

Greater Fall River Partners for a Healthier Community, Inc.

Action Plan Summary: July 2015 – June 2016



Greater Fall River Partners for a Healthier Community, Inc. (Partners) is a local coalition of public, non-profit, and private sector groups that work together to build healthier communities in Greater Fall River through community-based prevention planning and health promotion;

Every five years, Partners conducts a community-wide health needs assessment upon which an Action Plan for the following five-year period is built. Every year, we report on progress-to-date covering over 60 separate identified goals in eight population health categories. The following is a summary of major health concerns followed by bulleted descriptions of the progress-to-date on achieving those goals.

Diet & Exercise

- Fewer than half of all adults reported engaging in physical activity for exercise regularly: just 45.7% in Greater Fall River compared to 53.0% in Massachusetts.
- 80% do not eat the recommended five servings daily of fruit and vegetables.
- 66% of Greater Fall River adults are overweight and half of this group are obese.

What are we doing?

- Annual four-month Fitness Challenge for over 500 adults and over 5,000 children in school
- Physical activity integrated into behavioral health care settings
- Promotion of greater use of busses and bicycles, including promotion of the new Quequechan Rail Trail
- Encouraging short walks to health local markets, especially for senior citizens
- Teaching children about good nutrition in all second-grade classrooms
- Promotion of community gardening, including the new Seventh St. Garden
- Encouraging children to eliminate or cut back sugar sweetened beverages through sugar-free campaign
- Teaching over 2,000 parents and children together about nutrition at Family Fun Nights
- Providing farmers market coupons through the hospitals and physician offices
- Teaching cooking at Ships Cove and at churches for homeless families
- Providing nutrition education for people with diabetes and pre-diabetes
- Promoting healthier eating at worksites through recommended policy changes
- The Health and Well Being Coalition provides access to fresh fruits and vegetables through trips to the food pantry, Kerry's donations and UN's fruit and vegetable days.



Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Use Prevention

- Smoking is much more prevalent among South Coast adults compared to other regions in MA.
- While the youth rate for cigarette smoking has decreased the use of other tobacco and nicotine delivery products (i.e. “vaping”) has increased.
- Drug treatment admissions are more than twice state averages and triple for injection drug use.
- Fall River is experiencing a dramatic increase in opioid deaths: 29 in 2015 and on pace for far more in 2016.

What are we doing?



- Continued monitoring of tobacco sales to minors and aggressive enforcement
- Formation of The84.org chapters at Durfee, Diman and Westport high schools for peer-to-peer education
- Ongoing education efforts targeting tobacco retailers
- Continued expansion of smoke-free environments
- Statewide increase in age to legally buy tobacco and nicotine products from 18 to 21
- Distribution of Narcan to police officers and school nurses
- Hospital and health care provider distribution of Narcan kits to families
- Improved referral to substance abuse treatment by hospital ER staff, schools and police
- Education and outreach efforts targeting pregnant women with substance abuse disorder
- Operation of a drug court to get people out of jail and into treatment
- Ongoing drug education presentations at schools, workplaces and community settings
- Formation of a family-based Learn To Cope group at Charlton Hospital

Sexual Activity and Infectious Diseases

- Teen births in Fall River have been historically higher than both regional and statewide figures.
- Fall River ranks among top 10 Massachusetts cities where HIV infections are tied to injection drug use.

What are we doing?

- Teen pregnancy prevention education continues through Family Planning and ranking, though 8th in the state, is down from 4th.
- Patient education continues at Project Aware at SSTAR and Family Planning in one on one counseling sessions and as part of group outreach education
- Performance standards are currently being reviewed and incorporated in Electronic Medical Records and everyone over 25 is screened.

Access to Quality Dental, Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Care

- South Coast residents have access to care that is comparable to residents of Massachusetts, but the number of Fall River residents (84.5%) who have a personal health care provider is below the state level.
- While 77.8% of Massachusetts residents reported a dental visit in the past year, just 66.4 % of Fall River residents visited a dentist.
- Recruiting professional medical interpreters for non-English speakers is challenging.
- Transportation has been a chronic problem, especially for the 23% of residents who do not have access to an automobile.
- Suicide rates region has historically had greater rates than the rest of the state.

What are we doing?

- The proportion of South Coast adults as a whole who report being unable to see a doctor due to cost has declined over the past decade.
- HealthFirst just received a grant to add a dentist and support staff to increase dental access and now offers transportation to its site from its own van.
- HealthFirst Family Care Center and SSTAR Family Health Clinic have a long history of providing interpreter services for our ethnic populations and they have bi/tri-lingual speaking staff and contracting with a telephone language line.
- We have begun a Suicide Prevention Coalition.
- Local Hospital Emergency Rooms have increased mental health and behavioral health services.
- We have begun a Substance Abuse Newborn Task Force and produced a printed resource guide.
- Greater Fall River Partners has joined with other local organizations as a member of the Bus Riders United Coalition (BRU) in a campaign to establish improved bus access to make accessing medical visits easier.



Education, Employment, Income and Disability

- Approximately four times as many South Coast adults who earn less than \$50,000 per year report having fair or poor health as compared to those who earn above that threshold.
- 27.1% in Greater Fall River of those with a high school degree or less report fair or poor health.

What are we doing?

- A Culinary Arts Program and a Peer Leadership program funded by YEAH! enrolled 18 students in an 11-week program in which six students got jobs.

- An annual Worksite Wellness Conference has been held in each of the past two years. This year's speaker described how local businesses could take advantage of the DPH Working On Wellness program to reach employees in local businesses.

Community Safety and Violence Prevention

- Crime rates are both a predictor and a consequence of important economic and social indicators such as drug use, perceived and actual levels of safety, economic conditions, and changing demographics.
- The number of crimes reported in the South Coast increased by 14.9% from 2000 to 2011, although they have declined by 3.6% since 2005.

What are we doing?

- We have an active and ongoing Shannon Grant and a Safe and Successful Youth program that reach over 60 of the most at-risk youth in the city.
- The ninth annual Peace by Piece Summit drew over 125 at-risk youth from six major city programs and schools.
- Fall River Public School maintain an anti-bullying policy.
- The School-Community Partnership has hosted trainings for youth service providers on LGBT violence, bullying, substance abuse, resilience.



Family, Cultural and Social Support, and Housing

- The population is less diverse in the South Coast than it is statewide; 79.5% of South Coast residents are white non-Hispanic, compared to 70.8% of residents across the state.
- Population growth and residential development have been uneven within the region; the total population in Fall River declined 7% between 1970 and 2010, while the South Coast's suburban towns experienced population growth of 43.3% during the same period.
- The South Coast has always been an attractive place to settle for immigrants. Over fifteen percent (15.3%) of residents in the region are foreign-born, just over the statewide average of 14.7%. Fall River (19.1%) has the highest percentage of foreign-born residents in the region.
- The number of homeless families has increased in the area due to a policy of placing them in motels in Somerset and Swansea and in congregate housing in Fall River.

What are we doing?

- The Health and Well-being Coalition, People Incorporated and United Neighbors of Fall River have provided transportation for people in shelter to get to programs, medical appointments, social connections trips, job fairs, parent academy courses, early intervention, mental health groups, etc.

- The Health and Well Being Coalition provides ongoing support for families who are homeless by offering Health & Well Being Days, Nutrition Days, Dental Days, and Exercise Days with Wiggle Kids.
- The Health and Well Being Coalition provides access to housewares and linens for those leaving shelter through UN's the Home Project and toiletries, as well and emergency food for new residents in shelter.
- United Neighbors has created a new and larger version of the Emergency Resource Guide in paper form and added to the resource list on MyFallRiver.org.

Environment & Infrastructure

- An understanding the influence of the physical environment on health status have led to efforts to revitalize the waterfront, improve streets and sidewalks and deal with some of the City's deteriorating housing.
- We've seen a commitment by the City over the past ten years to improve the physical structures that support a healthier lifestyle and the willingness to pursue state and federal resources needed to accomplish them.

What are we doing?

- With the support of Mass in Motion, the City of Fall River has designed bicycle routes throughout the City and striped major routes like Plymouth and Eastern Avenues.
- Using a Massachusetts Council on Aging grant, Mass in Motion Fall River created a "Five Minute Walk to a Healthy Market Program" and completed an interactive on-line map of 24 local markets has been produced for the WalkFallRiver.org web site.
- A new four-year \$440,000 per year grant from the Mass in Motion 1422 Project will soon encourage more walking in the area within a mile of the Quequechan River Rail Trail with connections to three major food markets.
- A PARC Grant has allowed the City to install new basketball courts at Abbott Court, Kennedy Park, Maplewood Park, North Park & Ruggles Park and to improve five ball fields.
- A LWCF Grant has funded the installation of an inclusion playground at North Park.
- Funding from the Bristol County District Attorney provides for a Summer Field Day for WIC families.
- Mass in Motion has organized and supported ongoing clean-up activities in neighborhoods and along the waterfront
- The GroundWork Southcoast project has just been funded for \$250,000 over three years to preserve open space, improve access to outdoor recreational activity, and other activities to improve the environment in Fall River and New Bedford.



Other Partners Activities

- Contributed to successful All America Cities application
- Successfully leveraged grant funding to increase overall access to public health resources in the community
- Promotes health and healthy lifestyles through traditional and social media networks.

For a complete description of over sixty 2014-2019 Action Plan goals and objectives, go to <http://www.gfrpartners.com/2014-2019ActionPlan.html>

Descriptions of hundreds of activities that contribute to health in the Greater Fall River Area can be seen on the Healthy City web site at <http://www.gfrpartners.com/HealthyCity-related16.html>

For more information about Partners and its activities, contact Dr. David Weed, Executive Director, at <mailto:drweed@cox.net>.