

Social Determinants of Health

Mayors Wellness Campaign addresses wellness through community programming

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Now in its 25th year, the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute (Quality Institute) works with organizations throughout the Garden State to improve the safety, quality, and affordability of health care for everyone. While some of our work focuses on health care price and safety transparency or quality improvement, we also work with community leaders through our Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC).

The MWC provides tools and strategies to support communities in addressing health and wellness at the local level. This includes a focus on what are referred to as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH).

How we live, work, and play

SDOH are the conditions under which people live, work, and play which can have a significant effect on their health. SDOH include job opportunities, housing, having clean air, water and open space, quality public education, and access to healthy foods. Differences in SDOH across racial, ethnic, and economic groups have created inequities in health outcomes, especially for historically marginalized groups. It is essential to focus on SDOH to achieve health equity within our communities.

In July the MWC hosted a webinar and released two of our new MWC Social Determinants of Health Tools. We created the SDOH tools in collaboration with John Pepen, MPP, MD, a surgeon at Atlantic Health System's Overlook Medical Center and a Senior Fellow of the Quality Institute.

The first tool focuses on food security and how mayors can support residents' access to nutritious foods. Already a top priority for MWC communities, in 2019, food insecurity affected 800,000 residents in New Jersey or 9% of households. Researchers estimate this number has nearly doubled because of the pandemic and resultant economic conditions.

The new tool gives mayors and community leaders an overview of food insecurity, its impact on community health, federal and state program enrollment, resources to help residents, and evidence-based strategies to include in their MWC programs.

The tool includes highlights of successful community efforts. For example, the Montclair MWC is a part of the Montclair Community Farm Coalition, which includes several community partners dedicated to tackling local food insecurity. Their Mobile Food Stands reach residents where they are, focusing particularly on those in senior housing and others in need of food access by subsidizing produce prices and accepting the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The Mobile Food Stand, which has 7 sites in Montclair and surrounding towns, served over 470 individuals, grew over 4,000 pounds of organic produce, and increased SNAP transactions while also engaging over 1,000 volunteers.

Recreation, clean air and water, and safety

The second SDOH tool addresses land use planning, which includes considering recreation, clean air and water, and safety—all issues that impact our health. This tool provides an overview of land use planning and community health, resources for incorporating health considerations into land use planning, and evidence-based land use strategies.

We highlight Paterson's MWC, which launched several efforts, including a Green Schoolyards Coalition, research on crime prevention through environmental design, and evaluation of its parks and recreation options. Most recently, Paterson partnered with St. Joseph's Health to secure a development grant to build the city's first Fitness Zone in Pennington Park featuring state-of-the-art fitness equipment and a playground. The zone was completed in February 2022 and is now fully operational. 

About the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute

At the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute, our mission is to improve the safety, quality, and affordability of health care for everyone. Our vision is to create a world where all people receive safe, equitable, and affordable health care and live their healthiest lives.

About the Mayors Wellness Campaign

The Mayors Wellness Campaign is a program of the New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute in partnership with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities. The program empowers mayors across New Jersey with evidence-based tools, strategies, and support to champion health and wellness in their communities.

The session **Bringing Wellness to Your Community with the Mayors Wellness Campaign** welcomes mayors and others to attend on **Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 2 p.m., room 414.**

