



Public Health
Iowa HHS

108+

108+ PARTNERSHIPS CREATED,
EXPANDED OR MAINTAINED

31+

31+ COMMUNITY OUTREACH
ACTIVITIES FACILITATED

10K+

10,036+ RESOURCES
DISSEMINATED

HEALTH EQUITY PROJECT OVERVIEW

For over thirty years, the Iowa Rural Health Association (IRHA) has provided a statewide network of rural health providers advocating for rural health care and access to healthy rural communities. IRHA is a non-profit organization, dedicated to the growth and success of the communities it advocates for. We know from experience that time, funding, and resources when shared with rural communities, have impact, and sustainability. Rural residents who are “boots on the ground” know what they need and what is possible. When the IRHA applied for the Iowa Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities grant, our intent was to identify rural communities and garner our partnership capacity to help support and expand their existing community health efforts. The IRHA is pleased and proud of the four communities involved in the IRHA Health Equity Project: Health Determinants Rural Learning Collaborative.

The Health Determinants Rural Learning Collaborative increased awareness of health determinants and equipped participating communities with an action plan to address areas identified in the needs assessment phase of this project. Over the last 9 months, four rural communities were selected with the goals of: 1) increasing their knowledge about health determinants 2) assessing the needs in their community, 3) prioritizing the needs they identify, and 4) developing an obtainable action plan to develop programs to address health disparities.

Throughout the process, the need of peer-to-peer learning was repeatedly identified. The Iowa Rural Health Association (IRHA) met frequently with each of the four grantees and provided opportunities for the grantees to share successes and challenges with each other. Within each of the grantee communities, a community team or coalition was established to guide the grant objectives. When creating these community teams, IRHA worked with grantees to identify potential cross-sector partnerships and ensure all members of the community were being considered in the work. The result of the Health Determinants Rural Learning Collaborative is four successful health equity projects across the state of Iowa. While the projects vary in many ways, each project increased community partnerships, infrastructure, and community knowledge of the social determinants of health.

“This grant helped our coalition focus on a few specific projects from ideas that we’d been kicking around for awhile. The funding and the imposed timeframe helped us to prioritize short-term projects, many of which will have a long-term impact. We have come a long way in 10 months promoting brain health and increasing food access in Henry County!” — Kelly Carr, Healthy Henry County

HEALTH EQUITY PROJECT OVERVIEW

The communities that were chosen to participate in the Health Determinants Rural Learning Collaborative were Healthy Henry County, the City of Malvern, Iowa Specialty Hospital, and Healthy Fayette County. Each of these four communities worked diligently in one-to-two health equity focus areas over a ten-month period. The strides that were made over this period are remarkable and will serve as examples for other rural communities across Iowa. Read on for a snapshot of each project. If you would like to learn more about each of the projects, please visit the IRHA website.



HEALTHY HENRY COUNTY

HEALTH EQUITY FOCUS: BRAIN HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY

After completing a food pantry assessment, Henry County held a review meeting with coalition members and pantry leaders. The amount of information and idea sharing was incredible! Henry County was able to network with faith-based organizations that run food pantries and bring them together to address food insecurity. Henry County created a flyer with information about pantries in the county. This includes hours of operations, contact information, most needed donations, services provided, and promotes collaboration.

IOWA SPECIALTY HOSPITAL

HEALTH EQUITY FOCUS: FOOD SECURITY

Iowa Specialty Hospital in Clarion hosted a county-wide participation in planning for their event "We're WRIGHT to SHARE". Promoting, planning, and execution of this event has provided ISH the opportunity to reach out to organizations in Wright County that provide essential services. This event brought together these organizations and community members and provided insights that were pivotal to the development of the food security plan moving forward. Because of the relationships that have been established throughout this process, a new food bank has opened in Wright County!



CITY OF MALVERN

HEALTH EQUITY FOCUS: WALKABILITY, FOOD SECURITY



The City of Malvern secured a majority portion of funding for the safe route to school project. Because of the Health Equity grant support, they were able to increase their organization's infrastructure. With the increase of infrastructure, they are able to work with additional partners. Engagement with community stakeholders has highlighted areas to better serve the community of Malvern.

HEALTHY FAYETTE COUNTY

HEALTH EQUITY FOCUS: NUTRITION, MENTAL HEALTH, PREVENTION



Fayette County's Mental Health workgroup partnered with County Social Services, North Fayette Valley Community Coalition, North Fayette Community School District, and Healthy Fayette County Coalition to offer Youth Mental Health First Aid for all staff at North Fayette Valley and are offering courses to the public. In addition, the other three school districts in the county are working with these partners and MercyOne Oelwein to offer Mental Health First Aid for their staff next school year. Fostering relationships with the coalition partners and having available funding ensures delivery of vital education through resource sharing in the county. Just one year ago, the Mental Health workgroup identified how they wanted to provide support to their community and now it is a possibility.