



**BRAZOS VALLEY
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN
2020-2022**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Background & Community Health Improvement Plan Process	5
Community Health Improvement Plan Implementation Plan	8
Priority Issues	
Priority Issue 1: Access to Mental Health Care.....	8
Priority Issue 2: Access to Primary Care	11
Social Determinants	13
Next Steps & Sustainability	14
Appendices	
Appendix A: Steering Committee Members.....	15
Appendix B: Brazos Valley Health Coalition Member Agencies	16
Appendix C: The 10 Essential Public Health Services	18

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is a long-term, systematic effort to address issues identified by the assessment and community health improvement process. It should include the participation of a broad set of community partners. Partners can use a solid community health improvement plan to prioritize activities and set priorities.¹

In January 2016, the Brazos County Health Department (BCHD) formed the Brazos Valley Health Coalition (BVHC). BVHC will collaborate with numerous social service, healthcare, and governmental agencies to act as a coordinated group to address health issues in the Brazos Valley. The two main goals of the coalition include:

- Conduct a community health assessment (CHA) every three years to identify the health needs and strengths of the Brazos Valley.
- Develop a CHIP to determine health priorities and specific strategies that the coalition can implement to address the issues identified in the CHA.

The Steering Committee developed the BVHC mission statement to guide the coalition's work:

“The Brazos Valley Health Coalition is a collaboration transforming people, places, and communities for a stronger and healthier Brazos Valley.”

To develop a community-based plan to address health issues, the BVHC engaged community partners in the following ways:

- Steering committee members developed the BVHC framework and the assessment design and timeline.
- BVHC members provided feedback on the CHA components and determined the priority issues to address in the CHIP.
- BVHC members and other community partners formed task groups to create goals, objectives, and strategies to address the priority issues.

The 2020-2022 Brazos Valley Community Health Improvement Plan was developed in September 2021 using findings from the 2019 CHA. The assessment process incorporated existing secondary data, primary data from a randomized home survey, and qualitative data from community discussion groups held across the Brazos Valley region. The CHA is accessible at <https://cchd.us/publications/>.

¹ As defined by the Public Health Accreditation Board (<http://www.phaboard.org>)

The BVHC members chose the top two issues and formed task groups to address these priority issues as outlined in the CHIP:

Priority Area 1: Access to Mental Health Care

Focus on utilization of existing resources.

Priority Area 2: Access to Primary Care

Focus on improving resource coordination.

Community Engagement: “The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people.” – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

BACKGROUND & COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROCESS

Background:

The BCHD saw the need to form the BVHC as part of its public health accreditation efforts. The Public Health Accreditation Board measures health department performance against a set of nationally recognized, practice-focused, and evidence-based standards. The board also issues recognition of the achievement of accreditation within a specified time frame by a nationally recognized entity. ²

To develop a community-based plan to address health issues, the BVHC engaged community partners in the following ways:

- Steering committee members worked on developing the BVHC framework and the assessment design and timeline. They also secured sponsors.
- BVHC members provided feedback on the components of the CHA and determined the priority issues to address in the CHIP.
- BVHC members and other community partners formed task groups to create goals, objectives, and strategies to address the priority issues.

Formation of the Brazos Valley Health Coalition:

In 2015, the BCHD organized representatives from local healthcare and social service agencies to serve on a steering committee to assist with the formation of the BVHC. These agencies included the Brazos Valley Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Brazos Valley Council of Governments, CHI St. Joseph Health, College Station Medical Center, Health For All, HealthPoint, Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of the Brazos Valley, and the Center for Community Health Development at the Texas A&M School of Public Health.

The Steering Committee developed the vision and mission statement for the BVHC to guide the coalition's work.

Vision
A Healthy and Productive Community Through Collaborative Partnerships

² As defined by the Public Health Accreditation Board (<http://www.phaboard.org>)

Mission

The Brazos Valley Health Coalition is a collaboration transforming people, places, and communities for a stronger and healthier Brazos Valley.

The infographic below provides a summary of the coalition's mission, vision, and plan to improve the Brazos Valley.



In January 2016, BCHD, in collaboration with the steering committee and numerous social service, healthcare, and governmental agencies, formed the BVHC to act as a coordinated group to address health issues in the Brazos Valley. The two main goals of the coalition include:

- Conduct a CHA every three years to identify the health needs and strengths of the Brazos Valley
- Create a CHIP to determine health priorities and specific strategies that the coalition can implement to address the issues identified in the CHA.

Community Health Assessment:

The coalition conducted the most recent CHA in the spring of 2019. The steering committee members determined the assessment design and timeline. The assessment process incorporated secondary data from existing public sources, primary data from a household survey, and qualitative data from community discussion groups held across the greater Brazos Valley region, including Austin, Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Leon, Madison, Robertson, and Washington counties.

BVHC members provided feedback on the geographic scope and the components of the assessment. They also recommended specific population sectors to include in the discussion groups and what type of secondary data to report in the assessment. The complete CHA is accessible at <https://cchd.us/publications/>.

Priority Issues & Task Groups:

The Steering Committee reviewed the 2019 CHA results and chose three priority issues:

- Availability/access to primary care
- Availability/access to mental health care
- Patient care coordination

These priority issues were determined by reviewing previous health assessments and determining which topics continue to be problems in the community. The steering committee looked at trends in multiple counties throughout the Brazos Valley region to continue work started during the 2017–2019 CHIP.

On September 9, 2019, the steering committee presented the three priority issues to the BVHC. Through a dot voting process, BVHC members decided to focus on two priority issues. They then formed task groups to address the issues to be outlined in the CHIP:

Priority Area 1: Access to Mental Health Care

Focus on utilization of existing resources.

Priority Area 2: Access to Primary Care

Focus on improving resource coordination.

Each task group created goals and objectives to address their priority issue. During task group meetings, members narrowed the priority area to a focus area and developed specific and measurable goals and strategies.

The 2020-2022 Brazos Valley Community Health Improvement Plan was developed in September 2021, using findings from the CHA. The BVHC approved the CHIP on November 8, 2021.

“This (process) has been enlightening and encouraging. We can work together to make a difference.” – BVHC Member

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The CHIP outlines the two priority issues for the Brazos Valley for the next three years. The goals and objectives described below serve as a guide to implementing strategies that will further the mission of the BVHC.

Priority Area 1: Access to Mental Health Care

Background: The secondary data in the 2019 CHA identified several mental health factors:

- Except for Brazos County, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) designated all counties in the greater Brazos Valley as health professional shortage areas in mental health specialists.³
- The 2019 County Health Rankings reported that counties in the greater Brazos County Valley region have an average of 3.7 days of poor mental health days compared to 3.4 days for Texas.⁴

Findings from the home survey supported the secondary data:

- Mental health diagnoses were found in Brazos County at 24.1% compared to the rural counties (22.3%).⁵
- The mean number of poor mental health days for 2019 survey respondents was 6.29 out of 30 days, an 85% increase from the 2013 survey average of 3.4 poor mental health days per month.

In addition to the survey and secondary data, community discussion groups in multiple counties identified access to mental health care as an issue, a repeated theme from the 2016 CHA. Because of these findings, the BVHC determined that access to mental health care would be the first priority issue to address.

Goal #1: Awareness & Outreach

Develop outreach strategies to promote awareness of available mental health resources in the greater Brazos Valley Region.

- Strategy 1: Identify gaps of community mental health resources by December 2022.
- Strategy 2: Create at least two outreach opportunities to spread awareness of available resources by December 2022.

³ As reported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (<http://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/tools/analyzers/hpsafind.aspx>)

⁴ As reported in the County Health Rankings (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org>)

⁵ Center for Community Health Development. (2019) 2019 Brazos Valley Health Status Assessment Survey. College Station, TX: Center for Community Health Development.

- Strategy 3: Publicize the mental health website to at least 20 local partners by December 2022.

Goal #2: Database & Website

Develop a website and database that compiles all available mental health care resources in the greater Brazos Valley Region.

- Strategy 1: Design and launch a website to host mental health care provider database by March 2022.
- Strategy 2: Create a comprehensive mental health care provider database by March 2022.
- Strategy 3: Develop a mechanism to update the mental health care provider database by December 2022.

Priority Area 2: Access to Primary Care

Background: The secondary data in the 2019 CHA identified primary care access factors:

- The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) completely or partially designated all counties in the greater Brazos Valley as health professional shortage areas in primary care physicians.⁶
- The greater Brazos Valley region has a ratio of 5,418 persons per one primary care physician. In contrast, Texas has a 1:1,657 ratio of physicians to persons.⁷

Findings from the home survey and community discussion groups supported the secondary data:

- Community discussion groups in six of the eight counties of the greater Brazos Valley identified access to primary care as an issue, a repeated theme from previous years.⁸
- Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents (65.8%) reported putting off going to [their] healthcare provider when [they] felt [they] needed to. Of these, 40% said they delayed seeking care because they could not afford the cost.⁸

Because of these findings, the BVHC determined that access to primary care would be the second priority issue to address.

Goal #1: Increase awareness of primary care and other health care resources in the greater Brazos Valley.

- Strategy 1: Administer a survey to collect data from at least 50 primary care providers throughout the greater Brazos Valley regarding their awareness and use of community resources by March 2022.
- Strategy 2: Administer a survey to collect data from at least 100 residents throughout the greater Brazos Valley who have limited access to primary care regarding their awareness and use of community resources by March 2022.
- Strategy 3: Identify a process for primary care providers in the greater Brazos Valley to refer patients to appropriate social services based on the needs around social determinants of health by December 2022.

Goal #2: Improve coordination of primary care providers in the greater Brazos Valley.

- Strategy 1: Review care coordination models and share the report findings with the coalition by May 2020.
- Strategy 2: Using results from data collection, create at least one strategy (including materials and messaging) to increase coordination of care across the greater Brazos Valley by December 2022.

⁶ As reported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (<http://datawarehouse.hrsa.gov/tools/analyzers/hpsafind.aspx>)

⁷ Center for Community Health Development. (2019) 2019 Brazos Valley Health Status Assessment Survey. College Station, TX: Center for Community Health Development.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the conditions where people live, learn, work, play, and receive health care that can affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes⁸. SDOH to consider in the community include transportation, stigma, race and ethnicity, hunger, access to healthy food options, health literacy, insurance coverage, unstable or unsafe housing, and substandard education⁹. Addressing these determinants can help close equity gaps in the greater Brazos Valley Region, particularly those that influence the success of the two priority areas. The BVHC began the process of addressing social determinants by first considering transportation in 2016. This 2019 home survey findings also highlight the lack of affordable housing and poverty as emerging issues, a problem not previously identified in the 2013 survey.

Transportation

In the 2019 and previous CHAs, residents highlighted the lack of transportation as a concern across the Brazos Valley. Respondents reported that poor or inconvenient public transportation is the top community issue in the 2013 and 2019 surveys. Since the 2017-2019 CHIP, the United Way of Brazos Valley has led local organizations to improve healthcare transportation systems in the area. In 2021, the United Way of Brazos Valley will pilot the Ride2Health rideshare program to provide transportation to health care appointments for economically disadvantaged patients living in the Brazos Valley.

Affordable Housing & Poverty

The 2019 home survey findings show that lack of affordable housing and poverty are new to the top five community concerns list compared to the 2013 survey. These issues are related, and they can adversely impact health outcomes. When families cannot afford to meet basic needs, such as safe housing, they are less likely to meet their health-related needs. Nearly all of the greater Brazos Valley region has per capita income rates below the national rate¹⁰. The community discussion groups also shed light on this issue. Participants cited the lack of affordable housing as a community issue during discussion groups in five of the eight counties in the area. Issues related to poverty, such as lack of jobs and access to affordable food, were common themes. Access to affordable housing and poverty alleviation are potential areas to address in future improvement plans. The coalition and community stakeholders will continue to monitor these issues.

⁸ As reported by the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/>)

⁹ As reported by the Rural Health Information Hub (<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/social-determinants-of-health>)

¹⁰ Center for Community Health Development. (2019) 2019 Brazos Valley Health Status Assessment Survey. College Station, TX: Center for Community Health Development.

NEXT STEPS & SUSTAINABILITY

The BCHD, the BVHC, and the steering committee will continue to lead CHIP implementation. The task groups will work to meet goals for the two priority issues.

Task groups will review goals and strategies monthly to determine progress and achievement. They will also create action plans and timelines to assist with this process. The task groups will report progress and findings with BVHC members.

In the Fall 2021, the BVHC will begin work on the 2022 Community Health Assessment. To develop a community-based plan to address health issues, the BVHC will again engage community partners in the following ways:

- Steering Committee members will work on the assessment design, timeline, and sponsors.
- BVHC members will invite pertinent community partners and agencies to be involved with the BVHC.
- BVHC members will provide feedback on the components of the CHA and determine the priority issues to address in the CHIP.
- Task Groups will be formed from BVHC and other community partners to create goals, objectives, and project strategies to address the newly identified priority issues.

“Working together as a task group has allowed members to learn about each other’s services. This process has been connecting service providers.” – BVHC Member

Appendix A: Steering Committee Members

Jim Burdine, DrPH, Texas A&M School of Public Health

Heather Clark, DrPH, Texas A&M School of Public Health

Crystal Crowell, Brazos Valley Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Liz Dickey, Health For All, Inc.

Peggi Goss, United Way of the Brazos Valley

Jeff Hatala, PhD, Texas A&M School of Public Health

Sara Mendez, DrPH, Brazos County Health District

Fawn Preuss, CHI St. Joseph Health

Robert Reed, Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of the Brazos Valley

Julie Ribardo, PhD, HealthPoint

Morayo Suara, Brazos Valley Food Bank

Stacy Urbanczyk, Brazos Valley Council of Governments—Aging & Disability Resource Center

APPENDIX B: BRAZOS VALLEY HEALTH COALITION MEMBER AGENCIES

Angels of Care

Baylor Scott & White

Blinn College

Boys and Girls Club

Brazos County Commissioner's Court

Brazos County Health District

Brazos County Health Resource Center

Brazos Valley Care Coordination

Brazos Valley Council of Governments

Brazos Valley Council on Alcohol & Substance Abuse

Brazos Valley Food Bank

Bryan ISD

Bryan Parks & Recreation

Bryan Police Department

Burleson Health Resource Center

Brazos Valley Center for Independent Living

Catholic Charities Central Texas

CHI St. Joseph

Christ United Methodist Church

City of Bryan

City of College Station

Faith Advisory Network

Girl Scouts

Grimes County Health Resource Center

Health For All
Health Point
Hospice Brazos Valley
Human Trafficking Action Network
It's Time Texas
La Hacienda Treatment Center
Leon County Health Resource Center
Lincoln Center
Madison County Health Resource Center
Maximus
Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of the Brazos Valley
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Neal Recreation Center
Pride Community Center
Project Unity
REACH Project
Robertson County Health Resource Center
Ronald McDonald House Central Texas
Scotty's House
Symetria
Texas A&M University Health Science Center
Texas A&M University School of Public Health
Texas A&M University Telebehavioral Care
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Texas Department of State Health Services
Third Day Treatment

TMF

United Way of the Brazos Valley

Visiting Angels

WIC

APPENDIX C: THE 10 ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

The 10 Essential Public Health Services provide a framework that guides the work and the responsibility of the Brazos County Health District and the community it serves.

1. Assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets
2. Investigate, diagnose, and address health problems and hazards affecting the population
3. Communicate effectively to inform and educate people about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it
4. Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships to improve health
5. Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact health
6. Utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public's health
7. Assure an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be healthy
8. Build and support a diverse and skilled public health workforce
9. Improve and innovate public health functions through ongoing evaluation, research, and continuous quality improvement
10. Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health.

