



Community Health Assessment Executive Summary

July 2012 – Dec. 2013

Community Assessment Process:

Between Fall 2011 and Summer 2013, we engaged 740 Pierce County residents, including diverse and underserved populations, key leaders, community organizations and other partners. Through a series of focus groups, community workshops and a community survey, we asked questions including:

- What makes a healthy community?
- What would a healthy Pierce County look like?
- What are the strengths, assets and resources of Pierce County?
- What are the challenges to health in Pierce County?
- What are the most important health issues that need to be addressed in a community health improvement plan?
- What stories about our residents and their health are important to tell?
- What are Pierce County's strengths and assets that contribute to good health?

We evaluated other questions by asking key community leaders, public health advisors, Board of Health members and our core partners the following:

- What other issues face Pierce County?
- What non-health issues affect the health of Pierce County, such as laws, funding and changing demographics? What trends and events related to social, political, economic and technological issues might also affect the health of our residents?
- Are we able to conduct the essential services necessary to safeguard the public? What are the gaps in our local public health system?

We collected and analyzed current local data about our residents, including:

- What is the health status of our residents?
- Where data are available, what has worsened? What has improved?
- What are the health disparities in our communities?

Key Findings:

The following top issues, not listed in ranked order, emerged when analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data through the process described above:

1. **Mental health**
2. **Substance abuse** – i.e., drugs and alcohol
3. **Health disparities** – higher rates of chronic illnesses and diseases among certain groups
 - Poverty
 - Educational attainment, job training (non- health care provider) & education disparities
 - Access to quality health care and related services, including transportation barriers
 - Homelessness and lack of affordable housing
 - Social isolation – geographic isolation, lack of family and programmatic support
 - Racial inequity and discrimination
4. **Access to quality health care and services**
 - Health insurance coverage (e.g., Affordable Care Act)
 - Health care systems coordination and difficulty navigating health care system(s)
 - Workforce development (for health care providers)
 - Provider availability (shortage)
 - Health literacy and health education (people not understanding issues necessary to staying healthy, such as nutrition and exercise)
 - Prevention and preventive services for things like substance abuse, diabetes, heart disease, etc. (availability and access to)
 - Funding reductions to social services and poor economy
5. **Protecting and improving the environment** – i.e., air quality, clean water and designing healthy communities, including parks and walking trails.