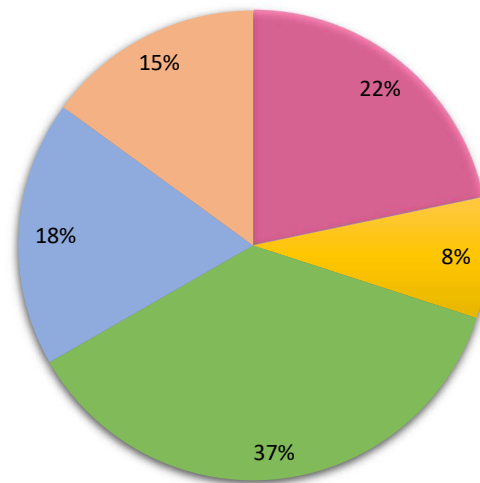


FOCUS GROUP RESULTS SUMMARY OF THE LORD FAIRFAX HEALTH DISTRICT

Overview

With a total of 66 participants, 9 focus group sessions were held in the Lord Fairfax Health District to better understand the concerns, goals, and health needs of the community and its members. A variety of topics were discussed including health needs, transportation, cost/insurance, a mobile health unit, mental health, substance use disorder, smoking, maternal, and child health.

Focus groups were conducted in all localities of the Lord Fairfax Health District; Frederick/Winchester, Warren County, Page County, Shenandoah County, and Clarke County. This allowed us to hear the thoughts, opinions, and needs of those across all localities. The results of these focus groups are divided into overall district results and results of each specific locality.



Percentage of participants by locality

■ Frederick/Winchester ■ Warren ■ Page ■ Shenandoah ■ Clarke

The information received will allow us to better guide our efforts toward the specific issues that community members view as the 'problem areas' of their specific communities. Each locality has different priorities and needs, and those should be addressed with this in mind to have the most substantial impact on the locality. The grant funding (ARPA Targeted Community Outreach) that allowed us to conduct these focus groups, will continue to be used to address these specific concerns.

We hear you and we thank you for your participation.

Overall District Results

District-Wide Highlights:

All localities see a need for more supportive resources and face barriers towards accessing services.

These barriers primarily impact the most vulnerable members of the community. All localities feel a lack of medical providers, appointments, and mental health resources. Similarly, the cost of health care and insurance is expensive which causes many people delay or avoid going to the doctor if they can't afford the services. Needs regarding public transportation with expansive routes is clearly needed and would significantly improve people's access to available services. Many individuals state a major concern towards vaping among teens with a need for more education to teens and parents.

Transportation:

There are very few public transportation options in the district. Current bus and trolley routes don't go into rural areas/neighborhoods. If services are available, vehicles may not be ADA compliant or may have long walks to bus stops due to inconvenient placing.

Cost/Insurance:

The cost of health insurance is high and healthcare costs are high regardless of insurance status. If people can't afford it, people delay seeking care, which can cause a condition to worsen. The lack of providers impacts people's ability to access preventative healthcare.

Mobile Health Unit:

Participants agree a mobile health unit would benefit the district. They believe that it can address issues like transportation and access to healthcare services. It would also be beneficial to work in collaboration and alongside other organizations to provide services.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

There are very few services available in the area for treatment and medications. The services that are present have very limited scope of practice or have very long wait times. There are few support systems for those in treatment as well. More detox centers, transitional housing, and support for families are needed. Stigma is present in the district which discourages people seeking help.

Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Tobacco use is common within the district. Vaping is a major issue amongst the youth while cigarettes are more common with older generations. Many see it as a generational habit that they pick up from their parents. Education is needed to combat misinformation about vaping to youth and adults alike.

Maternal and Child Health:

Few localities have sufficient OBGYN care for its population's need. Many people drive to Winchester or Front Royal for OBGYN care. More robust pediatric healthcare services are needed in the localities.

- Many areas need better access to birth control & family planning resources
- There are few pediatric practitioners and daycare facilities/childcare facilities
- WIC appointments are difficult to get, despite the need for services

Frederick County/Winchester City

Highlights:

Though this area has better access to healthcare and community resources, many people have difficulties finding the needed services in a timely fashion. There is a lack of knowledge about the available community resources and how to access them. Additionally, participants agreed that the cost of healthcare and insurance is expensive and oftentimes confusing to navigate. This causes healthcare to not be prioritized if people cannot afford it, or if it becomes too difficult. There is a need for more mental health resources in this area, especially services that are accessible to low-income individuals. There is a lack of knowledge of community resources.

Transportation:

Winchester Transit is helpful to get around town, but does not extend into Frederick County, creating barriers for many people. Elderly, disabled, low-income, and unaware individuals are more likely to experience barriers to using public transportation.

Cost/Insurance:

Participants do not go to the doctors if they don't have insurance or if the costs are too high. This results in poor health outcomes that usually affect high-risk populations. Major concerns include, confusing insurance systems, high costs and copays, and lack of transparency on pricing.

Mobile Health Unit:

Participants think that the mobile unit is a great idea to meet people where they are, especially if they don't have transportation. The many organizations in Winchester provide opportunities for community collaboration to benefit the most vulnerable communities.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

Mental health needs more attention. Opioid use is an issue in the community and associated stigma negatively affects the community. The community as a whole needs to have a better understanding of substance use disorders and how support can be beneficial to those in recovery. There is a need for more providers, treatment options, and more affordable care.

Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Vaping on social media grabs their attention and encourages youth to vape. There is a vape shop on every corner. There is a trend of older people smoking and younger people vaping. 'People know that [vaping] can cause cancer, but think "it won't happen to me, I will deal with it when it happens."'

Maternal and Child Health:

Community stigma has a large impact on the maternal and child health in the area. Religion influences people's beliefs in this community and may create stigma about accessing birth control. School systems don't educate about sex-ed leading to poor sexual health among youth. Additionally, lack of providers/few taking new patients, affordability of health and childcare, and language barriers all negatively impact the health of women and children in the area.

Warren County

Highlights:

Access to care is a concern in Warren County. Healthcare is expensive and it can be difficult to find a provider with open availabilities and the expertise needed. The lack in public transportation makes it difficult for people to reach needed resources. There is a need for more mental health and substance use disorder services in the community. Education about substance use is a need—particularly among youth—vaping, drugs, and alcohol are all areas of concern.

Transportation:

Front Royal has the Trolley, but its service is very limited and does not extend into neighborhoods or outside of its limited route. Wait times and its availability also cause difficulties for people trying to access transportation. Increasing number of calls are sent to dispatch to show up and assist a person getting to and from their car to the house.

Cost/Insurance:

People put off going to the hospital, but then it causes other issues long term with a long hospital stay. Many organizations refer patients to the free clinic. If people don't qualify for Medicaid, they're going to providers uninsured and are burdened with the associated costs.

Mobile Health Unit:

Participants think a MHU “would be huge”. Families would be relieved when their child could be taken care of in a convenient way.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

Mental health and SUD go hand in hand and there are a lack of resources for both issues. More detox and inpatient care facilities are needed. Patients are being released back into the situation they came from and does not benefit them during their recovery process.

Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Vaping among youths is a big issue. Holding parents accountable and educating them is important. Schools should have a better system of educating students about vaping and provide resources to those who are struggling with vaping habits.

Page County

Highlights:

Page county is a large rural area with few to no resources in the area. Some resources are available in Luray, but many people live in very rural areas outside of Luray. The lack of public transportation causes further difficulties from those who live in rural areas trying to reach services. The cost of care is expensive, and Page County has few providers that serve the community. Very few specialty providers practice in the County. There are very few maternal and child health resources in the area, so people travel out of town for service.

Transportation:

Page County is spread out and other areas are very difficult to get to. No public transit makes it difficult to access services outside of a walking distance. Medicaid Transport is unreliable and causes many issues for people trying to use it to travel to and from appointments.

Cost/Insurance:

Cost prevents many people from seeking care to begin with, and they defer preventative care. Insurance is expensive and can be difficult to get and still have expensive copays. This causes people to use the ER for non-emergency care. Many people use the free clinic to access care, but many still cannot afford the medications.

Mobile Health Unit:

Participants think that it could be beneficial for Page County. People want to be able to access care in alternative locations and in ways that fits in their schedule. Participants see the potential for collaboration among service organizations to provide the most benefit to community members.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

There are very few services available in the area for treatment and medications, and few support systems for those in treatment. Treatment is often sought out of Page County and relies on the individual having reliable transportation. There is stigma in the community about seeking help and is harmful to those in the community.

Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Cigarettes are more common with the older generation. It is a generational habit that they often pick up from their parents. Vaping is a major issue amongst youths because it is widely accepted, convenient, and seen as having fewer consequences. Schools confiscate vapes, but do not provide support to the student with the possible addiction.

Maternal and Child Health:

There are very few resources in the area. Most people have to drive to Front Royal for OBGYN care. There are few pediatric practitioners and daycare facilities, and they often have long waitlists. This results in people avoiding seeking care for themselves and their children because of the difficulties associated with maternal and child health.

Shenandoah County

Highlights:

The services available in Shenandoah County are helpful, but need to be expanded to support the needs of the community, ShenGo is the only public transportation offered, but routes don't expand from the main road. Cost and availability prevent people from caring for their health. There is a lack in mental health and substance use disorder resources. Smoking and tobacco use habits are higher in Shenandoah County than the US average. Options are limited for pediatricians and there are major waitlists to be seen.

Transportation:

ShenGo routes do not extend into towns, it only follows the main road in Shenandoah County. This helps people travel from town to town, but not within the towns. Lack of transportation would prevent people from going to appointments and caring for their health. People who experience barriers to using public transportation may be refugees and newcomers with language barriers, the elderly, and low-income individuals because ShenGo can be costly.

Cost/Insurance:

Cost and availability prevent people from caring for their health by avoiding going to the doctors. Costs and copay for services are high and insurance does not cover all associated costs for services.

Mobile Health Unit:

Participants agree a MHU would be beneficial to Shenandoah County especially since transportation is a large barrier. Many areas of the county have fewer services available than others, making it difficult for those areas to have the best opportunities for living healthy lives. A MHU would be able to address those disparities by supporting medical services in those areas.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

There are limited mental health and SUD resources in the area. Cost of medication and treatments is an issue and many insurance plans do not cover the costs. There is a lack of sober living facilities and the presence of stigma and lack of compassion in the community.

Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Vaping is a big issue. People see consequences so far in the future that they don't realize it. Educating parents is a potential way to address the generational factor of the issue. If parents realize that their children adopt the habits of their parents, they may act differently.

Maternal and Child Health:

Maternal and child health are large issues.

- There is help for when you are pregnant, but few when the child is born
- It's difficult to find places to take the children for care
- There are no local areas for delivery. Patients must travel to access delivery care.

Clarke County

Highlights:

Clarke County has difficulties accessing services for its most vulnerable populations. There is a lack of public transportation and few healthcare resources in the area, so many people must travel to access care. The lack of healthcare extends from basic care to specialty services. There is a stigma around mental health and substance use disorders with very few resources for recovery in the area.

Transportation:

There is no public transportation and a great need for services, particularly for medical appointments. Medicaid transportation is very unreliable and is not a solution to the transportation issues.

Cost/Insurance:

Insurance and healthcare don't feel obtainable to many people. Insurance though an employer can also be a huge issue because its often the second biggest bill in a family's expenses. Many people take the gamble to not have insurance to save costs, but then risk needing to access healthcare and receiving big medical bills.

Mobile Health Unit:

Participants believe a MHU would be convenient since everything is so limited in Clarke County. The senior center and other organizations could see collaborations so that people do not need to travel outside of the locality to access certain types of care.

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

There are a lot of SUD and stigma in the community.

- There are resources for very severe mental health needs, but fewer for less severe issues or people make too much money to qualify for benefits
- Children and adolescents have the least amounts of options for treatment
- There is a need for more providers and long-term recovery programs

Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Vaping is a major issue, especially amongst youth. Parents and coaches need to model habits and behaviors to the children.

Maternal and Child Health:

There is a lack of services and initiatives within prenatal care. Patients have to travel out of town for basic and specialty healthcare services.

Moving Forward

The Lord Fairfax Health District has received so many wonderful ideas and valuable feedback during these sessions. The health district will take this feedback and use it to advocate for our community members. We are dedicated to protecting and promoting your well-being, and to create a healthier Virginia.

This information will be used to know what the most pressing issues in the community are and be used to specifically address these issues. Outreach events encouraging healthy habits in youth and adults alike, creating target marketing towards educating community members, and providing better avenues for accessing opportunities for healthy living are among some plans to engage community members throughout the district with health as a priority. **Our goal is to find solutions that work for each community, because each communities' needs are different.**

The Lord Fairfax Health District has great hopes of obtaining a mobile unit. We hope to be able to use this funding to acquire a mobile health unit this year to address transportation disparities in our more rural areas. Our goal is to provide health department services in areas farther from the health departments, with a focus on those who have difficulty accessing care or experience barriers to transportation and to our more vulnerable populations.

Please reach out to Katherine Schroeder (Katherine.Schroeder@vdh.virginia.gov / 540-722-3470) with any questions you may have about these focus groups or the plans to address community health issues. [Find us on Facebook](#) to stay up to date with LFHD! Thank you again for your participation in our focus groups!