



UTMB Executive Summary

PLANNING ACTIVITIES

The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston recently was tasked by The University of Texas System with developing a regional population health strategic plan. The UTMB Planning Committee, including members from the health system and academic enterprise, identified a catchment area that included 17 counties in southeast Texas plus the southern part of Harris County.

The initial activities in the planning process were the compilation of a socio-demographic description and completion of a needs and resources inventory for the region. The process involved three steps: (1) gathering publicly available secondary data from a number of sources, (2) conducting an online survey of stakeholders (n=60) to identify community health priorities, and (3) interviews with a select group of stakeholders (n=38) regarding health-related issues and resources in the region.

NEEDS AND RESOURCES INVENTORY

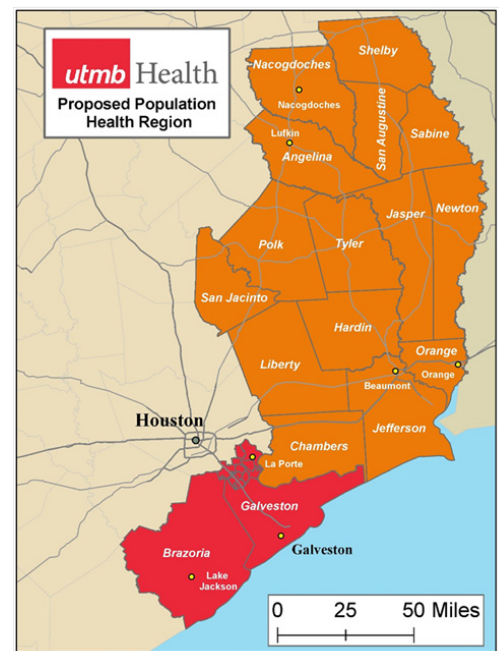
After reviewing the data, the committee selected four health priorities for the entire region:

- Obesity and its determinants,
- Tobacco use,
- Substance misuse, and
- Access to care, especially mental health care and including transportation.

The committee noted that these issues were quantitative (based on secondary data) and qualitatively (based on surveys and interviews) more serious in the less populated counties (counties in orange) compared to the more populated counties (counties in red).

Poverty and unemployment were also prevalent in the counties studied and both tended to be at higher levels in the less populated counties.

The services and resources available to address the priorities are more numerous in the more populated counties.



The community stakeholders interviewed identified existing local resources, including organizations, programs and coalitions that could help address the issues noted. These included: AgriLife Extension programs, existing health coalitions, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Mental Health and Substance Abuse organizations, hospitals and health districts, charity care organizations, transit programs, law enforcement, United Ways, YMCAs, faith-based organizations, Stephen F. Austin School of Social Work, Texas Association of Counties, and UTMB Regional Maternal and Child Health

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

A key resource serving Galveston and Brazoria counties and southern Harris County (the sites for UTMB campuses) is the REACH (Research, Education, and Community Health) coalition, a non-profit entity with membership from 23 UTMB centers and institutes and 39 community organizations. The population health strategic plan proposes disseminating the REACH model to expand and build new community and academic partnerships throughout the region. REACH serves as an umbrella organization to be a bidirectional mechanism to engage community leaders with academic partners. The goals are to: build partnerships, inform research development across the translational spectrum, impact population health and wellbeing through community based activities, and evaluate both the process of networking and the outcomes produced.

Partnerships will build on relationships established by the East Texas Area Health Education Center (AHEC) and the Medicaid 1115 Waiver Regional Health Partnership 2 (RHP2). Both are anchored by UTMB and active throughout the region.

UTMB also proposes to formalize a Population Health Improvement Steering Committee to work in partnership with the Clinical Quality Council that is focused on population health management activities from a clinical perspective and from within the health system.

Educational resources available through the institution will be employed to plan and deliver community based population health improvement programs. Multiple types of students at UTMB complete community rotations and practice experiences and these experiences can be conducted throughout the broad catchment area.

Through the community-academic partnerships established and by leveraging educational resources and student opportunities, UTMB should be able to contribute to the implementation of health behavior and health environment change programs.

Table: Rank Order of Most Serious Problems by Larger versus Smaller Counties.

Larger Counties		Smaller Counties	
Issue	% Serious	Issue	% Serious
Access to mental health services	59%	Obesity	77%
Obesity	53%	Poor or inconvenient transportation	69%
Poor or inconvenient transportation	44%	Lack of insurance or underinsured	69%
Fumes, smells, smoke from industry	41%	Tobacco use	69%
Poverty	41%	Poverty	58%
Lack of insurance or underinsured	32%	Illegal drug use	58%
		Prescription drug abuse	54%
		Access to mental health services	50%
		Access to services for older adults	50%
		Unemployment	50%
		Access to medical care	46%
		Alcohol abuse	42%
		Access to youth programs	38%
		Access to dental care	35%
		Access to prenatal care	35%

* = Problems with at least 30% of respondents identifying it as a serious problem