2025-2027
MERCER COUNTY, OHIO COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

LIVE WELL
MERCER COUNTY

Live Well Mercer County is a public health initiative committed to improving the health of the people of Mercer County, Ohio, by promoting education, services and resources.

2025-2027
MERCER COUNTY, OHIO
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Summary & Overview

The Foundation of a Thriving Community
A thriving community is built upon many essential components—economic vitality, educational opportunity, civic engagement, and more. However, none of these elements can be sustained without the well-being of its residents. When individuals are healthy, safe, and supported in their overall wellness, the broader community is strengthened.

Working Together to Better Serve the Community
A dedicated group of volunteers and employees from various community organizations and agencies throughout Mercer County routinely come together with a shared commitment to improving the health and well-being of Mercer County residents. With ongoing support from the Mercer County Health District and Mercer Health, this group serves as the steering committee for the Live Well Mercer County initiative. Their collaborative efforts help guide strategic initiatives, foster community engagement, and promote a healthier future for all. The additional collaborating organizations include: Foundations Behavioral Health Center, Mercer County DD, Mercer County Educational Service Center, Mercer County Head Start, Mercer County Job and Family Services, Mercer County Public Library, Mercer County Prevention Coalition, Mercer County Senior Citizens Center and Tri-County ADAMHS Board.

Driving Community Health Strategy
The Live Well Mercer County initiative steering committee serves as the lead entity in conducting the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), a comprehensive evaluation of the health status, needs, and priorities of Mercer County residents. Findings from the CHNA are integrated with additional data sources to inform the development of a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). This strategic plan outlines measurable benchmarks and targeted improvement goals, all aimed at enhancing the overall health and well-being of the community.

Development of the 2025-2027 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)
In spring 2024, the Live Well Mercer County steering committee initiated the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to evaluate the health status and needs of Mercer County residents. The assessment concluded in summer 2024 and was compiled by Dr. Hochstein of Wright State University – Lake Campus. A comprehensive report was delivered in fall 2024 and subsequently reviewed by the Live Well Mercer County group in collaboration with a broad coalition of community leaders.

These discussions informed the development of a draft Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), released in spring 2025. This document represents the culmination of extensive data collection, analysis, and stakeholder input, and serves as a strategic framework for advancing community health. An overview of the CHIP is provided on pages 5–7 of this report. The status of the plan can be found at the end of this document and will be continuously monitored and updated through the end of 2027 as progress is made toward identified goals.

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Establishing Strategic Priorities
While many opportunities for improving health in Mercer County were identified through the assessment and stakeholder engagement process, the focus of the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is to concentrate efforts where they can have the greatest potential impact. Through data analysis and thoughtful discussion, two areas of particular concern—**heart disease** and **mental wellness**—rose to the top. These issues share many contributing factors, including obesity, poor nutrition, and alcohol use. In addition to identifying heart disease and mental wellness as key health concerns, the assessment revealed a strong community desire for increased health education—particularly regarding obesity and healthy lifestyle choices. Notably, these topics are also contributing factors to the first two priority areas, underscoring the interconnected nature of the challenges facing Mercer County and reinforcing the importance of the third strategic priority: **health communication and literacy**.

Understanding and Using This Document
This report provides an individualized review of each of the strategic health priorities, along with the intended initiatives and benchmarks selected to improve each priority area. Progress will be tracked and reported upon periodically with a comprehensive report to be published at the end of the plan cycle.

Survey Limitations and Methodology
The raw data from the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), which served as the foundation for developing the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), is available upon request. To access this information, please contact Mindy Kremer, Vice President of Development, Marketing, and Communications at Mercer Health.

The following explanation of the survey methodology was provided by Dr. Dave Hochstein, Associate Professor of Psychology at the Wright State University Lake Campus. The weighting ratios are calculated by taking the ratio of the proportion of the population of Mercer County in each subcategory by the proportion of the sample in the Mercer County survey for that category. Subcategories with less than 10 individuals are not included within weighting, as rates calculated on counts of less than ten may be unreliable. All data was analyzed by Dr. Hochstein using the statistical software package SPSS 23.0.

Please note, as with all questionnaires, possible limitations must be considered. While the number of participants responding was larger than the minimum needed, any important differences existing between respondents and non-respondents regarding to the questions being asked could potentially threaten generalizability of results from the respondents to the non-respondents.

1 Mercer County Sex and Age numbers taken from U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP05?q=sex&g=050XX00US39107.

1 Mercer County Age numbers taken from U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). Sex by Age. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B01001. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B01001?q=age&g=050XX00US39107&y=2022.

1 Mercer County Household Income numbers taken from U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2022 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars). American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B19001. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B19001?q=household income&g=050XX00US39107.

Community Health Improvement Plan 2025-2027

PRIORITY: Mental Health

Decrease incidence of mental health related emergencies by increasing awareness of mental health and addiction signs and symptoms, expanding Mercer County Prevention Coalition activities, increasing awareness of mental health access and resources, raising awareness of and improving contributing factors that support prevention

What we know,:

- 27% of residents reported fair or poor mental health
- 38% of residents feel mental health should be the top priority of the community health improvement plan for 2025-2027

What initiatives do we want to achieve:

- Increase awareness of mental health and addiction signs and symptoms
- Expand Mercer County Prevention Coalition activities
- Increase awareness of mental health access and resources
- Raise awareness of and improve contributing factors to promote prevention

Who will be key contributors:

- Foundations
- Mercer County Prevention Coalition
- Tri-County ADAMHS Board
- Mercer County Health District
- Mercer Health

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INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE **MENTAL HEALTH** IN MERCER COUNTY, OHIO

- Education and awareness campaign of signs and symptoms of mental health and addiction
- Expand Mercer County Prevention Coalition engagement and efforts
- Increase mental health resource awareness messaging, including promoting 988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline and other mental health and addition resources in Mercer County
- Improve contributing factors:
  - Primary Care/Wellness Exams provide opportunities to discuss issues/concerns that may contribute to mental health - 63% of residents receive an annual wellness exam, **increase to 65% receiving annual wellness exam**
  - Goal to decrease substance use by educating on the impact of substance use on mental health
    - 48% of residents report drinking alcohol at least weekly, **decrease to 45% drinking alcohol weekly**
    - 13% of residents report using tobacco regularly, **decrease to 10% using tobacco regularly**
    - 10% of residents report using illegal drugs, **decrease to 7% using illegal drugs**
  - Goal to improve physical activity and nutrition choices by educating on the impact of physical activity and nutrition on mental health
    - 23% of residents eat the **daily recommendation of fruits and vegetables, increase to 26%**
    - 50% of residents eat **fast food more than 1x weekly, decrease to 47%**
    - 49% of residents exercise at least 3x weekly, i**ncrease to 52% exercising at least 3x weekly**

Community Health Improvement Plan 2025-2027

PRIORITY: Heart Disease

Decrease incidence of heart disease, by increasing access to providers, improving cardiac emergency preparedness, enhancing preventative testing, promoting prevention through education and raising awareness of contributing factors.

What we know:

- Mercer County working age adults have a higher chance of death from heart disease than any others in Ohio. In fact, the mortality rate in Mercer County is twice that of the lowest county, Noble County (Source: Health Policy Institute of Ohio, February 2024)
- Obesity and contributing factors of obesity greatly increase the risk of heart disease
  - 80% or respondents in the 2024 Mercer County, Ohio Community Health Needs Assessment had BMIs that were considered overweight or obese
  - Since 2012, the obesity rate in Mercer County, Ohio has increased from 33% to 51%

What initiatives do we want to achieve:

- Increase access to cardiology providers
- Ensure cardiology emergency preparedness
- Enhance preventative testing of heart disease
- Raise awareness of contributing factors to promote prevention

Who will be key contributor:

- Mercer Health

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INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE **HEART DISEASE** IN MERCER COUNTY, OHIO

- Increase access to cardiology providers in Mercer County
- Ensure cardiac emergency preparedness by seeking additional accreditations and certifications, to uphold the highest standards in cardiac care
- Enhance preventative testing by bringing new preventative testing options to Mercer County
- Increase community partnerships to provide heart disease education, awareness, support and prevention via schools, community forums and sponsored events, such as the Mercer Health 5K Challenge
- Improve contributing factors and the understanding of their impact on heart disease:
  - 63% of residents receive an annual wellness exam, **increase to 65% receiving annual wellness exam**
  - 49% of residents exercise at least 3x weekly, i**ncrease to 52% exercising at least 3x weekly**
  - 48% of residents report drinking alcohol at least weekly, **decrease to 45% drinking alcohol weekly**
  - 13% of residents report using tobacco regularly, **decrease to 10% using tobacco regularly**
  - 23% of residents eat the **daily recommendation of fruits and vegetables, increase to 26%**
  - 50% of residents eat **fast food more than 1x weekly, decrease to 47%**

Community Health Improvement Plan 2025-2027

PRIORITY: Health Communication & Literacy

Improve health communication and literacy by providing education, with emphasis on topics identified as priority.

What we know:

- 81% of respondents of the 2024 Mercer County, Ohio Community Health Needs Assessment reported the desire to learn more about health topics, with the top 3 areas focused on:
  - Obesity
  - Healthy Lifestyles
  - Mental Health
- According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, only 12% of Americans have proficient health literacy skills.
- According to Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS), 82% of patients reported that their doctors "Always" communicated well

What initiatives do we want to achieve:

- Improve social media sharing for all Live Well organizations
- Increase percentage of residents receiving an annual wellness exam
- Increase use of MyChart

Who will be key contributors:

- Mercer County Health District
- Mercer Health
- Live Well Mercer County

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INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE HEALTH COMMUNICATION & LITERACY IN MERCER COUNTY, OHIO

- Coordinate efforts to improve social media sharing for all Live Well organizations, with goal of **at least 2 shared postings per month**
- **Increase the percentage of residents receiving an annual wellness exam from 63% to 65%**, supporting greater awareness of personal health needs and strengthening overall health literacy so individuals better understand and manage their well-being.
- **Increase the percentage of patients seen with active MyChart accounts from 67% to 70%**