



COUNTY **ASSESSMENT**

PHASE THREE

Forces of Change





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The Forces of Change Assessment (FOCA) is designed to answer the questions, “What is occurring or might occur that affects the well-being of our residents or the local system?” and “What specific threats or opportunities are generated by these occurrences?”

The FOCA was facilitated by the Impact DuPage Core Team, consisting of the team leads for each of the assessment committees. The Core Team, together with the Impact DuPage Co-Chairs, determined that trends, factors, and events that impact the DuPage County community would be collected by conducting facilitated brainstorming sessions with community leaders. In order to obtain broad input, the assessment was conducted with three distinct audiences during meetings held in the fall of 2014. The three groups included the Impact DuPage Steering Committee, the DuPage County Health Department (DCHD) Leadership staff, and the DCHD Board of Health.

Findings

The three groups of community leaders discussed forces, threats, and opportunities across eight categories: Social, Economic, Political, Technological, Environmental, Scientific, Legal, and Ethical. Following the final brainstorming session, members of the Core Team reviewed the results of all three sessions to determine cross-cutting themes. The findings are listed below.

Changing Healthcare Landscape: New legislation, such as the Affordable Care Act, has changed the way healthcare is delivered. The cost of medical care is rising, and advances in technology may not be available to all. More conversations are needed about advanced directives, given the emphasis on medical intervention which impacts quality of life and healthcare costs. Hospital mergers may lead to layoffs but there may be opportunities for those workers in community health. Recent changes in state and national government leadership may result in further changes to the healthcare landscape.

Income Disparity: Poverty is an issue in DuPage, despite perceptions of it being a county without needs or low-income populations. Property taxes are high, which leads to people leaving the county and housing being difficult to afford. New graduates have barriers to employment and costs/student debt create difficulties in attaining independence. Transportation is difficult for low-income and homeless populations, and it is difficult to link these populations to the resources they need. Opportunities include redistributing taxes and job growth.

Changing Views and Demographics: There has been an increase in Hispanic/Latino populations, as well as refugee populations, in DuPage County. There is a stigma surrounding the issue of immigration, and there is a lack of immigration reform. The polarization between political parties has been growing and makes it difficult to enact policy changes.

Impact of Technology on Communication: Technology has created new ways to communicate, particularly through social media. However, this can lead to a spread of misinformation as well as extreme views. The increase in screen time may also lead to a decrease in physical activity and family interaction.

Misuse of Prescription Medication: Antibiotic resistance and dependence on pain medications are threats as a result of misuse of prescription medication and lack of safe prescribing practices. There are opportunities for continued



education of both the medical community and the public. Trends such as consuming raw milk and forgoing vaccinations are also topics that provide an opportunity for education.

Aging Population: Increased life expectancy may result in a lack of economic resources, caregiver burden, and barriers to transportation which may lead to isolation.

Climate Change and Resource Scarcity: Flooding and extreme cold have impacted residents in recent years. In addition, the appearance of exotic mosquitoes has led to concern about new diseases. Decreasing water levels in the Great Lakes and a lack of buildable land in DuPage County may have long-term implications. These changes provide an opportunity to use sustainability as a lens for improvement.

Criminalization of Mental Health and Substance Abuse: Some laws have resulted in a stigma and criminalization of mental health and substance abuse. Opportunities include working with mental health courts and reviewing laws for effective treatment.

Results from this assessment were shared with the Impact DuPage Steering Committee on January 22, 2015. This information supported the Steering Committee's ability to examine and prioritize strategic issues impacting DuPage County residents.

Evaluation

In order to measure the effectiveness of the Forces of Change brainstorming session, Steering Committee members were asked to complete an evaluation of the meeting. Due to time constraints, an evaluation was not done with the DCHD Leadership and the Board of Health. Of the twelve Steering Committee members participating in the event, nine completed an evaluation. All respondents said the discussion was open to a great extent, with sharing of diverse ideas and perspectives, providing a score of either a 4 or a 5, with 5 being best. The majority of respondents felt the goals were clear and successfully achieved, though two provided feedback that additional context about the role of the Forces of Change Assessment in the broader Impact DuPage initiative would have been helpful.