Summary of 2014 Larimer County Child Health Survey Comments

The 2014 Larimer County Child Health Survey was a cooperative effort between the Health District of Northern Larimer County, the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment, local healthcare organizations and researchers who identified critical gaps in local child health data. This follow up survey to the Health District’s 2013 Community Health Survey asked adults who reported having a child 14 and under in their home about the child’s health. The final question on the Child Health Survey was an open ended question asking, “Do you have any comments you would like to leave regarding child health issues?”

There were 48 comments from the 336 people who responded to the survey. Responses were grouped into themes and summarized below followed by a word cloud to visualize frequently mentioned words.

Comments Summary

Access to and Affordability of Care

Affordable health care is a common concern. Changes to the health insurance system were viewed as beneficial and concerning. Some adults were optimistic, “hopefully Obamacare has changed that so all children and adults (human beings) have access to healthcare.” Others expressed uncertainty, “concerned about what Obama Care and the cost increases it is causing for health care.” Overall, adults are happy with the quality of care for their children. “I think this is a terrific environment to raise children and I’m pleased with the accessibility and quality of health care.” However, there were comments regarding financial constraints that limit access to optimal levels of care. “The cost of healthcare is almost unbearable.” Comments regarding access to oral health care largely mirrored general health care. Oral health comments focused on high cost and limited accessibility, “If you are not below poverty line, it is almost impossible to see an affordable dentist. It costs hundreds out of pocket for an exam so we have only been a handful of times in her life. We pay so much in premiums there isn’t any money left for anything beyond well checks.”
Exercise and Nutrition

Adults expressed mixed perceptions on the amount of physical activity children get. While adequate physical activity was mentioned, “limited TV and computer time. Encouraged to be active” others shared their difficulties, “I have struggled with physical activities for my daughter that she enjoys and/or continues to enjoy” Some comments suggested increasing school based physical activity, “PE time in elementary and middle schools need to increase.” Nutrition in schools was also a concern, “schools need to provide healthy fresh vegetables and fruit choices for children.”

Mental Health

Comments regarding mental health tended to be specific to their child, mentioning ADD, autism and behavioral conduct problems. One comment did mention the lack of mental health care accessiblity, “Overall in Larimer County, my concern, as a citizen and as a teacher, has been the lack of accessible on-going mental health care for children and adults.” When asked in a separate survey question, why their child did not receive needed mental health care, adults cited access and cost as a barrier. Some responses were: “Didn’t know who to turn to,” “School did not provide a reputable source of care” and “care was too expensive.”

Safety

A few comments regarding neighborhood safety expressed a lack of community and general health disparities. “The sense of community is dead and gone.” Adults seemed to be aware of these disparities and were concerned for the health and safety of others. “We are among the fortunate in our neighborhood to have the education and financial resources to provide an excellent health environment for our child. Most of our neighbors do not have this as their lived experience. We often witness different child environments and neglectful/abusive parenting.”

Substance Use

Adults that commented on substance use were concerned with the prevalence of illicit drug use in the community. “Opiate use is horrible in our community.” Tobacco was also of concern, some adults used maximizing language, “smoking tobacco or marijuana in the airspace of a child should be considered child abuse” while others expressed a more general unease, “I am concerned with the amount of second hand smoke my child is exposed to from neighbors and public places.” Education around marijuana was an important topic, “they have stopped educating the kids against the negative implications or marijuana use… I would like to see better anti-drug programs at school.” Many adults also noted the stigmatization of alcohol use and were comfortable with responsible consumption after a certain age. “I would rather expose my child in a non-taboo environment rather than make it taboo to the point where they abuse it later.”
Vaccinations

The topic of vaccinations or immunizations came up as a concern. Comments explained why adults may have delayed vaccinations and some stressed the importance of getting the necessary vaccines. Reasons for delays include medical issues and health insurance lapses. “I only briefly delayed vaccines due to medical reasons and then got her back on schedule.” One adult felt strongly about the necessity of vaccines, “I would prefer Colorado make vaccinations mandatory for all kids attending preschool/school – no opt out.” In general those who commented on the topic were in favor of vaccinations.

For more information or to request data please contact:

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Survey results can be found at the Health District’s website: http://www.healthdistrict.org/community-health-survey.