

This is Fletcher Allen Health Care's report on its Community Needs Assessment for publication on or before March 1, 2007.

HISTORY

In 2004, Fletcher Allen conducted its fourth periodic Community Needs Assessment: an assessment of community assets and needs in Chittenden County and Fletcher Allen's service area as defined by the Vermont Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care Administration (BISHCA).¹

The assessment is designed to identify and prioritize the health care needs of Fletcher Allen's service area from its perspective as both a community hospital and a regional tertiary-care service provider.

The assessment was conducted through a collaboration among Fletcher Allen, the United Way of Chittenden County, the Champlain Initiative and numerous other community partners. Results of the assessment guide the development of priorities and strategic plans not only for Fletcher Allen, but for the United Way and many other community organizations.

The 2004 assessment included information gathered from two different sources: members of our community, and health care data (collected from a variety of sources) about our community's health, and its health care needs.

1,807 survey responses were received, including paper and on-line surveys, those responding via a phone survey, and one-on-one interviews.

The survey portion of the assessment identified three major health improvement priorities: **substance abuse, health care costs, and physical health.**

- Substance abuse (including drugs, alcohol and tobacco) was the primary health improvement priority, with 51 percent of respondents citing substance use or abuse as a top health and wellness concern, and 48 percent ranking substance abuse services as inadequate.
- Health care cost (lack of health care insurance and concerns about the cost of insurance and health care services) was the next major priority, with 32 percent of respondents citing lack of health insurance and the high cost of health insurance as their top health and wellness concern. Of note is that 33 percent of the survey respondents also cited health concerns as a top community problem – one-third of these specifically cited substance abuse as the top problem.
- Physical health (including obesity, poor nutrition and eating habits, and lack of exercise) was the third priority area. Twenty-four percent of respondents cited obesity as a top health and wellness concern, while 8 percent cited poor nutrition and 5 percent cited physical health related to exercise.

These priorities were substantially similar to those identified in earlier community needs assessments.

¹ The BISHCA-defined service area focuses on Vermont residents served by Fletcher Allen. In its role as a regional tertiary care center, Fletcher Allen regularly serves a large number of patients outside of this defined service area, including other regions in Vermont as well as northern New York.

2006 METHODOLOGY, RESULTS

On April 21, 2006, Fletcher Allen, the United Way of Chittenden County and the Champlain Initiative issued a press release and e-mailed all their partners to encourage people to participate in a new survey to update the 2004 Community Needs Assessment. The press release and e-mail messages directed people to a Web site where they could respond to the survey electronically, and also invited them to download a copy for completing and submitting it by mail, fax or in person.

The survey invited respondents to rank items identified in the 2004 Community Needs Assessment by category. A copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix A.

1,805 surveys were completed.

Because the methodology of the 2004 and 2006 surveys differed (the 2004 survey was entirely subjective, the 2006 version was more objective), differences could not be quantified. Overall, the results of the 2006 effort appeared to mirror those of the 2004 survey, with the top three health and wellness concerns being:

- Health care cost, access and availability
- Substance abuse
- Physical health

As noted earlier, the difference in the methodologies between the two surveys precluded specific comparisons. Three items did receive significantly higher notice in 2006 than in 2004:

- High cost of insurance
- Global warming
- Chronic disease

PUBLIC COMMENT 2006

On September 12, 2006, Fletcher Allen hosted a public forum on its 2006 Community Needs Assessment survey. Notice of the forum was published on Fletcher Allen's Web site, and sent to the same e-mail lists used for the survey. A legal notice announcing the forum was published in the *Burlington Free Press*. Approximately 20 people were present at the forum, including members of the Board of Trustees, Fletcher Allen senior leaders, two representatives from the United Way and one member of the public. A representative from the United Way asked if the results of the survey would influence the next iteration of Fletcher Allen's strategic plan and was told that they would.

The Community Health Improvement page on Fletcher Allen's Web site (www.fletcherallen.org) contains a copy of the 2006 survey instrument, the results of the 2006 survey and demographic information on respondents and a compendium of responses to the "other" option in the survey. These items complement a series of links to publications concerning the 2004 survey. Site visitors may click on the e-mail link to Community Health Improvement staff to ask questions or offer comments or concerns.

ADDRESSING IDENTIFIED AREAS

Fletcher Allen's report on the 2004 Community Needs Assessment detailed a variety of ways it works through its Community Health Improvement department to address the areas of concern identified by the public (pages 5 and 6 of the 2004 Community Needs Assessment).

In relation to the areas of concern identified again in 2006, Fletcher Allen supports additional efforts:

Health care cost, access, and availability

- In late 2004, Fletcher Allen increased its charity care eligibility, raising the eligibility guidelines to 300 percent above the federal poverty level.
- In late 2004, Fletcher Allen established an uninsured discount policy. The policy gives any uninsured patient a standard discount that represents the average discounted rate Fletcher Allen accepts from health insurance companies. The current discounted rate is 49 percent.
- In 2006, Fletcher Allen expanded staff availability in its Health Assistance Program.

Substance Abuse/Mental Health

- Beginning in Fiscal Year 2005, Fletcher Allen is providing both financial and in-kind support to the Mental Health Education Initiative (M.H.E.I.). The purpose of M.H.E.I. is to support people in recovery and to reduce stigma.
- Fletcher Allen's Mental Health Program Quality Committee continues to bring clinicians and consumers together to improve the quality of mental health care.
- Fletcher Allen, as the state's academic health center, has been a key participant in the ongoing dialogue about mental health services in Vermont. Robert Pierattini, M.D., physician leader of Psychiatry at Fletcher Allen, has represented Fletcher Allen's Psychiatry Service in these discussions, and formally serves on The Futures Advisory Committee, a group of Vermont citizens and mental health professionals looking at redesigning the state's mental health system.

Physical Health

- Beginning in Fiscal Year 2005, Fletcher Allen is providing small grants to community-based partnerships of two or more entities, known as "healthier living grants."
- Fletcher Allen co-sponsored the Vermont Obesity Summit on October 31, 2005. This day-long summit brought together dozens of key policy-makers to address the topic of obesity in the state, and featured panel discussions, workshops and a plenary session with representatives from local businesses, schools and health care providers.
- Fletcher Allen has received three grants from the Vermont Department of Health for activities associated with the Vermont Blueprint for Health to coordinate and promote Healthier Living Workshops, to coordinate and promote walking initiatives, and to engage its Hospital Service Area in all elements of the Blueprint.
- Fletcher Allen uses the ScoreHealth™ tool with its own employees and with employer clients as a means to engage with clients in one-to-one encounters to help them improve their health status.
- In January 2007, Fletcher Allen launched HeartAware – a free, online cardiac risk assessment. The program, open to the general public, is designed to identify people who are at risk for heart disease, so they can receive treatment for those risk factors before they lead to a serious health problem. Patients who are found to have two or more risk factors are eligible for a free screening at Fletcher Allen's outpatient cardiology office on

Tilley Drive in South Burlington. Since the program launched, a total of 2,906 assessments have been completed (as of March 1). The link to HeartAware is located on Fletcher Allen's Home page at www.FletcherAllen.org

- Recently, Fletcher Allen's Bariatric Surgery Program earned full national accreditation, designating it as a Level I center, the highest such distinction. Bariatrics is the branch of surgery that deals with obese patients, primarily through the use of gastric bypass. Fletcher Allen also recently expanded its services in this program, offering a new procedure, the Lap Band.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2008

Fletcher Allen has begun planning its next Community Needs Assessment, which will begin at the start of Fiscal Year 2008, which starts October 1, 2007. In addition to meeting the plan established for all hospitals, Fletcher Allen will work with its partnering organizations (most particularly the United Way of Chittenden County and the Champlain Initiative) to build on not only the 2004 assessment (and subsequent updates), but also assessments prior to 2004. NOTE: There may be a change to the statutory requirement for community needs assessment that would affect these plans if it is approved.

Appendix A

2006 Follow-up for Community Needs Report

In 2004, Fletcher Allen Health Care, the United Way of Chittenden County, and the Champlain Initiative conducted a community-wide survey asking people to describe the best things about our community, the top health and wellness concerns, and the top community problems we face. Below is a list of the 2004 responses. Please indicate what you believe to be the most relevant answers at the present time by filling out the survey below. You may check up to three in each category.

BEST THINGS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

PEOPLE (pick up to 3 you agree most with)

- People are friendly, helpful, supportive
- Sense of community/feeling connected to people who live here
- People who live here are aware of and/or engaged in social, civic, or political issues
- Community is socially and culturally diverse and/or at least becoming more diverse
- Progressive/liberal culture (e.g. social values, government)
- Tolerance, inclusion, open-mindedness
- Sense that you can make a difference - government is accessible
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

SERVICES AND RESOURCES

- Academic opportunities and institutions (e.g. benefits that come from presence of colleges and university)
- Quality school systems and other educational institutions and programs for youth
- Health care services and institutions
- Downtown and Marketplace
- Shopping (e.g. close by, good variety, availability of goods)
- Transportation
- Restaurants and food
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

- Lake Champlain, waterfront, and/or beaches
- General beauty of environment and/or scenery
- Relatively small size and scale of community
- Natural setting: outdoors and nature, mountains
- Cleanliness of area (e.g. fresh air; lack of pollution and litter)
- Mix of rural and city areas
- General proximity to work and activities (e.g. short commute, convenient access)
- Climate and seasons
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

ACTIVITIES

- Arts and cultural activities and/or cultural richness of community
- Recreational and sports activities (e.g. outdoor recreation, parks, bike path, and other sports and fitness activities)
- Specific events and festivals (Jazz Festival, Mardi Gras parade, fireworks, etc.)
- Activities for families and youth
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Safety: safe place to live, little/no crime
- Family-friendly environment; good place to raise kids
- Informal, simple, "laidback lifestyle"
- Peaceful, quiet, calm environment
- "Healthy" place to live
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

OTHER BEST THINGS

(choose this option for "Best Things" that do not fit in any of the themes listed above from results of the 2004 survey)

- Other? Please specify: _____
- Other? Please specify: _____
- Other? Please specify: _____

Continue on next page...

HEALTH AND WELLNESS CONCERNS

HEALTH CARE ISSUES (pick up to 3 you agree most with)

- Lack of insurance and/or lack of access to coverage
- High cost of health insurance
- Lack of availability or access within the health care system (e.g. difficulty getting an appointment)
- Lack of prevention programs or services
- High cost of prescription drugs
- Problems getting an appointment at Fletcher Allen
- Lack of doctors and nurses
- Lack of dental and vision insurance coverage
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

- Drug use and abuse
- Smoking
- Alcohol use and abuse
- Presence and influence of drug dealers in the community
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Obesity
- Poor nutrition/poor eating habits
- Insufficient facilities or lack of access to facilities for exercising
- High cost of exercise facilities
- Lack of good walking or biking options (as alternatives to driving)
- Lack of exercise and/or inactivity
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

- Homelessness
- Poverty
- Lack of affordable housing
- Hunger
- High cost of living and expenses (not related to health care or housing)
- Low wages, lack of livable wage
- Lack of employment opportunities
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

VIOLENCE

- Domestic violence
- Community violence (crime)
- Child abuse
- Global violence (war)
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

- Poor water quality; contamination and/or pollution of water
- Air pollution (not related to automobiles; see below for auto emissions)
- Industrial waste; business pollution; sprawl
- Automobile emissions and pollution (including overuse of gas)
- Trash, littering, garbage
- Global pollution
- Global warming
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Lack of services or providers for addressing mental health problems
- Depression
- Stress
- Existing mental health programs are poor quality or problematic
- Mental health providers are not qualified or capable
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

ILLNESS

- Cancer (noted 5%)
- Chronic disease (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, multiple sclerosis)
- Communicable disease (e.g. including sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS)
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

THREATS TO SAFETY

- Traffic safety, including speeding and drunk driving
- Lack of police presence in community
- Global safety issues (e.g. war, nuclear power)
- Racism, prejudice, hate, discrimination
- Snow and weather
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

Other Health and Wellness Issues

(choose this option for "Health and Wellness Issues" that do not fit in any of the themes listed above from results of the 2004 survey)

- Other? Please specify: _____
- Other? Please specify: _____
- Other? Please specify: _____

Continue on next page...

COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

ECONOMIC ISSUES (pick up to 3 you agree most with)

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of or limited employment opportunities
- Low wages
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- High cost of living
- Economic disparities between higher and lower classes
- Hunger
- High cost of health care/insurance
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

HEALTH ISSUES

- Substance abuse: alcohol and /or drug abuse
- Obesity
- Mental health problems
- Smoking
- Inactivity
- Teen pregnancy
- Chronic illness (e.g. asthma, cancer)
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

SERVICES AND RESOURCES

- Education/School problems: poor quality, high cost, and/or limited availability
- Lack of planning, funding, vision for services and resources
- Systematic problems in health care (not related to cost)
- Lack of/limited youth activities
- High cost and limited availability of childcare
- Problems with law enforcement, policy, incarceration
- Systematic problems in mental health care (not related to cost)
- Aging population: lack of resources to meet growing needs
- High cost and limited availability of elder care
- Lack of/limited family services
- Lack of availability/access to grocery store
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

DEVELOPMENT AND SPRAWL

- Unfriendly business climate
- Population growth/too many people
- Urban sprawl (including "box stores")
- Loss of open space
- Lack of development planning
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

CRIME AND VIOLENCE

- Vandalism and/or graffiti
- Availability of drugs and presence of drug dealers
- Gangs, street violence, fighting
- Domestic violence
- Bullying
- Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Guns, shooting
- Burglary and theft

PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES

- Racism and prejudice
- Lack of socio-cultural diversity and/or lack of diversity awareness
- General lack of awareness; ignorance
- Alienation and isolation
- Classism
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

TRANSPORTATION

- Traffic and congested roads
- Lack/limitations of public transportation
- Road conditions
- Driving habits (e.g. speeding, "road rage")
- Delays to Circumferential Highway
- Plans to continue the Circumferential Highway
- Parking
- Lack of sidewalks or biking options
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

- Garbage and litter
- Water pollution
- Noise pollution
- Air pollution
- Loss of open space
- Global warming
- Weather, cold winters
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

GOVERNMENT ISSUES

- High taxes
- Problems with/dislike of incumbent politicians
- General problems with politicians/politics
- Government bureaucracy/entrenchment; lack of diversity in gov.
- Disagreement with funding priorities
- Too much regulation
- Polarization
- Problems with specific policies or laws (e.g. Act 250)
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES

- Breakdown of family
- Youth crime/mischief
- Loss of community
- Sense of entitlement (felt towards others, government)
- Consumerism
- School dropout/truancy
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

OTHER COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

(choose this option for "community problems" that do not fit in any of the themes listed above from the 2004 survey).

- Other? Please specify: _____
- Other? Please specify: _____

- Rape
- OTHER? Please specify: _____

Other? Please specify: _____

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION – Tell us about yourself:

<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Male<input type="checkbox"/> Female<input type="checkbox"/> Transgender <p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <20 years old<input type="checkbox"/> 20- 34 years<input type="checkbox"/> 35 – 59 years<input type="checkbox"/> 60+ years <p>Household Income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$25,000<input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 - \$75,000<input type="checkbox"/> More than \$75,000	<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Some high school<input type="checkbox"/> High school diploma or GED<input type="checkbox"/> Some college/no degree<input type="checkbox"/> Associates degree<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelors degree<input type="checkbox"/> Graduate degree <p>Race</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> African American / born in US<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian/Alaska Native<input type="checkbox"/> Asian<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander<input type="checkbox"/> White/Caucasian<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
---	--

Thank you for filling out this survey.

Mail your completed survey to: Community Health Improvement
Fletcher Allen Health Care
199 Main Street, Suite 150
Burlington, VT 05401

or FAX to: (802) 847-6545