



## For Immediate Release

**Date:** June 2, 2016

**Contact:** Mary Michaels, Sioux Falls Health Department  
605-367-8286 or 605-376-2852

# Obesity, Behavioral Health, and Access to Care Identified as Top Health Issues for Sioux Falls

**Sioux Falls, South Dakota:** Obesity, including poor nutrition and lack of physical activity, behavioral health and substance use, and access to health services top the list of health issues facing the Sioux Falls area, according to a report released today by the Sioux Falls Health Department, Avera McKennan Hospital & University Health Center, Avera Heart Hospital, and Sanford USD Medical Center.

The partners presented findings from a collaborative Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), a process that assists community leaders in understanding the health status of the area, which includes the Sioux Falls Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of Minnehaha, Lincoln, Turner, and McCook Counties.

“Previously, the Health Department and the two major health systems had completed separate assessments,” said Jill Franken, Public Health Director for the City of Sioux Falls. “What made this current project so exciting is that we partnered with the health systems and other community organizations to ensure we have one comprehensive look at the health of residents in our area.”

The health systems need to complete this type of assessment every three years, a requirement established in the Affordable Care Act, according to Dr. David Kapaska, Regional President and CEO of Avera McKennan Hospital & University Health Center.

“On the national level, the expectation for hospitals to play an active role in the overall health of their communities has become an even higher priority,” said Dr. Kapaska. “As health care providers, the Avera Health system and the Sanford Health system are committed to providing the highest quality of care for our patients.”

Paul Hanson, Executive Vice President for Sanford Health, agrees on the benefit of this collaborative process.

“We see great value in coming together with Avera and with the Sioux Falls Health Department, through its Live Well Sioux Falls initiative, to learn more about our community and to work together to improve the health and well-being of our residents,” said Hanson.

The assessment included several components, beginning with a random sample resident survey, followed by focus groups and a series of discussions with representatives from work sites, health care, education, government, and other community organizations.

Some notable findings include:

- Sioux Falls still ranks near the bottom in the nation for fruit and vegetable consumption. Only 8.1 percent of residents consume four or five vegetables per day, and only 6.1 percent consume four or five servings of fruit per day.
- Two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese, based on body mass index (BMI).
- More than 20 percent of adults in the Sioux Falls MSA had not engaged in any type of physical activity during the past 30 days.
- The level of binge drinking in the Sioux Falls MSA has increased slightly from 2010, rising from 19 percent to 20.3 percent.
- Nearly one-third of residents have been diagnosed with a mental health issue, such as depression or anxiety, and many report experiencing “poor mental health days” ranging from 1 to 30 days out of a month.
- In the area of access to health services, nearly 10 percent of residents reported unmet medical needs, and 30 percent reported unmet mental health needs.
- The most often cited gap in access to care is the “hand-off,” a term coined by focus group participants that refers to ensuring individuals stay connected across the continuum of service delivery.

While the CHNA partners will each develop unique strategies to improve health in the Sioux Falls area, they also identified the following efforts that community partners can collaboratively undertake to address the identified priority health needs:

- *Community-based Behavioral Health Strategies:* Support efforts to address behavioral health needs, including access to behavioral health services, referrals to behavioral health services, coordination of care, and public education and awareness about mental health.
- *Hayward THRIVE:* Implement a pilot project to address social determinants of health in the Hayward neighborhood of Sioux Falls. This includes developing strategies in such areas as obesity, access to care, the built environment, behavioral health, and engaging neighborhood residents to address community health. If successful, this pilot could serve as an approach to addressing health needs in other Sioux Falls neighborhoods.
- *Sioux Empire Network of Care:* Support development of a coordinated social service system through a community collaboration.

A copy of this report and related resources, as well as information about implementation of strategies, will be available at [www.livewellsiouxfalls.org](http://www.livewellsiouxfalls.org), [www.avera.org](http://www.avera.org), and [www.sanfordhealth.org](http://www.sanfordhealth.org).

“This was a thorough and worthwhile process,” said Franken. “We are truly grateful for the many community members who worked together on collecting this data, and we look forward to working with them to develop effective and appropriate strategies to create a healthier place to live, work, learn, and play.”

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