Our mission is to improve health and quality of life throughout Jefferson County
Priorities in Jefferson County
How We Got Here

Our Vision for a Healthy Jefferson County

How We Move Forward: Strategic Issues

Healthy Lifestyles: Priority Health Concerns

Strategic Issue 1: How do we encourage healthy lifestyles?

Assessment Results: What influences how we encourage healthy lifestyles?

Goal 1 Prevent or manage chronic medical conditions

Goal 2 Decrease the number of children diagnosed as overweight or obese

Goal 3 Decrease abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

Goal 4 Develop targeted, unified messages for people to make healthy choices

Goal 5 Engage the community to identify and solve health problems

Goal 6 Decrease cultural, language, social and economic barriers that negatively impact community cohesiveness

Livable Communities for Community Health

Strategic Issue 2: How do we develop livable communities?

Assessment Results: What influences how we develop our communities?

Goal 1 Improve safety throughout communities

Goal 2 Improve environmental quality

Goal 3 Increase ways to be physically active in all new housing developments and shopping areas

Goal 4 Preserve and revitalize each neighborhood

Goal 5 Work toward a county development plan with participation from all cities

Goal 6 Support development of a viable and integrated mass transportation system

Health as a Real Option: Access to Care

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Assessment Results: What prevents access to care?

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Goal 2 Increase mental health resources throughout the community

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Community Health Status Assessment: Risk Factors, Quality of Life & Health Conditions
Health Action is a process conducted by a team of committed organizations seeking community input to improve health in Jefferson County, Alabama. Health Action uses a national public health model, Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) to determine community themes and strengths, forces of change, community health status and to assess the local public health system. The long range goal of Health Action is to better serve the people of Jefferson County by working with organizations that take action, make an impact, and work to improve health and quality of life throughout the county.

**Visioning**

As Jefferson County embarked on the path of improving health and quality of life, we began with developing vision statements that answer the following questions:

- What are important characteristics of a healthy community for all who live, work, and play here?
- How do you envision the local public health system in the next five or ten years?

Several key players in the public health system were involved in developing these vision statements. These statements set the course for the four MAPP assessments and furthered the need for partnership development.

**MAPP Assessments**

1. **Community Themes and Strengths**

This assessment documented the issues community members believed were having an impact on their health as well as community assets available to address health issues. The information was gathered through neighborhood asset mapping and 22 focus group sessions. This piece of the assessment demonstrates the value of community input. Throughout this document, you will see quotes from people who participated in these focus groups.

2. **Community Health Status**

This assessment compiles available data on risk factors, quality of life, and health conditions in the community. We gathered recent data relevant to over 200 indicators that demonstrate the health of our community. We continue to identify new sources of data as we engage additional partners.

3. **Forces of Change**

This assessment projects trends, events, and factors around us that will impact the health of the community. Each force of change presents unique threats and opportunities for our community. Volunteer working groups, representing various aspects of our local public health system, brainstormed these forces, threats and opportunities.
4. Local Public Health System Assessment

This assessment measures the capacity and performance of all the organizations and entities that contribute to the public’s health. Public health professionals and a wide array of system partners representing public and private organizations that actively participate and contribute to Jefferson County’s local public health system (LPHS) were involved in this assessment. The system was evaluated based on the ten Essential Public Health Services (shown right). These ten services were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials to provide a working definition of public health and a guiding framework for the responsibilities of local public health systems.

Over 100 public health system partners assembled at the McWane Science Center to vote on how the Jefferson County local public health system measures up to the National Public Health Performance Standards. These partners represented key players in public health, including emergency management, state and local health departments, school systems, universities, health care professionals, community and faith-based organizations, businesses, senior citizens organizations, city youth services, and local government officials such as a family court judge, mayor and fire chief.

Next Steps

Jefferson County is the first county in Alabama to complete an assessment of its local public health system. The assessment results indicate that Jefferson County has a solid public health infrastructure and is able to address the essential public health services. However, there are some gaps and several significant opportunities to improve performance of the essential services by Jefferson County’s public health system.

We will continue to engage partners in looking at data on community health status, forthcoming events that may affect the health of the public, and the local public health system as a whole. Partners have developed goals to be addressed in Our Community Roadmap to Health. An action-oriented community health improvement process cultivates community ownership of issues, solutions, and health outcomes. The ultimate goal of Health Action is to create sustained efforts in addressing health issues. Any agency, group, or citizen who has a stake in the health of the community is a potential partner, including governmental, public, private, non-profit, and voluntary agencies, as well as groups and individuals committed to the delivery of public health services. This is an ongoing process that determines priority community health needs, gathers scarce community resources, and creates action plans to improve the health of the community.

The Essential Public Health Services

1. Monitor health status to identify community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.
Our vision for the local public health system is a responsive, sustainable public health system that...functions through seamless public-private partnerships leveraging resources, educating the community, encouraging local ownership of local issues, and decreasing competitiveness between community agencies,...is positioned to proactively respond to identified community health needs through ongoing assessment, seeking new financial avenues, and evenly dividing resources to meet strategic goals, among all communities and residents, particularly children, the elderly and those at lower income levels.

“I dream about a youth camp for anybody to be able to come to from our community.”
Sayre resident
Our vision for community health is a Jefferson County where

...citizens consider themselves part of a cohesive regional community
  • working across political, jurisdictional, ethnic, and racial boundaries,
  • caring for those who are least able to afford and physically access quality health care.

...partnerships are based on the values of achieving a healthy community
  • through disseminating data,
  • celebrating success,
  • and holding each other accountable for the health of the community.

...community leaders understand and base decisions on the interrelationships of
  the environment, transportation, land use and public health.

...citizens utilize a reliable public transportation system, thereby improving
  • air quality,
  • access to jobs, health care, and recreational activities.

...effective preventive care and health education programs are innovatively delivered.

...community health is accomplished through partnerships that
  • raise awareness of resources and
  • increase access to quality, affordable, culturally competent, preventive, emergent, urgent, and ongoing health care.

...we empower our youth to make better health choices, thereby reducing
  • obesity,
  • substance abuse, and
  • unwanted pregnancies

...education is a priority and test results are improved to ensure that all children
  are equally educated.

...active living environments are safe and provide a greater opportunity for
  citizens to routinely engage in physical activity.

...economic development opportunities provide a high quality of life, a healthy
  place to live and work, and attract diverse citizenry.
Strategic Issues

“I think the most beneficial issue for a community forum is a pledge of non-partisanship. The people who are supposed to be dealing with these issues have other issues in front of them.”

58 year old male

How We Move Forward

A Summary

Our Community Roadmap to Health is written by the community of Jefferson County for the community. It is a blueprint for improving the health of all people in Jefferson County, Alabama. Without the input of hundreds of individuals and organizations, it would not be possible to have developed this plan or to implement the strategies put forth in the plan. It is up to you, the community leaders of Jefferson County, to pull together resources; to advocate for what is right and what is desperately needed by our neighbors; to motivate others to achieve optimum health; and to put teeth in the plans that will redesign Jefferson County to be a more beautiful and healthy place to live and work. It is up to all of us, each agency, organization, and corporation that plays a role in the fragmented system we call public health, to become more unified and function as a system so that we can achieve these goals together.

The following section of Our Community Roadmap to Health summarizes the input gathered in 2005 and 2006 across the community and across organizations that contribute to the public health system. The intent of this document is to succinctly present strategic issues that need to be addressed and goals and strategies to address them. A more in-depth document with the results of all of the four assessments is available to address all specific themes, concerns and issues.

Strategic issues are those fundamental policy choices or critical challenges that must be addressed for a community to achieve its vision. Strategic issues should reflect the results of all of the previous MAPP phases. Up to this point, the process has largely focused on developing a shared vision and identifying challenges and opportunities for improving community health. Strategic issues reveal what is truly important from the vast amount of information that was gathered in the four MAPP Assessments. Identifying strategic issues can be compared to pouring the assessment findings into a funnel – what emerges is a distilled mix of issues that demand attention.

— National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO).

The four strategic issues for Jefferson County encompass a variety of community themes and public health system concerns that were determined to be of utmost importance in order to improve the health of Jefferson County.

1. How do we encourage healthy lifestyles?

Relationship to Vision:

Results from Visioning meeting held January 2005.
2. How do we develop livable communities?
3. How do we affect public policy?
4. How do we assure access to care?

For each strategic issue, a chart summarizing the four assessment results is presented. Each Strategic Issue is in the form of a question and is “answered” by goals. These goals can be addressed using several strategies. The working groups chose the strategies listed to address each goal and the format in which each strategic issue will be presented. The diagram below illustrates the input involved in creating each strategic issue. The three working groups used the vision statement and the results of the four assessments to identify goals and corresponding strategies. Of the many strategies possible, the ones listed are considered to be priorities for addressing the major public health issues in our community.

**Framework for Assessment Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Themes &amp; Strengths:</th>
<th>Local Public Health System: Essential Public Health Services Results &amp; Recommendations</th>
<th>Community Health Status Indicators:</th>
<th>Forces of Change:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Results from 22 focus groups held March–July, 2005, with over 200 community participants.</td>
<td>Results from Health Action Working Conference held October 27–28, 2005, with 114 participants representing 62 organizations</td>
<td>Data available through various published reports, community databases, and other resources.</td>
<td>Results from three working groups consisting of public health system partners held in February 2006.</td>
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</table>

This document should be helpful to any group working to improve public health in Jefferson County. Our hope is that any organization already addressing a strategic issue will utilize the goals and strategies suggested here. This plan may be used to demonstrate the need for funding, to advocate for new or improved policies, and to incorporate into strategic plans.
Healthy Lifestyles: Priority Health Conditions

How do we encourage healthy lifestyles?

Healthy lifestyles improve quality of life and prevent a variety of diseases. It is up to each of us to choose to live healthy. We make these decisions several times every day – what we eat, whether we take the stairs or the elevator, whether we choose to smoke or use other substances. Sometimes these decisions are out of our control, and we need to advocate for the decision-makers to provide healthier options for us. This is true for cafeterias that provide lunches to our children, restaurants that permit smoking at the next table, and shopping centers developed without sidewalks.

In our focus groups and from community leaders across Jefferson County, the message heard loud and clear is that living healthier is important, but barriers to working together toward healthy decisions must be removed. The six goals presented in this section are of utmost importance to the citizens of Jefferson County. By working in unison, we can achieve these goals. Several “Action Ideas” to achieve each goal are presented. Look carefully to see what you or your organization can do to encourage healthy lifestyles in our community.

Relationship to Vision:
A Jefferson County where
...we empower our youth to make better choices, thereby reducing obesity, substance abuse, and unwanted pregnancies.
...education is a priority and test standards are improved to ensure that all children are equally educated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results from Community Themes &amp; Strengths Assessment:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Chronic pervasive conditions: obesity, Alzheimer's cancer, arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, allergies, hypertension</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Personal choices: nutrition, physical activity, STDs, substance abuse, family abuse, litter</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of available dental insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Absence and inadequacy of health insurance plans</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Rise in prescription costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of transportation</td>
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<td>• Language barriers</td>
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<tr>
<th>Local Public Health System: Results &amp; Recommendations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential Public Health Service #3: Give people information they need to make healthy choices. Partially Met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop targeted messages</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coordinate lifestyle messages</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Training &amp; resource website</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Town hall meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Agree on recommendations</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Results from Community Health Status Indicators Assessment:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 10.8% uninsured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Behavioral risk factors: alcohol, substance use, nutrition, physical activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Socioeconomic factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educational attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crime rates: domestic violence, elder abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Air quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Water quality</td>
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<tr>
<th>Results from Forces of Change Assessment:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increasing obesity and eating disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of effective mass transportation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Methamphetamine crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of adolescent health initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of elder initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Water pollution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increasing air pollution and ground-level ozone formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assure quality and safety of prepared food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What influences how we encourage healthy lifestyles?
Goal 1

Prevent or manage chronic medical conditions

"Thanks to screenings at health fairs, we can identify if someone has diabetes, hypertension, and other diseases you did not even know you have. The resources are available for Hispanics, but there are not enough."

Health fair volunteer in Hoover

**ACTION IDEAS**

- Create a media campaign modeling healthy lifestyle behavior changes
- Increase effective primary prevention efforts to decrease the number of persons with chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, exacerbation of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and obesity
- Increase the number of preventive screenings and early detection, such as mammograms and Pap smears
- Encourage neighborhoods to establish and promote community walking programs (e.g., faith-based wellness and exercise programs, neighborhood support groups)
- Facilitate access to nutritious foods (e.g., community gardens, incentives for community farmer’s market extensions, grocery stores in neighborhoods)
- Train patients to control the progression of chronic disease through proven self-management methods

*Seven Leading Causes of Chronic Disease Death
Jefferson County, Alabama, 2004*

* Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases
**Goal 2**

Decrease the number of children diagnosed as overweight or obese

“[Kids] are not getting enough exercise—PE used to be mandatory, but now they get out of it and sit and play games and watch TV.”
Clay resident

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**ACTION IDEAS**

At school
- Align schools with the model policies of the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity
- Assure that state mandates for health education are adequately met for every school
- Increase healthy vending choices at school (e.g., water, 100% fruit juice, milk)
- Improve school lunch programs (e.g., fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains)
- Increase physical activity opportunities during school through structured physical education classes and recess

Through parents:
- Include healthy dinner ideas on the school lunch menus sent home to parents
- Involve parents in advocating for healthier options at school
- Provide information to parents on ways to prevent childhood obesity

Other:
- Support the Parks and Recreation Board in increasing programs encouraging physical activity after school and during the summer
- Support physicians and other providers in efforts to prevent childhood obesity
- Convene a “best practices” conference on childhood nutrition and physical activity
Strategic Issue 1

Goal 3
Decrease abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs

**ACTION IDEAS**

- Support substance abuse education in the school setting
- Educate the community on the effects and addictive nature of substance abuse
- Encourage health care providers to use every opportunity to emphasize prevention
- Provide all prevention and awareness activities in a culturally competent manner

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**Did You Know?**

- There were 2,710 arrests for drug possession in Jefferson County in 2004, 188 of whom were juveniles under the age of 18.
- 12.1% of adult Jefferson County residents engage in binge drinking (consuming 5 or more drinks on one occasion in the past month).
- Nearly one-third (30.9%) of high school students in Alabama used alcohol for the first time before the age of 13.

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* Used one time or more during lifetime
** CDC, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance-United States, 2005
**A C T I O N  I D E A S**

- Use proven marketing strategies to encourage people to practice healthy lifestyles
- Expand existing radio programs and public service announcements focusing on health care issues (e.g., Take Charge of Your Health Jefferson County and Bodylove, the soap opera with health messages targeting African-Americans)
- Implement consistent school-based health programs throughout the county
- Provide prevention and awareness activities in a culturally competent manner

“I don’t think our kids in schools are getting enough health information. I think they’re omitting health because they tie health and physical education together. So the information isn’t getting to the kids.”

58 year old female

James A. McCarty, Jr.
stars in Bodylove as Saul Baxter, teenage son of Vanessa Love.
Goal 5

Engage the community to identify and solve health problems

ACTION IDEAS

- Develop relationships within the community and establish resources to assist with identifying and solving health problems (e.g., faith-based wellness programs, School Health Index)
- Create a community outreach campaign using specific healthy lifestyle behavior changes (e.g., proper nutrition, exercise, stress relief)
- Distribute a newsletter, based on the outreach campaign, to each community through local, city and county offices.
- Increase community participation in healthy events (e.g., Relay for Life, Five a Day)

“The ball parks are where the community gets together...it seems to be a family activity. Dad can go back and relive his glory days with them!”
Bessemer resident

The Five A Day chef demonstrated new and delicious ways to prepare fruits and vegetables.
The Bessemer community came out to enjoy healthy food and fun activities.
**A C T I O N  I D E A S**

- Assure interpretation services in all aspects of the community
- Assure that the dissemination of health information and education is conducted in a culturally competent manner
- Increase the diversity of community health volunteers
- Expand the Community Health Advisor training program
- Support the Cultural Alliance Master Plan, specifically in the goals of Cultural Economic Development and Neighborhood and Community Cultural Development

“Hoover has a strong population—we have a Mexican church that shares facilities with us right here, but there is no blending. Something needs to be done to integrate cultures and celebrate the differences ...maybe regular cultural events.”

Hoover resident

**Goal 6**

**Decrease cultural, language, social and economic barriers that negatively impact community cohesiveness**
Livable Communities for Community Health

How do we develop livable communities?

Livable communities can mean different things to different people. In Jefferson County, Alabama, we are looking for two basic characteristics for our neighborhoods, shopping centers, and work places: a safe and clean environment. We desire safe places to live and rear our children. That will require revitalizing some neighborhoods. As our community continues to grow in leaps and bounds, we are concerned about safe and clean places to walk, ride bicycles, and play. This takes a lot of planning and foresight when beginning new development projects. Our county has come a long way in cleaning up the environment; however, our citizens continue to put trash on the roadways. In order to develop livable communities, first we need to take pride in our community.

The six goals presented in this section represent a clear desire for Jefferson County to ensure safe and clean environments at home, work, and play. Livable communities is the central idea in providing these environments. Transportation is a major need for individuals across the county. We support developing an improved public transportation system and looking for innovative ways to help improve access to services. By supporting community development plans across the county and by working together, we can achieve these goals. Several “Action Ideas” to achieve each goal are presented on the following pages. Look carefully to see what you or your organization can do to encourage livable communities.

Relationship to Vision:
A Jefferson County where
...active living environments provide a sense of safety and greater opportunity for citizens to routinely engage in physical activity
...economic development opportunities that provide a high quality of life, a healthy place to live and work, and attract diverse citizenry
### Results from Community Themes & Strengths Assessment:

- Community togetherness has dissolved over time
- Lack of parental involvement with their children
- Growth and diversity throughout the county
- Lack of safety and police presence; increased crime and domestic violence
- Litter, illegal dumping, and abandoned properties
- Poor air quality and lack of mass transportation
- Need for sidewalks
- Issue of train tracks in communities
- Issues of flooding, pests, and animal control

### Local Public Health System: Results & Recommendations

**Essential Public Health Service #5:** Develop public health policy and plans. *Substantially Met.*
- Involve stakeholders and community in development of policies to increase funding
- Use marketing strategies to solicit stakeholder involvement
- Define benefits for uninvolved partners

**Essential Public Health Service #3:** Give people information they need to make healthy choices. *Partially Met.*
- Develop targeted messages
- Coordinate/unify lifestyle messages
- Hold town hall meetings/forums for community input
- Agree on recommendations

**Essential Public Health Service #4:** Engage the community to identify and solve health problems. *Partially Met.*
- Eliminate turf battles
- Establish broad-based community input

### Results from Community Health Status Indicators Assessment:

- Satisfaction with quality of life
- Percent of residents planning to stay in community
- Land use: number of community parks, mixed use developments, and walkable communities
- Public transportation
- Crime rates: neighborhood crime watch areas
- Air and water quality; tobacco free zones

### Results from Forces of Change Assessment:

- Public housing decline
- Increase in violence/crime rate
- Lack of effective mass transportation system
- Decreasing quality of schools
- Growth of new communities
- Shift from industrial to technical
- Multicultural neighborhoods
- Multiple jurisdictions
- Natural disasters
- Increase in transportation fatalities
Strategic Issue 2

Goal 1

Improve safety throughout communities

“IT’S NOT SAFE TO GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY—THERE ARE DRIVE-BY SHOOTINGS, FIGHTING IN THE STREETS, AND COMMUNITY PARKS ARE RUN DOWN.”
25 year old female

ACTION IDEAS

- Support collaborative efforts between existing and emerging health and safety groups
- Ensure that health and safety factors are considered in community design
- Build safe sidewalks in high traffic areas
- Provide adequate lighting in neighborhoods and on main roads
- Increase the number of neighborhood watch groups
- Increase community education about traffic safety, alcohol and drugs (e.g., Alabama Department of Public Safety’s Public Information/Education Unit)

Did You Know?*

- 7.8% of adults in Alabama rarely or never use seatbelts
- 14.2% of youth (grades 9-12) in Alabama rarely or never use seatbelts
- In 2005, there were 4,998 reports of domestic violence in Jefferson County
- In 2005, the Department of Human Resources confirmed reports of abuse or neglect of 1,156 children in Jefferson County
- In 2005, there were 331 homicides in Alabama, 143 (43%) of which occurred in Jefferson County

* See references page vii
**ACTION IDEAS**

- Improve enforcement of air and water quality mandates
- Utilize environmental courts to address health hazards in the community in a timely manner (e.g., illegal dumping, vacant lots, abandoned houses)
- Reduce litter on major roadways and in neighborhoods
- Reduce environmental hazards in the community

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The Jefferson County 2006 Litter Survey found an average of 117 pounds of litter per mile on county highways.

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“I saw a boy yesterday break a bottle. Now I have to clean it up, but if you tell on them, they may tear down a bush.”
Jefferson County resident

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**Goal 2**

**Improve environmental quality**
Goal 3

Increase ways to be physically active in all new housing developments and shopping areas.

“Parks should be around every community and we need sidewalks!”

Nursing Student

ACTION IDEAS

• Establish safe, clean walking and bike trails
• Locate new schools within the community to promote walking to school
• Encourage local governments to mandate creative development such as pocket parks
• Revise existing codes and ordinances to support livable communities
• Develop neighborhood planning and zoning groups to solicit community input for all new development projects
• Mobilize the community and media to hold policy leaders and developers accountable for the inclusion of livable communities concepts throughout the county
**ACTION IDEAS**

- Encourage community pride
- Work with neighborhoods to decrease litter and illegal dumping
- Use city, county, state and federal incentives to retrofit older neighborhoods according to livable communities criteria
- Promote ecoscape development through assistance of the Southern Environmental Center

“That is one of the most filthy looking intersections in this whole county. If you pull up to this intersection - full of cans, bottles, glass, and paper--what impression are you going to get of this area? It’s not a place you want to live.”

*Pleasant Grove church member*

“Revitalizing neighborhoods, one garden at a time.”

*The EcoScape Program at Birmingham Southern College will assist neighborhoods with ecoscape development.*
Strategic Issue 2

Goal 5

Work toward a county development plan with participation from all cities

ACTION IDEAS

- Promote the inclusion in the county development plan of “complete streets,” designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street
- Develop a Smart Track for quicker approval of a plan if developed according to livable communities criteria
- Market Livable Communities concepts to policy makers and the public
- Support the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham in developing a master plan

“I notice urban sprawl in our community, which in some ways is good. There’ve been more businesses moving in, which brings more traffic. The thing that concerns me is I don’t think we’re using livable communities.” Bessemer parent of two

Plans for mixed-use development in Jefferson County.
A C T I O N  I D E A S

- Support the Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority on the 2005-2015 Development Plan
- Partner with the Alabama Department of Transportation to improve roadway safety
- Consult the America Public Transportation Association for technical assistance
- Support municipalities working together to form a unified public transportation system
- Propose a feasibility study for privatization of the mass transportation system

“There is not enough public transportation. We have a program to help abused women and we know it is difficult for them to come to us, so we go to them.” Community volunteer and mother of four
Health as a Real Option

How do we assure access to care?

Access to care includes a wide spectrum of concerns and it may be overwhelming to look at it all at once. Here we present four goals designed to tackle this immense issue. It is feasible to have every child in our county on health insurance, yet not all children are insured. This must be our first priority to protect the fragile lives of our children. We are also obligated to care for those who cannot care for themselves due to mental illnesses and the resources are inadequate for meeting the needs of those who require help.

The last two goals address problems facing all of us in accessing preventive and primary health care services. Due to the lack of health insurance, too many people access primary care through the emergency room and this raises all of our health care costs. Once our citizens are physically at a clinic, the services may still not be fully “accessible” to them. We have come a long way in training the public health workforce on cultural competency, emergency preparedness, and resource referral, yet there are still major gaps in these areas.

Several “Action Ideas” to achieve each goal are presented on the following pages. Look carefully to see what you or your organization can do to assure access to care across Jefferson County.

Relationship to Vision:

A Jefferson County where
...effective preventive care and health education programs are innovatively delivered.
...community health is accomplished through partnerships that raise awareness of resources and increase access to quality, affordable, culturally competent, preventive, emergent, urgent, and ongoing health care.
### Results from Community Themes & Strengths Assessment:

- Multiple competent medical facilities and other health resources available, but community is not aware they exist
- Lack of available dental insurance
- Absence and inadequacy of health insurance plans
- Rise in prescription costs
- Inefficient and costly use of emergency services
- Lack of transportation
- Language barriers

### Local Public Health System: Results & Recommendations

**Essential Public Health Service #7: Help people receive health services.** *Substantially Met.*
- Develop integrated public transportation systems
- Provide adult dental health care
- Improve mental health system
- Develop interpreter certification

**Essential Public Health Service #8: Maintain a competent workforce.** *Partially Met.*
- Develop workforce training institute
- Provide funding and social support for training
- Develop leadership skills in management personnel

### Results from Community Health Status Indicators Assessment:

- 10.8% uninsured
- 46.2 Medicaid eligibles per physician
- 5,320 licensed hospital beds
- Preventable death, illness and injury
- Vaccine preventable diseases
- Preventable communicable diseases

### Results from Forces of Change Assessment:

- Lack of/insufficient medical insurance
- Lack of effective transportation systems
- Inadequate funding for mental health
- Lack of adolescent and elder health initiatives
- Increased presence of UAB
- Improved medical technology
- Medicare D Prescription Drug Plan
- State Constitution and tax on prescriptions
- Natural disasters
- Epipemics and pandemics
- Chemical spills

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**What prevents access to care?**

- Multiple competent medical facilities and other health resources available, but community is not aware they exist
- Lack of available dental insurance
- Absence and inadequacy of health insurance plans
- Rise in prescription costs
- Inefficient and costly use of emergency services
- Lack of transportation
- Language barriers
Goal 1

Link all children to appropriate health insurance coverage

“My kids are part of the All Kids program and I have been very impressed with it.”
Father of two

ACTION IDEAS

- Increase utilization of online applications for health insurance (e.g., ALLKids, Medicaid, Child Caring Foundation)
- Provide online access and support of the insurance application process through local community resources (e.g., public libraries, community schools, faith-based organizations)
- Improve adherence to insurance payments by working on financial planning skills with parent or guardian
- Remove the stigma associated with low-income insurance programs
- Seek future funding for the sustainability of the Jefferson County Coalition for Covering Alabama Kids and Families
**ACTION IDEAS**

- Increase awareness of how daily activities influence mental health (e.g., physical activity, stress)
- Increase use of employee assistance programs to address mental health and addictive disorders
- Work with mental health systems to assure quality care and services (e.g., Western Mental Health Center, Jefferson-Blount-Shelby Mental Health Authority, Eastside Mental Health Center)
- Increase the number of mental health providers in Jefferson County through incentive programs
- Increase resources for mental health for school-aged children through existing or potential programs (e.g., Children’s Policy Council School Health Network, Columbia University’s Teen Screen, The Jason Foundation)
- Increase the number of social workers in the school systems through policy development and funding
- Support and advertise available community programs that focus on mental health and addictive disorders
- Support efforts for increasing mental health benefits covered through health insurance plans offered in Alabama
- Expand revenue for community services to reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs (e.g., a tobacco tax)
- Expand outreach to homeless, incarcerated and institutionalized persons that normally would not have access to these services

**Did You Know?**

The suicide rate* by race and gender in Jefferson County:

- White males 27.2
- White females 6.8
- Black males 10.9
- Black females 0.7

*Three-year age-adjusted average rate 2001 - 2003

“We see a high incidence of depression in teenagers, there were two suicides at [our] high school this year and a lot of times we’re not recognizing it. We also see eating disorders in children--obesity, anorexia, and bulimia.”

Mountain Brook resident
Goal 3

Increase the availability & access to services for targeted populations

ACTION IDEAS

- Increase the number of children receiving screenings (e.g., EPDST, Denver Developmental and the pre-school health screening pilot project through Children’s Policy Council (CPC) Early Childcare and Education Committee)
- Seek funding for the expansion of existing part-time clinics using income adjusted payment methods and volunteer medical staff (M-Power Ministries, Birmingham Health Care, etc.)
- Increase access to primary care services through nurse practitioners and physician assistants
- Raise awareness of available adult services and health insurance
- Share referral resource information throughout the community
- Engage local volunteer organizations to help with the benefit application process
- Host a collaboration of agencies to serve as resources for self-sufficiency promotion (e.g., Summit One)

Did You Know?

- Jefferson County has 467 dentists and 1,312 primary care physicians (e.g., internists, gynecologists)
- For each of the 2,585 doctors who serve Medicaid recipients, there are only 46 eligible patients.
- Only 105 dentists agree to serve Medicaid recipients for a ratio of 1,004 patients per provider.

“There are lots of stumbling blocks that prohibit people from getting help—adult literacy, complicated phone systems at companies, people who don’t know how to communicate—we’re not addressing basic issues to show people how to be more stable and self-sufficient.”
39 year old female
**ACTION IDEAS**

- Implement a cultural competency plan that includes minimum standards and ongoing cultural competency training for public health workforce
- Develop interpreter certification programs to improve effectiveness of services and public health programs
- Increase emergency preparedness skills throughout the public health workforce
- Share referral resource information throughout the workforce

“Local universities and health care organizations are working together to train professional interpreters.”

*Community leader*
“We need to be more involved in community government. ...we have voting power on the local level ...if we try, we can make a change.”
Mt. Olive residents

Setting the Course for Action

How do we affect public policy?

In order for the local public health system to meet many of the goals discussed in this document, we must act as advocates for public policy change. This strategic issue has four goals which appear simple, but in fact are somewhat lofty. First, the local public health system must agree on a set of basic goals for Jefferson County. Second, the community’s voice must be reflected in every decision. Policies must be adopted that incorporate both the community vision and appropriate levels of funding. Too often, policies are adopted without a level of funding necessary to implement change. Third, our policy leaders must be engaged in efforts to better understand how healthy lifestyles impact every segment of the lives of Jefferson County residents. Last, to improve our message to policy leaders and the community at large, the public health system must come together in making data more accessible and understandable to community leaders. Several “Action Ideas” to achieve each goal are presented. Look carefully to see what you or your organization can do to affect public health policy.

Relationship to Vision:
A Jefferson County where
...community leaders understand and base decisions on the interrelationships of the environment, transportation, land use and public health.
...citizens utilize a reliable public transportation system, thereby improving air quality, access to jobs, health care, and recreational activities.
### Results from Community Themes & Strengths Assessment:

- **Transportation:** lack of access, traffic congestion, road quality, pollution, need for sidewalks
- **Environment:** Air and water quality, recycling, litter and illegal dumping
- **Community:** lack of cohesiveness, neighborhood pride, police presence, safety, recreational activities, youth programs

### Local Public Health System: Results & Recommendations

**Essential Public Health Service #4:** Engage the community to identify and solve health problems.  
*Partially Met.*
- Eliminate turf battles for dollars
- Go to constituents for input and coordination

**Essential Public Health Service #5:** Develop public health policy and plans.  
*Substantially Met.*
- Collaboration for policy making
- Board of Health self-evaluation
- Involve stakeholders and community in development of public health policies to increase funding
- Include public relations to solicit stakeholder involvement

**Essential Public Health Service #2:** Protect people from health problems and health hazards.  
*Fully Met.*
- Enforce laws requiring reporting of notifiable diseases
- Inform public that health data is available and easily accessible

### Results from Community Health Status Indicators Assessment:

- **Number of grassroots groups active at neighborhood level**
- **Number of advocacy groups active at community level**
- **76% of registered voters voted in 2004**
- **5.5% of housing units are subsidized (17% in some areas)**
- **PTA has 28,000 members in Jefferson County**
- **Obesity rate**
- **Crime rates (e.g., domestic violence, elder abuse)**
- **Mental health data**
- **Air and water quality data**
- **Number of youth involved in after school activities**

### Results from Forces of Change Assessment:

- Multiple jurisdictions
- Negative attitudes towards politics
- Economic development
- Public housing decline
- Increased violence and crime rate
- Increasing obesity rate
- Decreasing quality of schools
- Growth of suburban communities
- Downtown condo development
- Lack of adolescent and elder health initiatives
- Lack of effective mass transportation system

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**What challenges do we face in affecting public policy?**
**Goal 1**

**Encourage and support collaboration among public health system partners**

"We need to convene an annual symposium on public health research in Jefferson County focusing on the 10 Essential Public Health Services.”
Participant, Health Action Working Conference

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**ACTION IDEAS**

- Increase involvement of elected officials in public health system partner meetings
- Improve network with local agencies to achieve common goals
- Increase the involvement of faith-based and grassroots organizations to the public health system

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Display promoting collaboration of public health partners, used at a Health Ministry conference in 2002.
**Goal 2**

**Involve the community, including special populations, in policy development to increase funding for policy implementation**

**ACTION IDEAS**

- Increase diversity in the representation of organizations at consumer and organizational levels
- Improve community involvement in all stages of policy development, implementation and evaluation
- Engage media in soliciting ongoing stakeholder involvement
- Provide regular opportunities for public health professionals and the community at large to discuss current policies (e.g., Lunch and Learn, public forums, town hall meetings)
- Conduct all public health system activities in a manner sensitive to the needs of special populations

“We need collaboration and communication between agencies for policy making regarding public health impact.”
*Participant, Health Action Working Conference*

“Community leaders need to be more involved to keep us informed.”
*24 year old female*
Goal 3

Engage policy leaders in all efforts to increase healthy lifestyles as a priority public health issue

“...We’d like to have politicians, doctors, and policemen at community meetings so we can tell them our problems—the mayor, council members, someone from ambulance services.”
  Mt. Olive resident

ACTION IDEAS

• Establish a line of communication via key personnel
• Keep policy leaders abreast of current issues and statistics
• Include policy leaders in all efforts to encourage healthy lifestyles
• Encourage policy leaders to support education and management that reflects current trends

Mayor Kincaid and Piggly Wiggly promote healthy living at a Five A Day event in the Five Points West Community on September 27, 2003, at Fair Park Arena.
ACTION IDEAS

- Increase coordination among public health partners
- Support and participate in the development of the Alabama Resource Management system (ARMS) that will coordinate information sharing and communication through interactive website
- Create a shared system for disseminating data

“The CDC in October 2005 established the National Center for Public Health Informatics (NCPHI) to more effectively approach bioterrorism and global pandemics and to raise awareness of and funding for public health informatics. Thomas Savel, M.D., medical officer in the Office of the Director at NCPHI, says most states will need complex database systems to synthesize and use information from multiple, disparate sources.”
Hayes, Government Health IT, 10/9/06
“Ever since I was little, there was nothing to do except the skating rink and now it’s closed.”

Gardendale resident

Bill Allen
Jefferson County Department of Health

Connie Arnwine
Jefferson County Department of Health

LaMonte Augustus
Jefferson County Department of Health

Audrey Austin
American Heart Association

Stephanie Ayers-Millsap
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Catholic Diocese of Birmingham

Rafael Coplin
Cooper Green Hospital

Susan Cotten
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Diane Dafron
Children’s Aid Society

Doris Cunningham
Jefferson County Department of Health

Margie Curry
Childcare Resources

Clarice Davis
Jefferson County Department of Health

Milton Davis
BE&K Construction
Community Partners in Health Action
"One day we went to the park and the swings were gone. My baby is four and she said 'This ain't no park! What's a park without swings?'"

_— Birmingham mother_
Candy Palmer  
UAB Early Headstart

Martha Parker  
Jefferson County Schools

Frank Phillips  
Jefferson County Department of Health

Ursula Phoenix Wier  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Yolanda Reese  
JCCEO Head Start

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Edwina Taylor  
Cahaba Valley Health Care

Juanita Tetraud  
Magic City Harvest

Cory Thomas  
March of Dimes

Gloria Thomas  
Jefferson County Department of Health

Teresa Thorne  
City Action Partnership

Linda Torres  
Jefferson County Department of Health
“We don’t get to the kids young enough. That’s where we’ve got to start. These kids need the information... they’re grasping for information.”

Physical therapy student

Gregory Townsend
Jefferson County Department of Health

Sarah Tyree
Jefferson County Department of Health

Oliver P. Walker
Jefferson County Home-Ketona

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Charlene Young
Hoover City Schools

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Clay Senior Citizen’s Center

Summit Housing Complex
Sayre Revitalization Community Center

Sardis Baptist Church-Fairview
Korean Church Group

World of Opportunity
Sandusky United Methodist Church

Bessemer Parent Involvement Group
Lorna Road Apartments

Morris Retirement Center
Junior League of Birmingham

St. Peter’s Catholic Church
Concord Elementary School

Garywood Assembly of God Church
Mt.Olive Community Group

Project SAFE
Dolomite Life Center

Metropolitan Church of God
Lawson State Community College

Fultondale Municipal Building
North Birmingham Library
Strategic Issue 1: How do we encourage healthy lifestyles?

Goal 1 Jefferson County Department of Health

Goal 2 Jefferson County Department of Health


Strategic Issue 2: How do we develop livable communities communities?


Jefferson County Medical Examiner/Coroner’s Office, 2005.


Strategic Issue 3: How do we assure access to care?


Goal 2 Jefferson County Department of Health


Goal 3 Alabama Medicaid Agency.

Alabama State Dental Director.
Leadership is the essential ingredient if we expect to catalyze involvement of others in this community vision for a healthy Jefferson County. Let’s all be a part of it!

Michael E. Fleenor, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer, Jefferson County Department of Health

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