

## Introduction

Community Diagnosis is a community-based, community-owned process to assess the health status of Tennesseans. The Carter County Health Council in cooperation with the Northeast Tennessee Regional Health Office (NETRHO) of the Tennessee Department of Health structured the county health council in 1997 in preparation for the community diagnosis process. The Community Development Program of the NETRHO facilitates this community diagnosis assessment process and resulting health planning among all county health councils in the Northeast Tennessee region. The Carter County Health Council conducted a community survey, reviewed various data sets and evaluated resources in the community to identify areas of concern that affect the health of Carter County citizens.

Health issues for Carter County were identified from the data sources and prioritized for size, seriousness, and effectiveness of intervention. As a result of the assessment process, the health council is developing Action Strategies for Carter County to address the priority problems identified. The Action Strategies Report, to be published next year, will contain goals to improve the health of Carter County residents.

### The Council and Its Mission:

The Carter County Health Council is a long-standing council made up of members who broadly represent Carter County (please see Appendix A for a complete list of council members and the diverse areas they represent). All share a strong desire to promote the highest level of health and well being for all residents of Carter County.

The mission of the council in conducting Community Diagnosis is to develop a community-based, community-owned, and community-directed process to . . .

- ◆ Analyze the health status of the community.
- ◆ Evaluate health resources, services, and systems of care within the county.
- ◆ Assess attitudes toward community health services and issues.

- ◆ Identify priorities, establish goals, and determine courses of action to improve the health status of the community.
- ◆ Establish a baseline for measuring improvement over time.

Benefits of Community Diagnosis for the community include:

- ◆ Providing communities the opportunity to participate in directing the course of health services and delivery systems.
- ◆ Involving communities in development of health strategies which are directly responsive to the community's needs and are locally designed, implemented, and monitored.
- ◆ Providing justification for budget improvement requests, a foundation of information for seeking grants, and a tool for use in promoting public relations.
- ◆ Providing, at the local level, current health information and coordination of strategies to the Regional Health Council and to state-level programs and their regional office personnel.
- ◆ Serving health planning and advocacy needs at the community level. Here the community leaders, organizations, and local health departments provide leadership to ensure that documented community health problems are addressed.

This document provides a description of community diagnosis activities to-date. Data will be described with emphasis on important issues identified by the council. This report concludes with Carter County's priority health concerns as identified through the Community Diagnosis process, including smoking and alcohol/drug abuse (as symptoms of other identified community and social systems concerns), education system (retaining students and returning those who have dropped out, raising school standards), health insurance coverage/managed care problems, late prenatal care (especially related to low-weight births and infant mortality), expansion of senior citizens' services, pneumonia and influenza death rates, dental services for underserved/indigent populations, and heart disease to name a few.