October 2013 Issue

Welcome to NACo’s fourth issue of Creating Healthy Counties!

Numerous factors impact health such as access to care, diet and exercise, environmental influences and social and economic factors. These factors can present complex challenges for county officials seeking to implement initiatives to promote health.

Through support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI), NACo is providing counties with information and insights into how they can develop effective local programs and policies to create healthy counties.

The project, *Elected County Officials’ Guide to County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*, serves as a hub of information and resources for counties about community health improvement and is designed to facilitate peer-to-peer learning among counties about ways to create healthier communities. Counties have the opportunity to utilize information from the annual *County Health Rankings* to learn how to address local health needs and to work toward improving health outcomes.

For more information, visit www.naco.org/improvingcountyhealth

For more information about the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program, visit www.countyhealthrankings.org

For more information about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, visit www.rwjf.org/

For more information about the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, visit http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu/

In This Issue…

Learn about the upcoming *Roadmaps to Health* Forum in Madison (Dane County), WI, Oct. 31 – Nov. 1. NACo, in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, will be hosting a one and one-half day health-related forum to discuss the *County Health Rankings*, along with related indicators, public private partnerships and opportunities to sustain and enhance community engagement.
The registration deadline has closed. Be on the lookout for the November Creating Healthy Counties newsletter with highlights from the 2013 Roadmaps to Health Forum.

Resource Spotlight: Choosing Effective Policies & Programs

In the previous edition of Creating Healthy Counties, published in July, NACo put a spotlight on Focusing on What’s Important, a step in the County Health Roadmaps Action Cycle. The spotlight addressed opportunities to identify issues most important in the county and therefore

County Health Roadmaps Action Center

The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program brings groundbreaking tools and resources to communities across the country through the County Health Roadmaps Action Center. Once you have reviewed the Rankings data for your county, you can use the “snapshot” of your county’s overall health (e.g., health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, physical environment) to investigate and discuss ways to improve the health of your community and to develop a strategic action plan. The Action Center provides a step-by-step approach through the Roadmaps Action Cycle to find ways to take action and implement locally-driven change in your community. Check out the July edition of Creating Healthy Counties for a resource spotlight on determining what issues or issues should be addressed first in your county. Check out the newsletter archive for additional resource spotlights.
should be addressed first, keeping in mind the county’s valuable and limited resources that may be available.

Once your county has identified the important issue(s) that will be addressed, the next step in the Action Cycle is to choose an effective strategy to address the priority issues. The Action Cycle step, Choose Effective Policies & Programs, provides valuable information, resources and tools that can assist the county to identify policies/programs/strategies to address and resolve the important issues.

There may be some questions to consider before deciding the best strategy to employ. Does your community have sufficient resources in place to develop and implement a new (lacking current evidence) program or policy, not knowing whether it will prove to be effective in your community? Or, does your county want to use evidence-based policies/programs that have been proven to be successful in similar counties? These questions can be answered considering your county’s current strengths, assets, resources, needs, and gaps.

Choosing & Adapting Strategies to Fit Your County
The Action Cycle step, Choosing Effective Policies & Programs, provides a list of things to consider when identifying an effective strategy to implement in your county. Once you have considered a strategy or multiple strategies that may be successful in your community reflect on the following questions.

*Consider the available resource, assets and strengths in your community.*

- Are there political or legal constraints that could make the strategy more or less successful? What is the level of political support for the strategy?
- How would implementers view the complexity of implementing the strategy?
- What are your community’s values and what is important to the residence in the community? How can we make this visible in the strategy?
- What is the community’s readiness for the strategy?
- Does the community know there is currently a problem pertaining to a specific health outcome? Is there local evidence supporting the program need(s)?:
  - Suggested Tool: Community Readiness Model
- Does the county have current resources, strengths and assets in place to successfully implement and evaluate the strategy? Is there anywhere to leverage existing resources?:
  - Suggested Tool: Assess Needs & Resources
- Will the policy/program require more funding?:
  - Suggested Tool: Guide to Funding Your Community Health Initiative
There are no two counties that are exactly the same, and therefore a program or policy that works in one county, may not transfer easily to another county. Suggested tools include Criteria for Choosing Promising Practices and Community Interventions and What Works for Health. How does the policy or program need to be adapted to fit your community? You may want to consider short term strategies for the issue and a more in-depth, long-term strategy.

Suggested Tools:

- **Self-Assessment to Help You Find and Choose Promoting Practices** – a resource from the Community Tool Box includes questions to guide your community in finding a choosing policies and programs.
- **Policy Advocacy Choice Tool** – a resource from the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The step-by-step tool assists communities to identify the greatest likelihood of successful implementation of policy or systems change. Works in conjunction with the Policy Advocacy Choice Worksheet.
- **Policy Advocacy Choice Worksheet** – a resource from the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. It is used in concurrence with the Policy Advocacy Choice Tool.

**What Works for Health**

A County Health Roadmaps tool may assist your county in finding a policy, program and/or system change to adopt in your county. What Works for Health is an archive of policies and programs from a variety of resources and assigns them an evidence-based rating based on the quantity, quality, and findings from the policy or program. A program or policy that has been assigned a scientifically-supported rating has shown to have a strong system-design and positive outcomes, with no contradictive outcomes. The policies and programs that are available in the What Works for Health, cover four areas of the Rankings model that address health – health behaviors; clinical care; social and economic factors and the physical environment.

Resource: County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Action Center – Choosing Effective Policies & Programs

**National News**

**Prince George County’s Transforming Neighborhood Initiative**

In a broad effort to lower crime, increase job opportunities and improve access to health care and affordable housing in Prince George County, VA, the county announced their “Transforming Neighborhood Initiative” pilot program in schools. The Initiative will provide a full-day of pre-K, expanded after school activities, interventions for at-risk youth and provide additional services to address some of the county’s educational challenges. Read more

**Washington Counties Fighting for a Healthy National Forest**

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05) held a summit to discuss the health of the Colville National Forest and its impact on the surrounding communities (e.g., more jobs, recreation, and increased revenue to surrounding counties). The summit brought together a panel of local businesses and community leaders to discuss how to reduce the risk of forest fires, bug infested acres and strengthen rural economies. Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers said, “The Colville National Forest is the economic engine for our Northeastern Washington counties and healthy forests mean healthy communities.” Read more
Allen County, Ohio hosted a Summit to discuss the impact of the ACA on workplace wellness, the importance of having wellness programs in the workplace and a discussion with local business leaders and experts in health and wellness on workplace programs. The event also addressed healthy food choices and exercise habits during the work day. Read more

Lafayette County’s Health Improvement Plan is a Community Effort
The Lafayette County, FL, Health Department came before the County Commissioners to present an overview of the county’s health improvement plan. The county completed a community health assessment that identified three priority areas and addressed multiple issues (e.g., access to health care, address overweight and obesity, increase physical fruit, access to healthy foods, reduce tobacco use). The Lafayette Health Improvement Partnership, community partners working on improving the community health, will work to address the county’s priorities over the next few years. Read more

Share Your Story
NACo would like to hear about your county’s efforts to promote overall resident and community health. Share your county’s story so that it can be included in NACo’s Healthy Counties Database or highlighted in our bi-monthly newsletter. Email Katie Bess at kbess@naco.org or click here to complete a county profile form.

Updates & Resources
- **Upcoming Webinar** – Thursday, October 24, 2:00 – 3:15 PM - Incorporating Health Outcomes with Making Planning Decisions in Your County – County populations face great health challenges, including obesity, asthma, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and access to care. These concerns can be aggravated by physical design, infrastructure and environmental pollution, increasing recreational spaces, and ensuring mobility of older citizens. Webinar attendees will discover the value of incorporating health outcomes into planning policies by design professionals and experienced leaders. Register today!

- **Webinar Archive** - Using the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps to Drive County Change - Learn about tools and resources available through the County Health Roadmaps to address community needs. You'll also hear from Howard County, MD, who has used the Rankings & Roadmaps data and tools to implement their first county-wide health assessment that gave insight on local health behaviors and needs in the community. View Webinar Recording and PowerPoint Slides

- **NACo County Solutions and Innovations Blog** – The CSI blog contains posts from NACo’s subject matter experts in the areas of community and economic development, health, human services, justice and public safety and resilience.
New: Building Leadership Capacity in Counties through the Community Coalition Leadership Program. 
Read more

County Parks and Recreation offers a Proactive Prescription to a Healthy Community. Read more

The County by County Blog, part of the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps website, interviewed NACo President and Linn County Supervisor, Linda Langston, at the NACo 2013 County Solutions and Idea Marketplace in Tarrant County, TX on the County Health Rankings and collaboration to solving health challenges. Read more

The County by County Blog interviewed Tarrant County Commissioner, Hon. Roy C Brooks, on Community Health Improvement at the NACo 2013 County Solutions and Idea Marketplace in Tarrant County, TX. Read more

- Check out the June 2013 Healthy Counties brochure on the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. The special report is from the pages of County News. The report highlights the County Health Rankings model and stories of counties that have used the Rankings to spur improvement. View the report here

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