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Cuyahoga County Community Health Needs Assessment Released **Findings Point to Key Issues of Structural Racism, Social Determinants of Health**

CLEVELAND – The [2019 Cuyahoga County Community Health Needs Assessment](#), released today by hospitals, public health and other partner organizations, brings into focus several key foundational issues impacting the health of the county's residents, including structural racism and social determinants of health.

The findings are the product of an in-depth, facilitated process of data gathering and analysis, as well as active engagement by community partners and residents through surveys, interviews, a focus group and community meetings. Interview and focus group participants noted that issues such as lack of trust, segregation and racism are present in the community and prevent necessities like employment, food, affordable housing, healthcare and transportation from being available to all.

"The assessment gave us the opportunity to hear directly from the community about their health needs and concerns, and we heard clearly that structural racism and trust are key drivers in the health of those who live here," said Heidi Gullett, MD. Gullett, a practicing physician, is medical director for the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, associate professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, and co-chair of the Health Improvement Partnership – Cuyahoga. "These issues get to the core of what we as a community need to work to address in order to ensure those who reside here can achieve their best level of health."

The issues raised through data gathering were prioritized for action utilizing an inclusive process that sought input from individuals and organizations throughout the community. This led to the identification of the following five priorities:

- Eliminating structural racism.
- Enhancing trust and trustworthiness across sectors, people, and communities.
- Addressing community conditions, such as reducing poverty and its effects.
- Enhancing mental health and reducing substance abuse.
- Reducing chronic illness and its effects.

These priorities will inform the design of the community health improvement plan and implementation strategies for the next three years.

This assessment is the outcome of a powerful collaboration between Better Health Partnership, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, the Cleveland Department of Public Health, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, the Health Improvement Partnership-Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga), The MetroHealth System, PolicyBridge, Southwest General Health Center, St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, The Center for Health Affairs, United Way of Greater Cleveland, and University Hospitals.

“The assessment is unique in the unprecedented level of collaboration involved in completing it,” said Kirstin Craciun, director of community outreach at The Center for Health Affairs. “A broad swath of organizations across the community worked closely throughout the process to design and conduct the assessment. The relationships that were strengthened through this process will propel the efforts involved in the next phase as partners work in concert to develop and operationalize an implementation plan based on the assessment’s findings.”

The assessment fulfills the requirements of both public health and hospitals to evaluate community health needs on a regular basis. Because their defined service area is shared, they are permitted to collaborate on a single assessment, which is both a more efficient use of resources than conducting individual assessments and, more importantly, it allows for a more integrated approach to addressing the identified needs.

This year is the second collaborative assessment to take place in Cuyahoga County. For the first time, in 2018 a group of stakeholders that included hospitals and public health came together to conduct a joint assessment. This year, the collaboration grew to include a number of additional organizations. This group intends to carry the work forward, both by collaborating on a joint implementation plan and working together on future assessments, which are expected to be conducted every three years.

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