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Lawrence County Health Department

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2023

Lawrence County, Ohio

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INTRODUCTION

This is a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) for Lawrence County, Ohio. This appraisal aims to first collect data specific to this area, identify the community needs, and implement a plan to enhance the community’s health.

It is imperative to identify where the community is not thriving. It is also necessary to obtain information from different organizations and, if possible, from the county residents about the community’s health needs. This is important because the community’s input is essential to better understand the needs of the county, in addition to input from area health experts. Once these data are available, and the health needs are determined, several plans and programs can be put in place to meet the needs of the county.

SOCIAL ASSESSMENT

Lawrence County Overview and Geography

Lawrence County, Ohio (figure 1) is located in the most southerly point of Ohio. It runs adjacent to the Ohio River bordering West Virginia and Kentucky. There are 14 townships: Aid, Decatur, Hamilton, Elizabeth, Fayette, Lawrence, Mason, Perry, Rome, Symmes, Union, Upper, Windsor, Washington (figure 2) (Martin, 2022).



Figure 1: Lawrence County Ohio in green.

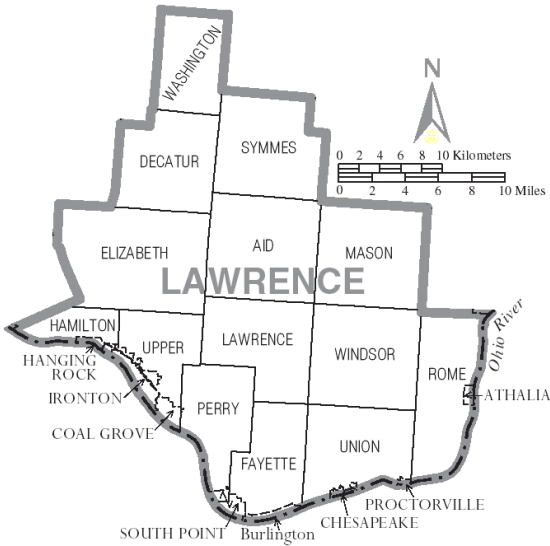


Figure 2: Lawrence County Ohio townships

Lawrence County has 453.4 square miles of land area and is the 41st largest county in Ohio by total area. It is predominantly rural with a population of 58,240 people in the Appalachian region with a median age of 41.8 ± 0.4 years old. The county seat is Ironton with a population of 11,211 habitants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

History

Lawrence County Ohio was founded on December 21, 1815 with the authorization of the Ohio government. The name arose in honor of James Lawrence who was an 1812 war hero. The county produced iron in great quantities and due to the iron-ore content of the land Mr. John Campbell, an iron manufacturer, founded Ironton (Iron Town) to expand his business. Having the river for easy transportation of the minerals was a plus for his trade (Lawrence County Convention and Visitor Bureau, 2020).

Economics and Industry

The median household income in Lawrence County, Ohio is $\$48,947 \pm \$2,833$, whereas the median household income in Ohio is $\$62,262 \pm \456 . There is salary inequality in Ohio between males and females, with male income 1.35 times higher than that of females (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The county employs 24.6 thousand people and employment is distributed as follows: healthcare and social assistance employs up to 24.5%, educational services employ up to 14.9%, and retail trade adds up to 11% of the employment (Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2021).

Public Spaces, Parks, and Recreation

Lawrence County has many publicly accessible open spaces such as libraries, parks, hiking trails, lakes, fishing sites, and camping sites. These areas are essential in the community because they allow the residents to interact and mingle. They certainly have a positive impact on their health and quality of life (Platt, 2021).

Public Transportation

There is public bus transportation that offers demand response service and curb-to-curb service in Lawrence County. This operates from Monday to Friday. Weekend trips are available if a driver is available. Reservations must be made 24 hours in advance. Most local trips are \$2.00 per mile. (Lawrence County Public Transit, 2023).

Public Schools

Lawrence County has 25 public schools serving 8,785 students, and 3 private schools serving 275 students. The city schools are well maintained and have good infrastructure (Public School Review, 2023).

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age and Gender

The median age of Lawrence County residents is 41.8 years old. This is a young county.

Table 1: Lawrence County residents by age and gender

| Age | County | Ohio |
|-------------------------|--------|-------|
| % Below 18 years of age | 21.7% | 22.1% |
| % 65 and older | 19.3% | 17.8% |
| % adults >18 and <65yo | 59% | 60.1% |
| % female | 51% | 50% |

Health Rankings Lawrence County Ohio, 2023

Race and Ethnicity

The race and ethnicity makeup of Lawrence County residents is as follows: White (94.4%), Non-Hispanic Black (2.1%), Hispanic (1%), and Asian (0.5%) (County Health Rankings, 2023).

Household Size

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), Lawrence County has a total of 23,221 households. The average number of people per household is 2.6. and the population type is mostly married couples (60%). There are 29.5% of households with children and 70.5% without children.

Income

Economic insecurity is often associated with poor health. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of or low education levels have negative impacts on a community's capacity to engage in healthy behaviors.

The unemployment rate in Lawrence County is 5.1% (County Health Rankings, 2021).

Table 2: Lawrence County household income and poverty levels in 2021

| | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Average Household Income | \$55,588 |
| Median Household Income | \$44,535 |
| People below Poverty Level | 12,159 |
| People above Poverty Level | 54,702 |

Education

Lawrence County has the following school districts: Ironton City School District, Dawson-Bryant Local School District, Chesapeake Union Exempted Village School District, Fairland Local School District, South Point Local School District, Rock Hill Local School District, Symmes Valley Local School District (K12 Academics, 2014).

The percentage of adults ages 25 and over with a high school diploma or equivalent is 89% in Lawrence County (County Health Rankings, 2023).

Religious Affiliations

Lawrence County religious affiliations are as follow. Approximately 23% of the population is religious: 7.5% are Baptist, 3.1% are Catholic, 2.9% are Methodist, 0.7% are Pentecostal, 0.3% are Lutheran, 0.2% are Presbyterian, 0.1% are Episcopalian, and 8.0% are another Christian faith (Best Places, 2023).

HEALTH INDICATORS

According to County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Lawrence County is ranked among the least healthy counties in Ohio (lowest 0% -25%). Regarding obesity alone, 40% of Lawrence County adults are obese, compared to 36% in Ohio and 32% in the United States (2022). Obesity increases the risk for several health problems such as heart attack, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea, dyslipidemia, and overall poor health status.

Mortality

Lawrence County Ohio, during the 2014-2018 period, showed a cancer mortality rate of 221.4 per 100,000 residents. This is a high rate when compared with the Ohio rate of 174.3 per 100,000. Also, during this period of time Lawrence County residents experienced 438 new invasive cancer cases and 181 cancer deaths.

In this same time period, the leading causes of cancer incidence and mortality in Lawrence County were lung and bronchus cancers during, accounting for 18.4% of cancer cases, and 28.6% of cancer deaths. Overall, Lawrence County's leading sites/types of cancer incidence were lung, breast, colon/rectum, bladder, and prostate, accounting for 53% of all new invasive cancer cases (Ohio Department of Health, 2021).

Table 3: Lawrence County Ohio percentage of new invasive cancer cases by site (2014-2018)

| | | | |
|-------------------|------|-------|-------|
| Lung and bronchus | | | 18.4% |
| Breast (female) | | 12.9% | |
| Colon and Rectum | | 8.7% | |
| Prostate | | 8.6% | |
| Bladder | 4.7% | | |

Morbidity

Chronic diseases can lead to decreased quality of life. They may also increase disability and contribute to higher health costs. Many Lawrence County residents present at least one factor for developing heart disease such as diabetes, obesity, or hypertension. Heart disease includes coronary heart disease, heart attack, and heart failure.

Obesity

The percentage of the adult population that reports a body mass index (BMI) greater or equal to 30 kg/m² in Lawrence County Ohio is 40%. This is an alarming rate compared with 36% in Ohio and 32% in the United States (County Health Rankings, 2022).

Cardiovascular Disease

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 out of 5 deaths in the United States in 2020 was due to heart disease. Risk for heart disease is increased in communities that have higher prevalence of arrhythmias/heart defects, high BMI, and diabetes. Additionally, substance use disorder is a significant risk factor for heart disease (CDC, 2022).

The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2016) reported that Lawrence County females had an ischemic heart disease rate of 172.4 cases per 100,000 compared to the state of Ohio at 135.6 cases per 100,000 in 2014. The Institute also reported that Lawrence County males had a higher rate of ischemic heart disease (259.8 cases per 100,000) compared to Ohio's rate (210.7 cases per 100,000).

Diabetes

According to Hidalgo et al. (2021), Lawrence County has the highest prevalence of diabetes in the state at 19.9% in 2021. Diabetes is a major public health issue and can lead to life threatening complications such as heart disease, stroke, vision problems, and kidney damage if left untreated. This high prevalence of diabetes may indicate that many community members are living an unhealthy lifestyle.

At the same time, the Ohio Department of Health concluded that physical inactivity is related to type 2 diabetes, obesity, stroke, and heart disease. The prevalence of physical inactivity in Lawrence County was 37% in 2018, putting the population at risk for such diseases.

Maternal and Child Health - Low Birth Weight

Low birthweight is an indicator of maternal health, nutrition, and poverty (Bailey and Byrom, 2006). According to the County Health Rankings, Lawrence County has a 9% prevalence of low birth weight (<2500gr). This data point is associated with infant morbidity, premature mortality risk, and maternal health risks. Children with low birth weight tend to have growth problems, higher risks of cardiovascular disease, and respiratory conditions, as well as higher rates of cognitive problems (2020).

Mental Health

Lawrence County has a 200:1 ratio of mental health providers to patients. More providers are needed to adequately provide for the needs of the community and ensure access to counseling. Mental health includes not only psychological, but also emotional and social, wellbeing (County Health Rankings, 2020).

Food Insecurity

Ensuring access to healthy food resources can provide a foundation for a healthier community. Lawrence County scored 6.8 out of 10 on the food environment index, which provides information regarding access to healthy food and food insecurity (County Health Rankings, 2021).

ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Tobacco Use

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2021) reported that each year approximately 480,000 deaths can be attributed to smoking. Additionally, smoking can cause cardiovascular disease, several types of cancers, and lung conditions.

According to the County Health Rankings (2020), in Lawrence County 26% of residents were current cigarette smokers. The CDC states that male cigarette smokers have higher death rates from heart disease than nonsmokers. Also, cigarette smoking is a major risk factor for heart attack (2014). New strategies and more cessation programs are needed to improve the effectiveness of mitigating this public health problem.

Cooper et al. (2022) in their study concluded that e-cigarettes are the most used form of tobacco product among middle and high schoolers. And because they usually contain nicotine it can harm the developing adolescent brain as well as increase the risk of future addiction to other drugs. According to the CDC, nearly 85% of the youth use flavored e-cigarettes and half of them use disposable e-cigarettes (2022).

Excessive Drinking

Excessive drinking is a risk factor for several adverse outcomes that include alcohol poisoning, heart attack, hypertension, unplanned pregnancy, and STDs. Approximately 17% of Lawrence County's population drink excessively (County Health Rankings, 2020). New approaches are needed to curb this behavior in Lawrence County.

Drug Misuse

Drug misuse is another major problem in Lawrence County. According to Manchikanti et al., even though many of the drugs are being prescribed by a physician, evidence has shown that use of opioids contributes to the majority of overdose deaths (2018).

ADDITIONAL HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION

Health Outcomes

Lawrence County experiences a premature death rate of 11,900 per 100,000 population, significantly higher than the rates in Ohio (8,700) and at the national level (7,300). Eighteen

percent of residents report poor or fair health as a quality-of-life indicator compared to 15% in Ohio and 12% nationally. Poor physical health days average 3.7 (out of the past 30 days) in the county, slightly higher than the 3.2 days in Ohio and 3.0 days in the United States. The poor mental health days in Lawrence County average 5.7 (out of the past 30 days), higher than the state (5.0) and national (4.4) averages. Low birthweight in the county is at 9% annually, which is similar to Ohio's rate and slightly higher than the national rate of 8%.

Health Factors

In Lawrence County, several health behaviors exceed state and national averages, indicating distinct lifestyle patterns within the population. The county's adult smoking rate is 26%, noticeably higher than Ohio's 20% and the national rate of 16%. Concurrently, adult obesity in the county is also elevated at 40%, compared to 36% in Ohio and 32% nationally. The Food Environment Index for the county, a measure of both the quality and accessibility of food, matches Ohio's at 6.8 but is slightly lower than the national index of 7.0. Furthermore, physical inactivity in Lawrence County surpasses state and national percentages, with a rate of 33% compared to Ohio's 24% and the national rate of 22%.

Lawrence County presents a unique blend of health behaviors and access to resources compared to Ohio and national averages. Information concerning access to exercise opportunities in the county shows that only 57% of residents have such access, as opposed to 84% in Ohio and the United States. The county data show slightly lower excessive drinking rates at 17%, compared to 19% for Ohio and the nation. Similarly, alcohol-impaired driving deaths are significantly lower in the county, representing 13% of driving deaths, substantially less than Ohio's 33% and the national rate of 27%. However, Lawrence County's rate of sexually transmitted infections, while lower than state and national rates, is still notable at 297.7 per 100,000 population. Teen births in the county also exceed state and national rates, with 34 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19, compared to 21 in Ohio and 19 nationwide.

The county shows a rate of food insecurity at 18% compared to 12% in Ohio and the United States. And the proportion of the population with limited access to healthy foods is lower in the county at 4%, compared to 7% in Ohio and 6% nationally. The county's rate of drug overdose deaths is 52 per 100,000 population, which is higher than the state rate of 38 and the national rate of 23. Additionally, insufficient sleep is reported by a slightly higher percentage of Lawrence County residents (38%) compared to both Ohio (36%) and the United States (33%).

Social and Economic Factors

The county's high school completion rate stands at 89%, aligning with the national average but falling slightly short of Ohio's rate of 91%. Regarding higher education, Lawrence County sees a smaller percentage of residents with some college education. At 51%, this rate is notably lower than the state average of 66% and the national average of 67%.

The county's unemployment rate mirrors the Ohio average at 5.1%, slightly better than the national average of 5.4%. However, 22% of children in Lawrence County experience living in poverty, a rate higher than both Ohio's 18% and the national average of 17%. Regarding income inequality,

the county's ratio is 4.6, on par with Ohio's ratio and marginally better than the national ratio of 4.9.

In the county, 27% of children live in single-parent households, which aligns with Ohio's average but is slightly higher than the national rate of 25%. Social associations in the county, a measure of community engagement, stand at 8.6 per 1,000 population, falling short of Ohio's average of 10.8 and the national average of 9.1. A significant area of concern is the rate of injury deaths in Lawrence County. At 122 per 100,000 population, this rate is substantially higher than Ohio's rate of 96 and the national rate of 76.

HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE

Lawrence County has resources and programs to address community health needs. Some of these organizations are located outside the limits of Lawrence County but can be easily accessed due to their proximity within the tri-state area. Resources include:

Local Health Departments

Lawrence County and Scioto County in Ohio
Greenup County and Boyd County in Kentucky
Cabell County in West Virginia

Local Hospitals

King's Daughters Health System (KDMC)
Southern Ohio Medical Center (SOMC)
Saint Mary's Medical Center
Cabell Huntington Hospital
Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VA)

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Mahajan Therapies
Mended Reeds
The Counseling Center
Pathways, Inc
Shawnee Mental Health
Southern Ohio Behavioral Health

Low-income Assistance

Community Action Organization (CAO)
City Welfare Mission
Salvation Army
Safe Harbor
Hope's Place
Area Churches

PRIORITY HEALTH ISSUES

The three priority health issues that Lawrence County is experiencing are obesity, substance use disorder, and smoking/vaping.

Obesity

Obesity is a major health issue in Lawrence County. Having a prevalence of 40% indicates a dire need for strategies and policies to be implemented to improve this problem. It is alarming that the county obesity prevalence is 10% higher than the nation's. (County Health Rankings, 2020).

Substance Use Disorder

The opioid epidemic is a significant issue in Lawrence County. Several family generations are experiencing the same substance use disorder. This has led to the heartbreaking problem of many children being left in need of foster care services (Ohio Department of Health and Addiction Services, 2020).

Smoking/Vaping

Smoking is currently a pressing public health concern in Lawrence County. The prevalence of cigarette smoking in Lawrence County is 26% compared to the national prevalence of 16% (County Health Rankings, 2020). The use of e-cigarettes (vaping) is another health issue of concern that is impacting the youth of the community, increasing their risk of addiction to nicotine and other substances.

COMMUNITY INPUT – SWOT ANALYSIS REPORT

Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Lawrence County, Ohio, April 2023

Lawrence County is the southernmost county in Ohio and borders the Ohio River. According to 2022 data from County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Lawrence County, Ohio is ranked among the least healthy counties in Ohio (Lowest 0%-25%). To gain an accurate understanding of the area's health landscape from the perspectives of Lawrence County stakeholders representing a diverse range of community engagement, the Lawrence County Health Department conducted an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).

This report is based on a review of written responses to SWOT worksheets. These were collected following presentations by Dr. Jennifer Richards explaining what SWOT analysis is and the importance of input from the audiences that were addressed. The audiences for these presentations were comprised of four Lawrence County Ohio area stakeholder groups: (a) Lawrence County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), (b) Lawrence County School Superintendents, (c) Appalachian Family and Children First Counsel (AFCFC), and (d) River Hills Prevention Connection.

The Lawrence County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is a coordinated planning body comprised of individuals who have expertise in planning and response to incidents involving hazardous materials. The LEPC is instrumental in fulfilling the purpose of the Community Right-to-Know law to increase the protection of the community from chemicals produced, used, stored, and/or transported within Lawrence County.

Headed by the county superintendent within the county educational service center (ESC), the Lawrence County School Superintendents governing body is comprised of superintendents from nine school districts:

- Ironton City Schools
- Fairland Local Schools
- Dawson-Bryant Local Schools
- Collins Career Technical Center
- South Point Local Schools
- Chesapeake Union Exempted Village Schools
- Rock Hill Local Schools
- Symmes Valley Local Schools
- Lawrence County Developmental Disabilities

This governing body is instrumental in improving educational opportunities for rural youth. The county educational service center has a history of dedication to the improvement of education for the young people of the state of Ohio and was created by the General Assembly in 1914 to meet the needs for continuity in the state's education system.

The Appalachian Family and Children First Council (AFCFC) includes families and people from local agencies and community organizations in Lawrence County. Their motto is: *Helping Children Succeed...One Family at a Time*. This group works together as partners to improve the well-being of children and families. There is a Family and Children First Council in every Ohio county.

The mission of River Hills Prevention Connection is to encourage residents to build a healthier, more connected community. This coalition unites service agencies and shares strategies to empower community residents to make healthy choices.

A total of thirty SWOT worksheets from stakeholders were collected, containing their responses. Each of the responses from the stakeholders was carefully analyzed, and the items mentioned in the SWOT worksheets were tallied to determine their frequency. This allowed us to rank the top five strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in order of most frequently cited to least frequently cited, ensuring that the conclusions represent the collective input and priorities of the stakeholder groups. The following is a summary of the top five strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats listed in order of most frequently cited to least frequently cited.

Strengths

1. Strong sense of community
2. Collaboration among area agencies
3. Strong faith-based community and resources
4. Drug courts
5. Access to health care

Weaknesses

1. High prevalence of substance use (including drugs, alcohol, vaping, and smoking)
2. Lack of mental health services
3. Lack of affordable housing
4. Low wage jobs and limited employment opportunities
5. Poor jail situation

Opportunities

1. Increase or improve collaboration and communication between community programs and networks
2. Assist the homeless
3. Community outreach to deliver and educate the public about services available for physical and mental health, wellness, and financial assistance
4. Seek federal and local sources of funding
5. Outreach to and involvement of youth for community programs

Threats

1. Consequences of substance use (including crime and poor health outcomes)
2. Mental health problems and concurrent lack of mental health services
3. Poverty
4. Limited financial resources and tax-based funding
5. Community members' lack of awareness of community needs and/or not willing to get involved in addressing those needs

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