

# Summary

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## Where is there evidence of health disparities in Hawaii County?

There is evidence of health disparities in Hawaii County in each of the following four domains:

### *Health Outcomes*

- ◆ Higher all cause death rates
- ◆ Higher coronary heart disease death rates
- ◆ Higher stroke death rates
- ◆ Higher overall cancer death rates
- ◆ Higher suicide death rates
- ◆ Higher breast cancer death rates
- ◆ Higher traffic-related death rates
- ◆ Lower life expectancy
- ◆ Higher teen birth rates
- ◆ Higher confirmed child abuse rates
- ◆ Higher proportion of self-reported fair/poor health status

### *Social and Economic Determinants of Health*

- ◆ Higher unemployment
- ◆ Lower income per capita
- ◆ More children living in poverty
- ◆ Higher % population living under 200% of federal poverty
- ◆ Higher Gini index of income inequality

### *Health Behaviors*

- ◆ Higher % of population smoking
- ◆ Higher % of population binge drinking

### *Health Systems*

- ◆ Higher uninsured
- ◆ Lower ratio of physicians per 1,000 population
- ◆ Lower ratio of dentists per 1,000 population
- ◆ Higher percent of population who do not have a personal doctor
- ◆ Higher acute care hospitalizations per 1,000 population
- ◆ Lower percent of female population receiving prenatal care

## Where is there evidence of declining health indicators in Hawaii County?

There is evidence of declining health indicators in the following categories:

### *Health Outcomes*

- ◆ Increasing suicide death rates
- ◆ Increasing percent of population with high blood pressure
- ◆ Increasing self-reported fair –poor health status

### *Social and Economic Determinants of Health*

- ◆ Increasing unemployment

### *Health Behaviors*

- ◆ Increasing percent of population reporting binge drinking

## Where is there evidence of improvement in health indicators in Hawaii County?

There is evidence of improvement in Hawaii County between 2000 -2008 in the traffic death rate, infant mortality, and the rate of confirmed child abuse. There is also improvement in coronary heart disease death rate, though Hawaii County remains consistently higher than the state. There is improvement in reducing smoking in Hawaii County, although again Hawaii County remains higher than the state.

**Reasons for Improvements:** In all of the above areas there has been significant island-wide collaboration, a clear structure for collaboration, implementation of evidence based strategies, and mobilization of state and federal resources. Improvements in transportation and reducing substance abuse have come through strong county leadership.

## Where is there evidence of Progress in North Hawaii?

In North Hawaii there has been collaboration around the community selected priorities (page 9) with a strong emphasis on increasing educational attainment: increasing student engagement through mentoring and hands on projects at Tutu’s House and Earls garage; increasing 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading skills for all kinds of learners through the Department of Education’s efforts, Hawaii Learning Resource, and Keiki Steps to Literacy; increasing the number of students who have the opportunity for a 13<sup>th</sup> year of school through partnerships, and a strong effort to develop of a West Hawaii Community College campus. There is clear evidence of educational infrastructure development through several new organizations and groups: North Hawaii Education Research Center, Kohala Center, Māla’ai Garden, and Hawaii Learning Resource. There is evidence of infrastructure development to reduce substance abuse through Five Mountains Hawaii and the North Hawaii Drug Free Coalition. There is a growing effort to improve access to high quality healthcare and to increase recruitment and retention of healthcare providers through North Hawaii Community Hospital and its partners.

Figure 73

### Analysis and Implementation Cycle



Source: Community Health Improvement: A Role for Performance Monitoring

# Recommendations

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## Where are the biggest needs and opportunities for improvement?

Reducing the many health disparities in Hawaii County will require addressing the underlying social economic, behavioral and health system causes of those disparities, as summarized on the previous page. Many of the underlying behavioral and health systems causes are identified in the Health People 2010 leading indicators on page 38.

Improving health behaviors will decrease the need for health services. This will require addressing underlying issues including depression and self-medication with alcohol and drugs. Integrating screening for depression, problem drink and chemical dependency into primary care and emergency care has been shown to be effective elsewhere and could help.

Reducing unemployment, and low income per capita will require countywide economic development AND simultaneously “preserving what’s special.” One sector for economic development which will also improve health through improving health access is development of the health services sector. Economic development of the health sector has been shown to have a strong economic multiplier effect nationally. Economic development will also require a workforce development through strong public education. Economic development will require improving the physical environment through improving affordable housing and public transportation.

There is clear need for improvement in health systems. Increasing the ratio of physicians and dentists to population, and the proportion of the population with a personal physician will require addressing the current large healthcare provider workforce shortage. Attracting and retaining high quality health professionals is a challenge because the cost of living is relatively high, and reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid and private insurers is relatively low. At the same time, the demands for night and weekend call are high.

Improving health status for North Hawaii and Hawaii County will require effectively addressing the complex issues behind physician and health professional workforce shortages. Partnerships between providers, employers, payers, insurers and government to improve access to primary care in Hawaii County are essential to improve health status in North Hawaii and Hawaii County.

Figure 74

Health...  
it takes a community

