

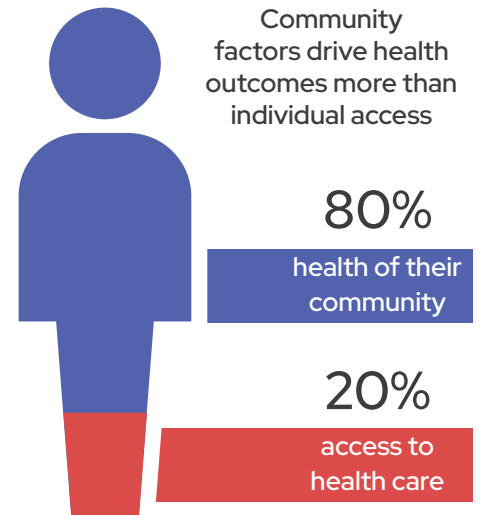


Building Your Legacy

Addressing the Factors that Shape Health

Where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age have a greater impact on health outcomes than how often they go to the doctor. With only **20% of a person's health being determined by access to health care, the other 80% is driven by the health of their community.**

Public health promotes health and well-being at the population level rather than treating individual patients. Public health investments – such as quality housing, clean air and water, and safe and accessible transportation – improve the health of entire communities. By leading with public health, county officials can have a greater influence on the health of a community than all its doctors combined.



How can county officials have the greatest impact on health?

Investing in the factors that shape health – sometimes referred to as the “social determinants of health” or “upstream measures” – is the most effective way to improve the health of an entire community. If you're unsure whether a particular investment is the best way to maximize your community's health, ask yourself the following questions. If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” then it will likely have a substantial impact on the health of your community.

County Health Checklist

Does the investment, policy, or intervention...

- Improve something about where people live, learn, work, play, worship, or age?
- Increase access to physical activity and/or healthy food?
- Prevent chronic disease?
- Prevent or treat mental illness or substance use disorders?
- Help a large group of people (as opposed to individuals, or just a few)?
- Help a group that has been neglected or harmed by previous policies and/or actions?
- Engage and include communities impacted by the action in the decision-making process?

The Factors that Shape Health

Economic Stability

People with [steady employment](#) are less likely to live in poverty and more likely to be able to afford things like housing, healthy food, and health care. A community where people live healthier, longer lives translates into a workforce with fewer sick days and more productive years. Three key ways to improve rates of steady employment in a community are to [promote access to higher education](#), [invest in business growth](#), and [increase availability of child care](#).

Education Access and Quality

Adults with higher levels of education have better [health outcomes and longer lifespans](#). Interventions that help children and adolescents succeed in school and support families in paying for college can have a positive impact on community health. Additionally, expanding access to [high quality, accessible pre-K programs](#) leads to increased high school graduation rates, higher earnings, reduced crime, and lower teen pregnancy rates.

Health Care Access and Quality

Access to health insurance and proximity to a health care provider are two of the many factors that influence whether people can regularly visit the doctor. Programs that increase the number of health professionals in a community and build infrastructure for remote visits can help facilitate access to care. In some communities, county health departments provide care to those without health insurance.

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Where people live, learn, work, play, worship, and age have huge impacts on their health. Housing, air and water quality, and transportation are some of the key areas that can be leveraged to improve the health of a community.

Social and Community Context

Relationships and connectedness with others are important parts of community health and well-being. County officials can facilitate this aspect of health through improving access to public transportation and sidewalks, facilitating the creation of gathering spaces in the community, and investing in mentorship programs that support adolescents.



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