

Connecting Point

A MID MICHIGAN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



November 2015

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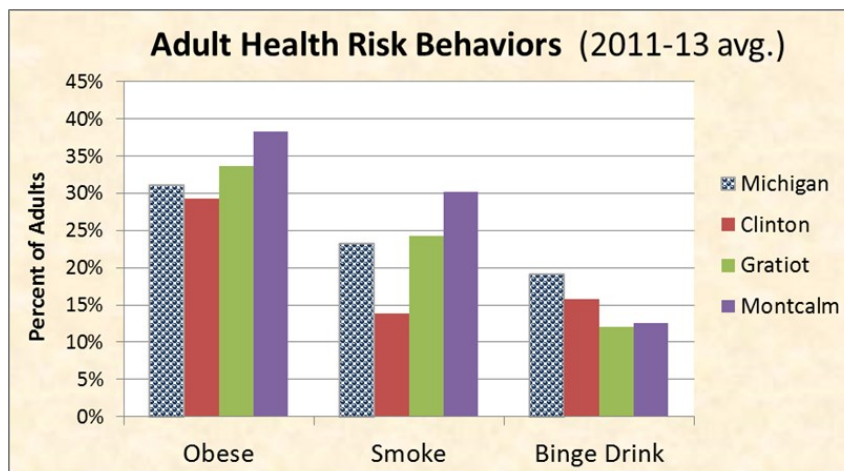
Community Health Assessment and Improvement

A Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan (CHA/CHIP) is a community-based assessment of health status and the factors affecting health, accompanied by a specific plan created by the community to improve health.

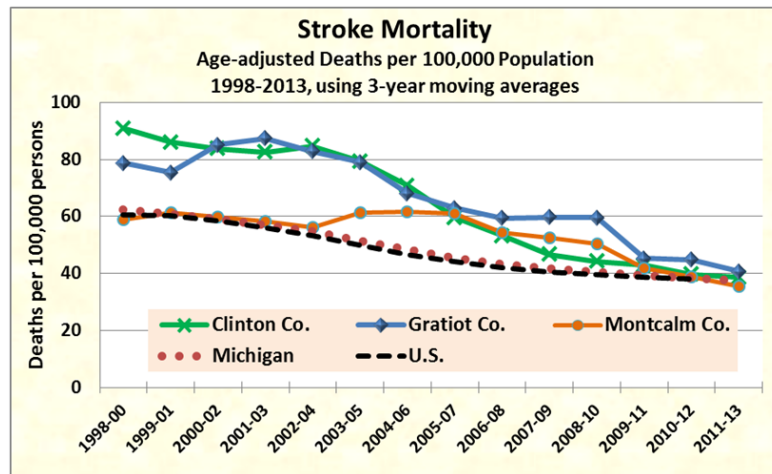
The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) serves Clinton, Gratiot, and Montcalm counties. The first CHA/CHIPS were created in these counties in 2012. Now, all three counties have teams working to assess these CHA/CHIPS and revise them based on the past three years of experience. The process in Gratiot County is called Live Well Gratiot. In Montcalm it is Healthy Montcalm. Clinton County is collaborating with Eaton and Ingham counties on a tri-county plan called Healthy! Capital Counties.

It is challenging working on three plans at once. Why not just do one plan for the entire district? The reason is that the three counties are distinctive, with strong community identities, different service providers to collaborate with and even different health problems to a surprising extent. Another reason is related to our unique take on what a CHA/CHIP should be. Let's face it, we live in a time of data overload and to some extent, planning overload. For example, almost all the organizations we partner with already have to pull together collaborations to write community assessments and strategic plans. So, we don't want to try to substitute our plan for theirs, nor do we want to appear to be trying to get them to do our work. Instead, we want the CHA/CHIPS to call out those most important activities that our partners are already doing to promote health, and describe how we can support them. Our plan should braid together all the good work that is being done and show how together we can have maximum impact on health.

The data we have been looking at tell some compelling stories. The first is that chronic disease remains by far the most important health challenge including heart disease, stroke, diabetes and related problems. In Gratiot and Montcalm, especially, we have not improved lifestyles much if at all. We are still eating poor diets, not getting much exercise and continuing to have high rates of smoking. This is clearly evident in high mortality rates from these causes. (Clinton County, parts of which include affluent suburbs of Lansing, is somewhat better off and is one of the healthiest counties in Michigan, if not actually very healthy.)

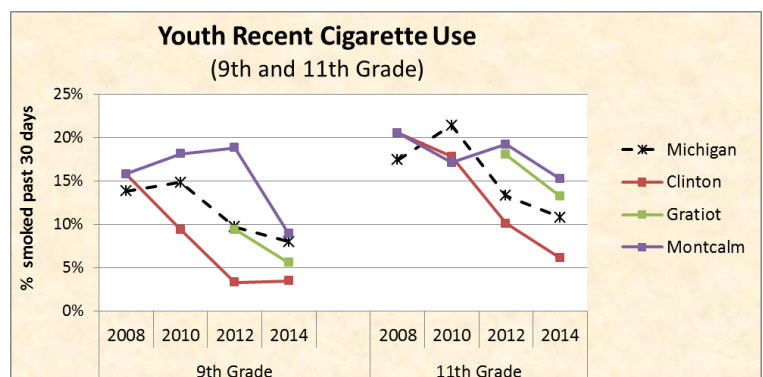
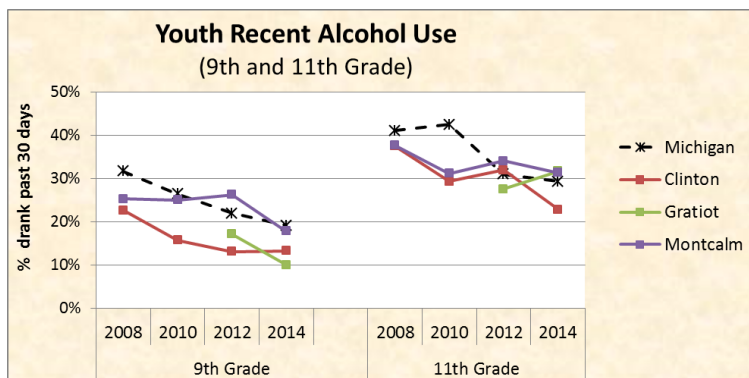


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You may be aware that the national media have recently been reporting that among low-income Americans, mortality rates have started to rise again after years of steady decline. This is a striking trend and is unknown in the rest of the world. Chronic disease contributes to this, but also driving this trend are mental health problems including substance abuse and suicide. In our data we saw how poverty drives poor mental health which in turn leads to myriad health problems.

There were many bright spots in the data. For one thing, youth substance abuse including tobacco and alcohol continues to go down and marijuana has not started increasing as many had feared with the change in attitudes toward marijuana. Connecting Point has been highlighting the downward trend in teen pregnancy rates for some time, and that continues. Our three counties have very low homicide and assault rates as well. Finally, the three counties have very low infant mortality rates. This is a precious asset which we must nurture and try to understand better. We have high rates of family poverty, as mentioned, and many of the problems that come along with that. But our children are nonetheless getting a surprisingly healthy start in life.



It seems the work before us is to build on the healthy start our youth are getting and turn that into a healthy adulthood. To do this we need to do much more than simply hector people to eat less and move more. We need to attack the rural poverty that leaves so many without the means to live healthier.

New Sharps Program



Residents of Montcalm County now have another option when it comes to safely disposing of sharps. Beginning on November 2, 2015, residents are able to dispose of their sharps (syringes, needles, lancets, etc.) at the Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) in Stanton, between the hours of 10 a.m.-12 Noon and 1 p.m.-3 p.m. All sharps must be placed in a sharps container or other puncture-resistant container, such as a plastic laundry jug. MMDHD is able to accept medication-filled sharps, a service that has not been previously available to county residents. This is a free service.

Residents of Clinton County can call the Granger Landfill at (989) 224-5186 to learn more about their sharps disposal program. Residents of Gratiot County can contact Gratiot County Community Mental Health at (989) 463-4971.

For more information about the health department's sharps program in Montcalm County, or about the medication disposal program, visit www.mmdhd.org or call (989) 831-3669.

What is Children's Special Health Care Services?

Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) is a program within the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and MMDHD. Its purpose is to provide case management services for children and some adults with chronic health issues, and who have special health care needs. Among the benefits of CSHCS are assistance with: paying specialty medical bills, coordinating services from multiple providers, learning about specialty providers, coordinating health insurance benefits and covering co-pays and deductibles.

For more information about Children's Special Health Care Services at MMDHD, visit www.mmdhd.org or contact:

Clinton	Laureen Simon	(989) 227-3121
Gratiot	Sue Corrigan	(989) 875-1004
Montcalm	Jamie Sawdy	(989) 831-3643



Why Get A Flu Shot?

There are many reasons to get a yearly flu shot. Here are just a few:

- Symptoms of influenza include high fever, chills, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. A bout of the flu can make you miserable and put you out of commission for a week.
- One person infected with the flu can potentially infect up to 15 others. The flu can spread quickly, especially in confined areas, such as schools and daycares. It is important to keep kids home when they are sick.
- Children less than six months of age are too young to get the flu vaccine, so the best way to protect them is to vaccinate those around them, including parents, family members and those who care for them.
- The vaccine is effective throughout the entire flu season, which can begin as early as October and last as late as May. Contrary to what some may think, receiving the flu vaccine does not "give" the person the flu, but some people may experience brief nasal congestion and a runny nose.
- Research has shown that the absolute best way to prevent the flu and its potentially life-threatening complications is for everyone, including healthy people, ages six months and older, to get vaccinated.
- For those at high-risk for developing serious flu complications, such as the elderly, young children, pregnant women, those with weakened immune systems, and people with certain health conditions, vaccination is especially important.

Getting the flu vaccine has never been more convenient. The vaccine is available at a variety of places, including doctor's offices, many pharmacies, or MMDHD.

MMDHD participates with the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program, as well as many types of insurance plans. We offer FluMist® nasal spray, Fluzone® High Dose, preservative-free options, as well as the "regular" flu shot. Call your nearest branch office for more information, to see if we participate with your insurance, or to schedule an appointment. Information is also available at www.mmdhd.org.

For more information about these and other Health Department programs, contact:

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