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Community Health Assessments Confirm Longstanding Concerns in Chippewa Valley
Mental Health, Drug Use, Alcohol Misuse Top List of Health Improvement Priorities

Eau Claire, WI, May 11, 2021 –The latest Community Health Assessments for Chippewa and Eau Claire counties indicate *Mental Health, Alcohol Misuse, Drug Use, and Obesity* remain among the top health concerns in the Chippewa Valley. The assessment results released this week in the final reports for both counties reflect findings similar to the previous two assessments conducted in 2015 and 2018.

The reports serve as the end result of an eight-month process that included a Community Health Survey; review of local, state, and national health comparisons; online Community Conversations with local residents; and meetings with local health coalitions. The assessments were conducted by a partnership including HSHS Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s hospitals, Marshfield Clinic Health System, Mayo Clinic Health System, United Way of the Greater Chippewa Valley, the Chippewa County Department of Public Health, and Eau Claire City-County Health Department.

In Chippewa County, *Mental Health* ranked as the top priority, followed by *Alcohol Misuse, Chronic Disease Prevention and Management, Drug Use, and Obesity*. In Eau Claire County, *Drug Use* topped the list, followed by *Mental Health, Alcohol Misuse, Obesity, and Healthy Nutrition*.

The health partners factored information from each step of the assessment process into the final rankings. Although Communicable Disease ranked higher than in past years, residents seemed less concerned about COVID-19 itself than its impact on other health issues, according to Project Manager Melissa Ives.

“One thing we heard over and over again is that the pandemic made everything else worse, especially due to the toll social isolation took on mental health,” Ives said. “Meeting participants also talked a lot about how closely mental health is connected to alcohol use, drug use, and other health issues as well.”

The reports will be used by the Community Health Assessment partners and local health coalitions – including the Chippewa Health Improvement Partnership and Eau Claire Healthy Communities – to develop plans for addressing community health needs. The assessment process takes place every three years.

Members of the public can find the reports on the Chippewa and Eau Claire public health websites:

TOP HEALTH PRIORITIES

Chippewa County

- *Mental Health*
- *Alcohol Misuse*
- *Chronic Disease*
- *Drug Use*
- *Obesity*

Eau Claire County

- *Drug Use*
- *Mental Health*
- *Alcohol Misuse*
- *Obesity*
- *Healthy Nutrition*

- Chippewa County – <http://co.chippewa.wi.us/ccdph/cha>.
- Eau Claire County – <http://bit.ly/EHealthAssessment>.

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