

West Suburban Community Health Network (CHNA) 18 Community Needs Assessment – Brookline Supplement

The Town of Brookline participated in a community health assessment which included Brookline, Dedham, Dover, Needham, Brookline, Waltham, Wellesley, Weston and Westwood. Led by a team from the Brookline Health Department, 10 interviews were conducted with residents and professionals in Brookline, yielding rich information about the health of Brookline residents.

Overall, Brookline compares favorably with the other communities in CHNA 18 and with the state of Massachusetts with respect to community health status.

	<i>Population (2005)</i>	<i>Median Income (2000)</i>	<i>% Below Poverty Line (2000)</i>	<i>% of children getting free or reduced price lunch (2010-11)</i>	<i>Population per square mile (2011)</i>
Brookline	56,422	\$66,711	9.3%	12.2%	8,308
<i>CHNA 18</i>	<i>309,560</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>4.5%</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>2,783</i>
<i>Massachusetts</i>	<i>6,436,940</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>9.3%</i>	<i>34.2%</i>	<i>839</i>

Summary Data

General Health Status

Brookline has lower rates of mortality, diabetes, smoking, hypertension and adult and child obesity, teen births and motor vehicle-related ER visits than the State. Brookline has a higher rate of HIV/AIDS than other CHNA communities but still lower than the state.

Demographics

Brookline has a much higher percentage of Asian residents than CHNA 18 and the State of Massachusetts.

Brookline has higher percentage of people below 200% of the poverty line than most other CHNA 18 communities.

Brookline has a lower percentage of both young people under 19 and those 65+ than do other towns in CHNA 18 and the State.

Top Community Strengths identified:

- Community involvement
- Strong government infrastructure
- The availability of adequate services

Top Health Concerns identified were:

- Mental Health (especially depression/anxiety, substance abuse, hoarding and lack of mental health services)
- Housing Prices
- Legal or financial barriers to accessing health care services

Spotlight Health Issue: Mental Health

Summary

- Suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among high school students are considerably lower in Brookline than in CHNA 18 and the state of Massachusetts.
- 8% of 9th graders in Brookline reported not going to school because they felt unsafe in the last month in 2007 as compared to 4.7% of all high school students in Massachusetts,
- Brookline had a higher rate of ER visits related to alcohol and substance abuse for those 19 and under than the state and many other CHNA 18 communities
- While the percentage of unemployed Brookline residents has more than doubled since 1999-2001, it still remains lower than other CHNA 18 communities and the state as a whole.

Selected Interviewee Comments

“Our expanding aging population requires more services”
Chamber of Commerce staff

“I think Brookline is a relatively safe community and has good collaboration with town agencies and resources”
Municipal employee

““There is a spirit of volunteerism and civic mindedness”
Town resident

“The school system is faced with budget cuts while there is an increasingly diverse student population with multiple challenges”
Mental health provider

“With cuts in funding and...programs, elders have to make difficult decisions like paying for food rather than heat or medications”
Senior center staff

“Brookline businesses find that the costs associated with paying health insurance for their employees continues to increase, an expense they find more difficult to fund”
Chamber of Commerce staff