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Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey Briefing

Community Research Institute-Johnson Center

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Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey Briefing:



Health Care





Preventative Health Care

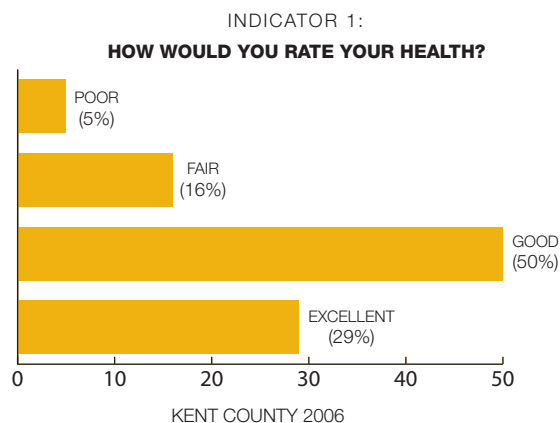
The American health care system has traditionally been remedial — focusing on treatment rather than prevention. The World Health Organization criticizes this model of health care, saying that it ultimately leads to an increased incidence of acute ailments and higher medical costs over time. The responses of 2005/2006 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey participants show that their practices reflect this lack of preventative emphasis. Survey data show that 35% of respondents have not had a physical examination in the last 12 months, 26% have not had a dental examination, 48% have not had an eye examination, and 58% have not had a flu shot. These numbers show that many residents are not taking the measures recommended to prevent disease.

Uninsured on the Medical Mile

Health care in the Greater Grand Rapids area is becoming simultaneously more important as well as more problematic. Medical research, life sciences, and health care are becoming ever-growing facets of the local economy. Meanwhile, data from the Michigan Department of Community Health show an increase in the percent of the county's population that is uninsured — from 7.2% (1995-1999) to 10.5% (2000-2004). Analysis of responses to the 2005/2006 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey show that 17% of residents living in the same zip code as the Grand Rapids Medical Mile have no health care coverage (including government assistance), while 11% of the overall population of Kent County is without coverage. A healthy workforce is a cornerstone to a vibrant economy, but a slumping economy can lead to a de-emphasis of employee health care. The economic strains felt by companies, many of which are decreasing their workers' health benefits, are passed on to the nonprofit sector, where hospitals and clinics face the burden of care for patients. Health care in Kent County has implications that spread beyond the social sphere into the private and public sectors, with potentially great economic effects.

Health Perceptions, Health Care, and Economic Hardship in Greater Grand Rapids

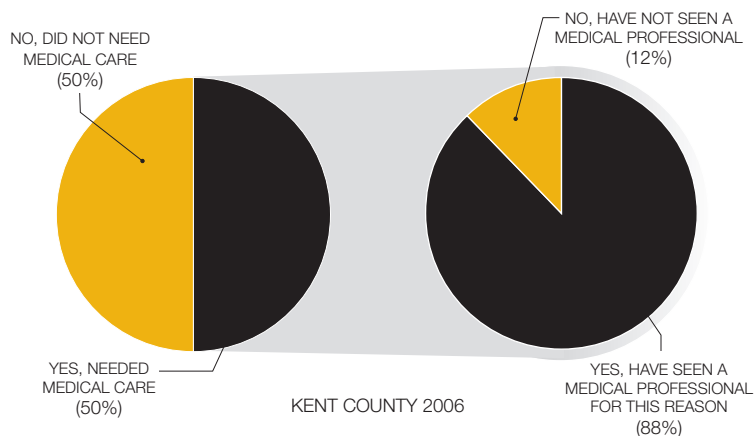
Residents of greater Grand Rapids consider themselves to be quite healthy though they do not always seek the care they need and cannot always afford needed care. Survey participants rated their own health positively with nearly four out of every five residents indicating that they were in excellent or good health (*see Indicator 1*). Despite this overall good health, half of all respondents stated that they at some point in the



last 12 months thought that they needed to seek medical care due to sickness (see *Indicator 2*). Additionally, 16% thought that they needed help because of anxiety or depression (see *Indicator 3*). Eighty-eight percent of those who thought they needed medical attention sought it; only 55% of those requiring counseling for anxiety or depression did so. The most common reason cited for not seeking psychological attention was that the respondent thought there was no real need to seek help or the issue would take care of itself. This may be related to the United States Surgeon General's 1999 findings that Americans are less comfortable seeking mental health care or think of it as less important than physical health. Respondents also indicated that financial status can affect health care. Twenty-six percent stated that, due to a lack of money, in the last twelve months they did not fill a medical prescription, did not follow-up on a doctor-recommended test or treatment, did not obtain dental care, or a combination of the three (see *Indicator 4*).

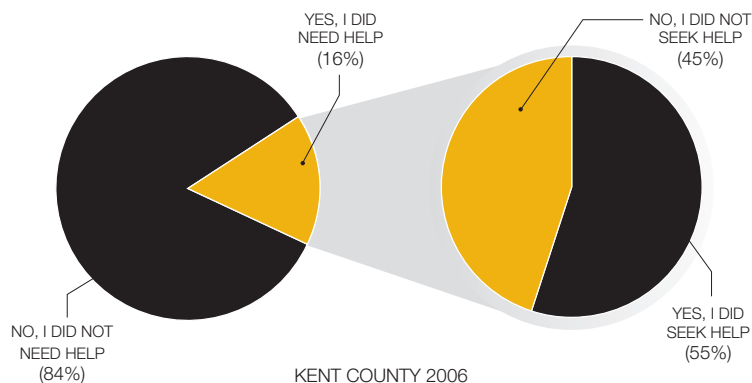
INDICATOR 2:

IN THE PAST YEAR, WAS THERE A TIME WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU NEEDED MEDICAL CARE BECAUSE YOU FELT SICK? IF YES, DID YOU SEE A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL WHEN YOU FELT SICK?



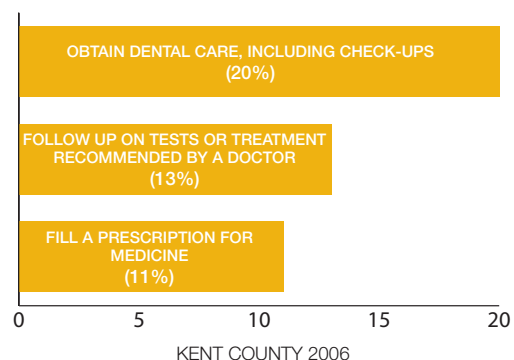
INDICATOR 3:

IN THE PAST YEAR, WAS THERE A TIME WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU NEEDED HELP BECAUSE YOU FELT DEPRESSED OR ANXIOUS? IF YES, DID YOU SEE A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU NEEDED HELP?



INDICATOR 4:

WERE THERE ANY TIMES IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS WHEN YOU DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO ... ?



Single Parenting and Health Care

Data from the Community Survey show that many people are finding that maintaining their health is increasingly cost-prohibitive. Adding the health care of a dependent child can further exacerbate this financial burden; this is especially true for single parents. According to the survey data, approximately 93% of single parents have health care coverage for their children, while one in five single parents do not have personal health care coverage. The real economic hardship is shown by the fact that, in the last year, 61% of single parents reported that they could not afford to pay for one or more types of necessary health care, such as filling a prescription, following up on a test or treatment, or obtaining dental care.

The Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, now in its sixth year, assesses citizen opinions, perceptions, and behaviors as they relate to quality of life in the Greater Grand Rapids Area (Kent County). More specifically, the community survey provides population, economic, community and public opinion data to present a picture of the Kent County community as a place to live. The 2006 Survey is a collaborative effort between the Community Research Institute of the Johnson Center at Grand Valley State University (CRI), Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Heart of West Michigan United Way, and the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation.

This report is part of a series of briefing papers. It is available online at www.cridata.org/publications, along with the rest of the series and the 2005/2006 Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey report.



**Dorothy A. Johnson Center
for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership**

288C Richard DeVos Center
401 Fulton Street West
Grand Rapids, MI 49504-6431
tel: 616.331.7585
fax: 616.331.7592

www.johnsoncenter.org

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