Health & Well-Being Focus Area

As the Community Foundation continues to deepen its impact, a focus on Health and Wellbeing offers a vital opportunity to strengthen the overall resilience and prosperity of Isabella County. Physical and mental health is a foundational element of a thriving community, influencing how individuals learn, work, care for others, and engage with civic life. When residents face persistent barriers to care, whether physical, mental, or preventative, their ability to thrive in other areas of life is often limited.

Isabella County is home to many strong healthcare providers and institutions. However, access remains a challenge for many residents, and a deterrent to those who may have otherwise chosen to make Mount Pleasant their home. Long wait times, limited provider availability, and the difficulty of navigating services can make it especially hard for people, regardless of income or background, to get the support they need, particularly during times of stress or crisis. Additionally, mental health and substance abuse are prevalent issues in the county.

Beyond access, community leaders also highlighted the importance of prevention. These underlying factors, such as chronic disease, nutrition, and overall well-being, have a major impact on long-term health. Yet efforts to address them often lack consistent funding and are not well connected to the places where people typically receive care, such as clinics or hospitals. Programs that help people navigate these needs show promise but remain too few and too underfunded to meet the full scale of community demand.

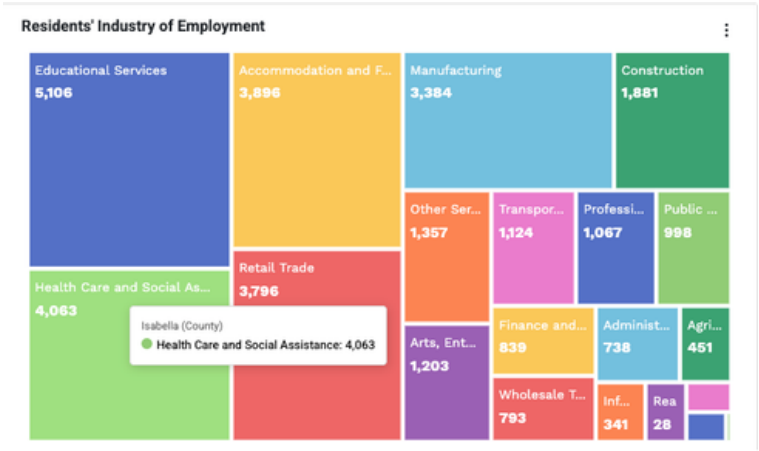
By prioritizing Health and Wellbeing, the Community Foundation affirms its belief that a strong community starts with the strength of its people. The Community Foundation knows that a strong health system is essential to keeping current residents healthy and to attracting and retaining new residents. While the Foundation may not provide direct health services, it can play a meaningful role in bringing partners together, supporting shared learning, and helping identify gaps where collaboration or innovation can make a difference. This focus aligns with the Foundation's mission to enhance the quality of life for all who call Isabella County home — now and for generations to come.

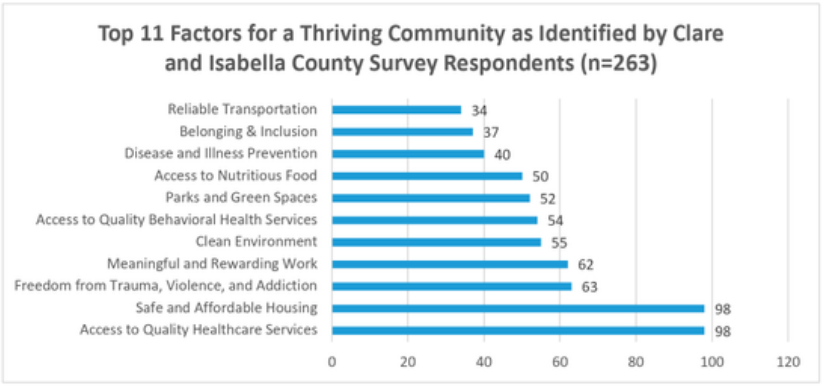
HOW WE GOT HERE

As part of its early strategic planning, the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation gathered both data and community input to better understand needs and opportunities in Isabella County. This included public data, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and a cross-sector survey of local leaders. Insights were organized using a framework adapted from the OECD's Better Life Index, with a focus on four key areas: early care and education, basic needs and economy, health, and community engagement.

HEALTHCARE IS IMPORTANT TO CURRENT AND PROSPECTIVE RESIDENTS

Middle Michigan Development Corporation shows that health care is the second highest industry of employment in the region.



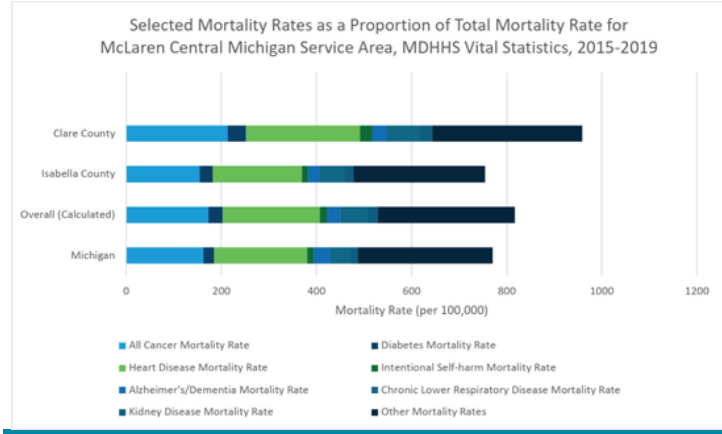


McLaren's MiThrive Report Survey Data

Mt. Pleasant Area COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

SIGNIFICANT HEALTH ISSUES FACING OUR COMMUNITY

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH



Leading causes of death: cancer and heart disease, mirroring regional patterns.

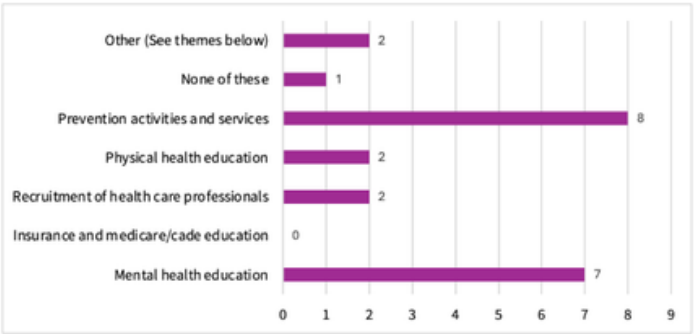
420 deaths per 100,000 people aged 75 or younger which is higher than state and national rates.

7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, slightly higher than state and national averages.

20.4% of adults in Isabella County experienced 14 or more "not good" mental health days a month which is well above the U.S. average of 15.8% and placing the county in the worst 25th percentile statewide.

Substance use disorder inpatient admission rates in Michigan went up over 13% from 2018 to 2019.

THE CALL FOR PREVENTION



Community leaders surveyed saw prevention activities and services and mental health education as the top priorities for the Community Foundation's focus in health. Stakeholders emphasized that public health funding is heavily treatment-focused, with little to no resources for preventive care, despite its cost-effectiveness.

My Michigan Health's needs assessment emphasizes the need for "Chronic Disease Prevention" due to high diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and cancer incidence in the region.

22.2 preventable hospitalizations in Isabella County per 100,000 residents occur each year. That is double the state benchmark of 10.1—highlighting missed opportunities in early intervention and outpatient prevention.

78% of mothers in Isabella county began prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy which is slighter above state and national averages, however . . .

14.1% of women smoke or use tobacco during preganancy in the county which is 6.5% over the state average.

Isabella County has significantly fewer primary care physicians compared to both the Michigan and national averages, with more than 30 less providers for every 100,000 residents. Stakeholders frequently reported long wait times, sometimes longer than six months, a shortage of providers, transportation, and challenges navigating the health care system.

There are 1370 residents to every 1 dentist in Isabella county which is higher than the state's average by over 100 residents for every 1 dentist.

PREPARED BY LUMEN IMPACT GROUP

Mt. Pleasant Area COMMUNITY FOUNDATION