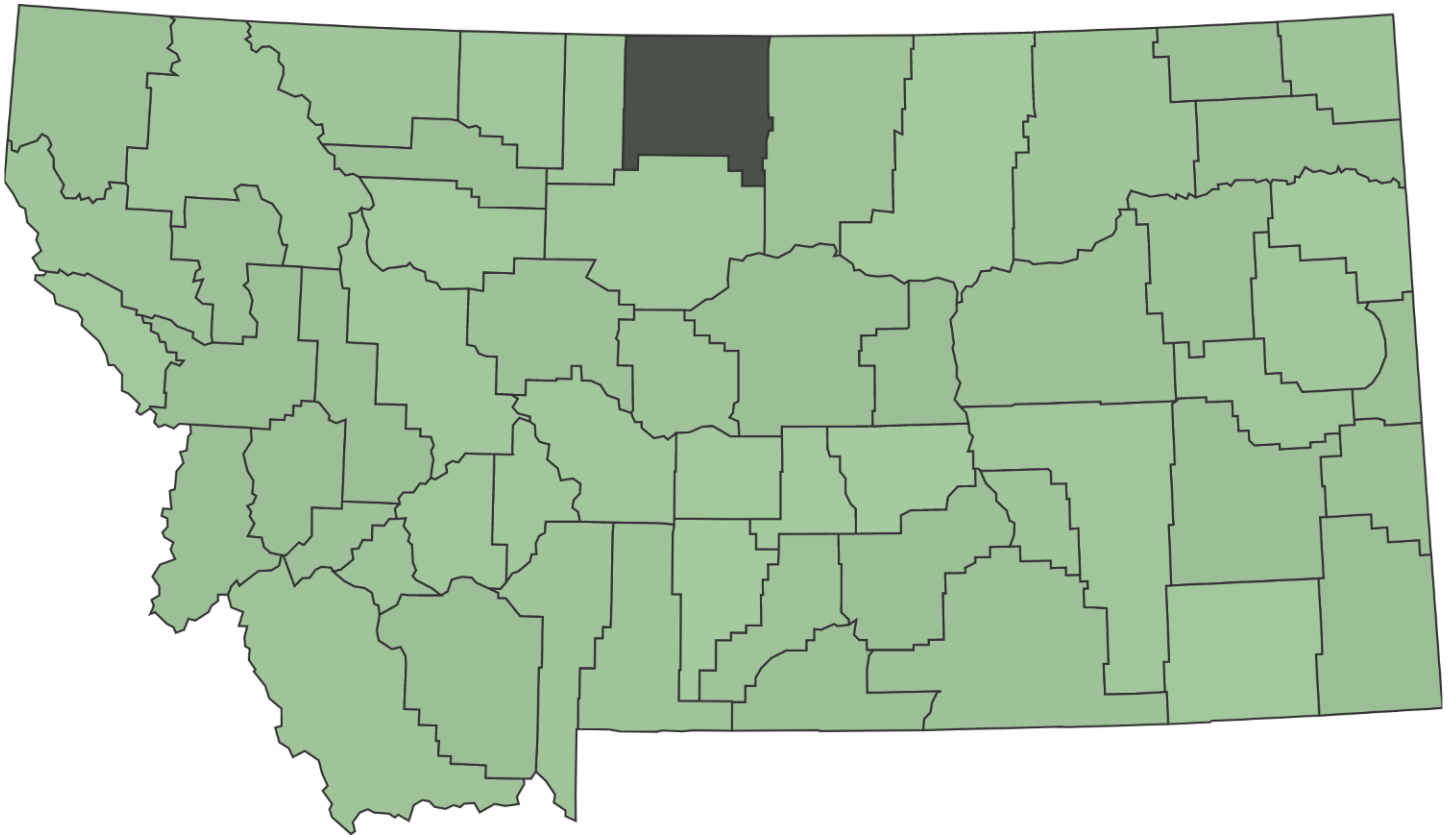


HILL COUNTY, MONTANA

COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2023



PREPARED BY THE HILL COUNTY HEALTH CONSORTIUM
DECEMBER 2023

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge the many partners, stakeholders, and community members whose time, effort, and resources contribute to the work of the Hill County Health Consortium and the preparation of this assessment, including the following:

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HELP Committee and Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line
Hill County Board of Health
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Hill County Extension Office
Hill County Health Department
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Youth Dynamics

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Executive Summary	3
CHNA Methodology	3
Understanding Social Determinants of Health	4
About Hill County	6

Data Profile of Hill County

Population Profile	6
Socioeconomic Profile	8
Behavioral and Health Profile	14

Key Findings and Areas of Opportunity	16
---------------------------------------	----

Access to Health Services and Community Resources	19
---	----

Next Steps	22
------------	----

References	23
------------	----

Appendix A: Hill County Community Health Assessment Questionnaire	24
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INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023 Hill County Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) follows similar studies conducted in 2012, 2014, 2017, and 2020. A CHNA is a systematic, data-driven effort used to assess a community's health status and needs, determine factors that shape health outcomes, and identify community-based resources able to address the recognized needs. Non-profit hospitals, federally funded Community Health Centers, and accredited county health departments must complete a CHNA. In addition to meeting IRS, federal funding, and accreditation requirements, the goal of a CHNA is to provide information that communities use to collaboratively identify issues of greatest need and to feasibly commit resources to those areas, making the greatest possible impact through coordination and prioritization.

This assessment was led by the Hill County Health Consortium (HCHC), whose principal partners are the Hill County Health Department, Northern Montana Health Care, Bullhook Community Health Center, District 4 Human Resources Development Council, and the HELP Committee and Boys & Girls Club of the Hi-Line. This assessment incorporates data from primary and secondary sources. Data was collected from Hill County residents through a survey instrument in June 2023, and employees of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services analyzed the results. Alongside key findings of these community survey results, a review of secondary county data and input from community stakeholders, health professionals, and human service organizations led to the prioritization of the following areas to be addressed in a subsequent Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP): behavioral health, access to dental care, and obesity. Both this CHNA and the forthcoming CHIP are intended to be living documents, used and updated as is most strategic for the ongoing work in Hill County of ensuring healthy people in healthy communities.

CHNA METHODOLOGY

A Community Health Assessment Survey is conducted in Hill County every 3 years to evaluate the health status in the community and to help identify priority areas. This survey utilized the services of SurveyMonkey.com. The consortium advertised the survey through traditional and social media and electronic mailing lists. Despite the mitigating circumstances, the 2020 community survey saw a 46% increase in the number of community participants from the 2017 CHNA survey.

Employees of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services analyzed the data collected from Hill County residents during the survey process. A total of 387 surveys were completed by Hill County residents. The analysis of these results led to the key findings that are presented within this document.

There were several limitations to this survey that demonstrate the need for secondary data sources, which are in the data profiles presented in this document. Some limitations to the survey's applicability to the general population is that the respondents were disproportionately female, which means that males are underrepresented in this survey. 85.06% of respondents in this survey were female, however only 49.10% of Hill County Residents are female per U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles. In another example of disproportionate demographics, the survey's race demographics do not reflect the reality of the county. 86.20% of survey respondents identified themselves as White (non-Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino descent), and 8.90% of survey respondents were American Indian/Alaskan Native. In reality, 70.3% of Hill County residents are White/not of Hispanic descent, and 24.7% of Hill County residents are American Indian/Alaskan Native.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. Conditions (e.g., social, economic, and physical) in these various environments and settings (e.g., school, church, workplace, and neighborhood) have been referred to as "place." In addition to the more material attributes of "place," the patterns of social engagement and sense of security and well-being are also affected by where people live. Resources that enhance quality of life can have a significant influence on population health outcomes. Examples of these resources include safe and affordable housing, access to education, public safety, availability of healthy foods, local emergency/health services, and environments free of life-threatening toxins. Understanding the relationship between how population groups experience "place" and the impact of "place" on health is fundamental to SDOH.

SDOH also contribute to wide health disparities and inequities. For example, people who don't have access to grocery stores with healthy foods are less likely to have good nutrition. That raises their risk of health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity — and even lowers life expectancy relative to people who do have access to healthy foods.

Just promoting healthy choices won't eliminate these and other health disparities. Instead, public health organizations and their partners in sectors like education, transportation, and housing need to take action to improve the conditions in people's environments.

Social Determinants of Health

Examples of SDOH include:

- Availability of resources to meet daily needs (e.g., safe housing, local food markets)
- Access to educational, economic, and job opportunities
- Access to quality health care services
- Access to quality education and job training
- Availability of community-based resources in support of community living
- Opportunities for recreational and leisure-time activities
- Public transportation options
- Public safety
- Social support
- Social norms and attitudes (e.g., discrimination, racism, distrust of government)
- Exposure to crime, violence, and social disorder (e.g., presence of trash, lack of cooperation in a community)
- Socioeconomic conditions (e.g., concentrated poverty and the stressful conditions that accompany it)
- Residential segregation
- Language/literacy
- Access to mass media and emerging technologies (e.g., cell phones, internet)
- Opportunities for cultural expression

5 Domains of SDOH



Sources: *Healthy People 2030*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>.

Healthy People 2020, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>

By working to establish policies that positively influence social and economic conditions and those that support changes in individual behavior, we can improve health for large numbers of people in ways that can be sustained over time. Improving the conditions in which we live, learn, work, and play and the quality of our relationships will create a healthier population, society, and workforce.

This CHNA shares the hope of one of the five overarching goals of Healthy People 2030: “To create social, physical, and economic environments that promote attaining the full potential for health and well-being for all.”¹

ABOUT HILL COUNTY

Hill County is located in north-central Montana on the “Hi-Line,” a region south of the U.S.-Canada border whose foundational infrastructure is the main line of the BNSF Railway and U.S. Highway 2. The county covers about 2,898.6 square miles of land and water (2022 U.S. Census

¹ Language and information in this section taken from: “Social Determinants of Health,” Healthy People 2020, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, retrieved Nov. 2020 from <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>; and “Social Determinants of Health,” Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, retrieved Nov. 2020 from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>.

Bureau), with major features including Beaver Creek Park, the nation's largest county park, and sections of the Milk River Project, including the Fresno Dam and Reservoir. Hill County borders Canada, with the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan to the north. Adjacent counties are Blaine County to the east, Chouteau County to the south, and Liberty County to the west. Part of Hill County is within Rocky Boy's Reservation, which also extends into Chouteau County.

Hill County has a population of 16,068 (2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate). The county seat and most populous city is Havre, with an estimated population of 9,213 (2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate). Other communities in the county include Box Elder, Gildford, Hingham, Kremlin, Inverness, Rocky Boy, Rudyard, and the East End, Gildford, and Hilldale Hutterite Colonies.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration, Hill County is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for Primary Care, Dental Care, and Mental Health Care.

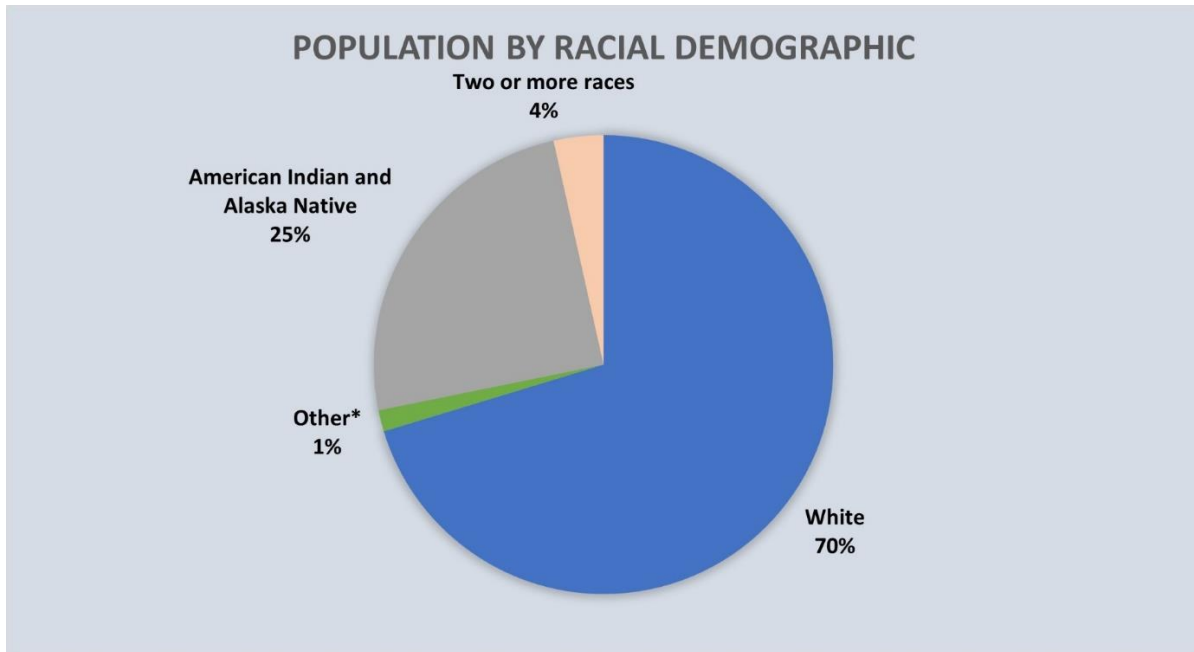
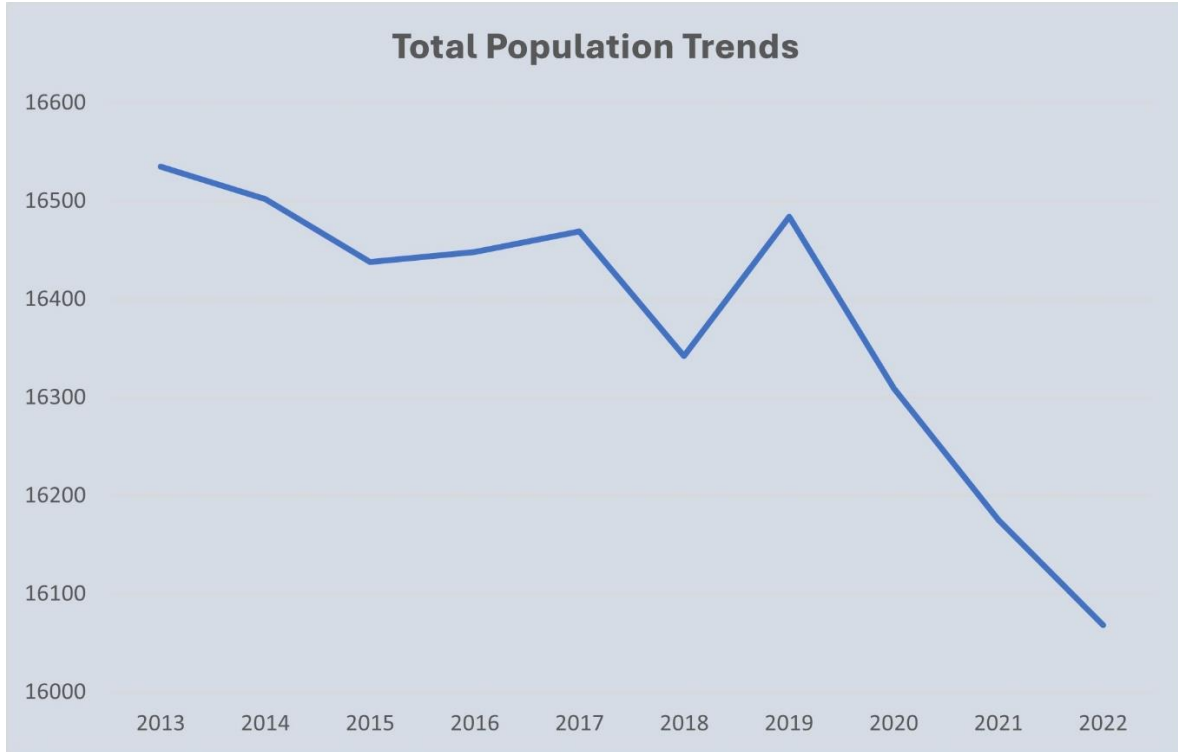
DATA PROFILE OF HILL COUNTY

The tables and related descriptions in this section provide a profile of Hill County based on available secondary data. Except where otherwise noted, all data and descriptions are from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates dataset and community profile narratives.

POPULATION PROFILE

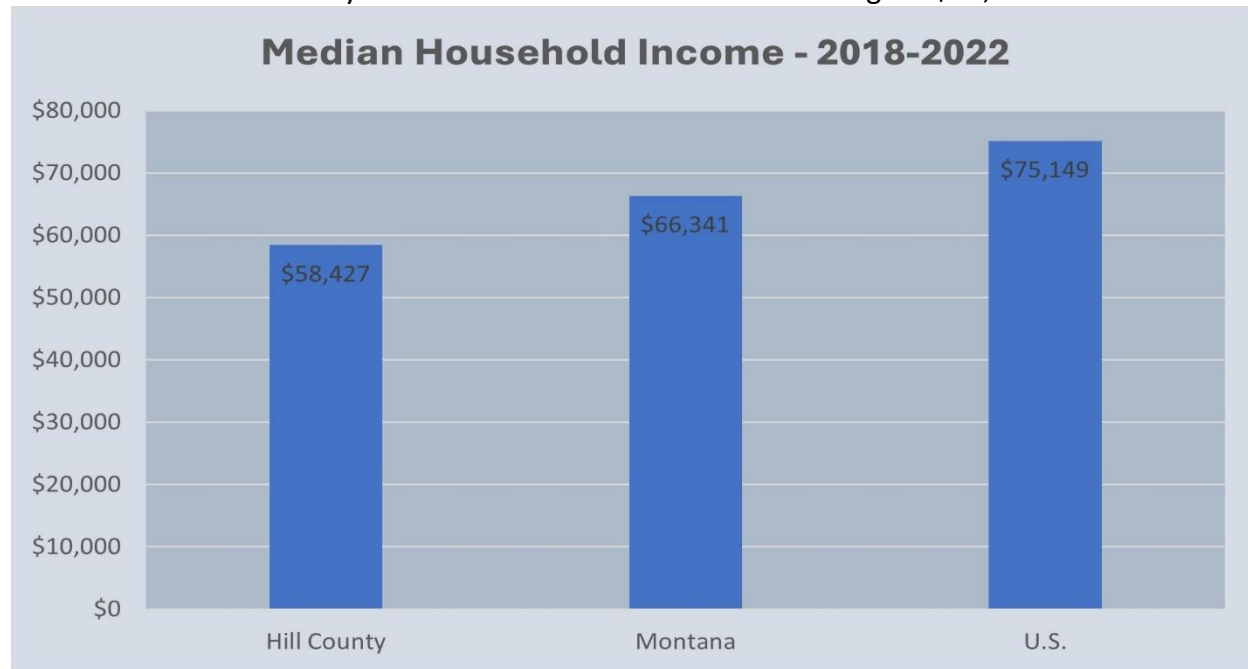
Hill County has a total population of 16,068, with 7889 (49.1%) females and 8,179 (50.9%) males. The median age is 34.3 years. An estimated 27.8% of the population is under 18 years, 31.2% is 18 to 44 years, 25.1% is 45 to 64 years, and 16.1% is 65 years and older.

For people reporting one race alone, 70.3% are White; 0.4% are Black or African American; 23.7% are American Indian and Alaska Native; 0.4% are Asian; 0.0% are Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 1.0% are some other race. An estimated 4.2% reported two or more races. An estimated 3.8% of the people in Hill County are Hispanic (people of Hispanic origin may be of any race). An estimated 69.2% of the people are White non-Hispanic.



SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

Median household income for Hill County is \$58,427. Median earnings for full-time year-round workers are \$41,704. Male full-time year-round workers have median earnings of \$47,341, whereas female full-time year-round workers have median earnings of \$35,828.



FINDINGS AND AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

KEY FINDINGS

The following top ten health issues were drawn from the survey, asking the community, “Using the following list, for each potential problem, please tell us if this is not a problem, a problem, a big problem, or don’t know.” Weighting these responses, “a big problem” carried a weight of 2, “a problem” carried a weight of 1, and “not a problem” and “don’t know” carried a weight of 0.

The community sees the following as the top ten health concerns in Hill County based on the perception of “a problem” and “a big problem”:

1. Depression and Anxiety

- 93.50% of survey respondents identified Depression and Anxiety as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 22.55% identified depression and anxiety as “a problem”
 - 70.96% identified depression and anxiety as “a big problem”
- 25.98% of those surveyed reported a “fair” or “poor” overall mental health
- Residents reported an age-adjusted average of 4.1 poor mental health days (mentally unhealthy days) in the past 30 days (County Health Rankings 2020)

2. Alcohol Abuse

- 91.56% of survey respondents identified alcohol abuse as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 24.46% identified alcohol abuse as “a problem”
 - 67.10% identified alcohol abuse as “a big problem”
- Excessive drinking rate is 23% (percentage of adults reporting binge or heaving drinking) (County Health Rankings 2020); Montana’s excessive drinking rate is 21%
- Alcohol-impaired driving death rate is 43% (percent of driving deaths with alcohol involvement) (County Health Rankings 2020)

3. Illegal Drug Use (meth, heroin, marijuana, etc.)

- 90.43% of survey respondents identified illegal drug use as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 21.12% identified illegal drug use as “a problem”
 - 69.31% identified illegal drug use as “a big problem”
- In 2019, drug abuse violations comprised 11% of all adult arrests. 63% of these arrests were male and 37% were female. (Hill County Sheriff’s Office NIBRS)
- In 2019, the crude rate for emergency department encounters in Hill County for drug overdoses (defined as ICD-10 codes T36-T50 “Poisoning by drugs, medicaments and biological substances” and F10-F19 “Mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use”) was 3,882.55 per 100,000 (MT IBIS)

4. Obesity

- 90.17% of survey respondents identified obesity as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 35.74% identified obesity as “a problem”
 - 54.43% identified obesity as “a big problem”
- Adult obesity (percentage of the adult population age 20 and older that reports a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 30kg/m²) is 38% (County Health Rankings 2020)

5. Suicide

- 86.52% of survey respondents identified suicide as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 35.86% identified suicide as “a problem”
 - 50.66% identified suicide as “a big problem”
- Suicide rate from 1999-2018 per 100,000 people: 17.5 for Hill County and 22.3 for MT (CDC Wonder)
- Intentional self-harm injury emergency department visit rate from 2016-2017 was 298.9 per 100,000 population (age-adjusted rate) (MT IBIS)

6. Tobacco Use

- 82.78% of survey respondents identified tobacco use as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 42.38% identified tobacco use as “a problem”
 - 40.40% identified alcohol abuse as “a big problem”
- 14.7% of survey respondents reported smoking “some days” or “every day”
- 23% of Hill County residents report smoking (County Health Rankings 2020)

7. Diabetes

- 82.74% of survey respondents identified diabetes as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 32.34% identified diabetes as “a problem”
 - 50.50% identified diabetes as “a big problem”
- Diabetes prevalence among adults was 10.1% in 2017 (Interactive U.S. Diabetes Surveillance System)

8. Availability of Affordable Housing

- 80.20% of survey respondents identified availability of affordable housing as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 35.57% identified availability of affordable housing as “a problem”
 - 44.63% identified availability of affordable housing as “a big problem”
- 13% of homes reported severe housing problems (households with at least 1 of 4 housing problems: overcrowding, high housing costs, lack of kitchen facilities, or lack of plumbing facilities) (County Health Rankings 2020)

9. Cancer

- 79.60% of survey respondents identified cancer as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 45.39% identified cancer as “a problem”
 - 34.21% identified cancer as “a big problem”
- Cancer incidence rate for all cancers from 2013-2017 was 415.2 (annual average, age-adjusted rate of cases per 100,000 people) (U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group)

- Cancer mortality rates for all cancers from 2013-2017 was 172.4 (annual average, age-adjusted rate of cases per 100,000 people) (U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group)

10. Prescription Drug Use

- 76.08% of survey respondents identified prescription drug use as “a problem” or “a big problem”
 - 35.22% identified prescription drug use as “a problem”
 - 40.86% identified prescription drug use as “a big problem”
- In 2018, the opioid dispensing rate in Hill County was 42 per 100 people (CDC 2018)

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

In addition to the top ten health issues identified by survey respondents and discussed above, several other areas of opportunity emerged from the questionnaire.

When the survey prompted for the “Top 3 for a Healthy Community”, “Access to health care and other services” ranked first, followed by “safe neighborhoods” and “good paying job opportunities”. When asked what could improve the community’s access to health, improving the availability of walk-in clinics/urgent care clinics was the highest-ranking choice, with 81% of survey respondents identifying it as a top way to improve access. When prompted with “How do you learn about health-related services available in our community? Check all that apply”, the top three ways that people found out about health care services were friends/family, social media, and word of mouth/reputation. When asked “During the past three years, was there a time when you or a member of your household felt that you needed health care services but did NOT get, or delayed getting services?”, 50% of respondents said “Yes.”

When asked “What do you think needs to be available, or improved upon to make Hill County a better place to raise children? Pick top 3”, the top results were more activities for teens, more things for children to do with free time, more parental resources for helping raise children, and more clubs/activities for children.

Finally, most survey respondents also identified Access to Mental Health Services (like counseling, treatment) as an issue. 32% of people in the community identified “mental health access” as “a problem”, and 37% identified it as “a big problem”.

AWARENESS AND ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Many things contribute to a community's access to health services and resources that contribute to health and wellbeing. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration, Hill County is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) for Primary Care, Dental Care, and Mental Health Care. However, the survey responses indicate that Hill County residents might not be fully aware of the many resources in their community that are available to them or how these resources could be mobilized to address identified needs. The HCHC will continue its collaborative efforts both to build the available resources in Hill County and to raise awareness of and increase access to said resources for its constituents. This section highlights some of the key health resources currently available.

Northern Montana Hospital is in Havre and is the only hospital in Hill County. This Critical Care Hospital has 25 beds. The Northern Montana Hospital campus includes several medical clinics and a vision center. Services provided by this system include an emergency department, birth center, dialysis, hospice, a sleep center, day surgery, and cardio-pulmonary rehabilitation. The campus also includes Northern Montana Sletten Cancer Center, the Northern Montana Care Center (a 136-bed skilled and intermediate care facility), and Northern Montana Assisted Living.

Bullhook Community Health Center is also located in Havre, and it provides overall health care from birth to end of life. Bullhook Community Health Center provides preventive care, education, behavioral health, case management, urgent and primary care, and dental services to its patients regardless of their ability to pay. It is a Federally Qualified Health Center funded in part by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to serve county residents without insurance or those who are underinsured.

The **Hill County Health Department** is also located in Havre. The Health Department provides many services to Hill County, including Public Health Emergency Preparedness, Disaster and Emergency Services, immunizations, WIC, family planning, HIV education and testing, a home visiting program, and various other programs aimed at promoting physical and emotional health, preventing disease, injury, and disability, and protecting the environment and population.

Rocky Boy Health Center, located in Box Elder on Rocky Boy's Reservation, offers a comprehensive range of services, including but not limited to primary care, emergency medical services, community health nursing, optometry, physical therapy, Public Health Emergency Preparedness, immunizations, preventive care, diabetes education, chemical dependency services, HIV education and testing, prenatal and newborn services, dental services, women's health care, behavioral health services, and a wellness program.

The **Merril Lundman Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic**, located in Havre, provides various services to veterans and their families.

Dental services in Hill County are offered by those facilities indicated above and also by the **Havre Dental Group**, **Harada Family Dental Care**, **Dr. Lee Laeupple**, and **Dr. Robert Marshall**.

Vision/optometry services in addition to those already mentioned include **Evans Optical** and **Havre Optometric Clinic**.

In addition to the behavioral and mental health services offered by the major healthcare facilities previously mentioned, there are a number of other behavioral and mental health providers in Hill County.

Havre has a local office of the **Center for Mental Health**, which partners with people and communities to produce integrated mental health and substance abuse services. Their teams provide quality mental healthcare, diversified programming, and a full range of community-based services to both adults and children.

Havre also has a local office for **Youth Dynamics**, a children's mental agency serving youth and families. Their services include therapy, case management, family education and support, foster and respite care, mentoring, therapeutic youth home care, equine-assisted therapy, substance abuse treatment, and independent living skills.

Havre is also home to a **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Chapter**. NAMI provides advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives. NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

Additionally, the **Havre/Hill County Mental Health Local Advisory Council** and the **Hill County Suicide Awareness Coalition** are local advocacy groups working towards meeting the mental health needs of Hill County.

Although located in Havre, the **District 4 Human Resources Development Council (HRDC)** serves Hill, Blaine, and Liberty counties, including Rocky Boy's and Ft. Belknap Reservations. As a Community Action Program (CAP) agency, the Council's goals are to serve, advise, educate, and aid society in projects aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty. Various services offered by HRDC District 4 include Head Start/Early Head Start, housing, employment and training, energy assistance, victim services including a shelter for victims of violence, a food bank, and emergency services.

As noted above, with increasing health care costs and given the rural and frontier nature of Hill County, access to care can be limited and constraining for many. A possible way to increase awareness and access to health services is to increase the local and regional utilization of connectmontana.org. **CONNECT** is a secure, web-based system for sending and accepting referrals, and it is HIPAA, FERPA, 42CFR and IDEA compliant. **CONNECT** is free-to-use and supported by the state of Montana.

Another resource provided by the state of Montana that would address a need identified by survey participants is **ParentingMontana.org**, which hosts an expansive collection of age-specific, situation-specific, evidenced-based resources for those in parenting roles to use with children of all ages, from infancy to teenage years.

NEXT STEPS

The information in this CHNA will continue to be used by the Hill County Health Consortium (HCHC) and community members to identify and prioritize health needs that can be strategically addressed over the next three years. The data from this CHNA will be presented publicly, and input from the community and the HCHC will be incorporated into future editions of this document. An initial review of the key findings from primary and secondary data by community stakeholders, health professionals, and human service organizations led to the prioritization of the following areas to be addressed in a subsequent Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP): behavioral health, access to dental care, and obesity. Both this CHNA and the forthcoming CHIP continue the ongoing, collaborative work in Hill County of ensuring healthy people in healthy communities.

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