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BRIGHT Coalition seeks input for 2-year community health plan

By JACKSON FRENCH jfrench@bgdailynews.com 22 hrs ago

Local officials are asking people across 10 counties to help them form a picture of their communities' health issues.

The Barren River Initiative to Get Healthy Together Coalition is conducting its third community health assessment since 2007.

Dennis Chaney, director of the Barren River District Health Department, said input from the survey will be used to formulate a two-year community health plan.

This year, the survey focuses more on community factors like median income, unemployment and high school graduation rates than previous iterations have because of the long-term impacts such factors can have on an area's health, Chaney said.

"A lot of the research in the last few years has challenged groups like the BRIGHT Coalition to look at the root causes of local health issues," he said.

For instance, Chaney said lower rates of high school graduation tend to lead to lower levels of employment and a lower median household income, which can impact the safety of neighborhoods and access to healthy food.

“They are a predictor of health outcomes, not just for southcentral Kentucky but across the whole country,” he said.

BRIGHT will formulate its next community health plan based on input from the community and data from countyhealthrankings.org, Chaney said.

Chaney also noted that, according to the county health rankings, Oldham County is the Kentucky county with both the best health outcomes and the highest median income.

“This is the first of those surveys to truly take a look at the social determinants of health,” he said.

According to data on countyhealthrankings.org released in March, Warren County is the healthiest county in BRIGHT’s purview, ranking 21st in overall health outcomes among Kentucky’s 120 counties.

The other BRIGHT counties include Barren, Butler, Logan, Simpson, Edmonson, Hart, Allen, Metcalfe and Monroe, which have ratings ranging from 30th to 92nd in the state.



Doris Thomas, vice president of development at Commonwealth Health Corporation and a member of BRIGHT’s board of directors, said getting the community’s feedback is a crucial first step to learning what the new health plan needs to address.

“It is key in doing the community health plan because without that, we wouldn’t know what the needs are,” she said.

Once the feedback has been gathered, BRIGHT will work together with Western Kentucky University to determine the largest issues based on the the surveys so the coalition knows what to address in its 2019-20 health plan.

“Those social components are important and have a lot of influence on someone’s health,” she said.

The survey is available on barrenriverhealth.org. Additionally, Chaney said, paper copies of the survey, in English and Spanish, can be picked up at the department’s office, and various community partners like the Warren County Public Library and TJ Samson Community Hospital are making the survey available on their websites.

“We want to be able to get representation from all walks of life,” he said.

The survey will be available through October.

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Jackson French

General assignment reporter focusing on features and regional coverage.

