



DEPARTMENT
**2014-2015 Annual
Report of the
Strategic Plan**

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Annual Strategic Plan Report 2016

As Elkhorn Logan Valley Public Health Department (ELVPHD) provides necessary, everyday services and facilitates health care programs for the greater Elkhorn area, yearly assessment of their strategic plan provides a more long-term focus that ensures continued improvement of services provided. Year-on-year evaluations of old programs and renewed emphasis on goals can build on previous successes, as well as shed light on areas in which inefficiencies or redundancies can be reduced or eliminated. Furthermore, assessment helps ELVPHD plan for the next year going forward, as new health care issues and challenges are continually presented.

In an effort to address each strategic issue, specific goals are identified that can be quantifiable or monitored by completing definitive steps toward a calculated target. Five strategic issues, established last year, are the means by which ELVPHD's strategy is broken down and mapped out in order to review priorities and the policies and projects that are meant to reflect those priorities. The five guiding principles that are being built upon are:

- 1. How can the local public health care system enhance access to health care services?**
- 2. How can the local public health department provide more activities that promote safe and healthy lifestyles?**
- 3. How can ELVPHD better use its resources to market itself and to meet the public health needs of its district?**
- 4. How can ELVPHD create and enhance collaboration and partnerships among public health stakeholders?**
- 5. How can ELVPHD formalize its operations to increase effectiveness of programming, efficiency of efforts, and an increase in standards?**

These five strategic issues have become the blueprint for conducting ELVPHD staff meetings. This allows each issue an opportunity to be discussed in detail, so that corresponding action steps can be recorded or pursued. Furthermore, each issue has a corresponding guiding principle, which embodies the department's mission in addressing the strategic issue. In the realization of these plans, progress on each issue is monitored, initiatives are distinguished, timelines created, and responsibilities for completion assigned.

How can the local public health care system enhance access to health care services?

Access to public health services can be fully tracked in the *2016 Community Health Assessment: Access to Care Report*, published in June of this year. ELVPHD recognizes accessibility to public health care as the beginning to providing quality care to the area. Without availability and understanding of the resources provided, strategies for the prevention and treatment of disease are ineffective. There are many barriers to health care, and as part of their assessment of this first strategic issue, ELVPHD is committed to addressing each of them. They include, but aren't limited to, health insurance status, distance to care, perceived quality of available care, trust in health care providers or the health care system, poverty, language barriers, inability to pay, as well as other cultural and socioeconomic factors. However, it is the ELVPHD belief that all persons should have access to affordable health services, and that activities undertaken by the department can have a profound impact in securing those benefits.

Of pressing importance, especially in the ELVPHD service area, is shortage of health care providers, with three of the four counties serviced by ELVPHD designated as family health care provider shortage areas, and all four counties being categorized as mental health and psychiatric shortage areas. The strain this puts on the health care system in the ELVPHD area is most apparent in the number of patients that this situation forces qualified providers to see. Long wait times, pushing providers to see an unrealistic number of patients, can hurt quality. Such trade-offs themselves are barriers to health care, as patients become frustrated by the system; furthermore, the problem can be exacerbated by providers, who see the pressure to meet quotas, look to other areas or decline coming to the area in the first place.

To combat this, the Elkhorn Logan Valley Public Health Department has explored ways to expand access to care by broadening service points, and easing stress on the system wherever possible. An example of this is the deployment of electronic blood pressure kiosks to various places in the community as an innovative blood pressure screening opportunity. This is automatization of a task that can put stress on the health care system, however, it is also broadening points of access in a sector of health care that is of particular importance to the service area.

Another way in which ELVPHD has moved to ease the overflow of patients at access points and broadening care is by providing services where the patients are, such as holding blood screenings at health fairs, which targets the agricultural community, the elderly, or the impoverished, whom experience the greatest travel barriers to receiving care. Another such effort is working with businesses, such as in Operation Heart to Heart, which works with businesses that are interested in providing a cost-effective and results-oriented worksite wellness program. Operation Heart to Heart has had measurable success, with 63% of those partaking seeing weight loss, 50% having improved blood sugar values, and an amazing 86% showing improved blood pressure.

ELVPHD does encourage all constituents to establish a medical and dental home, and stresses the importance of utilizing such providers for preventative screenings and exams, as well as for acute illness treatment and chronic disease control, rather than the prevalent notion to only seek healthcare when one is acutely ill. Because it is still common that portions of the population do not/will not seek preventative services, the health department has proven that getting ahead of health care needs is an effective way to provide some level of services for those that would otherwise not seek them, while continuing to stress the importance of the medical home concept. This has been done by disseminating fecal occult blood test (FOBT) kits, which helps detect early stages of colon cancer, along with aggressively pursuing vaccination programs to increase vaccine availability, which includes expanding insurance billing capabilities and Vaccines for Children (VFC) status. The success of such vaccination programs has led to ELVPHD recognition as a Vaccines for Children site, and 14 new business vaccination locations were added last year.

Though, challenges still remain, particularly in the area of behavior health. In the last year, ELVPHD has worked as a part of Northeast Nebraska Behavioral Health Network, securing a formal position on the Board of Directors and serving as the Fiscal Agent for the group. In this capacity, ELVPHD is working to increase the greater Northeast Nebraska areas behavioral health capacities, and in the next year will apply for continued federal funding through HRSA.

How can the local public health department provide more activities that promote safe and healthy lifestyles?

ELVPHD has continued to offer opportunities for community organizations to participate in activities that promote healthy and safe living. This has been done by setting up programs for enhanced success, assuring adequate new-staff training, evaluating programs for effectiveness, and enhanced service outreach into new populations.

The collective of these programs is measured to ensure that the health department's individual programs are being utilized effectively to advance toward the broader goals, and that they are making the best use of resources, as well as propagating success. To that end, ELVPHD compiled seventy-two performance measures that are used to monitor the collective effectiveness of their many programs and broader operational goals. Among the most successful was the measurement of the number of drills, exercises, or actual events participated in regarding the bioterrorism domain of emergency preparedness. In the first quarter alone, the staff participated in three events and exercises in order to prepare for a quick and effective response to an occurrence of bioterrorism.

Measuring individual programs for effectiveness is also important, and this is done mainly through evidence based assessments, which measure outcomes comparative to the start of the program, or the impact on the participant in terms of lifestyle changes adopted. Among the most successful of these projects has been the pre-diabetes community classes. These sixteen-week classes aim to help people lose weight and adopt a healthier lifestyle, and are based off of the National Diabetes Prevention Program outlined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). This evidence-based lifestyle-change program entails sixteen core sessions, and six post-core sessions, which helps participants lose five to seven percent of body weight, cutting the risk of developing type-2 diabetes in half. These are goals that ELVPHD can measure showing effectiveness and success of the program, but equally important, they are results that participants can see, and changes that will greatly change their overall health.

Another success in an additional area of health care that deserves attention is the marked results that ELVPHD has seen in dental care due to the Smile in Style (SIS) program. ELVPHD began the Smile in Style program with five definitive goals, and in 2016, they met all goals, at least partially, and in some areas, far exceeded original expectations. SIS provided general community outreach at multiple events in which at least 500 individuals (parents and/or children) were provided oral health education. Furthermore, every child that received preventative oral services was provided with a presentation and demonstration of proper tooth brushing techniques using methods that were child friendly. Lastly, ELVPHD surpassed its goal of reaching eighty percent of participants establishing a dental home (or regular dentist) in those that previously reported that they didn't have one.

How can ELVPHD better use its resources to market itself and to meet the public health needs of its district?

ELVPHD continues to strive to make the community more aware of the services they provide in an effort to ensure that every person living within the service area has the benefits available to them. The impact of ELVPHD is limited if citizens within the jurisdiction area are unaware of

the opportunities available through the department and its partners. Therefore, the department has renewed focus on increasing public awareness and recognition of their services. In 2016, the department wrote and implemented a Marketing Plan, which included target audiences (residents of Burt, Cuming, Madison, and Stanton counties), goals, and strategies. Each strategy includes the assignment of responsibility, goals that can be used to assess success, along with estimate costs of completion. Strategies aimed to increase name recognition among individuals and businesses were of primary importance, and the department sponsored, or worked with partners to co-sponsor, community events, with the goal of having four events this year. Furthermore, ELVPHD made a commitment to reach out to five businesses/organizations/entities a month; therefore, beginning in April, they brought general awareness of services and programs to forty-five businesses/organizations/entities.

The sustained focus on marketing as a tool to increase access and awareness to ELVPHD programs necessitated the addition of a marketing coordinator, who is responsible for the implementation of the marketing plan. This allows for a coordinated community outreach effort and strengthens positive working relationships with communities, schools, community groups, public health partners, local health leaders, medical professionals, agencies and the general public. The department is also experiencing a larger presence on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest, using it as an outlet to share information about events and services.

How can ELVPHD create and enhance collaboration and partnerships among public health stakeholders?

Enhancing collaboration and partnerships will help ELVPHD achieve each programs mission, help address the local public health and safety concerns identified in the CHIP, help the progression of the departments Strategic Plan, and make full use of the agencies time and resources. In focusing on expanding collaboration opportunities, the department has remained active in thirteen professional organizations with public health and/or political involvement, with a staff member being assigned to each organization in an effort to ensure full cooperation and involvement. These organizations range from local Chambers of Commerce to the State and National Associations of Local Boards of Health (SALBOH/NALBOH).

Cooperation with partners aids in expanding ELVPHD's capacities, as resources can be pooled, and the strengths of each organization can be better utilized. They also provide a platform for which the department can increase its marketing while staying up-to-date on the changes in the health community. ELVPHD's involvement in Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) is an example of the benefits of collaboration and partnerships. In the preliminary findings of the Health Assessment Survey data, it was found that just over seventy-seven percent of tobacco/nicotine users wanted to quit. Research done by CADCA, such as the connections between mental health and substance abuse, and the connections made through the organization, have been beneficial and helped shaped the departments policies. Mainly, shaping their continued support and promotion of the Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI), which focuses on reducing substance use and abuse among youth in the ELVPHD health district. Through these connections, ELVPHD has utilized Region 4 Behavioral Health Systems Funding to complete structured, curriculum-based programs for school-age children. Through partnerships with HCI and schools, ELVPHD is working to prevent drug and substance use and abuse and help those with drug problems quit at any age.

In one of their biggest undertakings this year, ELVPHD, in conjunction with Oakland Mercy Hospital, St. Francis Memorial Hospital and Faith Regional Health Services, conducted the 2016 Community Health Assessment. 1,500 participated in this year's assessment, which represents a thirty percent increase over the last Community Health Assessment which took place in 2013. The data from the respondents was utilized to create the 140-page report about health care in the ELVPHD area. The data, which covers all aspects of care from dental to nutrition, helps to identify areas of success in the past, along with health care services or particular demographics that have been under represented. It will also be useful for both the hospitals and the health department in the coming years as they plan to meet the new health care challenges presented.

How can ELVPHD formalize its operations to increase effectiveness of programming, efficiency of efforts, and an increase in standards?

ELVPHD continually strives for better quality of service, and more efficient allocation of time and resources. As a result, the department has placed a priority on formalizing its operations. In 2016, ELVPHD completed its path toward Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) standards, and as such, hosted the PHAB site visit in June. On the path toward accreditation, ELVPHD has gone to great lengths to share data and health findings with the general public, along with adhering to PHAB standards and measures. The seven-step path toward accreditation is a long process which aims to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing and ultimately transforming the quality and performance of state, tribal, and territorial public health departments. The process, started in 2013, is well underway, and is a testament to the department's efforts to adhere to regulations, increase efficiency, and raise standards.

Data sharing was a large part of accreditation and remains a major priority for ELVPHD. The department tracks all data sharing endeavors, and in the last year, has made efforts to expand the channels by which they publicize information. Through marketing and transparency efforts, the department's website has become a growing avenue, for those interested, to access data. The continued publication of the e-newsletter remains an effective way to disseminate information about upcoming and past events, health tips and emergency notices.

In addition to accreditation efforts, ELVPHD is working to ensure customer satisfaction. This was tracked via the Quality Improvement (QI) project which was completed in April. The project was conducted with customer satisfaction surveys, using forms and methods reflective of other health agencies in the state. The department also made efforts to utilize clear, concise language to better gauge customer input, and use standardized language across different surveys to have congruency among the findings.

Continued emphasis on staff training enables growing departmental capabilities. It is with this in mind that ELVPHD staff undergoes mandatory training on various topics set forth in the ELVPHD Workforce Development Plan. Additionally, each employee's certifications and training, both from the department and outside agencies, are cataloged. As ELVPHD continues to expand and provide broader, higher quality health care services, formalization of operations and higher efficiency practices become more important.