

# **A Health Needs Assessment Study of the Minority Population in Tippecanoe 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 Tippecanoe 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 Tippecanoe 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 Tippecanoe 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 Tippecanoe 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 Tippecanoe County is disproportionately affected when comparing the health indicators among racial groups.

Targeted surveys were developed and administered to 101 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 diabetes, high blood pressure and strokes, cancer, diet problems, and heart disease as part of the top five worst health problems in their neighborhood. These results indicated that eighteen percent 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 attributed to accessing healthcare included: waiting too long for an appointment, the lack of money, lack of insurance, medical care not covered by insurance, and did not feel the medical care was the best.

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 Tippecanoe County community residents perceive cancer, depression, diabetes, and high blood pressure as major health problems. These results also highlighted that the most frequently noted barriers to accessing healthcare encountered by minority residents in Tippecanoe 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 Tippecanoe 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 consumers and providers; increase the education level of the community; increase the number of minority physicians and other healthcare providers; make people more aware of available resources; and provider 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 Tippecanoe 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.