Windshield Survey

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Windshield Survey

A windshield survey is an informal way to physically assess a community. Just by observing the physical condition, resources, and people, health providers can get an idea of what a community is like.

Community

A community is a group of people who share something in common. Harkness and DeMarco (2012) identify communities based on geographical boundaries and governing structure, common interests or beliefs, and by a nation or society in general. Community health is measured by the rate of injury and disease of a group of people and their ability to adapt to change (2012). Community health is influenced by environment, needs, and resources. Rather than focusing on the individual, the group as a whole becomes the patient. Community as client involves health promotion and protection of the entire defined population.

Healthy People 2020 and the Role of the Nurse

*Healthy People 2020* has chosen a set of high priority health issues with ten-year goals to work at to overcome these current challenges. One of these Leading Health Indicators (U.S Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2013) addresses the proportion of children and adolescents who are obese. Nurses can promote healthy change by modeling positive habits and educating on nutrition and physical activity. When the client is the community, nurses can organize health fairs, present topics in schools or churches, or guide a public forum.

Community Health Risks

After completing a windshield survey in a small rural town, a few health risks came to mind. First, the main road through town is a state highway with heavy traffic. The elementary school is located on this road causing concern for the safety of children on bikes and walking to school. There are no cross walks and this two-to-three lane road is surrounded by homes and pedestrians. Additionally, several high school students need to turn onto this road after school. Secondly, the fact that it is a farming community adds a high risk for occupational hazards and injuries.

The closest hospital is thirteen miles away. In an emergency, the first responders would be the township’s volunteer fire department. There are no primary care offices or urgent care clinics within twelve miles. This a health concern for those with transportation issues especially without public transportation available.

Lastly, the community is at risk for health disparities due to the lack of ethnic diversity and the variation of socioeconomic status. The fact that there are no clinics for the underserved or emergency care contributes this concern as well.

Conclusion

Conducting a windshield survey was a quick way to physically survey an entire community. It gives an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the community and lays the groundwork for developing plans for community health.

References

Harkness, G. A., & DeMarco, R. F. (2012). *Community and public health nursing*. Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

U.S Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Leading health indicators. Retrieved September 27, 2013, from http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/LHI/2020indicators.aspx

Appendix

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| **Housing and zoning**Rural community.Housing varied from run down mobile homes to well kept larger homes.Most homes have yards, some with fishing boats, campers, basketball hoops, trampolines, or swing sets.Not many sidewalks and existing are in bad shape. | **Transportation**No public transportationPeople are driving cars, trucks, semi trucks, and motorcycles.A few people are riding bikes or walking on sidewalks. | **Race and Ethnicity**Majority of people seen are Caucasian. One African-American child. A few Hispanic adults in the mobile home park. |
| **Open space**Beautiful waterfall with a trestle above it.Several fields for crops and dahlia flowers.Some abandoned businesses. | **Service centers**Love, INC ministryDentist officeEye care officeChiropractorVet ClinicSkate park in constructionAccess to community pool, Zumba, Karate | **Religion and politics**Three Christian Reformed churches and one Evangelical Free Church of America.No evidence of political affiliations. |
| **Boundaries**State highway is the main road through town.River and railroad tracks.State game land on southern border. | **Stores and Street People**Families walking, people walking dogs, mowing yards, home improvement work, children playing.A few stores, restaurants, and pawnshops. | **Health and Morbidity**The closest hospital is 13 miles away. No local clinics or primary care offices. One pharmacy.Potential for accidents related to heavy traffic on main road.No signs of substance abuse.Potential for farming injuries. |
| **Commons**High school age kids gathered around cars in the grocery store parking lot.Recreation sports at the schools and local fields.Ice cream shop with play area. | **Signs of decay**Community seems alive and active.Signs for craft fairs, school fundraisers, family night at church.Community shows evidence of school pride. | **Media**Newspapers. People using their phones for texting, etc. |