

Cass County 2022 IPLAN



**Conducted, compiled, and completed by
the Cass County Health Department**

Submitted to the Illinois Department of Public Health on August 25, 2022

Purpose

The Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs (IPLAN) is a community health assessment and planning tool based on the National Association of County and City Health Officials Protocol for Excellence in Public Health (APEXPH) model. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has made IPLAN their tool for the certification of local health departments as delineated in 77 ILL. Adm. Code 600.

The IPLAN process is a series of planning activities, led by the certified local health department that involves community participation in identifying the community's health problems, setting health priorities and completion of the community health needs assessment and community health plan.

This process requires a combination of subjective and objective observations, from data, surveys and input from community representatives based on professional expertise and life background.

There are three essential elements to IPLAN:

1. An organizational capacity assessment
2. A community needs assessment, and
3. A community health plan

The organizational capacity assessment purpose is to assess the internal status of the local health department in order to determine needs and strengths. The results can then serve as a guide for direction in the improvement of organizational capacity.

The community needs assessment is the process of determining the community themes and strengths, identifying the forces of changes in the community and reviewing pertinent health data, ultimately identifying the top health priorities of the community.

The purpose of the community health plan is to develop a five-year strategy to address selected health priorities in the community. It is intended to be a health plan that is created, embraced and addressed by the collective efforts of the various stakeholders.

Cass County Health Department IPLAN Priorities

2022-2027 Health Priorities:

1. Substance Use
2. Heart Disease
3. Obesity

2017-2022 Health Priorities:

1. Access to Behavioral Health & Substance Abuse Providers
2. Heart Disease
3. Obesity

2012-2017 Health Priorities:

1. Heart Disease
2. Cancer
3. Obesity

2007-2012 Health Priorities:

1. Heart Disease and Stroke
2. Lung and Prostate Cancer
3. Access to Health Care

1999-2004 Health Priorities (Extended to 2007):

1. Cardiovascular Disease
2. Osteoporosis
3. Mental Illness

1994-1999 Health Priorities:

1. Heart Disease
2. Breast Cancer
3. Low Infant Birth-weight

Background

County Description

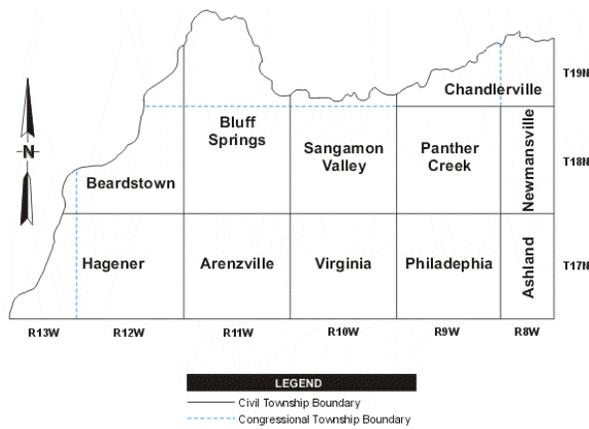
Cass County is located in west-central Illinois. According to the 2020 census, it has a population of 13,042, which is an increase of .9% from 12,676 in 2016. Its county seat is Virginia and is the home of Jim Edgar Panther Creek State Fish and Wildlife Area.

Cass County was formed in 1837 out of Morgan County. It was named in honor of Lewis Cass who was a general in the War of 1812, Governor of the Michigan Territory, and United States Secretary of State in 1860. Cass was serving as Andrew Jackson's Secretary of War just before the County was named. The ancestry of Cass County is from a wide variety of countries, but the largest groups were German, Scotch-Irish, and English when the county was first formed in the 1800s.

Cass County has a total area of 375.75 square miles (31 miles east to west and 17 miles north to south), of which 375.82 square miles is land and 7.95 square miles is water. The land is primarily allocated for corn and soybean production and for grazing livestock. Surrounded by fields and pastures, towns in Cass County are islands located miles from each other. There are 34.7 persons per square mile compared to 231.1 persons per square mile for the State of Illinois.

Adjacent counties include Mason County to the northeast, Menard County to the east, Sangamon County to the southeast, Morgan County to the south, Brown County to the west and Schuyler County to the northwest. The Illinois River divides Cass County from Schuyler County on the northwest and the Sangamon River divides Cass from Mason County on the northeast.

There are four major highways running through Cass County: US Route 67, Illinois Route 78, Illinois Route 100 and Illinois Route 125. Cass County is divided into two cities (Beardstown and Virginia) and three villages (Arenzville, Ashland, and Chandlerville). There are three other very small villages that no longer have post offices, which are Bluff Springs, Newmansville and Philadelphia. The county is divided into 11 townships that include: Arenzville, Ashland, Beardstown, Bluff Springs, Chandlerville, Hagener, Newmansville, Panther Creek, Philadelphia, Sangamon Valley and Virginia.



Populations of cities and villages:

- Arenzville – 400
- Ashland – 1,272
- Beardstown – 5,504
- Bluff Springs – 584
- Chandlerville – 430
- Newmansville – 112
- Philadelphia – 118
- Virginia – 1,382

Based on 2020 Census Data

There are three school districts in the county. A-C Central CUSD #262 has an elementary school in Chandlerville and a middle and high school in Ashland. Beardstown CUSD #15 has a middle and high school, Gard Elementary School, and Grand Avenue School in Beardstown. Virginia CUSD #64 has an elementary, junior high and high school located in one building in Virginia. There are a total of 2,079 children ages 3 and over enrolled in the three school districts. High school graduates in Cass County comprise 83% of the population compared to Illinois at 90%. According to the 2020 Census, persons living in Cass County with Bachelor’s degrees or higher degrees were only 15.1% of the population compared to 34.7% in Illinois.

Cass County is located in Illinois’ 18th Congressional District, 99th House of Representatives District, and 47th Senate District. There are 693 veterans living in Cass County.

Demographics

According to the 2022 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, there were 12,773 people living in Cass County. The 2020 United States Census states the population of Cass County is represented in 5,043 households, and 5,824 housing units. The racial make-up of Cass County is 90.7% White, 5.8% Black or African American, 0.9% American Indian and Alaska Native, 1% Asian, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander. Persons identifying two or more races totaled 1.4% of the population. The US Census for 2020 also states that 72.7% of Cass County identifies as Non-Hispanic or Latino, and 20.7% identify as Hispanic or Latino. Census studies show that 18% of Illinois’ population identified themselves as Hispanic. It is believed that there are more Hispanics living in the county than reported in the census because many of them are undocumented persons who do not wish to have any contact with census takers. Thus, it is very difficult to get an actual count of Hispanics living in Cass County. Foreign born persons represent 11.6% of residents living in our county, and 17.5% of households speak a language other than English. More recently, an influx of Africans have moved into Cass County with many emigrating from Benin, Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Nigeria, and Togo. Cass County also has an increasing population of Burmese emigrating from Myanmar that is not shown on any recent demographics.

There are 6,236 males and 6,257 females living in the county (2020 US Census). Children under the age of 18 total 3,043. Those 18 and over amount to 9,450. Other age groups are:

- 18 to 24 years old – 947 persons
- 25 to 34 years old – 1,563 persons
- 35 to 49 years old – 2,256 persons
- 50 to 64 years old – 2,528 persons
- 65 years old and over – 2,156 persons

Languages spoken in Cass County include mostly English, Spanish and French. JBS, a pork processing plant located in Beardstown, has been responsible for bringing many new residents to Cass County from other countries including Mexico, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Togo (Africa), and Myanmar. The people from Togo and other African countries speak French, while emigrants from Myanmar speak Burmese.

Cass County remains a poor county. The median family income in Illinois is \$71,200. The median family income in Cass County is \$53,899. The median non-family income is \$26,767. As of August 2022, 12.2% of the population of Cass County is living below the poverty line. The 2022 County Health Ratings and Roadmaps states the unemployment rate for Cass County is at 6.7%

The health system in Cass County continues to improve. Cass County still does not have a hospital and residents of the county rely on neighboring counties to provide hospital services. There are two ambulance services in the county. One is centrally located in Virginia and the other is located in Beardstown which is the largest population center in the county. Hospitals most commonly used by Cass County residents include Blessing Hospital in Quincy, Culbertson Memorial Hospital in Rushville, Jacksonville Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville, St. John's Hospital in Springfield, and Springfield Memorial Hospital in Springfield.

Cass County currently has three health clinics; Taylor Clinic, Cass County Health Clinic, and the JBS Clinic. Taylor Clinic is owned by Culbertson Memorial Hospital and employs five nurse practitioners. The Cass County Health Department operates a Federally Qualified Health Center in Cass County with two locations; Virginia and Beardstown. The FQHC employs two physicians and two nurse practitioners. The Cass County Health Department also has a dental clinic at their Virginia location. The health and dental clinics accept private insurances, Medicare, Medicaid and self-pay on a sliding fee scale. Both Taylor Clinic and the Cass County Health Clinics offer outpatient behavioral health services. Taylor clinic employs one mental counselor while the Cass County Health Department employs four licensed staff members who are available at either the Virginia or Beardstown location. Counselors offer individual, couple, and family counseling for children and adults, as well as grief counseling, domestic violence counseling, and substance use counseling. DUI evaluation, assessment, and risk education is available as well. CCHD also makes referrals locally for psychiatric services. In 2019, Memorial Physician Services opened a clinic for

JBS employees. The clinic is exclusive to JBS employees and their dependents covered under JBS medical insurance.

Besides the medical, dental, and behavioral health services mentioned above, the health department also offers home health, hospice, Teen Reach, environmental health, School-Linked health center, WIC and Family Case Management, health promotion and emergency preparedness programs, as well as, women's health education, a Welcome center, and many other services to the residents of Cass County and the surrounding area. The Cass County Home Health agency provides in-home healthcare by nursing professionals under the orders of a physician. Cass-Schuyler Area Hospice is designed to provide sensitivity and support for people in the final phases of terminal illness. CCHD's Teen Reach program is a comprehensive youth development initiative that provides after-school and summer program services to high-risk youth. The Cass County Environmental Health Program works to assess, correct, control, and prevent harmful factors in the environment through education, regulation, and inspection. The health department clinics are School-Linked Health centers providing services to all three school districts in the county, and providing immunizations to all ages. The health department also provides Women, Infants & Children (WIC) along with Family Case Management (FCM) services.

Health Promotion

Cass County Health Department has a health education department whose focus is on promoting healthy lifestyles in our community, and identifying personal risk of preventable disease. These current programs include Tobacco, Hepatitis B, Communities of Color, Public Health Emergency Preparedness, Pandemic response, Community Engagement, Community Health Equity, Infection Control, Diet and Exercise, and Access to healthcare. Two Women's Health Education programs are also offered through CCHD. The program aims to increase the knowledge of women on health and cancer screenings, as well as provide patient navigation services to women who are diagnosed with cancer, or just need to schedule a routine appointment. The Cass County Welcome Center provides linguistically and culturally sensitive management services to immigrants and refugees to secure basic services needed to become socially and economically self-sufficient.

The Cass County Health Department's main office is located in the city of Virginia. The satellite health department office is located in the city of Beardstown. The health clinics are also located in these offices. The dental clinic is in the Virginia office. Cass-Schuyler Area Hospice and Cass County Home Health are programs offered by the Cass County Health Department based out of our Virginia office. They are both Medicare-certified programs that service a five county area in West-Central Illinois.

The Cass County Health Department is committed to the health needs of Cass County residents and its mission:

“The Cass County Health Department (CCHD) is committed to the philosophy that each individual human being has the basic right to expect and secure prevention information and public health services that are necessary to promote and sustain their optimal physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being. Based on this philosophy, CCHD acknowledges its responsibility to promote health and wellness through progressive and effective programs that will prevent disease and its complications.”

The goal of public health is to prevent disease and promote healthy choices. Public health is a dynamic field that must continue to respond and adapt to current health issues as well as maintain quality service to meet basic health needs. There are always new challenges as emerging diseases are discovered and the needs of the populations change over time.

Services

The range of services provided by Cass County Health Department (CCHD) is very comprehensive. CCHD offers programs that provide or ensure vaccinations; the control of infectious diseases; safe and healthier foods; healthy mothers, babies and children; safe drinking water and septic systems; prevention of chronic diseases; home health and hospice services; STI testing and education; emergency preparedness for all citizens; preventative and restorative dental services; primary health care services; behavioral health services; substance use disorder services; a welcoming center providing assistance to immigrant and refugee populations; community health outreach and assistance; health educators active in the schools and community; and an active after-school and summer Teen Reach program for children in the Virginia and Beardstown communities. Appendix A illustrates the current organizational chart of the Cass County Health Department.

Community Outreach

One of the essential public health services is to inform, educate and empower people about health issues. By maintaining a presence at community events, CCHD has provided the residents of Cass County with a wide range of information, from awareness of appropriate behavior at given developmental stages in a child’s life; risk factors in the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and other communicable diseases; vaccination scheduling; modifiable risk factors for heart disease, cancer, and other life-style related diseases; emergency preparedness and response; environmental health; and a host of other topics. Our Immigrant Welcoming Center also allows us to address equity, by identifying challenges that our communities are facing and helping them gain access to resources and education that foster healthy lifestyles.

The range of activities includes attendance at health fairs and school resource fairs; community events such as fairs and commemorative events; presentations to populations at risk for a variety of health problems such as seniors, children and adolescents in schools, Latino and African populations, and information disseminated through the media. Our two FQHC clinics and dental clinic have proven to be valuable assets to the public by providing immunizations, school and

sports physicals, dental examinations and care, breast exams, blood work, and traditional screenings for chronic diseases.

Quality Assurance

As a public agency, Cass County Health Department is subject to scrutiny by a number of governmental, professional, funding and other regulatory agencies on an ongoing basis. Individually, license and certified staff go through periodic review for licensure, such as nursing and sanitation. Clinical areas and laboratories are subject to inspection for compliance standards, as well as ongoing monitoring of safety and efficiency.

Funding agencies require regular reports on the outcomes of many services such as lead screening, WIC, Family Case Management, immunizations, School-Linked Health Center and FQHC Clinics as well as other grant-dependent programs.

The health department employs a Quality Assurance Nurse who monitors all programs of the health department. Reviews are done on a monthly or quarterly basis, depending on the program. Her reports include chart reviews as well as investigation of any adverse events. A synopsis of the findings is then reviewed with the Administrator, department heads and staff of the program.

Regular meetings are held with department supervisors every other week and with the entire staff monthly to provide the opportunity to evaluate performance, assess and intervene in problem areas, and quickly disseminate changes in practice and policy that affect the outcomes of service. A monthly calendar is published for all staff members so that health department news and activities are up-to-date and quickly accessed by all employees.

The Cass County Board of Health meets on a monthly basis on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Board members are updated on health department performance for all programs and they in turn provide guidance to both the health department and the county on public health concerns.

Members of the Cass County Board of Health include:

Zachary Flinn	President/CEO West Central Bank
Joyce Brannan	Retired Director, Christian Love in Action
Ann Chelette	Retired School Health Coordinator
Jennifer Allen	Nurse
Mekelle Neathery	Virginia School District Superintendent
Cecy Reza	PSSI
Amy Parlier	Controller, Cass Communications
Kim Hance	County Board Member
Cathy Gibson	County Board Member

The Cass County Health Department developed a survey which was distributed via Survey Monkey on the internet as well as paper copies, which were available at each health department office. The Survey Monkey link was accessible through the Cass County Health Department website and Facebook page as well as distributed via email to local employers and school districts. A copy of the survey results has been attached. (Appendix B)

Over the course of approximately two months, 316 individuals responded to the survey with 256 being Cass County residents. There were a total of 284 English responses, 29 Spanish responses, and 3 French responses. Of the 316 respondents 88.29% were White; 3.8% were Black or African American; 2.84% were Multiracial; 0.63% were Native American or Alaska Native; 0.32% were Native Hawaiian; 3.16% identified as Other and 0.95% skipped the question. When asked about Ethnicity, the responses were 13.6% Hispanic; 84.8% Non- Hispanic and 1.58% skipped this question.

The total number of respondents from each community included:

7 (2.2%)	Arenzville
10 (3.16%)	Ashland
118 (37.3%)	Beardstown
15 (4.74%)	Chandlerville
67 (21.2%)	Virginia
32 (10.1%)	Outside Cass County
67 (21.2%)	Skipped question

From the survey, we learned that Cass County residents view the most significant health concerns to be drug and alcohol use. The leading causes of death are heart disease, cancer, and COVID-19, while many residents suffer from risk factors for chronic disease such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity. Inactivity, poor diet and nutrition and high smoking rates are identified as significant lifestyle behaviors that are most likely contributing to chronic disease rates.

Respondents cited weekend healthcare access and prompt care as a significant health issue or concern facing their community. Many residents feel that they do not have access to healthcare during the weekends. Many residents drive up to an hour to receive healthcare access and prompt care services on the weekends. Respondents did agree that medical, dental and mental health services were accessible in our county but ranked each discipline as “high” when asked to prioritize the improvement and expansion of these services. Many expressed concern over the issue of clinics keeping primary care physicians and the lack of a hospital in Cass County.

Respondents viewed family and social service programs as important and believed the county had numerous assets in this area, including faith-based services, food pantry and meal delivery

services, pre-school programming for low-income children, and other support devices for low-income families. Many residents disagreed (53%) that there are child-care services accessible in Cass County or that childcare providers and services are available (38.6%). An increase in quality affordable daycare, pre-school and after-school programs are seen as much needed for parents of our communities.

Please see Appendix B for the Cass County Health Department Community Needs Assessment survey results. The results of this survey will be broken down by specific community and those results will be distributed to the communities at a later date.

Prioritization of Community Health Problems

Staff of the Cass County Health Department and Cass County leaders discussed the list of health-related issues that they felt should be addressed in Cass County. The list consisted of the following health problems.

- Drugs/Alcohol
- Insurance Issues
- Lack of hospital in Cass County
- Cancer
- Keeping Physicians
- Health Education
- EMS Services in county
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Heart Disease
- Smoking
- Communicable Disease Prevention
- Allergies
- Flu/Flu Vaccines
- Water Quality
- Vaccine Hesitancy

After much discussion, the IPLAN Committee chose three priority health needs that would be addressed by the Cass County Community Health Plan. These needs are:

1. Substance Use
2. Heart Disease
3. Obesity

Community Health Plan

Health Priority # 1: Substance Use

Substance use was identified as the first health priority for the community plan. This has been a consistent issue within our county. Of the 222 people that answered the survey question 94 people raised concern with substance use.

Substance use disorders (SUD) occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically significant impairment, including health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home. As of 2020, 37.309 million Americans have used illegal drugs regularly in the last 30 days. Recurring drug use is referred to as substance dependence. This is a medical term used to describe abuse of drugs or alcohol that continues even when significant problems related to their use have developed. According to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics, there were 96,779 drug overdose deaths reported in the United States from March of 2020 - March of 2021. Of those deaths, 2,790 were in the state of Illinois. The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps reported that 21% of adults have reported binge or heavy drinking in 2019. It is important to note that not only adults are suffering from these problems, but adolescents are as well. In 2020, 40.3 million people aged 12 or older (or 14.5%) had an SUD in the past year, including 28.3 million with alcohol use disorder, 18.4 million with an illicit drug use disorder, and 6.5 million with both alcohol use disorder and an illicit drug use disorder.

In the 2020 Census there was a population of 13,042 reported in Cass County. Because Cass County is a very small and rural county, it is difficult to obtain statistical information relating to substance use specific to our area.

There are many risk factors associated with substance use. Biological factors and mental health play a major role. While the Cass County Health Department has greatly increased the ability to address mental health needs within the community, there are always going to be instances where a person is unwilling or unable to seek help. Mental health conditions play a prominent role in most substance use. There are factors such as poverty and rural living. The third risk factor identified in this case is insurance coverage. There are many programs available to people in need of insurance coverage, but there are still many cases of people being underinsured or totally uninsured. Without coverage they may be unable to seek care for themselves.

The Cass County Health Department will continue to provide Behavioral Health Services to the community. The Behavioral health staff can work with individuals needing mental health services in addition to the Medication Assisted Recovery Program (MAR) that can work with individuals battling with addiction and substance use. Community health workers will work to educate the community on risks of substance use. Health Educators will work with community partners to ensure proper education on overdose and the use of Narcan. Lastly, Cass County Health Department will provide education to schools and physicians on risk factors and other potential

indicators that can make an individual more susceptible to substance use such as family history, socioeconomic status and access to care.

The Cass County Health Department will continue to update their Cass County Resource guide yearly. This guide provides residents with a wide range of information regarding service providers and services offered to Cass County families. The hard copies of the guide are available at both Cass County Health Department locations as well as electronically on the Cass County Health Department website.

Risk Factor: Biology & Mental Health

Biology plays a critical role in predisposition to addictive behaviors especially if the individual's first experience with drug use is early in life. Experimentation during the most critical stage of development can affect susceptibility and lead many into more serious use. During adolescent years, the brain is developing its ability to assess situations and manage emotions. Exposure to drugs and/or alcohol during this process can result in increased risk for poor decision-making and lead many towards more risky behavior. Trying drugs and continued use can have a substantial impact on mental functioning and cause long-lasting, potentially irreversible, consequences.

Substance abuse and mental health are not a matter of weak will power or lack of morals. The chemical reactions that happen in your brain when you have an addiction is quite different from those that happen in someone without one. Heredity is a major risk factor for substance use and addiction. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, up to half of a person's risk of addiction to alcohol, nicotine, or other drugs is based on genetics. If a person has family members who have experienced addiction they are more likely to experience it too. Many people may feel inclined to believe that just because a family member has struggled with mental illness or substance use in the past they will not have such an issue. This could lead them to not seek out treatment or services at an early stage or possibly seek no treatment at all.

Gender can also be a significant biological risk factor for substance use. Per the National Institute on Drug Abuse, men are more likely than women to use almost all types of illicit drugs, and illicit drug use is more likely to result in emergency department visits or overdose deaths for men than for women. "Illicit" refers to use of illegal drugs, including marijuana (according to federal law) and misuse of prescription drugs. For most age groups, men have higher rates of use or dependence on illicit drugs and alcohol than do women.

Mental health and the development of co-occurring disorders can amplify the side effects of substance use. Many with issues such as depression use these substances in an attempt to self-medicate. In reality, the combination of mind-altering substances with mood disorders can intensify symptoms and increase mental distress. Use of various substances to numb pain and help those who are victimized by violence is common. To prevent further damage to family or to

themselves, many do not seek medical help and use illicit substances to temporarily relieve pain and self-medicate. Substance abuse in these situations is especially vicious due to the “rebound effect” in which an individual coming off the effects of drugs and/or alcohol often experiences greater pain both mentally and physically. Those under the influence of substances operate without consideration for their actions. Alcohol and drugs can lower inhibitions, cloud judgment and cause some to abuse their loved ones. This, however, does not mean substance use causes violence; merely, it can be a catalyst for some. About two thirds of adults aged 18 or older with a co-occurring SUD and SMI in the past year received either substance use treatment at a specialty facility or mental health services in the past year (66.4%), but only 9.3% received both services.

Genetics and other biological variables are examples of factors that have been significantly linked to mental health. Hereditary, familial, and twin studies have long supported the possibility of genetic predispositions to mental illness. Genetic risk factors have been indicated as important in the causation of many mental disorders. Abnormal functioning of nerve cell circuits/pathways, including abnormal balances of neurotransmitters, and brain defects and injury have likewise been noted as potential causative factors of mental illness. By having the option to access mental health services, individuals could receive proper help and hopefully avoid substance use.

Risk Factor: Poverty/ Rural Areas & Environmental

Higher instances of substance use are generally seen in rural areas and those with higher poverty rates. In 2020, 12.2 % of people in Cass county live below the poverty level. Individuals that are part of these areas are more vulnerable and have higher risk of choices that negatively impact their health. When looking at drug overdose deaths, rates are 10% higher in rural areas than urban. According to the Gateway Foundation, rising numbers of drug use in rural areas are attributed to isolation, unemployment rates, poor health, lack of educational completion, poverty and risk taking behaviors.

People living in rural communities that wish to seek addiction treatment have limited or no access to detox services and other life-saving treatment options. Local healthcare providers often lack information and access to addiction treatment medications. According to the Gateway Foundation in 2016, 2,278 people in Illinois died of an overdose, and 80% of these were opioid-related. There is a documented need for detox services and medication-assisted treatment in rural areas across Illinois.

Environment, which is defined as family beliefs and attitudes, peer group, community, and more, is also believed to heavily influence addiction because these are typically the factors that lead an individual to try drugs or alcohol initially. When a person is encouraged to try drugs or alcohol, either socially or as a coping mechanism, they may continue to use these substances and, over time, their use may spiral into addiction. Stigma surrounding substance use in certain cultures and social settings is a large barrier to detecting and treating substance use disorders. Research has indicated that exposure to lead, mercury, cocaine, alcohol, cigarettes, and antidepressants

throughout pregnancy can have negative neurodevelopmental effects. Many women do not understand the correlation between these types of exposure and the potential negative effects they can have on their unborn child.

A young person in school can be easily influenced by the actions of their peers. This may impact their performance in school and their commitment to their education, which can lead to negative choices. If a peer is engaging in substance use the young person is more likely to do the same. This is considered the biggest risk factor for addiction in young people.

Proven Intervention Strategy

The Cass County Health Department recognized the need for increased mental health services in its community during the last IPLAN. Since then, services increased and there are now behavioral health providers in both offices. Cass County is located in IDHS Region 4 for the State of Illinois. Regions 4 and 5 have 12 of the counties with the highest population rates of opioid overdose in 2016. These two regions also have the lowest levels of currently available opioid use disorder (OUD) medication assisted recovery (MAR) resources in the State of Illinois.

Behavioral health services will utilize evidence-based tools and strategies such as Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Solution Focused Therapy (SFT), Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), client centered therapy, play therapy and Strategic Family Therapy. The substance use provider will diagnose and treat substance use disorders focusing on the treatment, prevention, and awareness of opioid abuse, and will work collaboratively with the medical providers to support MAR treatment. The substance use provider will also use an integrated approach to work with the LCPC to diagnose and treat co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders. The community health workers will provide educational programs for patients, families, communities, and personnel to increase awareness of, patient access to, and patient retention in mental health and/or substance abuse disorder treatment programs. The community health workers will collaborate with existing community resources to address factors that impact the onset and/or recurrence of substance use disorders. The community health worker will also support patient engagement and self-management training.

The Cass County Health Department will utilize community resources from a number of different avenues in order to implement this strategy for increased access. Community health workers will provide education to local physician offices as well as local probation/parole officers and law enforcement officials so they can be aware of potential patients/clients that could benefit from this program. We feel that these will be the best referral sources.

Resources Available

- Behavioral Health - Cass County Health Department
- Medication Assisted Recovery Program - Cass County Health Department
- Gateway Foundation
- Community Hope and Recovery
- Alcohol and Narcotics Helpline

Cass County Health Department has a Behavioral health section and a Medication Assisted Recovery Program (MAR). Behavioral Health can provide mental health services for all ages. The MAR program provides intervention for substance use under the supervision of medical professionals.

The Gateway Foundation is located in Jacksonville, Illinois and provides inpatient treatment for substance use disorders.

Community Hope and Recovery can provide mental health and intervention services.

The Alcohol and Narcotics Helpline is a hotline number anyone can call to find resources for their needs with substance use.

Barriers

- Denial of substance use issue by a person under the influence is most common.
- Access to inpatient services is very low within a 100 mile radius
- Illegal substances are readily available in all communities
- There are few programs that provide youth with activities. This creates boredom and youth searching for something easily accessible.
- Higher stigma associated with addiction and recovery
- Inadequate means of transportation to travel for treatment
- Lack of funds to pay for treatment

Community Health Improvement Goals

By 2027 the Cass County Health Department will increase access to Behavioral Health services to ensure everyone that needs assistance has that option. Community health workers will work with local support groups to increase exposure to the programs in each community.

Cass County Health Department will participate in 75 community events by 2027, where they will provide information on services and substance use prevention. Community health workers will create informational handouts on the effects of substance use in each at risk age group.

Outcome Objective

One of the outcome objectives that the Cass County Health Department plans to cover over the next five years is to establish a network that would help facilitate access to mutual self-help activities, resources, and information for people and their family members who are experiencing emotional distress resulting from substance abuse. We hope to accomplish this goal with the help of our community health workers. We will work to ensure that the citizens of Cass County know where to go when they or a loved one are suffering with a substance use issue and seek help or resources needed.

The community health worker will work with community partners to provide education and resources for families. Information about substance abuse will be given out through articles in local newspapers, through pamphlets and other educational information at grocery stores, pharmacies and church groups. The Cass County Health Clinic health educator can also assist the community health worker's efforts by taking pamphlets and information to various community events and health fairs she attends to help spread the word as well. Both CCHD offices will have Narcan available to the public, so that when it is needed people have access to it for themselves or loved ones.

Evaluation

Progress for this priority will be tracked with the number of community events attended and materials that are created. Collaboration will be documented with local support groups to show progress made in outreach.

Health Priority #2: Heart Disease

The second priority health need chosen by the committee is heart disease. Heart disease is a broad term used to describe a range of diseases that affect your heart. The various diseases that fall under the umbrella of heart disease include diseases of the blood vessels, such as coronary artery disease; heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias); heart infections; and heart defects (congenital heart defects).

The term "heart disease" is often used interchangeably with "cardiovascular disease". Cardiovascular disease generally refers to conditions that involve narrowed or blocked blood vessels that can lead to a heart attack, chest pain (angina), or stroke. Other heart related conditions, such as infections and conditions that affect the heart's muscle, valves, or beating rhythm, also are considered forms of heart disease.

Heart disease and Cerebrovascular Disease (stroke) are the first and fifth leading causes of death in the United States. One quarter of all Americans have some form of heart disease. Heart disease is responsible for more than 6.5 million hospitalizations annually. Heart disease is a major cause of disability and contributes significantly to the rising cost of healthcare in the United States. Heart disease also remains the biggest cause of deaths worldwide, even though over the last two decades, cardiovascular mortality rates have declined in high-income countries. At the same time, cardiovascular or heart disease deaths have increased at an astonishing rate in low and middle-income countries.

In 2020, heart disease remains the leading cause of death among Cass County residents as it has been for many years. From “Statewide Leading Causes of Death by Resident County, Illinois Residents, 2020” from the Illinois Department of Public Health, there were a total of 163 deaths in Cass County in 2020. Thirty-seven of these deaths were from heart disease. The percentage of deaths from heart disease in Illinois for the same time period was 24 percent.

Almost all reported diagnosis of heart disease in a population can be explained in terms of a limited number of factors; age, gender, high blood pressure, high serum cholesterol levels, tobacco smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, family history, obesity, lack of physical activity, psychosocial factors, diabetes mellitus, and air pollution.

The Cass County Health Department and its partners will work to educate and try to eliminate as many risk factors as possible from the residents of Cass County to reduce the incidence of heart disease. The risk factors that the health department and its partners will focus on include high blood pressure, high serum cholesterol levels, tobacco smoking, excessive use of alcohol, obesity, and lack of physical activity. Community health improvement strategies through the Cass County Health Department, Cass County Health Clinics and School-Linked Health Centers will include education and marketing that focuses on early screenings, interpreting screening results, and the prevention of chronic disease through health lifestyle choices. In addition, organized efforts to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke in Cass County will be utilized to reduce the incidence of heart disease in Cass County residents. We will also provide education to the public on diabetes, as heart disease is the leading cause of illness and death in the diabetic patient. Good nutrition and physical activity will also be stressed as an important way to reduce heart disease. The health department will work with our on-site behavioral health counselors to educate the public about excessive use of alcohol.

Risk Factor: High Blood Pressure and High Serum Cholesterol Levels

The definition of uncontrolled high blood pressure is a measured systolic blood pressure of 140 mm HG or more, or a diastolic blood pressure of 90 mm Hg or more, based on an average of up to three measurements. The definition of high LDL cholesterol is a measured level of LDL above the treatment goals established by the National Cholesterol Education Program’s Adult Treatment Panel III guidelines: less than 160 mg/dL for low-risk groups, less than 130 mg/dL for

intermediate-risk groups and less than 100 mg/dL for high-risk groups. Blood pressure is easily screened in any doctor's office or pharmacy. Serum cholesterol levels can be checked by medical providers by blood work.

According to the Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey conducted in 2019, 35.5 percent of Cass County adults have been told that they have high blood pressure. The survey also showed that 41.2 percent of Cass County residents have been told that they have high cholesterol. According to the question when was the last time your cholesterol was checked, 59 percent stated within the past year; 17 percent said over a year ago; and 20.2 percent stated they have never had their cholesterol checked.

Risk Factor: Smoking

Twenty percent of all heart disease deaths are caused by smoking tobacco. Smoking is the single largest preventable cause of heart disease in the United States and actually triples the risk of dying from heart disease. People who use tobacco are more likely to have heart attacks, high blood pressure, blood clots, strokes, hemorrhages, aneurysms, and other disorders of the cardiovascular system. Cigarette smoking, a major cause of stroke, increases clotting factors in the blood, decreases HDL cholesterol levels, increases triglyceride levels, and damages the lining of blood vessels. The risk for stroke increases as the number of cigarettes smoked increases.

According to the Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey conducted of Cass County in 2019, 18.1 percent of persons surveyed were smokers which was a slight increase from 2012 at 18.1 percent.

Secondhand smoke is a much greater problem than people realize. Secondhand smoke is a combination of the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar and the smoke exhaled from the lungs of smokers. There is no evidence of a safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. In fact, long-term exposure to secondhand smoke has been shown to cause a 30 percent increase in the risk of heart disease in non-smokers. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 34,000 coronary heart disease deaths per year are caused by exposure to secondhand smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke also negatively affects heart disease by decreasing exercise endurance, damaging blood vessel walls, and increasing the tendency of blood platelets to clot, contributing to heart attacks. Many people think that only the person smoking the cigarette is getting the harmful effects from the smoke but all people around the smoker are being harmed also.

Risk Factor: Nutrition (Obesity) and Physical Activity

Other risk factors for heart disease include obesity, nutrition and physical activity.

Obesity is a chronic condition defined by an excess amount of body fat. A certain amount of body fat is necessary for storing energy, heat insulation, shock absorption, and other functions. The

normal amount of body fat (expressed as percentage of body fat) is between 25-30 percent in women and 18-33 percent in men, women with over 30 percent body fat and men with over 25 percent body fat are considered obese. One in three Americans are now considered obese. The 2019 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey in Cass County showed that 29.6 percent of the population was obese and 38 percent was considered overweight. In 2012, the same survey showed that 35.5 percent of the population was obese and 32.9 percent overweight. Both categories have small decreases but it is clear that obesity is still a large problem in our small county. According to the 2009 survey, persons who stated they have been advised about their weight were 18.4 percent compared to 81.6 percent who stated they had not been advised about this problem. Overall, the percentage of obese residents decreased from 2012, while the percentage of overweight residents has increased.

Good nutrition is one of the key factors in preventing heart disease. Eating a balanced diet low in fat and salt is one way to prevent heart disease. According to the 2022 County Health Rankings and Roadmap 10% of the county residents suffer from food insecurity. This is due to the limited grocery stores in the county. Beardstown is the only city in Cass County that has a full service grocery store for residents. The 2022 IPLAN Needs Assessment results stated that 43.4 percent of respondents indicated that they disagree that they have access to groceries. Each community in Cass County does have a Dollar General store that is adding produce to their grocery section. Thus, many residents in Cass County still have limited access to groceries and healthy foods.

Physical activity is another aspect of preventing heart disease. According to the 2019 IBRFSS survey only 65.8 percent of Cass County residents had exercised in the past 30 days compared to 34.2 percent who had not. Without any other details it is hard to know whether or not those who responded yes to the question regarding exercise are actually meeting the vigorous activity standards at least three times a week for twenty minutes, however 49.9% say that they meet the physical activities guidelines. Many residents may not realize that this is the type of exercise that is actually needed in order to prevent heart disease.

Resources Available

Resources available for programming in Cass County are limited, however, the resources we have are very valuable. Health department resources that are available through grant-funding sources include the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois Department of Human Services. The health department also has the very valuable resources of the two Cass County Health Clinics that employ two physicians and two nurse practitioners, providing services not only to Cass County but the surrounding area as well. Our resources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- American Lung Association
- American Heart Association
- Cass County Health Clinics (FQHC)

- Parks in all communities in the county
- 340B Drug Program
- Women's Health Night (Annual event to promote women's health that includes programs given by our medical providers)
- Illinois Tobacco Program (QUITLINE)
- Virginia 5K Race sponsored by CCHD at the Virginia BBQ annually
- Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program
- University of Illinois Extension
- SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Public fitness in Beardstown
- School districts
- Cass-Schuyler Area Public Transit
- JBS
- Cass County Health Department Staff

The Illinois Department of Public Health provides funding, educational materials, brochures and guidance. The Illinois Department of Human Services provides the same. The American Lung Association and the American Heart Association are excellent sources of materials and education that can be handed out to patients at our clinics and health department, as well as at health fairs, community events and schools.

Our health clinics have already implemented measures to make sure that all patients receive blood pressure screenings and education if they have elevated screenings. They also measure BMIs on all children and adults and provide education on nutrition and physical activity when needed. Clinic staff also asks if the patient smokes and gives education information to anyone who responds that they do smoke. The clinics and health department offices provide blood work and screenings to help reduce the incidence of heart disease every day and at special clinic events.

The parks in Cass County provide a place to walk, run and play for children and adults of all ages. The park in Beardstown has exercise equipment available as well. Beardstown, Virginia, Ashland, Arenzville and Chandlerville all have summer baseball programs for girls and boys in their towns plus some offer adult programs such as softball and basketball. All three school districts participate in baseball, basketball, and football. Beardstown has a large soccer field that is used frequently as well.

The Cass County Health Clinic has implemented the 340B drug program for patients without prescription drug coverage. This helps patients who have been diagnosed with high blood pressure or high cholesterol receive their medications at a lower cost. Many patients were not filling their prescriptions for these medications because the out of pocket cost was very high.

The health department's annual Women's Health Night was first held over 8 years ago with approximately 20 women in attendance. It has now grown to two events (one in Beardstown and one in Virginia) with over 60 women in attendance. Both of our clinic physicians give presentations on various subjects including menopause, eating healthy, screenings and other women's health related topics. Our on-site behavioral health counselor has also participated with presentations about stress management and other mental health topics.

Women, Infant and Children (WIC) is a very important program in our low-income, rural county. Many pregnant mothers and their children benefit from this program to help them eat healthy. The Maternal Child Health staff provides nutrition education through WIC, as well as, advises pregnant moms against smoking or drinking when pregnant and after their child is born. The WIC program also offers coupons to mothers who participate so they can choose nutritional foods including fresh fruits and vegetables for their families. The MCH program has also implemented the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor program that informs new mothers or mothers-to-be that breastfeed children tend to not become overweight as they grow and mature. The MCH program as well as Public Health uses information and educational materials from the University of Illinois Extension to advise their patients on weight loss, physical activity, etc.

All three school districts in Cass County are always open to have our health educator and nurses come to the schools to provide talks about obesity, nutrition, smoking, and physical activity. We provide talks on whatever the teacher of a class would like their students to know more about.

The Cass-Schuyler Public Transit system is up and going in our county. This transportation system helps provide patients with transportation to and from their medical appointments both with local medical providers as well as with specialists in the Springfield area.

JBS (formerly Cargill Meat Solutions) welcomes health department staff to come to their plant to provide education to their employees on a monthly basis.

Barriers

- Patient apathy and denial of risks are barriers that can be expected to occur when educating people about the risk of heart disease.
- Patients tend to be noncompliant with treatment for heart disease. Appointments are often canceled for various reasons.
- Financial resources could offer another barrier for Cass County residents as 12.2 percent of them live below the poverty level.
- Language is always a barrier in Cass County as we continue to learn and work with our Spanish speaking and French speaking populations. Persons from Hispanic cultures other than Mexico often have different dialects that we must learn to interpret. Trained and trusted interpreters are often hard to find and keep employed. We are fortunate enough to

have two full time Spanish and one full time French interpreter on staff. We also use Stratus Video for any interpreting services we may need for languages such as ASL (American Sign Language).

- Medications are expensive and many people, especially our senior population, are finding the laws that the Illinois government has put into place have made it very difficult to buy their prescription drugs and healthy food choices. Sometimes they must choose which to buy on a monthly basis. Because they have to eat, they often do not take their medications as prescribed for their high blood pressure or cholesterol or do not purchase them at all.
- There are a couple of community parks in the county that offer nice walking paths but more walking or biking paths and more public exercise facilities would be helpful to many people who cannot afford the price of a gym membership.
- There are different education levels and cultures in Cass County and some of the cultures believe that a fat baby is a healthy baby. The WIC and Maternal Child Health programs are working towards changing this belief.
- Nutritious foods are expensive and there are cheap fast food places in the county that offer non-nutritious foods very inexpensively. Many families find it easier to eat out at a fast food restaurant than to fix a home cooked meal because of school and sporting events.

Community Health Improvement Goals

By the year 2027, reduce the rate of deaths from heart disease in Cass County residents from 22.6 percent (Statewide Leading Causes of Death by Resident County, Illinois Residents, 2020) to no more than 19 percent of total deaths. This goal ties in with the Healthy People 2030 goal to improve cardiovascular health and reduce deaths from heart disease and stroke.

Community Health Improvement Objectives

By August 2027, reduce the number of Cass County residents who smoke from 18.1 percent (2019 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey) to 15 percent.

By August 2027, reduce the percentage of Cass County residents who are considered overweight from 38 percent to 35 percent and obese from 32.3 percent to no more than 29 percent (2019 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey).

Community Health Improvement Strategies

- The Cass County Health Department will provide QUITLINE information to Cass County smokers to receive counseling about quitting the tobacco habit. The health department can no longer provide patches to help smokers quit but they can be mailed to the patient by request using the QUITLINE.

- The Cass County Health Department will continue to enforce Smoke Free Illinois in all public establishments.
- Staff of the Cass County Health Clinic will ask all clients who are thirteen years of age and older if they smoke. If they respond that they smoke, education will be given about the hazards of smoking and information about the Illinois QUITLINE.
- The Cass County Health Clinic health educator will provide education to children at all three school districts in Cass County about tobacco and the health issues that it can cause.
- The Cass County Health Clinic health educator will work with the cooks in school cafeterias to provide nutritional education about the meals they serve to children.
- Wellness fairs will be conducted at community events and county businesses to educate residents on good nutrition and physical activity to help control weight.
- Nutrition and physical activity education will be provided to all WIC moms.
- WIC staff will encourage all moms to join the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program.
- Education will be provided to all patients at Cass County Health Clinics regarding high measurements of blood pressure and/or high cholesterol. Medication, diet and physical activity instructions, along with information about heart disease will be given to patients as needed.
- Education will be provided to all patients at Cass County Health Clinics regarding obesity including information about proper diet and physical activity. BMIs will be taken on all patients including children.
- Education will be provided to children and their parents when the children come for school and sports physicals about the importance of a proper diet and physical activity. Information will include proper nutrition that includes at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Routine health screenings will be conducted at clinics, health fairs and other events throughout Cass County.
- The Cass County Health Department will continue to work with minority populations to promote good nutrition and physical activity among their cultures.
- The Cass County Health Clinic health educator will continue to meet with patients one on one to discuss healthy behaviors that will help decrease their risk of heart disease.

The Cass County Health Department applies annually for the Illinois Tobacco Free Communities grant. The amount of this grant will total \$20,000 and will be used to continue most of the interventions and programs related to this health priority. The remainder of funding will come from the Cass County Health Clinic's HRSA grant as they are a federally funded FQHC. Many of the employees tasked with the education programs presented in this IPLAN are employees of the Cass County Health Clinic and so are compensated under this grant program. Grant funding for heart disease is very rare in Illinois at this time.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this priority will include behavioral risk assessment surveys, vital statistics data, pre and posttests where applicable, and information gathered from health department program reports.

Health Priority #3: Obesity

Obesity continues to be cited as a major health issue. Obesity rates in the United States are among the highest in the world. Of all countries, the United States has one of the highest rates of obesity. More than one-third (41.9%) of U.S. adults are considered obese (NHANES, 2021). The Illinois Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey for Cass County Illinois in 2019 reported that 67.7% of residents were considered overweight or obese. 29.6% were obese. (IBRFSS, 2019)

Obesity rates have increased for all population groups in the United States over the last several decades. Non-Hispanic Black adults (49.9%) had the highest age-adjusted prevalence of obesity, followed by Hispanic adults (45.6%), non-Hispanic White adults (41.4%) and non-Hispanic Asian adults (16.1%). (NHANES-CDC, 2021)

Historically, obesity primarily afflicted adults, but this has changed in the last two decades. Childhood obesity is a serious problem in the United States putting kids at risk for poor health. Despite recent declines in the prevalence among preschool-aged children, obesity amongst all children is still too high. In 2017-2020 children and adolescents aged 2-19 years the prevalence of obesity has increased by a few points and currently stands at about 19.7%; affecting about 14.7 million children and adolescents. The prevalence of obesity was higher among Hispanics (26.2%) and non-Hispanic blacks (24.8%) than among non-Hispanic whites (16.6%). The prevalence of obesity was lower in non-Hispanic Asian youth (9%) than in youth who were non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, or Hispanic. The prevalence of obesity was 12.7% among 2- to 5-year-olds compared with 20.7% of 6- to 11-year-olds and 22.2% of 12- to 19-year-olds. Childhood obesity is also more common among certain populations (NHANES-CDC, 2021). The MCH Director of the Cass County Health Department reports that her staff feels this study is very accurate based on the characteristics of the large Hispanic population the health department serves. The MCH Director stated that the Hispanic population's culture believes that their children are not healthy if they are not "chubby".

Risk Factors

Obesity occurs when a person eats and drinks more calories than he or she burns through exercise and normal daily activities. The human body stores these extra calories as fat. Obesity usually results from a combination of causes and contributing factors, including:

- Genetics – A person’s genes may affect the amount of body fat that is stored and where that fat is distributed. Genetics may also play a role in how efficiently the body converts food into energy and how the body burns calories during exercise. Even when someone has a genetic predisposition, environmental factors ultimately can cause a person to gain more weight.
- Inactivity – If a person is not active, he or she does not burn as many calories. With a sedentary lifestyle, it is easy to take in more calories every day that burn off the calories through exercise and normal daily activities.
- Unhealthy diet and eating habits – Having a diet that is high in calories, eating fast food, skipping breakfast, intake of most daily calories at night, drinking high-calorie beverages, and eating oversized portions all contribute to weight gain. Many people may feel that having one unhealthy meal from a fast food restaurant occasionally isn’t a big deal but over time these meals add up and can cause weight gain.
- Lack of sleep – Getting less than seven hours of sleep a night can cause changes in hormones that increase appetite. It can cause a person to crave foods high in calories and carbohydrates, which can contribute to weight gain. Many people may not view getting enough sleep as a potential risk factor for obesity as the two issues do not seem to go together.
- Certain medications – Some medications can lead to weight gain if a person does not compensate through diet or activity. These medications include some antidepressants, anti-seizure medications, diabetes medications, antipsychotic medications, steroids and beta-blockers.
- Medical problems – Obesity can sometimes be traced to a medical cause, such as Prader Willi syndrome, Cushing’s syndrome, polycystic ovary syndrome, and other diseases and conditions. Some medical problems, such as arthritis, can lead to decreased activity, which may result in weight gain. A low metabolism is unlikely to cause obesity, as in having low thyroid function.

Even if a person has one or more risk factors, it does not mean that he or she is destined to become obese. Most risk factors can be counteracted through diet, physical activity and exercise and behavior changes. The Cass County Health Department will continue to focus on nutrition and physical activity for the next five years.

Risk Factor: Nutrition and Physical Activity

Obesity is a chronic condition defined by an excess amount of body fat. A certain amount of body fat is necessary for storing energy, heat insulation, shock absorption, and other functions. The normal amount of body fat (expressed as percentage of body fat) is between 25-30 percent in women and 18-33 percent in men, women with over 30 percent body fat and men with over 25 percent body fat are considered obese. Over one in three Americans are now considered obese. The 2019 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey in Cass County showed that 29.6% of the population was obese and 38% was considered overweight. In 2012, the same survey

showed that 35.5 percent of the population was obese and 32.9 percent was considered overweight. Both categories continue to trend down but it is clear that obesity is still a large problem in our small county.

Good nutrition is one of the key factors in preventing obesity. Eating a balanced diet low in fat and calories is one way to prevent obesity. Cass County is home to only seven grocery stores as defined by the Illinois Food Finder. Of those seven locations, three are Dollar General stores, with poor or no access to produce. Three of the seven grocery locations are focused on Cass County's Hispanic and African communities. These stores specialize in those harder to find items that our immigrant communities use on a regular basis. That leaves two grocery stores that have more substantial produce sections where more fresh foods can be found.

Physical activity is another aspect of preventing obesity. In 2019, 34.2% of Cass residents stated that they had no exercise in the previous thirty-day period; and 50.1% stated that they do not meet physical activity guidelines of exercise at least three times a week for twenty minutes (IBRFSS, 2019)

Resources Available

Resources available for programming in Cass County are limited, however, the resources we have are very valuable. Health department resources that are available through grant-funding sources include the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois Department of Human Services. The health department also has the very valuable resources of the two Cass County Health Clinics that employ one physician and two nurse practitioners, providing services not only to Cass County but to the surrounding area as well. Our resources include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- American Heart Association
- Cass County Health Clinics (FQHC)
- Parks in all communities in county
- 340B Drug Program
- Women's Health Night (Annual event to promote women's health that includes programs given by our medical providers)
- Illinois Tobacco Program (QUITLINE)
- Virginia Barbecue annual fitness event sponsored by CCHD
- Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program
- University of Illinois Extension
- SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Public fitness center in Beardstown
- School districts
- West Central Mass Transit

- JBS
- Cass County Health Department Staff

The Illinois Department of Public Health provides funding, educational materials, brochures and guidance. The Illinois Department of Human Services provides the same. The American Heart Association is an excellent source of materials and education that can be handed out to patients at our clinics and health department, as well as at health fairs, community events and schools.

Our health clinics have implemented measures and continue to follow protocol to make sure that all patients are weighed at each visit and providers give education about proper body weight. They also measure BMIs on all children and adults and provide education on nutrition and physical activity when appropriate.

The health department's annual Women's Health Night was first held 14 years ago with approximately 20 women in attendance. It has now grown to two events (one in Beardstown and one in Virginia) with over 85 women in attendance. Clinical and health education staff give presentations on eating healthy, recommended preventative screenings, exercise, and other women's health related topics. Our on-site behavioral health counselor has also participated with presentations about stress management and other mental health topics.

The parks in Cass County provide a place to walk, run and play for children and adults of all ages. The park in Beardstown has exercise equipment available as well. Beardstown, Virginia, Ashland, Arenzville and Chandlerville all have summer baseball programs for girls and boys in their towns plus some offer adult programs such as softball and basketball as well. All three school districts participate in baseball, basketball, and football. The Hispanic and African populations in the Beardstown area have a large soccer field that is used frequently as well.

There are some physical fitness opportunities in Beardstown that offer work out equipment for minimal fees.

All three school districts in Cass County are always open to having our health educators come to the schools to provide talks about obesity, nutrition and physical activity. We provide talks on whatever the teacher of a class would like their students to know more about.

There is a Public Transit system in place in Cass County. This transportation system helps provide patients with transportation to and from their medical appointments both with local medical providers as well as with specialists in the Springfield area.

JBS welcomes health department staff to come to their plant to provide education to their employees on a monthly basis.

Barriers

- Patient apathy and denial of risks are barriers that can be expected to occur when educating people about the risk of heart disease.
- Patients tend to be noncompliant with the medical provider's encouragement to lose weight.
- Financial resources could offer another barrier for Cass County residents as 12.9 percent of them live below the poverty level.
- Language is always a barrier in Cass County as we continue to learn and work with our Spanish speaking and French speaking populations. Trained and trusted interpreters are often hard to find and keep employed. We are fortunate enough to have seven full time Spanish, three full time French, and one full time Burmese interpreters on staff. We also use Stratus Video for any interpreting services we may need for languages such as ASL (American Sign Language).
- Medications are expensive and many people, especially our senior population, are finding it very difficult to buy their prescription drugs and healthy food choices. Sometimes they must choose which to buy on a monthly basis. Because they have to eat, they often do not take their medications as prescribed for their high blood pressure or cholesterol or do not purchase them at all.
- There are a couple of community parks in the county that offer nice walking paths but more walking or biking paths and more public exercise facilities would be helpful to many people who cannot afford the price of a gym membership.
- There are different education levels and cultures in Cass County and some of the cultures believe that a fat baby is a healthy baby. The WIC and Maternal Child Health programs are working towards changing this belief.
- There is a lack of fresh fruits and vegetables in the county. There is a farmer's market held in the summer and fall months in Beardstown but one is needed in each community. Fresh fruits and vegetables in the county's grocery stores are expensive to purchase.
- Nutritious foods are expensive and there are cheap fast food places in the county that offer non-nutritious foods very inexpensively. Many families find it easier to eat out at a fast food restaurant than to fix a home cooked meal because of school and sporting events.

Community Health Improvement Goal

By August 2027, reduce the rate of obesity in Cass County residents from 29.6% (2019 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey) to no more than 27%.

Community Health Improvement Objectives

By August 2027, reduce the percentage of Cass County residents who are considered overweight from 38% (2019 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey) to 35%

By August 2027, increase the percentage of Cass County residents who participate in physical activity at least once in the past 30 days from 34.2% (2019 Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey) to 37 percent.

Community Health Improvement Strategies

- The Cass County Health Department will work with the cooks in school cafeterias to provide nutritional education about the meals they can serve children.
- Wellness fairs will be conducted at community events and county businesses to educate residents on good nutrition and physical activity to help control weight.
- Nutrition and physical activity education will be provided to all WIC moms.
- Information about breastfeeding to reduce child obesity will be provided to all WIC moms through breastfeeding classes.
- WIC Staff will encourage all moms to join the Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program.
- Education will be provide to all patients at the Cass County Health Department screening clinics regarding diet and physical activity instructions who are considered overweight or obese.
- Education will be provided to all patients at the Cass County Health Clinics regarding obesity including information about proper diet and physical activity. BMIs will be taken on all patients including children.
- Education will be provided to children and their parents when the children come for school and sports physicals about the importance of a proper diet and physical activity. Information will include proper nutrition that includes at least five fruits and vegetables a day.
- Access to nutrition education will be available on computers in both health department offices for public use.
- Routine health screenings will be conducted at clinics, health fairs and other events throughout Cass County.
- The health department will work to implement employee wellness programs with employers in the county.

The Cass County Health Department and Cass County Health Clinics plan to fund these various intervention strategies with funds from the Local Health Protection Grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health,. This grant totals \$126,854, however obesity screening and education is just a small portion of the services provided through these grant funds. Our federally-

funded HRSA grant will also fund a portion of these intervention strategies through their work in primary care and health fairs.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this priority will include behavioral risk assessment surveys, vital statistics data, pre and posttests when applicable, and information gathered from health department program reports.

Board of Health Approval

The Cass County Board of Health unanimously approved the 2022 IPLAN at its regular Board of Health meeting on August 24, 2022. Please refer to Appendix C for the Board of Health IPLAN Approval Letter.

Appendix

[Appendix A: Cass County Health Department Organizational Chart](#)

[Appendix B: Cass County Community Needs Assessment Survey Results](#)

[Appendix C: Board of Health Approval Letter](#)

[Appendix D: List of Data Sources used in IPLAN Narrative](#)

