



Pioneering Healthier Communities: Re-shaping Policies

Does your organization utilize or benefit from data, partnerships, or strategies offered through the Health Improvement Plan of Washtenaw County (HIP) ? If so, those efforts can be featured in an upcoming edition of HIP Success Stories! See below for contact information.

What's HIP?

Since 1995, the Washtenaw County Public Health Department has led HIP, a countywide partnership whose purpose is to facilitate the design and implementation of community-based disease prevention and health protection strategies through local health assessment, data analyses, objective setting, coalition-building, and promotion of evidence-based strategies.

The 2005 HIP Survey was funded by:

- University of Michigan Health System
- Chelsea Community Hospital
- Saint Joseph Mercy Health System
- Pfizer, Inc.
- United Way of Washtenaw County
- Washtenaw County Public Health

To learn more about HIP, access HIP data electronically, or become a partner, please go to <http://hip.ewashtenaw.org>.



In July 2004, The YMCA of the USA (Y-USA), with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and corporate and foundation donors, launched Pioneering Healthier Communities (PHC), a multi-year initiative focusing on policy and environmental change in communities to promote healthy lifestyles. Nationally, 81 communities now participate and an additional 15 YMCAs' and their communities will be selected this year. In July 2008, the Ann Arbor YMCA was selected to lead a PHC initiative in Washtenaw County. A county-wide cross-sector team was formed to head up the local effort, in keeping with the initiative's

purpose of convening community leaders to address policies related to youth activity levels and nutrition.

PHC guiding principles include:

- Involving high-level community leaders at every step
- Engaging multiple sectors and diverse organizations
- Influencing policy and environmental changes that promote activity
- "Organically growing" local initiatives using strategies specific to the needs of each community
- YMCAs' serving as "conveners" in the community and co-leading with partners

Washtenaw County Risk Profile (2005 HIP Survey)

- 62% of Ypsilanti children engage in 60 minutes or more of moderate exercise 5 to 7 days a week, 26% less than children in Western Washtenaw County.
- 21% of Ypsilanti children are considered overweight or obese according to body mass index calculations.
- 15% of Ypsilanti children report spending about 3 hours a day watching TV and videos, or playing computer games.

From Assessment to Agreement

In 2008 the Washtenaw County PHC team conducted a county-wide "gap analysis" of youth physical activity opportunities and found gaps in Ypsilanti's recreation programs related to 2002 city funding losses. The team also examined local policies and found they could be adapted to increase opportunities for more physical activity. PHC members and community stakeholders then rallied for policy changes to pave the way for more local services.

As a result, in 2009 the Ypsilanti City Council and Ann Arbor YMCA entered into an agreement enabling the YMCA to offer youth physical activity programs on city park property. The YMCA also formed an agreement with some Ypsilanti schools to provide after-school youth programs.

“Pioneering” the Way to Better Health One Success at a Time

- The agreements PHC made with Ypsilanti partners are a good example of how shaping policies can increase access to healthy activities.
- During summer 2008, the YMCA provided 40 Ypsilanti youth with a one-week camp of active games and crafts. During summer 2009, an eight-week camp will be held in city parks with plans to reach 200 to 400 children.



- Successes:**
- Forming a positive partnership between the Ann Arbor YMCA, the Ypsilanti City Council, and Ypsilanti schools.

Challenges:

- The potential closing of community facilities related to economic difficulties in Ypsilanti.
- Navigating policies on recreational facility and activity scheduling.

Collaboration is Key

As the PHC initiative shows, cross-sector teamwork is important to any community health improvement initiative. PHC and/or YMCA partners now include:

- Ypsilanti City Council
- East and West Ypsilanti Middle Schools
- Washtenaw County Public Health
- Ypsilanti Area Community Fund

HIP Helps!

PHC translated HIP “Partnerships, Data, and Strategies” into successful programs and services. Here’s how HIP Helped:

- Through HIP, PHC connected with community leaders and stakeholders.
- 2005 HIP survey data on physical activity and related health indicators were used to write a strong justification for grant funding.
- HIP data, reports, and presentations on best practices supporting policy change were considered as PHC formulated its approach.

Selected 2020 HIP Objectives related to changing policy

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND POLICY

- Advocate for a statewide law requiring all public spaces to be smoke-free.
- Increase the proportion of residents with pedestrian sidewalks, paths, or trails in or near their neighborhoods from 78% to 86%.



Thanks!

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