



"A social problem is a social condition or a pattern of behavior (such as substance abuse) that harms some individuals or all people in a society and that a sufficient number of people believe warrants public concern and collective action to bring about change" (Kendall, D. *Social Problems in a Diverse Society* (4th ed) Boston: Pearson, 2007, p. 4.).

All three tables listed alcohol/drug abuse as one of the most important issues we face as North Slope residents, and one of the first to be listed by each table, when asked the question, "what do you think are the most important health issues faced by North Slope residents?". Other issues listed included bullying, verbal/physical abuse, mental abuse, smoking, bootlegging, and chewing tobacco.

Subsistence Way Of Life/Access to Healthy Foods

Atqasuk residents rely heavily on subsistence foods. Concerns about having no grocery store in Atqasuk to purchase fresh, healthy foods to eat was brought up repeatedly by residents. A small local store provides canned goods and other non-perishable items, but a well-stocked store with produce and dairy products is needed, residents stated. Residents enjoy times of the year where subsistence foods are readily available, such as the annual Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts. According to the Baseline Health Analysis Report, approximately 1/3 of residents stated they didn't have enough subsistence foods to eat during the year, and 100% of residents stated they weren't able to get enough store foods to eat healthy meals during the year. Issues with obtaining healthy foods included the high cost of shipping to Atqasuk, and that items are often shipped spoiled. It was suggested introducing subsistence foods into the schools. Airfare is expensive, and residents usually have to travel to access healthy foods. The local airline used to provide free freight for food items but that no longer exists; residents would like to see this established again.

Health-Specific Concerns

Information from the Baseline Report suggests that Atqasuk adults are experiencing lower-than-average reported general health, with 34% of adults reporting fair to poor health, compared to the NSB overall, which was 16%. During the health forum, residents in Atqasuk voiced concerns about chronic conditions such as diabetes, cancer, obesity, and respiratory diseases. Other health-specific concerns included STD's, FAS, FAE, sleep deprivation, dental hygiene, teen pregnancy and the increase consumption of soda and juice. Residents discussed the need for healthcare providers to address prenatal care in Atqasuk. Also, questions were raised about accessing extended care or cancer treatment in Barrow instead of Anchorage. An issue with subsistence hunting was raised, about having to travel farther to get caribou because of the recent helicopter traffic.

Education



Meeting participants expressed the importance of education – both in school and out of school, and the importance of passing on Inupiaq values in a school setting and at home. Iisagvik College and the Kiita Program were listed as important resources for NSB residents.

Other Topics

Another topic frequently discussed focused around communication; the communication between the Barrow and Anchorage hospitals (inquiring about how the system works), between Elders and youth, between villages in the North Slope and between organizations involved with health, such as ASRC, NSB, ASNA, etc. This was also raised in the Barrow Forum, and is discussed in the Baseline Community Health Analysis Report.

Next Steps:

An agency meeting was held previous to the evening meeting in Atqasuk, with a majority of City of Atqasuk staff/Board members present. The issues and concerns raised at this meeting mimicked the evening forum, and they are discussed above. One action item that came from the agency meeting was suggesting a collaboration between Atqasuk and Barrow on a “Mommy and Me” or similar program in Atqasuk that is currently provided in Barrow. The possibility of using video conferencing and exchanging resources were suggested to get the program running. Atqasuk residents would like to incorporate Inupiaq values for this potential program, which focuses around parenting. Residents would like to have more events filled with activities for children and youth in Atqasuk, which not only provides physical fitness but is something that would motivate children and youth to move forward.

This report will be given back to the community, and it will be uploaded online on the North Slope Borough Health Department’s website with other community forum reports, found here:

http://www.north-slope.org/departments/health/Health_Impact_Report.php

Large-scale change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from isolated intervention of individual organizations; therefore, substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social issues if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create *collective impact*.¹ Communities on the North Slope are diverse; therefore, each community will have its own set of priorities for health. The NSB will be traveling to the remaining villages to provide community health forums similar to this one, for the purposes outlined above.



Report

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A gathering on health and well being

