Creating a Community Partnership To Improve Mental Health

Burnett County is one of Wisconsin’s poorer counties and has a small population of about 15,000. In 2013, the Burnett County Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with Burnett Medical Center, used Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant funding to conduct a community health needs assessment, host a community forum, collectively determine priority health needs, and begin work on the county’s top health priority: mental health.

For the community health assessment, health department and medical center staff surveyed 500 community members and presented the survey results, along with data on 12 health focus areas, to 60 residents at a forum. The forum included representatives from a variety of community groups, such as the neighboring St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin. During this forum, participants formed a coalition called “Healthy Burnett” to guide the community health assessment, and they ultimately selected mental health as the county’s top health priority.

Suicide is a critical concern in the county, and the US Health Resources and Services Administration had designated it as a mental health professionals shortage area, further underscoring mental health as an important area of need there.

Healthy Burnett launched several initiatives focusing on the county’s top health needs, particularly mental health. To help reduce the stigma of mental health issues, Healthy Burnett created a public awareness campaign. It also developed the Healthy Burnett website and Facebook page to regularly share important health information and resources with residents. Another initiative was to bring a suicide prevention training called “Question, Persuade, Refer” (QPR) to high school students, teachers, and community members. Nine community members were then trained to teach QPR to others.

Working together, Burnett County’s public health and healthcare systems are building a stronger, healthier community through initiatives that support mental well-being.
Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant

What is the PHHS Block Grant?
The Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant provides flexible federal funding to 61 states, tribes, and US territories. These grantees use the funding to meet vital public health needs within their jurisdictions that align with national priorities—the Healthy People (HP) 2020 objectives.

Block Grant Investment Across the Nation
In fiscal year 2015, the 61 grantees received about $126 million from the PHHS Block Grant to support critical programs and services. Most funds (85%) supported HP 2020 objectives in 10 key areas: 1) Public Health Infrastructure, 2) Education and Community-Based Programs, 3) Injury and Violence Prevention, 4) Nutrition and Weight Status, 5) Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, 6) Environmental Health, 7) Immunization and Infectious Diseases, 8) Emergency Medical Services, 9) Oral Health, and 10) Physical Activity.

Public Health Infrastructure was the most funded area (26% of total funding); 43 grantees directed funds toward public health systems assessment, health improvement planning, accreditation, quality improvement, laboratory services, and other infrastructure activities. Education and Community-Based Programs was the second-most funded area (21% of total funding); 29 grantees directed funds toward community-based primary prevention services, worksite health promotion programs, and culturally appropriate community health programs.

Grantees also directed funds toward supporting local organizations working to improve community health (27% of total funding) and reduce health disparities (23% of total funding).

Please visit www.cdc.gov/phhsblockgrant for more information.