Health and Nutrition

Goal and Work Plan Priorities

Goal Statement

Foster innovative partnerships to ensure all community members have access to health, nutrition, wellness, and family strengthening resources while addressing health inequities through education, healthcare access, and advocate to improve the overall physical health, mental health, and wellness of the community.

Work Plan Priorities

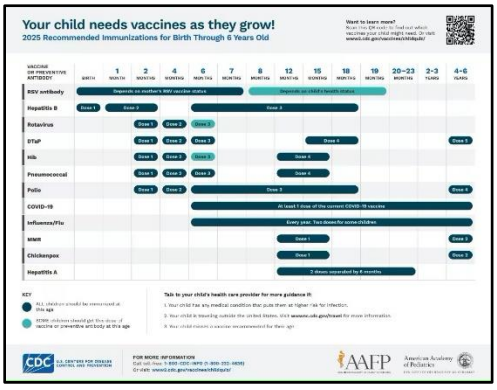
General Health and Nutrition Priorities

Continue to recruit nurses and doctors to Duncan

Duncan Regional Hospital is a leader when it comes to healthcare provided to residents of Southcentral Oklahoma because of the continued drive to grow services and opportunities offered. For this, continued recruitment of nurses and doctors to Duncan is necessary and the community needs to ensure that there are proper amenities and quality-of-life components in place that will help attract the new medical staff. To assist Duncan Regional Hospital, the community needs to focus on housing opportunities, cultural and recreational experiences, and retail/services necessary to raise the overall quality of life.

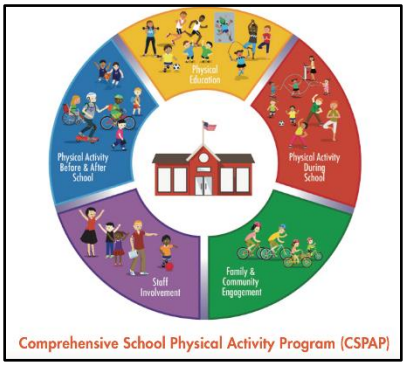
Continue to provide educational information about public health, vaccines, and water quality to residents

Promoting information, knowledge, and understanding about health issues is important to improving and protecting the overall health of the community. Accurate and reliable information coming directly from Duncan Regional Hospital, Stephens County Health Department, and local medical providers will help ensure that our citizens are provided with the opportunity to make positive choices for their wellbeing. Working closely with other public organizations, the information can be distributed through established information hubs, social media, and local alert systems as necessary.



Promote education outreach by Duncan Public Schools regarding health and nutrition

Schools provide education on health and nutrition through health and science classes as part of the regular curriculum, and when taught at an early age there is greater potential for improving health outcomes, improved academic performance, and personal empowerment of the students. Most of these curriculums include education about the food groups and essential nutrients, dietary guidelines, potions control, and the impacts foods have on personal health but should also include food demonstrations, taste tests, and gardening projects. Allowing these other teaching methods to occur will further engage students, and their families, in making healthier eating choices.



Ensure transportation and access is available to health services and nutrition opportunities

Access to health services and nutrition opportunities is a significant hurdle for more and more households in Duncan. Operating a personal vehicle can be a financial burden and public transportation is very limited, if not nonexistent, for many of the citizens. Red River Transportation plays an important role in providing access and steps to ensure effective and efficient access is not only maintained but improved for citizens of Duncan. Other barriers that impact access include limited financial stability, readily available locations nearby or not, scheduling delays and conflicts, or other systemic barriers that create a real or perceived burden. The Duncan Library, Duncan Senior Center and Douglass Community Center can be access points for citizens to access the internet for telehealth options, serve as hubs for mobile clinics, and a location that education materials can be made available to help address these other barriers to healthcare.

Physical Health Priorities

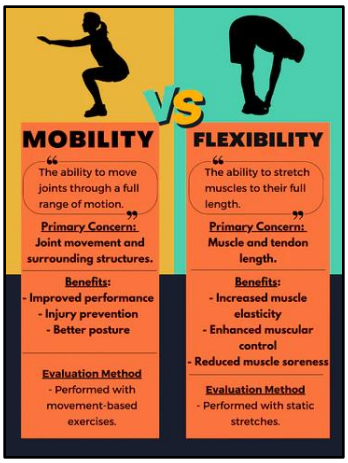
Promote access to physical activities for adults and seniors throughout the community

As we age it becomes more important to pursue a variety of exercises to maintain optimal health benefits with a mix of aerobic activities, strength training, flexibility, and balance exercises. This will help prevent, or delay, the onset of many health problems that seniors face as well as reducing the dependency of others for day-to-day activities. To help promote physical exercise, our local parks should look to install outdoor fitness equipment that encourages movement, maintains mobility, increases strength, and is in a setting that will also promote social engagement with others.

Promote access to physical activities for children that are affordable throughout the community

Children between the ages of 3 to 5 need to be active throughout the day while children ages 6 to 17 need to be active for at least 60 minutes each day. This will help build stronger bones and muscles, develop fundamental movement and balancing skills, improve attention, aid in social skills and development, and improve academic performance. Duncan Public Schools does a great job in providing curriculums that include physical education, and elementary aged students get a recess where they can be active. This begins tapering off when students get to Middle School and High School and opportunities become a bit less available. Therefore, there needs to be activities identified and promoted throughout the community that provide young people with affordable opportunities to get the recommended amount of exercise.

Provide educational information about staying hydrated, getting a good night's sleep, and flexibility/mobility exercises



Utilizing resource hubs, senior centers, and community centers, information about staying hydrated, getting a good night's sleep, and flexibility/mobility exercises should be provided to the public for each age group. Proper hydration keeps our organs functioning properly, helps to prevent infections, and aids in the delivery of nutrients to our cells. A good night's sleep helps improve our mood, improves health, and allows for better brain and memory function. Flexibility and mobility exercises will help improve posture and balance, help to decrease the risk of injury, and can help to reduce stress and physical pain. All these components are vital to living a better life and having information readily available for each age group can lead to a healthier community.

Mental Health Priorities

Continue to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues through public awareness programs

Great strides have been made to begin reducing the stigma associated with mental health conditions, and groups like Pathways to a Healthier You have done a wonderful job in raising awareness and providing resources to those in need. By encouraging conversations about mental health to be open, educational, compassionate, and supportive, Pathways has continued to help many citizens obtain the help and support they need. Continued outreach by Pathways and other organizations will need to continue to fully address the behavioral health needs of our community and remove barriers that restrict access to needed treatment opportunities.

Continue to improve access to mental health services and ensure that services are coordinated

OKLAHOMA Mental Health & Substance Abuse

One of the leading causes of limited access to mental health care is a lack of understanding about the conditions, limited information readily available, and perceived lack of support within the community. Thankfully, Duncan has Pathways to a Healthier You that makes information and resources available to the community and allowing help to be obtained. Additional resources and information developed by Pathways should be made available at multiple information hubs throughout the community which will allow greater access for Duncan's citizens.

Continue to improve recognition and assessment of mental health needs of our citizens

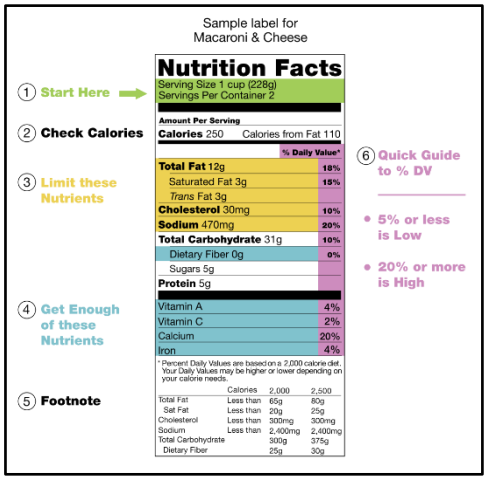
Pathways to a Healthier You, sponsored by Duncan Regional Hospital, continues to lead the way in the community working to improve recognition and assessment of mental health needs in our community. Pathways has conducted surveys, raising awareness, educating the community, and working with healthcare professionals in developing proper assessment tools regarding mental health and substance abuse. Pathways also continues to provide information regarding the importance of early intervention

and screening, encouraging local employers and workplaces to inform employees of available support networks, and work to address the stigma that has often been associated with mental health and substance abuse. Continued efforts are needed, and other nonprofits and organizations can benefit by partnering with Pathways to a Healthier You to properly address the mental health of Duncan.

Nutrition and Healthy Food Priorities

Provide educational information to parents about healthy food choices

Choosing healthy foods will help improve our overall health, maintain a healthy weight, strengthen our immune system, reduce the risk of disease and illness, and help to maintain proper energy levels throughout the day. Sadly, we live in a day where healthy food choices are difficult to obtain for many in our community and often the unhealthy alternatives are cheaper leading to families choosing unhealthy eating habits on a frequent basis. Therefore, it is important to provide educational information about healthy food choices that can be sent with school-aged children home to their parents, having information available at our churches and community centers, and utilizing all forms of media to share the importance of healthy food choices throughout the community.



Create and promote a healthy eating environment for families and children

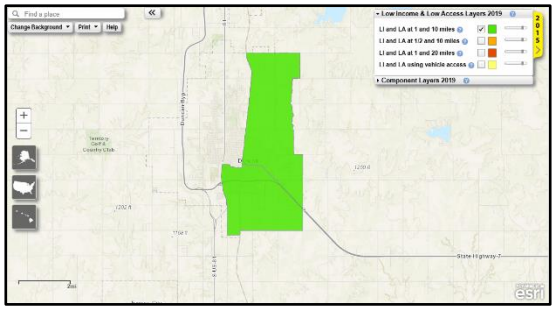
Effort must go into creating healthy eating environments for families and children given the access and availability of unhealthy choices that are often cheaper to purchase. Education, access, and positive reinforcement will be required to train our minds in healthier food decisions and often must start with making small changes in our lives. Keeping healthy food available at home and "junk food" out, keeping healthy snacks on hand at home and the workplace, and sharing healthy eating goals and accomplishments with those around you will begin to reinforce our minds and cravings towards healthier options.

Establish "Learn to Garden" programs for residents

Learning to grow a garden is a very rewarding skill that not only provides healthy foods to the dinner table, but also can promote other physical and mental health benefits. Working in the garden is a form of aerobic exercise, improves the heart and joint health, strengthens the immune system, and reduces stress while improving memory function. To begin, a person only needs a pot or bucket, some soil, and some seeds. However, like many skills, there are community leaders and organizations that have advanced their gardening skills that can assist those just beginning. "Learn to Grow" programs can help guide local citizens learning

new skills the knowledge needed to determine how much sun certain plants and vegetables need, what tools will make gardening easier, what vegetables grow best in Oklahoma, and how to properly plan the garden – knowing what plants grow well together will increase the vegetable bounty come harvest time. Groups like Think Ability with their community garden and the Oklahoma State University Extension Office with the wealth of knowledge in horticulture are valuable resources that our citizens should take advantage of to better provide fresh fruits and vegetables to their dinner tables.

Address food deserts as they exist in the community



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a food desert as a community where at least 33% of the residents live more than one mile away from a grocery store in urban settings or more than 10 miles in rural settings. These food deserts often occur in low-income areas causing residents to rely on small stores that do not carry healthy food options or where these healthy options are much more expensive. Because of these food desert scenarios, low-income areas often see a greater disparity in diet-related conditions like obesity and diabetes. Duncan's officials have worked with USDA data and has identified several neighborhoods that meet the definition of a food desert and are continuing to work with potential developers, investors, and funding institutions to begin addressing these areas so that affordable healthy food options can be made available to Duncan's citizens.

Family Strengthening Priorities

Ensure family activities exist throughout the community

Family strengthening is a means of learning ways to improve parental resilience through stress management, develop positive relationships and social connections, understand child development, and have access to support networks to aid in addressing family needs to increase family strengths and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. Many activities that aid in the process include things that create shared experiences, help build and develop skills and create a sense of community that can be enjoyed by the entire family. Events like the City of Duncan's Movie in the Park, volunteering as a family with a nonprofit, or working together on a community garden project are activities that need to continue to grow and develop as an asset.

Encourage communication between children and parents

Communication between parent and child is very important to the development of trust and respect, helping the child feel understood and validated, and creating a positive environment that allows the child to grow through positive experiences and reinforcement. Understanding that a child has yet to fully develop emotionally, parents and older adults need to realize that both verbal and nonverbal communication is important and engagement in the conversation is welcoming for the child. It is important to ask open-ended questions, to listen attentively, and reinforce the child for keeping communication open. In this day of technology, and providing a thought in 160 words or less, we are beginning to forget the importance of true conversation and resources may need to be made available to the public to help address the proper ways of communication between an adult and child.

Work Plan Priorities Matrixes

General Health and Nutrition Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Continue to recruit nurses and doctors to Duncan	Ongoing	Ongoing	Duncan Regional Hospital
Continue to provide educational information about public health, vaccines, and water quality to residents	2025	Short-Range	Duncan Regional Hospital, Duncan Public Schools, Community Development
Promote education outreach by Duncan Public Schools regarding health and nutrition	2025	Mid-Range	Duncan Regional Hospital, Duncan Public Schools
Ensure transportation and access is available to health services and nutrition opportunities	2025	Long-Range	Red River Transportation, ODOT, Public Works, Community Development, City Council

Physical Health Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Promote access to physical activities for adults and seniors throughout the community	2025	Short-Range	Simmons Center, Douglass Community Center, Duncan Senior Center, Duncan Public Library, Community Development
Promote access to physical activities for children that are affordable throughout the community	2025	Short-Range	Simmons Center, Duncan Public Schools, Public Works, Community Development
Provide educational information about staying hydrated, getting a good night's sleep, and flexibility/mobility exercises	2025	Short-Range	Simmons Center, Duncan Public Schools, Duncan Regional Hospital, Duncan Public Library

Mental Health Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Continue to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues through public awareness programs	Ongoing	Ongoing	Duncan Regional Hospital
Continue to improve access to mental health services and ensure that services are coordinated	Ongoing	Ongoing	Duncan Regional Hospital
Continue to improve recognition and assessment of mental health needs of our citizens	Ongoing	Ongoing	Duncan Regional Hospital

Nutrition and Healthy Food Priorities	Start	Timeframe	Key Stakeholders
Provide educational information to parents about healthy food choices	2025	Short-Range	Duncan Regional Hospital, Duncan Public Schools
Create and promote a healthy eating environment for families and children	2025	Mid-Range	Duncan Regional Hospital, Duncan Public Schools, Community Development
Establish "Learn to Grow" programs for residents	2025	Mid-Range	Duncan Public Schools, Oklahoma State University Extension Office, Think

			Ability, Community Development
Address food deserts as they exist in the community	2025	Long-Range	Community Development, City Council

Family Strengthening Priorities	**Start**	**Timeframe**	**Key Stakeholders**
Ensure family activities exist throughout the community	Ongoing	Ongoing	Simmons Center, Community Development, City Council
Encourage communication between children and parents	Ongoing	Ongoing	Duncan Public Schools, Churches, Community Development