

Community Health Improvement Plan: Basic and Social Needs

Core Priorities Brief
August 2025

OVERVIEW

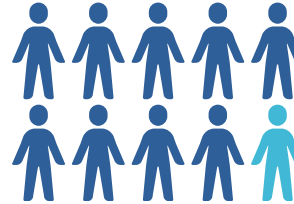
The Public Health Council of the Upper Valley, using Dartmouth Health's 2025 Community Health Needs Assessment, has identified priorities for the upcoming Community Health Improvement Plan. We hope these priorities may be incorporated into our partners' work in serving, educating, and advocating for communities across the Upper Valley.

Socioeconomic factors, including financial status, educational attainment, and family support, can greatly affect an individual's ability to live a healthy life. At the community level, efforts focusing on affordable housing, easily accessible transportation, and services for families including child care and help paying bills have been shown to improve the health of the population. Even when such services are available, however, confusion in navigating among various organizations, stigma associated with seeking help, and difficulties getting an appointment pose additional barriers, especially to those of lower income levels. Addressing these issues will require ingenuity, open-mindedness, and, most importantly, an integrated effort from all of our community organizations.

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“They turn down social activities because of a lack of transportation - they can't get there. There's also a socioeconomic divide in this area, feeding into that loneliness and stigma.” - Discussion Group

“Families have to choose between keeping their career and taking care of their kids because of the cost.” - Discussion Group

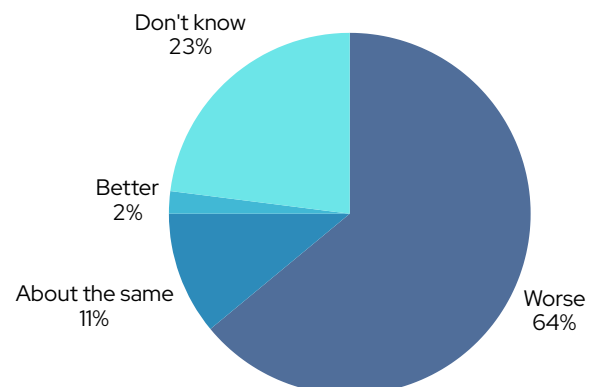


Nearly 9 out of 10 community residents reported that the ability of people to afford housing has decreased over the last few years

FACTS AND FIGURES

- 18% of community residents reporting difficulty getting help paying their bills selected “stigma or shame” as a reason.
- Among those having difficulty getting help with housing needs, bill payments, and rides to services, 24%, 36%, and 39% respectively selected “Did not know who to call” as a reason.
- The most common barrier to housing and child care was “Cost too much.”
- The most common barrier to help with bills and rides to services was “Service not available.”
- 72% of community residents report that healthy food is not affordable.

According to community residents, the ability to get affordable child care in the past few years has gotten:





Which of the following services or resources that can support a health community should we focus on improving? (select top 5)



Community leader survey

“There are so many needs right now. However, I think there is a need for community. We are very disconnected as a society, and being in the Upper Valley can exacerbate this as everything requires travel. We need human connections and caring. - Community Resident Survey Respondent

CURRENT STRENGTHS

- Community residents generally agree healthy food is available (though unaffordable).
- 82% of community residents agree the Upper Valley is a good place to raise children.
- Most community residents report it is easy to get exercise and there are ways to take part in social life.
- Public transportation access has improved within the more populated towns of the Upper Valley, and funding has increased.

SOME OPPORTUNITIES

- Integrate the work of community organizations to simplify the process of getting help
- Advocate for zoning ordinances that increase capacity for accessory dwelling units and manufactured homes
- Encourage older residents to participate in home sharing programs, which are often mutually beneficial
- Fill in the gaps in volunteer driver programs in the Upper Valley and find ways to help residents with “the last mile” to their homes
- Expand peer support services, community gardens, and affordable or free local recreational activities

REFERENCES

Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, Alice Peck Day Memorial Hospital, and Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire. (2025). Community Health Needs Assessment: Fiscal Year 2025. <https://www.dartmouth-hitchcock.org/about/community-health>