

2022 WILLIAMSON COUNTY
community
HEALTH
assessment



Executive Summary

Overview

To strategically address health issues within the community, it is vital to sustain broad community partnerships first and develop a shared vision and goals for the future. Led by Williamson County and Cities Health District, the 2022 Williamson County Community Health Assessment (CHA) was developed by a strong task force of community partners (CHA Task Force): Ascension Seton, Baylor Scott & White Health, Bluebonnet Trails Community Services, Georgetown Health Foundation, Healthy Williamson County Coalition, Lone Star Circle of Care, Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties, St. David's Foundation, United Way of Williamson County, and Williamson County. The 2022 CHA is designed to collect and analyze data to educate and mobilize communities, develop priorities, gather resources, plan actions to improve population health, and enable evidence-based goal setting and decision making for Williamson County.

Methodology

The CHA Task Force used a modified format of the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) process from the National Association of County and City Health Officials. The MAPP process is a proven systematic framework for identifying community health needs and the resources to meet them. The CHA Task Force used two assessments from the MAPP process: the Community Health Status Assessment and the Community Themes and Strengths Assessment.¹ The findings from each assessment are included as individual sections in the report. Together, the two assessments provide a comprehensive view of the factors influencing the community's health and guide the community's determination of priority areas.

The assessment process involved both quantitative data (e.g., numbers) and qualitative data (e.g., voices of the community) collection through various methods:

- Community Health Survey
- Photovoice (also known as "Youth with Cameras")
- Community and stakeholder focus groups
- Key informant interviews
- Primary and secondary data analysis
- Social Determinants of Health and COVID-19 Vaccine Survey

Community Health Status Assessment

The Community Health Status Assessment (CHSA) explores aggregated, population-level data to define the health status of the county and provide key findings to residents and stakeholders. Indicators are divided into 11 broad categories based on the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships framework's "Core Indicator List." The CHSA draws comparisons between Williamson County and Texas health indicators, as well as applicable targets from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2030 initiative.² The CHA Task Force obtained data from many primary and secondary sources at the local, state, and national levels. Significant secondary data sources include American Community Survey, Texas Department of State Health Services, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Local organizations, including Bluebonnet Trails Community Services, Hill Country Community Ministries, and Lone Star Circle of Care, also provided primary data.

In 2020, the **TOP 10 CAUSES OF DEATH** in Williamson County were³:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Heart diseases | 6. Unintentional Injuries |
| 2. Cancer | 7. Chronic lower respiratory diseases |
| 3. Alzheimer's disease | 8. Parkinson's disease |
| 4. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) | 9. Suicide |
| 5. Cerebrovascular diseases | 10. Influenza and pneumonia |

¹ "Phase 3: Collecting and Analyzing Data."

² "Healthy People 2030."

³ "Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2020: 15 Leading Causes of Death: Williamson County, TX on CDC WONDER Online Database."

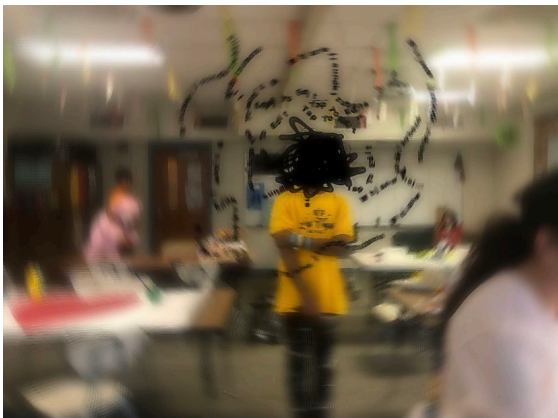
Community Themes and Strengths Assessment

The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment (CTSA) identifies current community concerns, perceptions about quality of life, and community strengths and assets through feedback from community stakeholders and the public. The concerns the CTSA found reveal four common themes: 1) the importance of engaging the community to improve health, 2) the connection to mental health, which was found to be woven throughout all the health concerns; 3) the impact of disparities, which exist in health across the county; and 4) effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed people's lives and opportunities to achieve health in many ways.



STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

- Communication and collaboration between agencies that provide community resources
- Availability of quality healthcare services
- Availability of community programs and services
- Availability of fresh food
- Availability of parks, green spaces, and opportunities for exercise
- Low crime/safe neighborhoods
- Good schools
- Mental health awareness
- Local assets and wealth



CONCERNS

Access to Healthcare

- Affordable healthcare for publicly insured or uninsured
- Awareness of resources and support for navigating healthcare system
- Lack of medical insurance
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate care and services

Social and Structural Determinants of Health

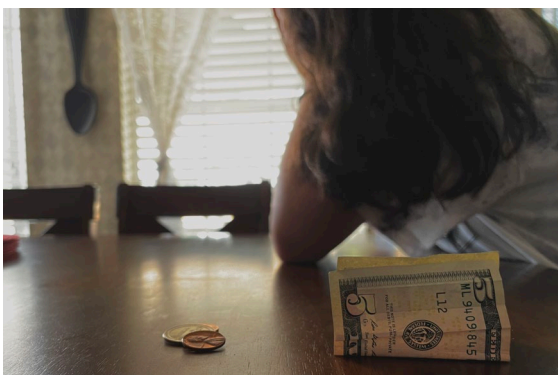
- Housing and homelessness
- Transportation
- Cost of living, affordability, and low socioeconomic status
- Broadband internet access
- Ethnic and racial segregation

Community Health Needs

- Challenges related to aging
- Chronic disease and chronic disease risk factors
- Dental care
- Mental health, isolation, and substance use

Children's Health

- Child abuse
- Intellectual disabilities
- Mental health



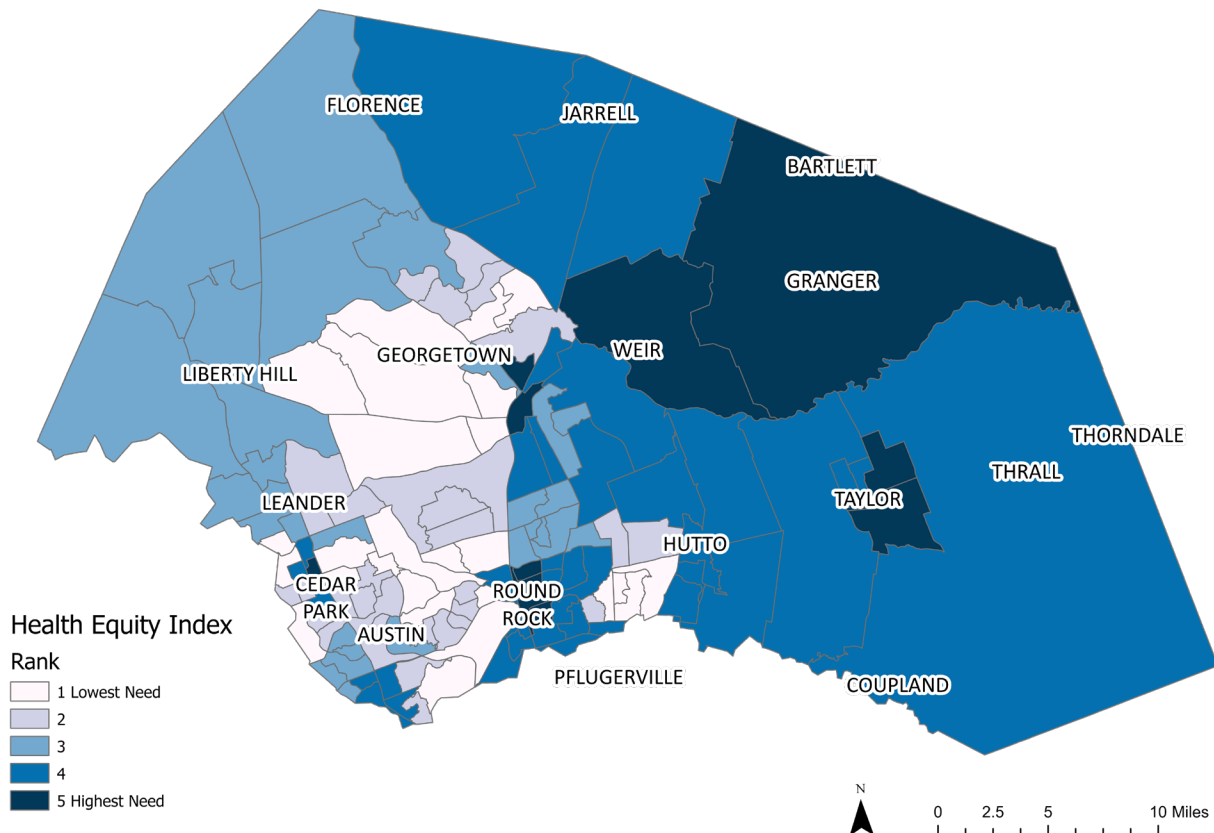
Health Equity Zones

In 2021, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ranked Williamson County as the second healthiest county in Texas, yet disparities in health and wellness persist.⁴

⁴ "County Health Rankings: Texas."

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, health equity “means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.” Health equity is a critical factor that contributes to the economic prosperity, safety, and security of all county residents.⁵

The 2021 Health Equity Index is a measure of socioeconomic need that is correlated with poor health outcomes. In Williamson County, census tracts are ranked from 1 (low need) to 5 (high need) based on their index value relative to similar locations within the county.⁶ Using the index, five health equity zones (HEZs) were identified in Williamson County. These are census tract areas that tend to have higher-than-average health risks and burdens. The HEZs in Williamson County include census tracts in northern rural Williamson County (Bartlett/Granger/Weir), Taylor, Georgetown, Round Rock, and Cedar Park.



Top Health Priorities

The Community Health Assessment (CHA) is just the first step of the community health improvement process. The companion document, the Community Health Improvement Plan, will be the community’s action plan for addressing the top health priorities and coordinating countywide efforts for the next three years. Through feedback and prioritization from residents, stakeholders, and the two Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships assessments, the CHA identified four health focus areas for decision makers to prioritize to improve health and wellness for all.

Unlike the health priorities in the past two CHAs, these are not ranked, as doing so would neglect the intertwined nature of the top health priorities. Quantitative and qualitative data show the importance of taking a whole-person- and whole-community-centered approach to improving health, for example, supporting holistic healthcare that includes mental health and basic needs, like transportation and housing. Furthermore, data show that the needs of the communities, cities, regions, and neighborhoods in Williamson County differ.

⁵ “What Is Health Equity?”

⁶ “2021 Health Equity Index.”

In developing solutions to health disparities, groups should focus not only on countywide efforts, but also on efforts targeted to each community, neighborhood, and region. More importantly, communities' needs are often better met by equipping them to make decisions that will impact health. By including community members in planning and by facilitating community-led efforts, groups can ensure their resources are used for appropriate and sustainable interventions.

The following are the top health priorities as identified by the 2022 CHA.



Social and structural determinants of health

Focus on improving basic needs (housing, transportation, broadband internet access, and living wages) for all and eliminating ethnic and racial segregation.

"Not having money really affects your mental health. You are trying to figure out, how I am going to pay this water bill, this gas bill, this light bill. I got electric due. I got car insurance. It's all rolling through your head, and there is no sleep, because you're trying to figure out how you're going to do it...I'm in a survival mode, and I need finances to just keep my head above water." — Focus Group Participant



Mental health and well-being

Focus on building resilience by improving mental health for children and youth and mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"A lot of hospitals forget that if a parent has a child in a [mental health] crisis, that parent is in crisis too. They forget that they need to help the family navigate and advocate...It is not a rush-through system. Help them learn how to help their family member or their child." — Focus Group Participant



Chronic disease and chronic disease risk factors

Focus on increasing healthy food access and physical activity.

Junk food is widely marketed, available almost everywhere, and is offered at unbeatably low prices, making it a contributing factor to high obesity rates. Healthy foods tend to be much more expensive than unhealthy food. It is difficult to eat healthily when unhealthy foods, such as donuts and cake, are cheaper than healthy food, such as apples. — Summary of discussion with youth Photovoice participant



Access to healthcare

Focus on increasing access to culturally and linguistically appropriate care and dental care for vulnerable populations (e.g., older adults, people of color, and people experiencing homelessness).

"Even the free places...a lot of times, they will still only work on one tooth, or they won't offer certain things like root canals." — Focus Group Participant

Conclusion and Implications for Williamson County

The 2022 Community Health Assessment is a comprehensive snapshot of the health and quality of life of Williamson County residents. Though the county consistently ranks among the healthiest in Texas, inequity persists — that is, health is not equally accessible for all community members. Community partners will use this assessment to guide the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan, the community's action plan to address the top health priorities and areas of need in the county. The CHA Task Force hopes this assessment will increase engagement in supporting the health of all who live, learn, work, play, worship, or age in the county and inspire efforts to build a resilient Williamson County.