

Youth-Led Community Health Learning Initiative (YLCHLI)

in Partnership with the Del Valle & Montopolis Communities

August 30, 2019

Partners involved in the Austin/Travis County Community Health Plan completed a targeted assessment in the Del Valle and Montopolis area in 2019. Findings highlight disparities among geographic regions in the Austin/Travis County area and draw connections between social determinants of health and health outcomes. This information is presented to our community to update our 2017 Community Health Assessment and further inform our planning efforts.

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In Partnership with: Austin Parks & Recreation Department, Austin Public Health, Children's Optimal Health, Del Valle High School, Dell Medical School UT at Austin, SAFE Expect Respect Program, and Travis County Health and Human Services.

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Executive Summary:

Background: The Youth-Led Community Health Learning Initiative (YLCHLI) was a one-year pilot initiative aimed at identifying health needs and assets in partnership with the Del Valle and Montopolis communities via youth-led community health assessment and analysis of community health indicators. In addition, the initiative sought to build skills and capacity of young people in central Texas related to community health assessment while contributing to their overall healthy social development.

Methods: Guided by a community health advisory committee comprised of school, government, academic and nonprofit leaders, the YLCHLI was based in a mixed methods approach that included two primary components: 1.) a youth-led component in which youth based in the partner communities implemented a range of qualitative assessment methods aimed at exploring selected health topics (e.g., participatory mapping, data walks, photovoice); and 2.) a data analysis component consisting of analysis of existing quantitative health indicator data and use of geographic information systems (GIS) methods. In implementing the youth-led component, we partnered with two cohorts of youth in collaboration with Del Valle High School; and b.) youth working with Summer Youth Employment Program based at SAFE in Montopolis. Data primarily from the CDC and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's *500 Cities project* formed the basis of the community health indicator analysis.

Findings: Multiple strengths were identified within the Del Valle and Montopolis communities, including positive social relationships and sense of community as well as a range of community assets. These strengths notwithstanding, we also documented a challenging socioeconomic context for residents of Del Valle and Montopolis, with one in four and one in three residents, respectively, living below the poverty line. We also found a range of disparities in community health indicators for Del Valle and when compared to adults in Austin, state of Texas, and with the Healthy People 2020 goals. For Del Valle residents, health behavior and health outcome profiles were similar to the state of Texas. However, Del Valle residents fared worse in comparison with Austin residents and Healthy People 2020 goals for key *health behaviors* (smoking, physical inactivity, and sleep), multiple *health outcomes*- including mental and physical health, and access to and use of health care and preventive services. Montopolis residents fared better than Del Valle residents for selected health behaviors and some health outcomes when compared to Austin and Texas- although fared worse on obesity and poor mental health days. Both Del Valle and Montopolis adult residents fared worse across health indicators related to *access to and use of health care and preventive services* when compared to Austin and Texas. Findings from the youth-led community health assessment provide rich context for understanding these disparities, including identification of social and environmental barriers to healthy living, and mental health and health services, as well as recommendations for community health action.

Conclusion: Findings document both strengths as well as key health disparities for Del Valle and Montopolis adult residents, including environmental barriers to healthy living, which provide important targets for future community health planning. The valuable contributions of our YLCHLI youth co-investigators, including their insights, service, and leadership, demonstrate the power of youth for community health assessment and merit further consideration for community health improvement efforts locally and throughout the state.