



# 2019 HEALTHY MENDOCINO LISTENING TOURS

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## Healthy Mendocino Listening Tour

We want to hear from you!

**What in your community is working well?**

**What are the major barriers to health and wellness for you and your family?**

**What support or resources do you need to improve your life?**

**Please attend this important meeting to tell us what will help you, your family and your community to thrive.**

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# 2019 Healthy Mendocino Listening Tour Analysis

## Introduction

Part of Healthy Mendocino's mission is to be a central hub for cross-sector collaboration to improve community health. One way to do this is through collecting continuous community feedback about the most pressing health issues in the county to help inform our partners' next steps. Healthy Mendocino conducted 23 Listening Tours with agencies and groups around the county representing a diverse cross sector of the population. This was a compliment to the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) for community engagement to obtain a better understanding of what community groups feel are the barriers and highest needs for their community members. Data was compiled in 2019 from each region of Mendocino County – North Coast, South Coast, North County, Round Valley, Willits, Ukiah area. The groups targeted were: Tribal Councils, Family Resource Centers, Coalitions, Agencies, Organizations, Councils, and Coalitions.

The theme of each meeting was to listen and ask questions of community members, leaders in the community and people on the ground working with specific populations.

## List of Agencies and Organizations

1. Safe RX Mendocino Coalition
2. Workforce Alliance of the North Bay Mendocino Advisory Subcommittee
3. Consolidated Tribal Health Project Board of Directors
4. West Business Development Center
5. Mental Health Services Act Stakeholders Forum
6. Bekkie Emery Mendocino County HHS, Social Services Branch Director
7. Mendocino Coast District Hospital
8. Alliance for Rural Community Health/FQHCs Federal Qualified Health Centers
9. Ukiah Vecinos En Accion (UVA)
10. Round Valley Tribal Health Clinic
11. Round Valley Tribal community members
12. Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority, Tribal Listening Session
13. Redwood Community Services
14. Redwood Quality Management Company
15. Family Resource Center Network group
16. Mendocino College
17. LATINX Alliance
18. Laytonville Community Coalition
19. Children's Youth Council
20. Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 2015 Coast Chapter

21. Action Network
22. Project Sanctuary
23. Advocates Supporting Coast Kids (ASCK)/ Child Abuse Prevention Council
24. Coalition for Gang Awareness and Prevention (CGAP)

## Questions Asked

1. What are the major barriers to vital health and wellness for your clients/members?
2. What support would you/they need to address these barriers?
3. What are the gaps in care and prevention based on your work with this population?
4. What in your community is working well?
5. If you had a magic wand, what programs, policies, and resources would you ask for?

## The Native American Community

### Challenges/Barriers

In meetings with the Native American communities, the high incidence of substance abuse, domestic violence, incarceration, and mental health issues was discussed. Many of the factors that can be attributed to this centered around lack of jobs, housing, transportation, and services to outlying areas especially for seniors, mentally ill, and young adults. Each tribe has its own government with its own jurisdictions, laws, and needs; therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for the Native American communities as a whole. Each tribe needs to be treated individually. There is a feeling that the tribes are an afterthought and the resources do not flow to the tribal populations. In addition, mental health services need more funding for community treatment. A list of specific barriers emerged from these conversations:

- Racism in schools and communities
- Loss of cultural knowledge
- No roles or opportunities for youth to grow
- A gap in services and programs for 19-27-year old's
- There is a lack of family support
- Lack of tribal involvement and input on issues concerning their communities to push for money and services.
- Programs available are not tribal specific
- No workforce development
- Decline in health from lack of in-home care and higher-level care such as occupational and physical therapy.
- Lack of services for newly released inmates
- MTA does not provide service in Covelo

## Solutions

The solutions discussed during the meetings were based on culturally-specific ideas involving family unity, teaching the value of culture and connecting to sense of place, providing role models and time spent with elders, working through anger from historical trauma and racism. Other specific solutions were:

- Bring youth in for intergenerational, empowering activities like a digital storytelling, sports, singing, dancing.
- Communication with higher-level leaders in the county, to provide a seat at the table and representation on Boards, Councils etc. at the county level.
- Prevention over treatment
- Land acquisition to purchase land for housing
- Healthy parents = healthy children = healthy parents
- Need a felony-friendly workforce list and assistance program for former inmates to become active members of the community.
- Develop a program where young adults help support their adults and elders in the community
- Develop a home visitor position for home visits to assess the condition of seniors and the disabled population
- Develop a “Walk in Your Goodness” program to encourage volunteering which in turn increases self-worth, self-esteem. Teach young adults and kids that contributing makes a difference

## The Hispanic Community

### Challenges/Barriers

The Hispanic population has a level of poverty, domestic violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse and mental illness disproportionate to the larger community. Language is a barrier, as are cultural taboos about talking openly about abuse, mental illness and other issues. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are high among the Latinx population. Working Parents experience a high level of stress, especially farm workers who work long hours. There are not enough after school programs to provide a safe place for children. The 0 – 5-year old’s experience the highest rates of child abuse and neglect because that age group typically does not have childcare programs. With poverty comes a decrease in food availability, especially for healthy foods, unsafe and unsanitary housing, and less access to health care. Undocumented workers face additional challenges with the fear of being deported and the affect that may have on their

families. The laws are constantly changing, which make it difficult for non-English speakers to follow. Many Latinx families dis-enroll their children from MediCal benefits due to fear of how it may affect the undocumented parent and their pathway to legal permanent residency.

## Stories

Families are having a hard time finding local providers who accept their insurance (MediCal). There is only one optometrist provider who accepts MediCal. Clients must use the Emergency Room as a form of primary care.

"I feel I get treated differently when I provide the providers with my MediCal card" - A

"It is really hard to get appointments for my children (locally)" -A

## Solutions

We need more access to information in Spanish, presented in a culturally sensitive way. The language barrier needs to be addressed with protocols in place to make sure there is easier access to bilingual options in print and for personnel working with non-English speaking clients. This is especially important in emergencies. Translations need to be made available at the same time as the English information is dispersed. Mental health providers can learn to understand the cultural taboos when helping children and adults. Latino children should be educated on their rights in school and at home. We need an increase in the options for family and children's recreation that are affordable and do not include alcohol. Through partnerships, the community could find a way to motivate children to come back to their home communities to be part of the work force after they finish school.

Volunteering is a way to increase self-worth and see what the community has to offer to them and their community. Providing an easier way to volunteer without all the paperwork and legal requirements would be beneficial. Families and direct service providers for the Latinx community should have more education on public charge—what you should and should not be afraid of.

## The Coastal Communities

### Challenges/Barriers

The coast feels there is a lack understanding inland of what is needed in their communities. There is lack of industry, jobs, and opportunities--especially for youth. Seniors are isolated and without the care they need. Many retired people particularly on the South Coast are unaware of the poverty, desperation, substance abuse and other challenges prevalent in their community. There

is a huge gap between the working poor and the well-off retired folks. Access to care is a major barrier on the coast, as is affordable housing. Much of the housing stock is taken by vacation rentals. Housing and environmental regulations as well as NIMBYISM attitudes prevent progress on affordable housing. Most low-income employees make too much to qualify for section 8 vouchers or food stamps. Section 8 vouchers are only used at about 30% on the coast because many landlords are apprehensive about accepting them. There is a lack of understanding among parents about the signs of gang activity in their children. Working poor parents are too busy to engage their children and find ways to communicate with them about gangs, substance abuse etc. The area needs more treatment options for substance abuse: there is no outpatient facility on the coast, no continuity of care from ER to treatment. There are many great trainings for suicide prevention, etc., but attendance for meetings is consistently low.

## Solutions

There is a need for user-friendly programs for adults and kids on prevention and education that resonate with teens, help parents understand how to answer questions about drugs, keeps teens busy with activities and help them find a career path. A School Resource police officer at the high school has proven to make a difference in teen substance use and gang activity, but the funding was lost. Provide gang prevention education for 6th graders. Provide support for kids transitioning out of high school. Other specific solutions were:

- Better access to healthcare
- Higher wages—many workers are juggling more than one job
- More representation at the county level
- Better treatment options for substance abuse: an out-patient facility, more continuity in the process that takes patients from ER to treatment.
- Better 5150 (mental illness care) for the North and South Coast
- More education to reduce NIMBYISM and promote need for affordable housing
- More education to reduce stigma associated with seeking out parenting and mental health support, especially among the Latinx community—bring in facilitators that create a climate of normalcy
- Better transportation, particularly for kids of working parents,
- Gang prevention education for lower grades
- More youth drug counseling

## Bright Spots on the Coast

- Agencies on the coast are very good at collaborating and sharing resources
- Fort Bragg High School is taking a new approach to career counseling and presenting students that are not college bound with more options such as trade schools and certification programs.
- A new teen center with Project Sanctuary which will be an access point for teens. There will be 3 teen interns that will learn how to be peer counselors and help facilitate groups. A secondary goal of the center is to focus on economic development: job skills and professional development.
- Collaboration with Mendocino Coast Children's Fund (MCCF) allows Project Sanctuary to be trauma-informed, i.e. MCCF takes care of victims' and families' primary needs and logistics when they are fleeing a violent household. MCCF provides money for socks, food, clothing, etc., no questions asked.
- Lots of parent support and education opportunities on the coast

## Domestic Abuse

### Challenges/Barriers

There is a lack of trauma-informed approach among law enforcement when dealing with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The justice system often re-victimizes the victim by blaming victims for not making reports. Domestic violence victim support is extremely limited for outlying regions. There is stigma among families and parents about getting help and support for abusive situations. Isolation and lack of connection, meaning, and purpose are seen as causes for abusive situations. Prevention funding is considered a secondary need and is the first to get cut because it is not seen as a mandate by the Office of Emergency Services.

### Solutions

Provide better prevention funding, which is integral for programming and for changing social norms/breaking the generational cycle of abuse. Create a family justice center that would streamline services: domestic violence victim advocate support, law enforcement and court, and a Family Resource Center all in one place. Provide better treatment for substance abuse such as group facilitators and trainers that represent the communities they are trying to support.



## Workforce/Economy

### Challenges/Barriers

We do not have the trained workforce to fill the available jobs. The lack of affordable housing, our aging population and a workforce pool lacking in technical and soft skills is affecting the ability to fill empty positions county wide. The health care industry and the County are hit especially hard. The requirements listed in job descriptions inhibits most people from applying even though they would be able to fulfill the job tasks because they don't emphasize the transferrable soft skills needed for the positions. Resources for workforce help and higher education are centered in the Ukiah Valley. It is cost prohibitive to travel to the outlying areas and hard for people to come to Ukiah because of lack of transportation. Kids feel that they have no purpose or options.

### Solutions

- Have a workforce development-Welfare to Work program with Career Point partnering with West Business Development Center, EDD, and California Indian Manpower Consortium for CalWorks recipients.
- Need to extend this to outlying areas
- There is a need for economic recovery and resiliency for the county along with digital technologies and improved broadband. Businesses need staff with digital skills
- HR rewrite job descriptions to attract people with transferrable skills
- Need for increasing agency among adults of working age
- Incentive programs to bring Mendocino County natives back to the community to work after they finish their education

## Health Care/Mental Health

### Challenges/Barriers

There is a strong need for better 51/50 care in the outlying areas. It is hard for mentally ill clients to get the help they need at the clinics. Assessments are not allowed at most clinics and people must go to the emergency room or a crisis center for the assessment before they can be referred to someone for help. It can then take 100 days for the patient to get mental health services once they are referred. This is a problem as most cases are short term, immediate needs and they cannot wait for services.

## Solutions

Increase help for those needing short term services, most help is for long term needs. There is a need for wrap around services and a mobile unit that can go to the outlying areas, but this still will not help people in immediate need. More community-wide education about Measure B funds—what it will and will not accomplish.

## Summary

Healthy Mendocino set out to conduct Listening Tours throughout the county to hear directly from leaders and members of the community from a diverse number of sectors. The 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment had just been completed and the surveys, secondary data and Key Leader interviews pointed to 3 main priority areas needing attention in the county: Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Domestic Abuse. Most of the data for this assessment came from a narrow population in the county and did not have a statistically relevant number of data points from the most vulnerable populations. What was heard from specific populations and from different regions was insightful. The challenges and barriers were similar on the issues of poverty; housing; access to health care, especially mental health; lack of skilled laborers and workforce development causing large job vacancies in government and health care sectors; and lack of transportation to outlying areas, lack of programs for young children and youth. What we learned was Native American and Hispanic populations had distinct challenges because of language, culture, problems with equity and racism to name a few.

The solutions brought forward showed that these communities have been thinking of positive programs to address these issues: better access to educational programs for youth, job seekers, the mentally ill, and newly released inmates. Better access to treatment options for the mentally ill, substance abuse clients and domestic violence victims and perpetrators. Increase in transportation, language translations, and an understanding of cultural history and taboos.

Healthy Mendocino will share this information out to the community and to our partners to engage and strengthen relationships with community agencies and organizations, to engender collaboration and help bring about community change.