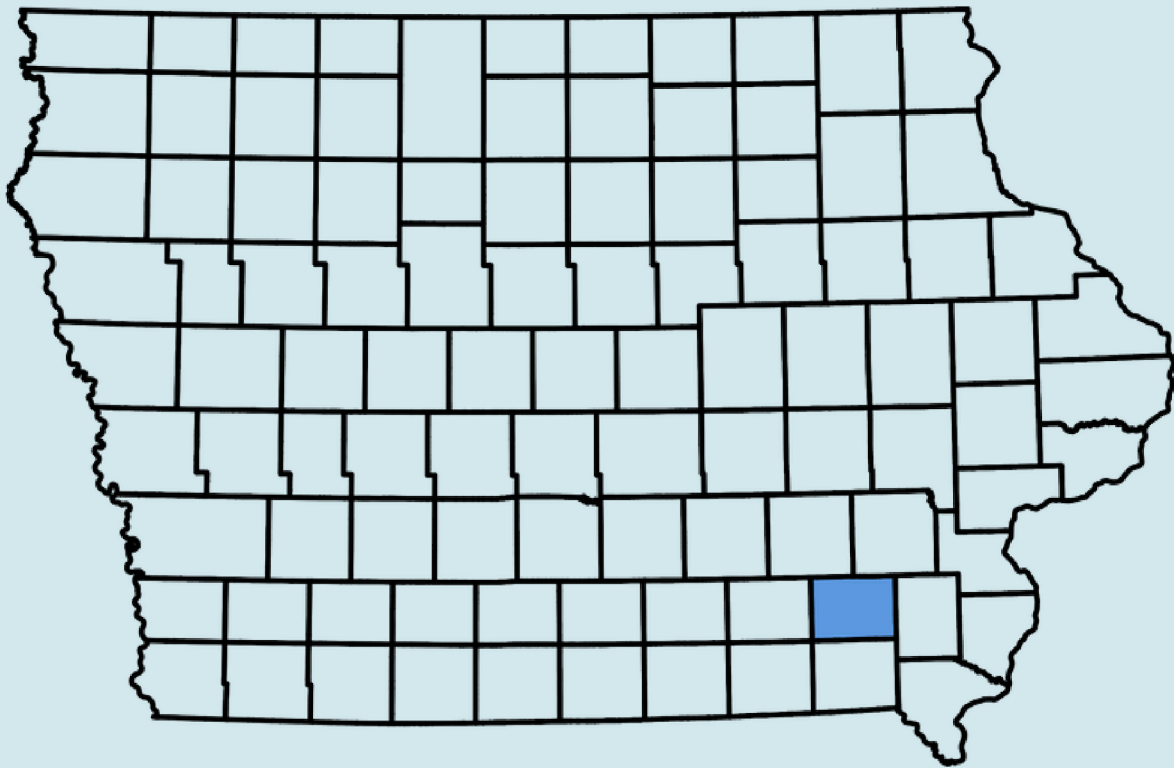


COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023

JEFFERSON COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

FAIRFIELD, IOWA



COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

A Community Health Assessment (CHA) is a vital tool for identifying the health needs and priorities of a specific community. It provides insight into the resources and interventions that are needed to address health issues in a community. By conducting a thorough assessment of the health needs of our county, community partners, stakeholders, and residents can gain a better understanding of the health disparities that exist and develop focused strategies to address them.

The Jefferson County Public Health Department, which is often referred to as JCPH, recently conducted a Community Health Assessment. This CHA involved multiple methods of data collection, including the analysis of secondary health data, interviews with both community members, stakeholders, and a community survey which was created and distributed within the population. The top community concerns identified from this assessment are: housing, mental health, substance use, healthcare access, and poverty. Within this document, the areas of concern are not listed order of priority.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Jefferson County is located in southeast Iowa and has a population of 15,698 (as of July 1, 2022). Jefferson County is considered to be micropolitan, meaning it has an urban core of at least 10,000 people, but less than 50,000 people total. 38.7% of the population lives in areas of low population density (500 or fewer people per square mile).

When it comes to health outcomes, Jefferson County is ranked among the healthiest counties in Iowa, in the top 25%. In health factors, Jefferson County is ranked in the top 50% (1).

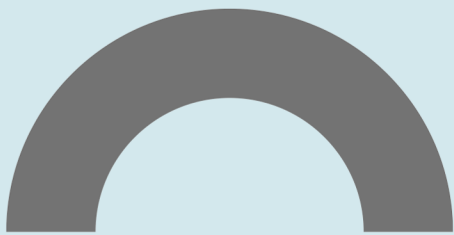
Much of the county's population resides in Fairfield, IA-the county seat. The city was given the title of "One of Iowa's Great Places," and is known for its vibrant culture and diversity in entertainment, shops, and eateries. Fairfield prides itself on having a focus on sustainability, and its rich agricultural and industrial heritage (2). It is also home to Maharishi International University, a private university that practices "consciousness-based education," including Transcendental Meditation.

SURVEY SUMMARY

Within the survey, participants were given a list of issues and asked to indicate what they felt were the most important issues affecting their community. From a list of concerns, 20% of respondents identified “housing quality and affordability” to be a concern. “Mental health” had the second most responses, with 19% of respondents identifying it as a concern. “Elder/aging health issues,” “poverty,” and “substance abuse” were also listed as pressing issues. These identified areas of need will be examined in the following pages.

SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

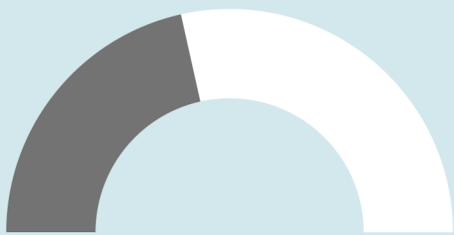
53 total respondents



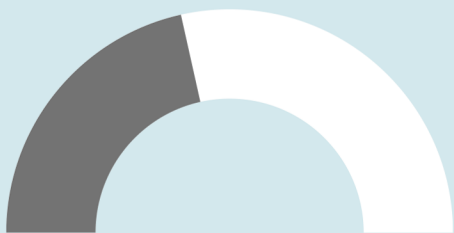
100% were Non-Hispanic White



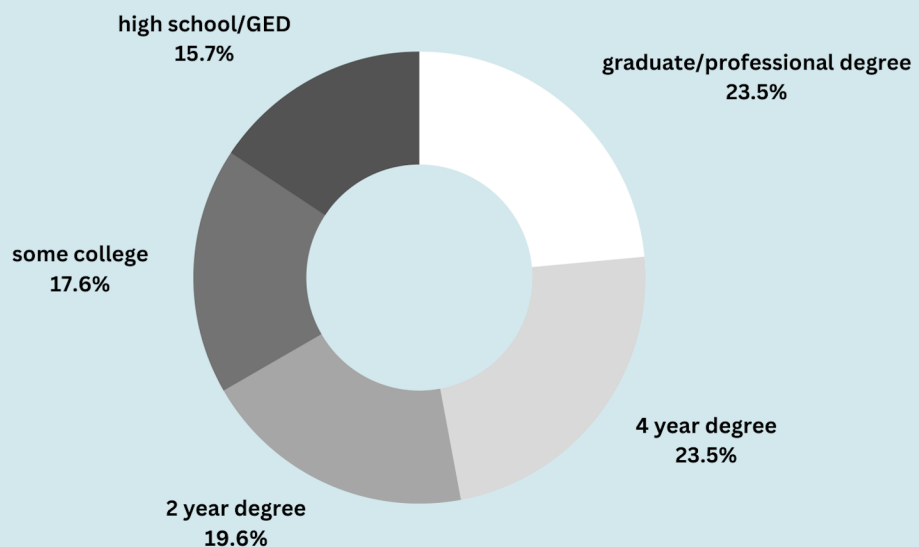
78% of respondents identified as female



43% were aged 65 or older



43% were employed & working full time



HOUSING



11.7% living with severe housing problems



24.6% spend at least thirty percent of their income on housing

Housing quality and affordability have been identified by the CHA as major issues in Jefferson County. In the survey, **11.7% of the population in Jefferson County reported that they were living with severe housing problems**, including overcrowding, a lack of kitchen and plumbing facilities, and high housing costs. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, housing costs in Jefferson County have been rising. Jefferson County has seen median house sale prices increase in single-family properties by 33.9% from June 2021 to June 2022. In addition to this, **24.6% of households in Jefferson County spend at least 30% of their income on housing**, more than the national median of 22.8%(5). Within the survey, people in Jefferson County that are 65 years and older expressed that there is not affordable and attainable housing in their communities. In 2023, the city of Fairfield completed a Rural Housing Readiness Action Plan. This comprehensive plan includes: Assessment, Public Input, Data Analysis, Education, Financing, and Recruiting Developers. This document can be found on the city of Farifield’s website.

Neighborhood and Built Environment are social determinants of health.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Goal: Improve housing quality and affordability.

Objective: Increase access to affordable housing by 2% by December 2026.

Strategy: The creation and implementation of home building, buying assistance, and rehab incentives may be done with support of the City of Farifield.

Explore the option of utility initiatives. This may be accomplished by waiving the connection fee for new constructed homes.

Identify and provide information regarding low-income Housing Tax Credit programs.

Public Health will advocate for safe, affordable housing for all.

MENTAL HEALTH

1:520

1 mental health provider for every 520 people (1)



11% have a hard time obtaining mental health services



12.3% of adults suffer from frequent mental distress (4)

Mental health has been mentioned in multiple instances throughout the CHA. It is viewed to be one of the top health concerns for Jefferson County by its residents. **In Jefferson County, there is one mental health provider for every 520 people (1).** This data demonstrates just how serious the needs for mental health providers and care in Jefferson County are, with its citizens expressing that there are not enough providers in the area to meet their community's needs. **Of the people who completed the survey, 11% answered that mental health was a service that was hard for them to obtain.** In a focus group of senior members of the community, participants stated that one of the negative aspects of living in Jefferson County is a high incidence of individuals with mental health problems. **According to U.S. News and World Report, 12.3% of adults in Jefferson County suffer from frequent mental distress (4).** In addition, there is also a lack of insurance coverage for mental health services in Jefferson County, meaning people may experience a large out-of-pocket expense for accessing mental health services. While there are currently efforts being made to increase mental health services in the community, its citizens still believe it is a serious issue within the county.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE



7 out of the 53 respondents reported binge drinking in the last 30 days

Substance abuse was identified as a concern within Jefferson County. Within the survey, **7 of the 53 total respondents reported binge drinking in the last 30 days.** It has been reported elsewhere that 22% of the county's population binge alcohol. Meth use by people older than 50 years of age in Jefferson County had also been mentioned in the focus groups as an area of concern. Currently there are several Mental Health and Substance Abuse coalitions functioning independently within Jefferson County.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Goal: Improve access in obtaining comprehensive mental health and substance use services.

Objective: Decrease the number of Jefferson County residents reporting binge drinking from 22% to less than 20% by December 31, 2027.

Strategies: Align current mental health and substance use groups within the county. (Alcohol and Tobacco Free Coalition, Jefferson County Mental Health and Wellness Alliance, Jefferson County Community Partner Group)

Promote mental health and substance use awareness through education, social media, and community involvement.

Work within group to identify care access issues.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS



47% of people visit JCHC when in need of medical care

1:1,530

1 physician for every 1,530 people (1)

Jefferson County Health Center is a critical access hospital located in Jefferson County. Throughout this assessment, people often expressed that healthcare services could be more accessible within the community. Of those surveyed, **47% answered that when they were in need of medical care, they visited Jefferson County Health Center.** Respondents also stated that they would like for there to be more health services in Jefferson County, which would allow them to stay closer to home while receiving care instead of having to travel outside of the county. Ten percent (10%) identified speciality services, 7% identified dermatology, and 6% identified vision care. Additionally, the focus on prevention and wellness care were listed at 8%.

In Jefferson County there are 1,530 people for each physician in the county, with a 1,360 average for the state (1). It is important to note; providers such as NPs and PAs are not included in this data. Some of the main concerns from the assessment include the lack of physicians, home health aides, and of overall funding in all areas of Jefferson County. Many of those surveyed often experience a wait time of 2-3 weeks for healthcare appointments.

Health Care Access and Quality is a social determinant of health.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Goal:

Improve access in obtaining healthcare services for all populations.

Objective: By December 2028, develop new healthcare access services within Jefferson County.

Strategy: Jefferson County Health Center diligently recruits healthcare providers. This includes but is not limited to: family practice, speciality providers, hospitalists, nurse practioners and physicians.

Engage with community partners in recruitment with potential healthcare providers.

Explore opportunities for system level change within traditional healthcare delivery system.

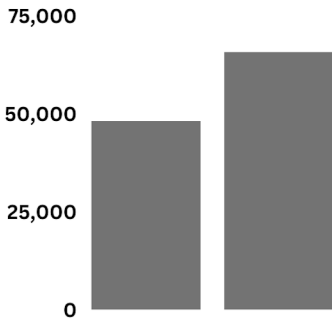
Move conversations from a disease treatment focus to wellness and prevention focus.

POVERTY

Poverty was a concern identified by the CHA. **The median household income in Iowa is \$65,600, but in Jefferson County, it is \$47,950.** In addition to this, **the poverty rate in Jefferson County is significantly higher than the Iowa average, with 13.5% of people living in poverty (7).**

Homelessness was also identified as a concern in Jefferson County, and according to staff at JCHC, there has been an increase in homelessness in Fairfield, resulting in a potential need for warming/cooling shelters. While poverty is a concern, Jefferson County provides multiple services aimed at those experiencing poverty specifically. In recent years, Jefferson County Public Health and other organizations in the community have partnered with Pathfinders RC&D to bring Bridges out of Poverty training to the community in hopes of improving the incidence rate of poverty in the area (6). Jefferson County General Assistance is also a service provided by the Jefferson County government to assist those who may have financial hardships and emergencies, and there is a confidential service number (211) that provides a list of resources within the community.

Poverty is the single largest determinat of health, according to the World Health Organization.



the median household income is \$47,950 - compared to Iowa's \$65,600



13.5% of residents live in poverty

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Goal: Decrease poverty in Jefferson County.

Objective: Reduce the poverty rate reported for Jefferson County by 2% within 5 years.

Strategies: Explore opprotunities within Jefferson County to decrease poverty.

Review previous Bridges Out of Poverty community outcomes and offer evidence based education.

Work with public/private partners to bridge gaps for individuals in need of assistance.

CONCLUSION

"Collaboration with community partners is key when it comes to improving outcomes in Jefferson County"

The data collected indicates a multitude of concerns and areas for improvement within Jefferson County. Within the focus groups, it was reported in multiple interviews that there is a resistance to change within this community, as well as a "lack of funding in all areas." Community stakeholders expressed the need for more activities for children and teens in the community (ex. roller-skating rinks, movie theatres). They also explained that more competitive salaries, affordable childcare, and a cost-of-living adjustment could be great steps towards improving the community.

REFERENCES

1. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/iowa/jefferson?year=2023>
2. <https://www.visitfairfieldiowa.com/about-our-vibe/about-fairfield>
3. <https://www.southeastiowaunion.com/news/economic-data-shows-varying-trends-for-se-iowa-2/>
4. <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/iowa/jefferson-county#food-nutrition>
5. <https://www.southeastiowaunion.com/news/economic-data-shows-varying-trends-for-se-iowa-2/>
6. <https://www.southeastiowaunion.com/life/bridges-out-of-poverty-development-day-planned-for-feb-24/?print>
7. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/jeffersoncountyiowa/PST045222>

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Hours:
Monday-Thursday:
7:30am-4:00pm
Closed 12:00-1:00
Friday:
7:30am-1:00pm



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Website: <https://jeffersoncounty.iowa.gov/health/>

"It is the mission of Jefferson County Public Health to promote mental, physical, and social well-being of all residents of Jefferson County while preventing illness and the spread of disease"