

# Chapter 14: Focus Group Summary

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## Introduction and Methods

Between June 2007 and January 2008, eleven focus groups were conducted by Rockingham County Healthy Carolinians, Rockingham County Department of Public Health, and numerous community members. Focus group “listening sessions” are conducted during the Community Health Assessment to allow voices of smaller populations to be heard more clearly; important voices that could otherwise be lost during a larger county-wide survey of community residents.

Trained facilitators conducted focus group “listening sessions” with existing community groups or convened groups that could provide insight regarding special populations. Consistent methods were followed at each session. A moderator guided the group by asking a set of standard protocol questions available in English and Spanish (Appendices E and F)

Participant responses were typed, written, or tape recorded with permission. Transcripts of responses were analyzed for emerging themes and summarized accordingly. The information gathered during the focus group listening sessions was used along with results from the Community Opinion Survey and the secondary data to guide stakeholders in setting community priorities for the 2008 Community Health Assessment. Complete participant comments are available for review in Appendix G.

Focus Group Listening Sessions included:

- African American Men
- African American Women
- Victims of Domestic Violence
- Hispanic / Latino Men
- Hispanic / Latino Women
- Incarcerated Men
- The Unemployed
- Recipients of Mental Health Services
- Teen and Single Parents
- Rockingham County Veterans
- High School Students

## Summaries and Emerging Themes

### African American Men

#### **Summary:**

African American men expressed concerns over of the lack of economic development. They have seen many talented people leave the county to find jobs elsewhere. They cited institutional racism as the reason behind the loss of African Americans to other counties. The group was also concerned about the lack of African American involvement in county leadership

roles including business, government, and law enforcement. They expressed the need to come together as African Americans to solve their own problems and to work better together. They expressed concern about the number of African American men in the prison system. They felt there was a need to teach youth to have a more positive view of law enforcement officials, and to encourage them to choose law enforcement as a career. The men expressed a need for new leadership in Rockingham County, and felt that issues of racism need to be addressed.

### **Emerging Themes:**

- Talented African Americans leave the county due to racial issues.
- Institutional racism, especially in government and law enforcement.
- The lack of African Americans in leadership, business, government, and law enforcement.
- The need for African Americans to work together.
- The lack of diversity in Law Enforcement.
- The rising African American prison population.
- The need to bridge Black and White communities.

## **African American Women**

### **Summary:**

Among African American women, the major concerns were related to drug problems, racism, and the lack of dialogue over important issues by all social groups within the county. They also expressed concern over the large number of African American men being imprisoned and not being offered needed help. African American women viewed health from spiritual, physical, and mental dimensions. Keeping a strong faith was viewed as an important way to stay healthy, along with eating healthy and getting enough exercise. The group expressed a need for more affordable healthcare, especially for people with disabilities. Drug abuse and mental health emerged as important health issues; and access to existing services could be improved by establishing better public transportation.

### **Emerging Themes:**

- Racism separates social groups. All groups need to come together in honest dialogue.
- Lack of unity and leadership within faith communities.
- Need of affordable healthcare.
- Lack of public transportation.
- The need for advocates to help people navigate public services.
- Disproportionate incarceration of minority populations.
- Lack of local mental health services.
- The need for services for those affected by drug abuse.

## **Women who are Victims of Domestic Violence**

### **Summary:**

Among women who have been victims of domestic violence, there were concerns about transportation, services, and programs in Rockingham County. These women find it hard to get help from the provider and they would like to be shown some compassion. The Police Department is also a concern for these women, who complain the “police don’t care and don’t listen.”

**Emerging Themes:**

- The need for more activities to keep youth out of trouble.
- Service providers need to be more compassionate.
- Local Police Departments are seen as a problem among women who have been victims of domestic violence.

**Hispanic / Latino Men****Summary:**

The Hispanic / Latino men in Rockingham County were most concerned with getting their driver's license. In the past, they were able to get a license with ease, and now it is more difficult. Without a driver's license or social security card, it is harder to get a job. They can't go to college and educate themselves, buy a house, or get Medicaid. Hispanic / Latino men would like dental services for non Medicaid children and adults and more advertisement for Health Department services. Hispanic / Latino men also see diabetes in children as a growing problem.

**Emerging Themes:**

- Inability to get their driver's licenses.
- Concerns over the lack of jobs.
- The need for more dental services.

**Hispanic / Latino Women****Summary:**

Among Hispanic / Latino women, there was concern over finding jobs, getting driver's licenses, obtaining ID numbers for banking services, and having more public transportation. The most pressing health concerns were related to their children, especially for asthma, vision problems, and the lack of healthy foods being served at school. They believed there was a need for more local healthcare specialists, and that services should be more affordable. They also expressed concern about the lack of pediatric dental services and interpretation services at pediatric providers. Racism was identified as a concern for children in middle and high school grades.

**Emerging Themes:**

- The need for more medical specialists, especially for dental care.
- The lack of public transportation.
- Racism in middle and high schools.
- The lack of healthy foods at school.
- The need for interpreters in pediatric services.

**Incarcerated Men****Summary:**

Incarcerated men were concerned about the lack of jobs in Rockingham County. They felt that joblessness had become a root cause for involvement with drugs, leading to an increase in jail time. Prominent health concerns were over drugs, alcohol, tobacco, unprotected sex, HIV / AIDS, and environmental protection. Incarcerated men also felt there should be more affordable healthcare, and more programs to help mainstream inmates back into society - in order to reduce those re-entering into the system.

### **Emerging Themes:**

- Lack of services for inmates, in or out of jail.
- The negative stigma associated with jail keeps inmates from getting future jobs.
- More crime prevention programs are needed for youth.
- Mental health services have not been available since formation of the LME, and some inmates are on suicide watches. Churches are the only ones who come to see inmates.

### **The Unemployed / JobLink**

#### **Summary:**

The unemployed of Rockingham County are most concerned with the lack of good-paying jobs. They would like to see healthcare become more affordable and want better services at both hospitals. They feel that people **without** health insurance should be treated the same as those **with** insurance.

#### **Emerging Themes:**

- The need for more affordable health insurance and healthcare.
- The need for assistance with prescription drugs.
- The need for comprehensive sexuality education in schools.

### **Recipients of Mental Health/Substance Abuse Programs**

#### **Summary:**

Among recipients of Mental Health Services, there is concern over having enough facilities to help with substance abuse and addiction. They were also specifically worried about the fact that there is nothing for the youth to do, which can lead the youth to get into trouble. They would like to see longer assessment and rehabilitation programs in the county for people affected by substance abuse.

#### **Emerging Themes:**

- The county lacks recreational activities.
- More transportation and access to healthcare is needed, as well as more substance abuse facilities.
- More health education is needed in schools on STDs and HIV prevention.

### **Teen and Single Parents**

#### **Summary:**

The Teen / Single-Parent Support Groups are concerned about job opportunities in Rockingham County. They are also concerned about the high crime rate, renting options, gas prices, taxes, and an increase in grocery prices. They would like information on Medicaid to be clearer. They would also like to see more health services being provided for their children and more child care services.

#### **Emerging Themes:**

- There are good teen pregnancy support groups in Rockingham County (Parents as Teachers, Pregnancy Care Center)
- They are concerned most about jobs.
- The need for changes in health services.
- Concerns over drugs and high crime rates in Rockingham County

## **Veterans of Rockingham County**

### **Summary:**

Veterans in Rockingham County expressed concern over environmental pollution and water quality. They were also concerned about the illness and death of many Veterans due to Agent Orange. They felt that there was a general lack of coordinated care for veterans at the local level, between the VA and local health-care providers. Many Rockingham County Veterans are active in the schools and churches. They also expressed a desire to see more cooperation and mutual aid between local counties.

### **Emerging Themes:**

- Health problems due to Agent Orange.
- Concerns over environmental issues and water quality.
- The need for more local services for Veterans.

## **High School Students**

### **Summary:**

Among high school students, major concerns were expressed about substance abuse, gang activity, stress from school and family, and teen pregnancy. Students were concerned over tobacco use on school property, especially with chewing tobacco that is put into drinking fountains. Students believed there should be more job options for them, other than working in fast-food restaurants and grocery stores. They felt they would benefit from having more age-appropriate health education presentations on topics such as tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse; safe sex and abstinence, and drinking and driving.

### **Emerging Themes:**

- The need for comprehensive sex education.
- The need for substance abuse programs.
- The need for age-appropriate health education.
- The increasing pressure for academic success.
- Tobacco abuse during school hours.

## **The Top 10 Emerging Themes**

- Availability of Mental Health services.
- Prevention Programs for substance abuse.
- The lack of employment opportunities.
- Access to medical specialists, including dental providers.
- Improving access to healthcare, including more low-cost services and increased availability of health insurance for all residents.
- More respect for cultural differences, and a call to reduce racism.
- Increasing prescription assistance programs.
- The need for more low-cost public transportation.
- Comprehensive sexuality education in high schools.
- Increasing social and recreational opportunities for youth.