



The Healthy Community Collaborative of San Mateo County

In order to make deep and significant improvements in the health and well-being of San Mateo County residents, we must recognize that social policy is health policy -- beyond the traditional focus on individual healthy behaviors. Following are “treatment recommendations” for policy makers, advocates, and concerned community members.*

2008 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT: HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

The *2008 Community Assessment: Health & Quality of Life in San Mateo County* is a comprehensive community needs assessment that can be used as strategic planning for community programs and as a guideline for policy and advocacy efforts. The report is available at www.plsinfo.org/healthysmc.

POLICY-LEVEL TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensure deliberate considerations of health impacts into social policy decisions are made such as:

- community design
- planning and land use
- funding for education
- public transportation subsidization
- emergency preparedness
- housing affordability
- ensuring health language is included in all local government general plan updates
- the criminalization of mental illness and substance abuse

Reduce chronic disease rates by improving laws and practices that guarantee healthy places for everyone:

- promote increased access to locally-grown, affordable fresh produce
- create more safe areas for recreational exercise, such as parks and walking routes
- dedicate space for community gardens within ½ mile of every resident
- public transportation improvements
- ensure every child has a safe walking route to school
- focus on smart growth practices and transit oriented development (TOD)
- support your local farmers’ market; if you don’t have one, help establish one
- improve colon cancer screening rates
- disincentivize the use of cars

Reduce childhood obesity rates by:

- modifying school meals programs to be more nutritious
- banning TV from children’s bedrooms
- increasing nutrition education in schools
- adding school gardens to all schools
- ensuring adequate PE time is available during each school day
- promoting physical activity within and outside of school settings
- limiting TV viewing and video-gaming for all family members to no more than 7 hours per week
- linking young people to farms and garden programs

Focus on the redesign of local, community-based food systems by:

- promoting products of coastal growers in the other regions of San Mateo County
- improving local food transport
- developing preferential local food purchasing arrangements
- attending the slow foods conference in San Francisco on 8/29/08-9/1/08

Reverse the criminalization of biology by:

- developing alternatives to prison for individuals with mental health and substance abuse issues
- improving access to appropriate mental health and substance abuse treatment, appropriate re-entry methodologies, and job alternatives for people convicted of crimes
- supporting legislation for healthcare reform that provides mental health and substance use treatment parity

Reduce substance use rates by:

- supporting progressive taxation policy on alcohol that directs revenue to treatment and prevention
- moving regulatory authority of alcohol outlets from state to local governments
- supporting a funding structure that would assist those who need treatment
- improving on the plan within your organization to help employees with substance abuse problems
- supporting environmental substance use prevention efforts
- improving youth asset development
- making depression screening and treatment a higher priority

Sponsored by the Healthy Community Collaborative of San Mateo County: Health Plan of San Mateo County; Hospital Consortium of San Mateo County; Hospital Council of Northern & Central California; Kaiser Permanente, Redwood City & South San Francisco; Mills-Peninsula Health Services; Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital; Peninsula Library System Community Information Program; San Mateo County Health Department; San Mateo County Human Services Agency; San Mateo Medical Center; Sequoia Hospital; Seton Medical Center/Seton Coastsides, Silicon Valley Community Foundation; Stanford Hospital & Clinics; Youth & Family Enrichment Services



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Prepare systematically for the demographic shifts in the population and accessibility of “aging in place” by:

- actively planning for the impacts of the increasing number of seniors on all services you offer
- creating systems that allow for increased public transportation
- developing cross-generational living arrangements
- supporting family caretakers

Focus on youth and their optimal development by:

- ensuring all youth have at least 2-3 supportive and caring relationships with adults beyond their parents and teachers
- providing youth opportunities for meaningful community involvement
- providing youth opportunities meaningful involvement in your organization
- providing a high-level of educational attainment for all youth
- creating an internship program for local youth at your organization, and other opportunities that would encourage your colleagues to mentor a young person

Reduce racial/ethnic disparities by:

- addressing segregation, social exclusion, prejudice, and structural racism
- understanding your role in differential access and treatment
- exploring your own biases

Reduce income inequality by:

- ensuring most new jobs pay a living wage
- increasing the minimum wage
- making home ownership more attainable
- improving tax policies to reduce the tax burden on low-income individuals
- guaranteeing a strong safety net below which no one falls

Eliminate the permanent underclass by providing a ladder into the middle class through:

- ensuring every child in the county reads at least at the 50th percentile in 3rd grade
- improved job training
- increased educational opportunity for those not on a college track
- universal healthcare access
- adopting a school
- job security

Increase your individual health by:

- stopping smoking
- engaging in physical activity 20-30 minutes on most days of the week
- eating at least 5 fruits and vegetables per day
- if you drink alcohol, drink in moderation, less than 2 drinks per day
- maintaining a proper weight

Prepare for disasters by:

- storing at least 2 weeks to 2 months worth of food for your family
- establish a family emergency supply kit to the level described at www.smhealth.org/pandemicflubrochure

Increase awareness of how social conditions and policies influence health by viewing *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making us Sick* on PBS starting March 27 at 10:00pm (www.unnaturalcauses.org). Organize an event within your community or organization to view subsequent episodes.

** Policy is more than law. It is any agreement (formal or informal) on how an institution, governing body or community will address shared problems or attain shared goals. (The Praxis Project)*

For further information, please contact the San Mateo County Health Department, Health Policy and Planning Unit at 650-573-2104 or smayer@co.sanmateo.ca.us.