

9 Common Dimensions of Healthy Community



A Healthy Community is...

A place to live where all people can ...

- Meet their needs: economic, social, physical, cultural, and spiritual.
- Work together for the common good.
- Participate in creating their future.

A community's health is made up of many separate but inter-related dimensions.

The 9 Common Dimensions of Healthy Community Include:

- **Life-Long Learning**

All ages have access to educational opportunities that enable them to participate in and contribute to the economic, political, social and cultural life of the community to the full extent of their potential.

This perspective is based on a definition of learning as a means of helping people be productive members of their community. It also emphasizes the need for a variety of educational opportunities.

Examples: Pre-K Education, K-12 Education, Higher Education, Community Education, Trainings, etc.

- **Inclusion**

People consistently make the effort required to capitalize on the range of differences in the community and intentionally seek ways to utilize the diverse backgrounds, experiences and skills of everyone for the benefit of the whole community.

Organizations, groups and local government actively seek out and encourage all people to participate in planning, decision-making and action in the community. The community recognizes and values the many benefits of including the voices and perspectives of all of its residents. The community is welcoming and makes a consistent effort to help everyone feel that they belong. There is a strong tendency for individuals to help each other and for groups and organizations to work together. When conflicts arise, people always make efforts to understand various perspectives and to approach problems constructively.

Examples: Ethnic diversity, poverty experience, people with physical disabilities

- **Recreational & Artistic Opportunities**

Everyone has access to a variety of recreational and artistic opportunities.

Part of the quality of life of a community is based on people of all ages, abilities, and interests having access to recreational and artistic opportunities that meet their needs. The variety of opportunities available expresses the cultural backgrounds, talents and experience of all community members.

Examples: YMCA, athletics, theatre, arts

- **Environmental Stewardship**

The community supports the environmental quality and management of natural resources that best provide for a sustainable future.

All segments of the community recognize the need for environmental quality and are willing to assist in and/or support the responsible management of the environment. The community is aware that it must decide carefully between competing long- and short-term uses of its natural resources.

Examples: Agriculture, DNR, environmental organizations

- **Infrastructure & Services**

The community has adequate infrastructure, and all people have access to essential services.

The community has the quality and quantity of infrastructure (e.g., transportation, telecommunications, water, sewer) it needs. Everyone in the community has access to necessary services such as sanitary living conditions, health and social services.

Examples: Human services, utilities, city employees, transportation, media

- **Safety & Security**

The community provides appropriate safety and security measures for all and actively addresses the causes and consequences of violence.

Safety issues and violence exist in every community. In a healthy community, there is adequate police and fire protection. People watch out for each other. Violence is acknowledged in its many forms (e.g., from criminal abuse and assault to subtle forms of discrimination). The community actively seeks to aid all those affected by violence and to change the conditions leading to violence.

Examples: City and county law enforcement, fire department

- Community Leadership

There are broad-based leadership structures in which many people fill leadership roles. The same people, or same group of people, do not hold all the elected offices or chair all the committees. Instead, many different people fill these positions and there is a regular turnover of those holding leadership positions. Volunteer activities do not depend on a small group of people. Volunteers are numerous and they reflect the diversity, (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, etc.) of the community. There are opportunities for people to gain or improve the skills that will help them to be more effective in leadership roles.

Examples: Government, chairs of committees, boards, nonprofits, BCLP participants

- Economic Opportunity

All people can earn an income that allows them to live with dignity. The economy of the community is sustainable and not dependent on exploiting human beings or depleting the natural environment.

This dimension has a two-fold emphasis. The first is on having economic opportunities that provide for adequate incomes. The second is on long-term viability through renewing and sustaining the human and other resources that create the community's economic advantages.

Examples: Small business, industry, chamber of commerce, economic development

- Spirituality & Wellness

A healthy community recognizes that a person does best when they are sound in body, healthy in mind, and grounded in values that direct their lives.

Because the community respects personal and cultural differences, there are opportunities to support people's efforts to live as "whole persons." This can include opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles, participate in programs that promote wellness, have access to faith communities of their choosing, programs that teach how to balance work, relationships, and community responsibilities.

Examples: Healthcare, clergy, religious organizations, YMCA, athletics

These are just a few of the dimensions that can be used as indicators of community health. Please keep in mind that like our personal physical health, our community's health is always subject to change and constantly needs our attention.