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### **MiThrive community health needs assessment launched**

Health starts in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities - as well as in the doctor's office. Successful community health improvement initiatives collect accurate data, include voices from our residents, and gather local community resources. Through this comprehensive approach, local residents and community partners share their perspectives, participate in ranking the top concerns and collaboratively create plans to address them. By working together, residents and partners can make more lasting change than any one organization could by itself.

That is the goal of the MiThrive community health needs assessment, which is conducted every three years in a 31-county region of northern Michigan. Partnering agencies include Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, Central Michigan District Health Department, District Health Department #2, District Health Department #4, District Health Department #10, Grand Traverse County Health Department, Health Department of Northwest Michigan, McLaren Northern Michigan, Munson Healthcare, and Spectrum Health.

"The most important information we collect is from local residents," said Jane Sundmacher, Executive Director of the Northern Michigan Community Health Innovation Region (CHIR), which is leading the project. Sundmacher noted that residents will be able to share their perspectives through community meetings, surveys, and other ways. The information gathered will be used to develop a community-wide health improvement plan. Agencies may use the community health needs assessment to develop their own strategic plan, advocate for residents with local, state, and federal policymakers, justify requests for grant funding, as well as meeting accreditation, state or federal requirements.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, taking care of ourselves by eating well and staying active, not smoking, getting the recommended immunizations and screening tests, and seeing a doctor when sick all influence our health. Health is also determined in part by access to social and economic opportunities; the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schooling; the safety of our workplaces; the cleanliness of our water, food, and air; and the nature of our social interactions and relationships. MiThrive community health needs assessment considers all these factors.

For more information about the MiThrive Community Health Needs Assessment Initiative, visit <https://northernmichiganchir.org/taking-action/community-needs-assessment/>.

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