

## **Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **You Talked – We Listened!**

**Three Rivers, MI.** In 2012, the Access to Care Task Force, a collaboration of Sturgis Hospital, Three Rivers Health, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, St. Joseph Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and other partner organizations, asked local residents to participate in a Community Health Needs Assessment. Over 600 people participated and completed an electronic survey that identified the following five needs:

1. Access to Health Care which includes access to health services and to affordable health insurance.
2. Healthy Behaviors which includes weight control, physical activity, and tobacco usage.
3. Chronic Disease management which includes access to specialists, free and low cost screenings and health education and information;
4. Maternal and Infant Health to address teen pregnancy, lack of prenatal care and infant mortality; and
5. Substance Abuse and Mental Health to address problems with Meth usage and mental illness in children and adults.

Since the publishing of the survey's findings, various representative agencies, who sit on the Access to Task Force, have worked hard to address your concerns. To date, the following projects are being initiated or are underway:

- Establishment and expansion of school-linked clinics in Three Rivers and Sturgis.

- Free navigation and in-person assister programs that can help uninsured and underinsured people apply for the Healthy Michigan program or purchase private insurance policies through the Health Insurance Marketplace.
- The recruitment of specialists and the use of technology designed to improve the availability and quality of health services provided locally.
- The establishment of the Step Up St. Joseph Initiative which seeks to promote locally based wellness activities and services and incorporate wellness into local festivals, as well as create a culture of health in St. Joseph County. (Check out [www.steupsjc.net](http://www.steupsjc.net) to learn more).
- Increasing availability of free and low-cost screenings offered at local health fairs and special events, such as the Three Rivers Health Fair and the Sturgis Hospital's Ladies Annual Check Up Day.
- Funding for a free prenatal smoking program for pregnant and post-partum women and their family members.
- Continued integration of mental health services with primary care services to improve access and coordination.
- The initiation of a Trauma Assessment Center for children.
- The receipt of a Partnership grant to initiate substance abuse screening in primary care offices and provide prevention education that targets 10 to 25 year olds.
- Obtaining a certificate of need by Three Rivers Health to establish a new inpatient psychiatry program.

**Once again, the Access to Care Task Force is seeking community input!** The second round of the St Joseph County Health Community Health Needs Assessment is scheduled to begin on December 9th and run through January 22nd. The assessment will once again survey St. Joseph County residents in an effort to better understand new needs and identify new priorities that are based upon public health perceptions. All St. Joseph County residents who are 18 years of age and older are asked to participate. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Online respondents are anonymous and cannot be identified. Any personal information solicited is solely for the purpose of developing aggregate demographic

group trends. The survey may be accessed online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/stjosephcommneeds>. Paper copies and a Spanish version of the survey are available as well and can be picked up at Three Rivers Health's and Sturgis Hospital's lobbies. The health department in Three Rivers will also have copies available, as will Community Mental Health's main office in Centreville.

In about three months the hospitals and their partners will publish the results of this and other data collection efforts, along with anticipated responses to identified needs. It will be available to download for free by any interested individual from the hospitals' websites. Please encourage your friends, family and relatives living in St. Joseph County to participate. Your input, as you can see from the list of projects listed above, is really important and valuable.

Should you have questions about this survey, please contact:

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This project is a collaborative effort by Sturgis Hospital, Three Rivers Health, Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency and St. Joseph Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

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