

**Recommendations
of the
Saint Paul–Ramsey County
Community Health Services Advisory Committee**

July 2009

The Saint Paul – Ramsey County Community Health Services Advisory Committee (CHSAC) advises the Mayor, City Council and County Board of Commissioners on issues related to public health as defined in the Joint Powers Agreement approved by both local governments in December 1996.

For the past nine months the committee has investigated the topics of public health emergency preparedness, Community Health Services planning, underage drinking in Minnesota and Ramsey County, healthy homes for children (eliminating mold and lead), trans fat ban and caloric labeling in food establishments, public health teen parenting program, public health policy development, Nurse Family Partnership Program, Active Living Ramsey County and the joint annual meeting with Hennepin County and the city of Minneapolis on the subject of the multicultural health storytelling project.

Based on the presentations by staff and other experts and discussions by the CHSAC members, the following recommendations, not in any priority order, have been developed for consideration and action by the Saint Paul City Council and the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners.

Taken together, poor nutrition, tobacco use, hazardous use of alcohol, and physical inactivity contribute to more than 50% of all deaths and a proportionate amount of disability and health care costs in US populations. Unless individuals live in a physical and social environment that supports healthy behavior, they cannot sustain a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, the first four CHSAC recommendations to the Saint Paul City Council and Ramsey County Board are for action to significantly improve the life experience of residents in the city and county.

Diversity contributes to the resilience and quality of life in Saint Paul and Ramsey County. However, members of these populations have unmet needs that reduce their ability to fully contribute to the community. The second group of four recommendations, address actions that the Saint Paul City Council and Ramsey County Board can take to help vulnerable individuals in the city and county.

Recommendation #1 – Work towards limiting the use of trans fats and requiring the posting of caloric information in Ramsey County food establishments.

The committee supports the survey of the restaurants in Saint Paul initiated by the Saint Paul City Council, Resolution – 09-238. The resolution requests the Department of Safety and Inspections to work with the Minnesota Restaurant Association to survey the restaurant industry regarding trans fat in food preparation and menu labeling practices. The CHSAC supports the idea of voluntary participation in the survey process. The committee requests that the results of

the survey be provided to the Saint Paul - Ramsey County Department of Public Health (SPRCDPH) and the CHSAC. The committee encourages the Ramsey County Environmental Health Section to provide public education to the restaurant owners via the Thought for Food Newsletter on the topics of trans fat and calorie labeling in order to educate and motivate restaurateurs towards a substitute for trans fats.

Recommendation #2 – Create smoke-free campuses throughout Ramsey County.

The CHSAC Committee supports the Position Statement adopted by the SPRCDPH that would assist schools within Ramsey County in creating Smoke Free Campuses. The purpose of the position statement is to protect the health of students attending schools, colleges and universities in Ramsey County. SPRCDPH encourages all academic campuses to eliminate smoking on their entire campus. The committee endorses the proactive role of the SPRCDPH to protect the rights of non-smokers against involuntary health hazards and supports the role of encouraging and working with campuses (faculty, students and staff) to create smoke-free environments. The committee requests an update on this topic during the next program year (fall of 2009).

Recommendation #3 – Curb binge drinking by young adults using community-based programming.

The problem of binge drinking by young adults was discussed. Committee members were provided a copy of the recommendations created and approved by the Minneapolis Public Health Council. The committee members request they be kept apprised of the work of the Minneapolis task force and any possible actions by the Minneapolis City Council. The committee declined to support any specific changes to city policy at this time, but did wish to emphasize the need to enforce existing laws and to encourage community-based approaches to limit binge drinking.

Recommendation #4 – Support Active Living Ramsey County and endorse the Strategic Plan.

Physical activity is a behavior that reduces chronic disease and improves the health of people of all ages and racial and ethnic groups. Many individuals in Saint Paul and Ramsey County find that it is difficult to achieve healthy levels of physical activity in their daily routine.

Therefore, community and business leaders, elected officials, and representatives from cities in Ramsey County, the county, schools, and residents from all walks of life joined together in 2005 as Active Living Ramsey County! to bring about and sustain changes in design, transportation, and public/private policies to cultivate and support a way of life that makes physical activity in our neighborhoods and communities safer and easier. The Coalition's mission is "to create and promote environments that make it safe and convenient for people to integrate physical activity into their daily routines." Rooted in science, the coalition works to increase physical activity by creating a physically active, friendly community where people of all ages, abilities, and

backgrounds can participate in a wide variety of safe, convenient, attractive, and affordable physical activity opportunities in their daily routines.

The Coalition guides its interdisciplinary collaboration, in influencing policy, enhancing the built environment, and changing systems by using Active Living principles in the areas of:

- Community development and planning processes
- Building and landscape designs
- Parks and trails accessibility and connectivity
- Transportation systems and Complete Streets
- Facility and infrastructure maintenance and promotion

The committee has concluded that it is important to reduce the risk of chronic disease, improve the health and quality of life of Ramsey County residents by supporting Active Living Ramsey County's mission.

Recommendation #5 – Use the Multicultural Story Telling DVD and lessons learned to provide culturally appropriate public health programs.

At the annual joint meeting of the CHS Advisory Committees (Minneapolis, Hennepin and Saint Paul-Ramsey County) Minneapolis staff presented their work on the project (DVD and discussion) titled Multicultural Story telling. In the summer of 2006, Minneapolis Public Health developed a gender-balanced community advisory committee reflective of some of the major racial/ethnic groups residing within the City. Ten intergenerational health storytelling events were held and videotaped with members of the: African American, American Indian, Caucasian, Hmong, Latino, Somali, and Vietnamese communities. Gender-specific events were held in the African American and Somali communities. The focus of the events was to “talk about a time when their family/community was healthy.” In summer 2008, a short DVD of these events which highlights six of the dominant health themes was completed. The themes included:

- Extended kinship networks and social interaction promotes health.
- People can be extremely resilient despite great hardships.
- Health is viewed holistically, with physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects.
- Access to and engagement in physical activities is important to health.
- Racial/cultural pride and maintaining cultural traditions and ties to a cultural community are important to health.
- Culturally-competent and language-specific services are essential.

The result of this pilot project was to support the overarching need to shift traditional health paradigms focused on individuals and needs towards families and cultural assets in order to eliminate health disparities.

The CHSAC applauds the work of the Minneapolis Health Department in producing this DVD and requests that it be made available to local health departments, community groups and educational institutions. Members recommend the DVD be shown on a public access TV channel and suggest the Director of ECHO be contacted. Members request that it be made public on a web site for downloading. The committee suggests a presentation by Minneapolis staff involved in the project at a “Public Health Presents” lecture and invite community partners to participate as well.

Recommendation #6 – Develop strong cooperation among departments and agencies in identifying and addressing housing issues that adversely affects children’s health.

The committee will provide a letter of support from the CHSAC to be submitted with the 2009 HUD grant application indicating the City’s and County’s continued commitment to healthy homes and lead hazard control efforts. Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated that the home environment has been implicated in the rise of asthma prevalence and exacerbation rates due to airborne allergens. The CHSAC recognizes mold as a public health hazard. Recent work conducted by the Saint Paul – Ramsey County Department of Public Health and the City of Minneapolis, with HUD funding, has shown that coordinated improvements in the residential environment, in conjunction with medical management, lead to the greatest health benefits, particularly in high risk populations. The local research demonstrated that reductions in exposure to asthma triggers, such as pet dander, and dust mites, also results in reductions in health service utilization due to acute asthma exacerbations (hospitalizations, emergency room visits) and school absenteeism, and improvement in health related quality of life. Numerous studies indicate that program costs for durable equipment to reduce asthma symptoms were offset by savings from reductions in hospitalizations and emergency room visits. The committee supports legislation that requires health insurance coverage of durable medical equipment items necessary to reduce asthma symptoms including: HEPA vacuum cleaners, HEPA air cleaners, allergy bed and pillow encasements, furnace filters and dehumidifiers.

Recommendation #7 – Improve the lives of low-income, first-time families and their children by continuing and expanding the Nurse-Family Partnership of Ramsey County.

The CHSAC supports the continuation and expansion of the Nurse-Family Partnership of Ramsey County. Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) is an evidence-based community health program with a 30-year track record of success in helping transform the lives of vulnerable mothers pregnant with their first child. SPRCDPH began enrolling mothers in the voluntary prevention program in 2008, becoming the first Minnesota County to offer the Nurse-Family Partnership program in a large urban setting. Nurses in the program begin visits early in the mother’s pregnancy and continue visitation until the child’s second birthday. Mothers in the program receive support, education and counseling on health, behavioral and self-sufficiency issues. Services are provided to first-time mothers in their first trimester of pregnancy.

NFP has three main goals:

- Healthier babies – by supporting pregnant women to improve nutrition, reduce use of cigarettes, alcohol and illegal drugs;
- Improved child health and development – by helping parents provide more responsible, competent care for their children;
- Economic self-sufficiency – by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.

The RAND Corporation 2005 analysis found a net benefit to society of \$34,148 (in 2003 dollars) per family served, with the bulk of the savings accruing to government, equating to a \$5.70 return for every dollar invested in Nurse-Family Partnership. The analysis also found that for the higher-risk families participating in the first trial in Elmira, New York, the community recovered the costs of the program by the time the child reached age four, with additional savings accruing throughout the lives of both mother and child. President Obama has called for significantly increasing public investment so that Nurse-Family Partnership and other programs that meet its high evidentiary standard are available to all low-income first-time mothers.

Recommendation #8 – Promote the health and well-being of teen parents and their children by continuing and expanding the Public Health Teen Parent Program that works in conjunction with Ramsey County Departments of Human Services and Workforce solutions, public schools and community agencies.

The CHSAC supports the continuation of the Public Health Teen Parent Program that works in conjunction with Ramsey County Departments of Human Services and Workforce Solutions, along with schools, and community agencies to reach the following goals:

- promote teen and child health
- promote effective parent-child interaction and attachment, and positive parenting skills
- promote healthy child spacing and prevention of subsequent teen pregnancies
- promote high school graduation or GED completion to increase the long-term self-sufficiency potential of pregnant and/or parenting teens

Teen Parent Program promotes the health and well-being of teen parents and their children by emphasizing the importance of research-based, coordinated services that are accessible to all pregnant and parenting teens. Teens enrolled in the NFP program also receive MFIP related services from the PH Teen Parent Program.

Children born to teen mothers are more likely to experience: lower birth weights and related health problems, inadequate parenting, abuse and neglect, and poor school performance. More than 70% of teen parents receive TANF assistance.

Over 50% of families receiving MFIP began with a birth to a teen mother. Females whose highest education level was grades 9-11 earn 27% less than females with a high school diploma or GED.

The Ramsey County program has achieved success in the following areas:

- enrollment of teens and their children in health insurance programs
- increasing the percentage of vaccinated children and well-child examinations
- promoting child-spacing and reducing additional births to teens
- improving high school graduation and GED completion rates from 33% for teen parents enrolled in the previous MFIP program in 2003 to high school graduation and GED completion rates for teen parents of 64.5% in 2008