

Plan4Health: Umatilla County Plan4Health Initiative

SUMMARY

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by American Planning Association (APA) chapters and American Public Health Association (APHA) affiliates, Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. The Umatilla County Plan4Health Coalition aims to build a county-based network of partners responsible for making policy, systems, and environmental changes and incorporating strategies to promote healthy lifestyles in rural Oregon.



CHALLENGE

Umatilla County ranks 26th out of 34 counties in Oregon in health outcomes and 31st in both quality of life and health behaviors. Umatilla County has high rates of obesity (33 percent) and low rates of adults who reported participating in physical activities (24 percent). Only 65 percent of residents report having access to exercise opportunities, which is well below the state and national rates. These indicators are worse for Latino/Hispanic residents,

where nearly 76 percent reported being overweight or obese. Umatilla County has the highest childhood obesity rate in the state. Children in Umatilla County also reported high rates of screen time and soda consumption as well as low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption. Only 18.7 percent of children consumed the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Umatilla residents can stay engaged and up-to-date with coalition news and events by visiting the coalition on Facebook or Twitter

@UCoPlan4Health or visiting their website at <http://www.ucoplan4health.wixsite.com/ucoplan4health>

To learn more about the Umatilla County Plan4Health Initiative and all coalitions participating in Plan4Health, check out the project website (www.plan4health.us). Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following

"Focus group participants pointed out that in Umatilla County, 'It's just so easy to drive.' This shed a lot of light on the infrastructure of our community and the nature of rural communities that are designed around cars rather than people. The UCo Plan4Health Initiative will be working to make the transition so rather than driving being the easy choice, the healthy choice will be the easy choice."

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SOLUTION

The Umatilla County Plan4Health Initiative will expand membership by building partnerships to increase physical activity and access to healthy food. The coalition will conduct a community needs and readiness assessment to inform the selection of project strategies. When ready, the selected strategies will be implemented and evaluated to determine the impact on the community. The coalition will focus on ensuring adequate resources, deploying media to provide policy education, collecting baseline data, and working to address and reduce identified barriers.

RESULTS

Umatilla County departments of Public Health and Planning partnered to form the Umatilla County Plan4Health Coalition. To date, 25 organizations and individuals have joined the coalition. The Coalition hired the University of Oregon's Community Service Center in June, 2016 to conduct a Community Needs and Readiness Assessment (CNRA) which has provided the coalition with a deeper understanding of the perceptions and barriers around accessing healthy food and physical activity in Umatilla County. The assessment consisted of a random sample mail-home survey, four focus groups, six outreach events and nine stakeholder interviews.

On September 21st, Coalition and community members gathered for a half-day workshop to discuss the preliminary results of the assessment, PSE implementation strategies to pursue moving forward, as well as the focus, structure, and organization of the coalition. The workshop focused on seven areas of importance as determined by the survey: infrastructure, physical access- food & physical activity, economic access, safety & comfort, information availability & communication, underlying conditions & systems, and key issues for the Plan4Health Coalition. Through facilitated discussion and breakout groups the participants were able to utilize the survey results and understand their implications for the community and identify tools to address the issues at hand.

During a group brainstorming session, the Coalition developed a long list of strategies to pursue. Although there was a long list of possibilities identified, the group identified three topics which had the greatest interest and by the end of the workshop, participants had developed three project work plans for three distinct projects. The three projects cover active transportation and transit, food access, and school-based health issues. Each participant and group took responsibility for completing some portion of the work plan over the coming months in order to ensure progress is made. Over the coming months the subcommittees will:

1. Work to host a "10 Minutes to Transit" summit, to highlight the existing free transit system and locations that can be accessed within a 10-minute walk of transit stops.
2. Coordinate to bring more educational programming around nutrition into the schools of an underserved area in our North County, Milton-Freewater
3. Take the first steps towards initiating a food waste recovery/gleaning program to ensure that locally grown produce is staying local to feed community members in need

In addition, the statewide chapters of the Oregon Public Health Association and the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association have made the commitment to include multiple sessions about the project at their annual statewide conferences being held in October.