and HIV/AIDS. These results also highlighted that the most frequently noted barriers to accessing healthcare encountered by minority residents in LaPorte 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 LaPorte 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: educate and improve communication among providers and consumers, make people more aware of available resources, improve the healthcare system, and provide translators and interpreters.