**SIGNIFICANT HEALTH**

**ISSUES, GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

**IN HAWAIʻI – HAH Community Health Needs Assessment (12/18)**

After engaging with people across Hawaiʻi to learn about their lives, their struggles, and their interactions with the healthcare system, and after reviewing a sampling of data that help to define the scope of challenges and who in society might be facing the biggest challenges, three major health issues emerge. These issues point us to the most significant health priorities in Hawaiʻi, particularly those that can help the most needy in society—those who are often bearing the brunt of the downstream effects of poor health including disease, shorter lives, and poorer quality of life.

**ISSUE 1** : Many individuals in Hawaiʻi lack a foundation for health—security, justice, hope, love, time, good food — the basic things that every human being needs to have a reasonable chance at assembling a truly healthy life. It is a common belief that poor health is the result of people making poor decisions. In conversations across the islands, Islander Institute met people making conscious, well-reasoned decisions. The

problem is that many people have poor options. People in Hawaiʻi are making tradeoffs at the expense of their own health and the health of the community. They have to choose between an extra job to pay the rent or the chance to spend time cooking good meals for their kids; between the time it takes to care for an aging parent or the money it takes to pay someone else to care for that parent; between money for a car payment to get to work or money for out-of-pocket expenses to see the doctor; between an unfulfilling job that provides health insurance or a personally fulfilling job that doesn’t. And if they are facing discrimination or unfair disadvantage, their options are even worse. If they are lacking a multitude of the health basics, the options are worse still.

Many people cannot simply “live healthy.” They need the support of family, friends, community, workplaces, organizations, and society to obtain the basics for healthy living. When this foundation is in place, many of the upstream factors get addressed, which should subsequently mitigate the expensive and painful downstream impacts. Understanding community needs and working with people to address priorities are much more strategic than waiting to treat their poor health outcomes in an already taxed healthcare system.

**ISSUE 2**: Many feel that Hawaiʻi is losing its sense of community—including aspects of the place, values, culture, and practices—and this loss is diminishing health itself. Community is becoming a tired word. What does it mean? More significantly, what does it mean in Hawaiʻi? Talk with enough people, particularly in rural Hawaiʻi, and the pillars of community start to come into focus. The foundation was set by the genius of the indigenous people of these islands. At the foundation of community, we have our land that provides everything we need to live. The people of this place work together for the benefit of all, including two sacred obligations—to nurture the keiki and to honor the kūpuna. And many generations of migrants to these islands have added flavor to that reciprocal relationship among people and place. But as much as we have added to community, we also do many things to diminish it.

In the eyes of many in Hawaiʻi today, we are losing healthy places, creating more disconnection to our land, putting the needs of visitors ahead of residents, and losing

our sense of community. It already feels lost in parts of Oʻahu, and people across the islands feel it

eroding away. People long for the healing power of community. Community makes health, it has health,

and it is health.

Hawaiʻi’s people and place form a powerful healing force that is currently underutilized and steadily being diminished. By building healthy environments and strong communities that meet our obligations to keiki and kūpuna, we set the stage for good living and bring more power to bear on addressing the upstream determinants of health.

**ISSUE 3**: For many in Hawaiʻi, particularly those with the greatest needs, the relationship to the healthcare system is a poor one, often seen as lacking in humanity, empathy, and availability.

Receiving healthcare is a highly personal and deeply involved human interaction. It often carries the highest stakes of any interactions that people will have in their lives. So, it is difficult to square this with the fact that healthcare has been largely reduced to a three-way economic transaction between a consumer, a provider, and a payer. Most participants in the CHNA shared how they are not satisfied with the products and services in these transactions, and many questioned the very premise of reducing healthcare to money issues when what they really need is help from other human beings. People shared stories of discrimination, medical mistakes, lack of listening, lack of caring, and other negative experiences with such frequency that one would conclude that bad healthcare is the norm. Of course, some stories may be exaggerations or misperceptions that are part of a generally negative narrative about healthcare. But the fact that these impressions exist is a problem in of itself. Furthermore, there is good reason to believe that the things people shared in a safe, comfortable community meeting will not be shared directly with their healthcare providers in the form of feedback, because local people—out of shame, fear, respect, or resignation because they have no healthcare options—often won’t call a supervisor or fill out a feedback form.

The relationship that Hawaiʻi people have to their healthcare system is a core factor in the state of community health. With all the talk of social determinants, the fact is that healthcare will always be essential to good health. Walling off personal health with the rules of individual privacy is not personalization. What people really want are compassion, empathy, and heartfelt human connection in their relationship to healthcare. Improving this aspect of quality will ensure that people—especially those in greatest need—can and will seek, access, and benefit from healthcare.

**SIGNIFICANT HEALTH GOALS AND PRIORITIES.**

Given these three core issues, a three-part strategy emerges that focuses on three significant goals. Each goal is divided into priorities that were determined by a review of all input including: a) community input from meetings, which indicated community needs and the degree of community readiness to join in forming solutions; b) key informant interviews, which provided expert opinion on various community needs, possible solutions, systemic factors, insights into political factors, and/or evaluation of organizational readiness for partnerships; and c) quantitative data, which provided evidence of need, locational and population priorities, and other nuanced aspects of issues.

Based on this information, an analysis was done looking at criteria including:

● Evidence of community need based on qualitative and/or quantitative data

● Community knowledge, energy and readiness to address an issue

● Existing or potential cross-sector partnerships for broad impact

● Existence of current efforts to replicate or learn from

● Political will and potential resources, if known

**GOAL 1: Secure the basic foundations so that people can have more control over their own health**

**FOUNDATIONS Priorities**

* 1. Address financial insecurity. Roughly half of all households in Hawaiʻi are living lives conducive to poor health because of financial constraints. There is not enough charity to change the living conditions of every other household in Hawaiʻi. Communities and families need coordinated and systemic supports to make good food and housing realistically accessible, develop workforce skills, create new economic opportunities, build financial assets, and reestablish active lifestyles that are giving way to economic pressures.
  2. Work together for equality and justice. At the root of health disparities are historical and current injustice. Instead of addressing the health consequences of that unfairness, society needs to become increasingly more inclusive and work alongside affected populations to address inequitable treatment and opportunity. Comprehensive approaches to support the advancement of Native Hawaiian health could very well improve the health of all people in Hawaiʻi. And efforts must be made to stamp out prejudice and unjust treatment of Pacific Islanders, immigrants, non-English speakers, people with disabilities, elderly, transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, and any others whose lack of privilege becomes an upstream cause of economic hardship, life traumas, poor healthcare, and poor health.
  3. Strengthen families. People of Hawaiʻi value their families, but financial pressures and stress take their toll. We need to create the conditions and opportunities for families to be healing forces for its own members—preventing domestic violence and trauma before it happens, eating healthy together, spending adequate time with one another, being the primary role models for keiki and primary caregivers of those in need.
  4. Prepare for emergencies. Natural disasters are on people’s minds, and for good reason. Working with community to prepare for these emergencies will not only mitigate future health impacts. It is a community building activity that can engage people, increase understanding of the most vulnerable populations, build food systems, and strengthen relationships and community cohesion.
     1. Hau’ula Emergency Plan
  5. Build good food systems. Hawaiʻi has the ingredients to ensure that nutritious food is available and consumed by all. Farming, subsistence expertise, grocery stores, farmers markets, cultural practices, culinary arts, prices, time, food waste—all of these factors must be thoughtfully organized to disrupt unhealthy aspects of our food consumption and establish access to good food, particularly for those whose health will benefit the most.
     1. **Food Systems Mapping – identifies available food in service area**
     2. **Food education in area schools (Sunset, Kahuku, Laie, Hauula, Kaaawa)**
     3. **Farmer’s Markets (Sunset, Waimea, Punaluu, Hauula)**

**GOAL 2 : Preserve, nurture, expand, and employ the healing properties of community**

**COMMUNITY Priorities**

1. Restore environment and sense of place. The natural environment is the health resource in Hawaiʻi. It is a critical provider of healthcare and health-risk prevention for the people of Hawaiʻi, particularly for those without access to medical care. For many people, the sense of connection to these islands is health itself. Efforts should be made to restore Hawaiʻi’s sense of place with better protections of natural resources, adequate preparation for climate change, good design and integration of the built environment, and reducing the negative environmental impacts of the visitor industry.

**2.1.1 Keep Laie Cool and other initiatives**

* 1. Nurture community identity and cohesiveness. Strengthening communities means actively working against forces leading people to feel more divided, isolated, and unfamiliar with the people and places around them. Greater trust and connectivity within community can be built through shared activities and events, active organizing around shared purposes, and instilling community pride. These efforts are more likely to be successful when they are led from communities themselves.
  2. Invest in teenagers and healthy starts. With almost all of the adults tied up with work, too many of Hawaiʻi’s children are ill-equipped to lead healthy lives. Investment in health and education at the earliest stages of life needs to expand. But in addition, there is a large void of support for pre-teens and teens who are not getting enough physical activity, sleep, healthy food, positive relationships with adults, and positive social engagement with one another. Many spend more waking hours at school or with their peers than they do with their parents. Therefore, school-based structures, community-based activities, and youth empowerment are three critical targets for investment of time and resources.
     1. **Food education in schools**
  3. Shift kūpuna care away from “sick care.” According to many accounts, the focus on medical care for seniors pulls attention away from boredom, loneliness, purposelessness, inactivity, and other social and emotional hardships of aging. A new paradigm of aging must be built so that healthy aging is available to more than just the few who can afford those supports and activities.

**GOAL 3 : Improve the relationship between people and the healthcare system**

**HEALTHCARE Priorities**

1. Strengthen trust in healthcare. Health disparities are caused in part by people not receiving thebenefits of healthcare, which is in part a function of people’s attitudes toward healthcare. We may not be able to know the full extent of people’s fear or mistrust of healthcare, but based on community accounts, it is high. Trust needs to be strengthened, and in some cases rebuilt, through listening, empathy, compassion, and treating the whole person. Healthcare workers need to be able to meet people where they are at in terms of language, culture, and community. And information needs to be shared in plain language that can engage people and effectively convey information.
   1. Provide accessible, proactive support for those with high needs. People with great needs, including those who are struggling with houselessness, mental illness, and addiction as well as those who are physically distant from healthcare require more proactive services, including outreach, early intervention, free healthcare services, mental healthcare, oral healthcare, and other preventative services
      1. **Slow down the progression of Type 2 diabetes** [**http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/39/Supplement\_2/S121**](http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/39/Supplement_2/S121)
      * **Explore having the CKD Center come to Kahuku once a month to care for patients there (32 total)**
      * **Explore opportunities to increase PD for Kahuku/Laie/Hauula residents – even exploring whether it might make sense to explore PD as an option for current HD patients living in Kahuku/Laie/Hauula**
      * **Pilot projects in the moku to create support systems (tribes) as traditional methods aren’t working**

**3.2.2 Explore, design, and build a health/wellness campus(s): KMC, Hauula, Malaekahana**

Work towards the outcome of greater/community good.

• Need to generate momentum – need tangible things (commitment, document/paper on which to hold)

• Necessary to BUILD on common ground – the merit is in the process

Perhaps with a few players and their progress/success story, it creates/promotes credibility. e.g. Molokai – breakthrough

**Consider:**

Working through smaller group process: “breaking bread” sessions for people to get to know each other and discuss what health means to them as well the proposed strategy to build relationships of trust/alignment

Support positive (and celebrate) projects that have positive momentum