

# 2013 RHP 17 Regional Health Assessment

## A Community Snapshot:

# RHP 17



### Community Description

Throughout the nine county region, participants described their communities as great places to live that are filled with friendly, giving, and supportive community members. They mentioned that the region provides the benefits of small town living while having access to the bigger city amenities. They also described the community as traditional and rich in history. Many said the region is growing and changing with an increase in the older adult population, since the area is attractive for many retirees. Residents also cited an increase in diversity with a growing Hispanic population. Other regional characteristics included being close knit, a wonderful place to raise children and have a family, and a good place to have a business.

### Obesity & Chronic Disease

Although the obesity rate in the region appears to be leveling off, the existing rate of obesity is cause for concern, as well as the prevalence of chronic diseases related to obesity.

- ⇒ Across the region, 63.3 percent of adult residents are overweight or obese. The rate for morbid obesity is 13.3 percent.
- ⇒ Across the region, several chronic disease exceed the national rates.

High cholesterol and hypertension rates for RHP 17 are substantially higher than the national rates.

Disease	RHP 17 (Rural rates)	U.S.
Depression	21.1% (17.9%)	12%
Emphysema/COPD	4.7% (6.8%)	2%
High cholesterol	33.2% (33.5%)	13%
Hypertension	32.8% (36.6%)	24%

Public transportation was described as unreliable, unaffordable, and inadequate in every community.

## Transportation

Transportation is a significant barrier to access to care for residents and to economic growth for communities.

- ⇒ In every community, the public transportation system was described as unreliable, unaffordable, and inadequate.
- ⇒ A third of all rural residents (32.9%) travel more than 20 miles to obtain medical care.
- ⇒ The mean distance to medical care is 13.7 miles— ranging from 10.5 miles in Brazos County compared to 42 miles in Leon County.

## Population Growth

Communities throughout the region are recognizing rapid population growth without the infrastructure and capacity necessary to accommodate it.

- ⇒ Many residents say that the infrastructure (roads, buildings, utilities) in their community is aging or does not have the capacity to accommodate the growing population.
- ⇒ Growth in some communities is in the population, but not in the business sector to provide jobs and local resources for the increasing population. This is causing increased socioeconomic disparities, particularly in rural communities.

Residents, community leaders, and service providers all expressed a concern for the unmet needs of older adults.

## Resources for Older Adults

As the population grows, the proportion of older adults is increasing, and the current resources and services available for the older adult population and their caregivers are insufficient.

In community discussion groups, EVERY county, residents, community leaders, and service providers expressed concern for the unmet needs of older adults:

- ⇒ Gaps in coverage/services
- ⇒ Transportation services
- ⇒ Cost of available services
- ⇒ Lack of adult day care and respite care for caretakers
- ⇒ Inadequate financial resources forcing choice among basic needs

## Economy

The state of the economy is making it difficult for families to maintain financial stability.

- ⇒ Many communities are recognizing the need for more local opportunities for vocational training to enable residents to find employment.
- ⇒ Unemployment and under employment places families in situations where they cannot afford to meet their basic needs.

## Youth Risk Behaviors


Residents are concerned about the risky behaviors of young people in their communities.

- ⇒ Across the region, residents indicated that there is a lack of recreational opportunities for youth and adolescents.
- ⇒ Residents feel that having few organized recreational activities leaves youth with idle time that contributes to participation in risky behaviors and crime.

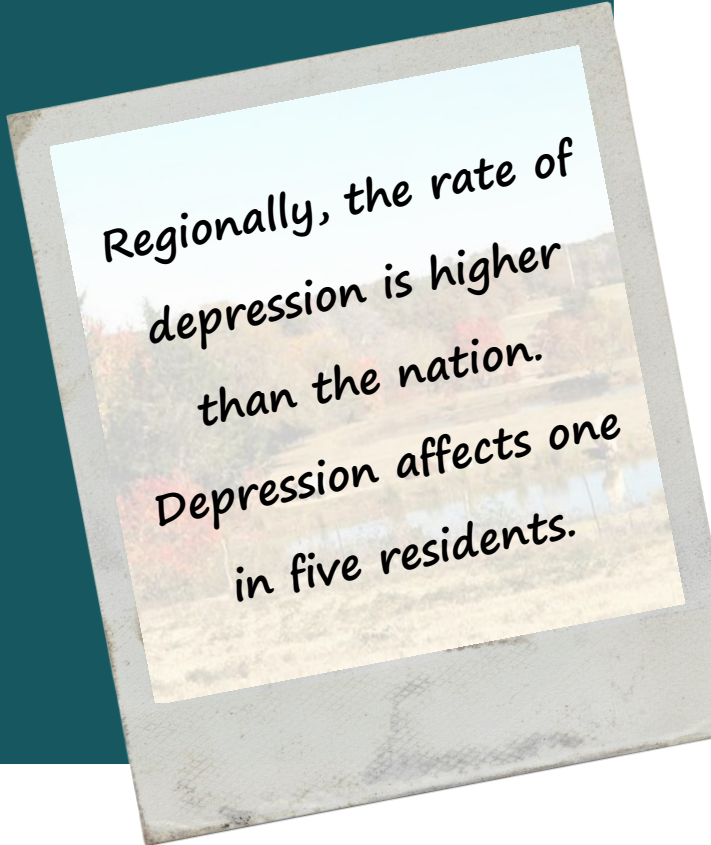
## Mental Health

Mental health needs continue to exceed the resources and services currently available, and many communities lack local mental health services altogether. Often accompanying mental health issues, alcohol and substance abuse are significant concerns that many residents feel are unacknowledged and unaddressed.

- ⇒ Across the region, 21.1 percent reported being diagnosed with depression, and 20.4 percent reported being diagnosed with anxiety.
- ⇒ Nearly half of all residents report having at least one poor mental health day in the past month; 10 percent reported more than 10 poor mental health days.
- ⇒ One-quarter of residents in the region (25.4%) feel that alcohol abuse is a serious problem or a very serious problem.
- ⇒ Almost one-third of those surveyed (29.6%) feel that illegal drug use in the region is a serious problem or a very serious problem.



Across the region, at least 2/3 of respondents in each county identified youth risk behaviors as a key community issue.



Regionally, the rate of depression is higher than the nation. Depression affects one in five residents.





Across the region, those who were uninsured reported less access to primary medical care.

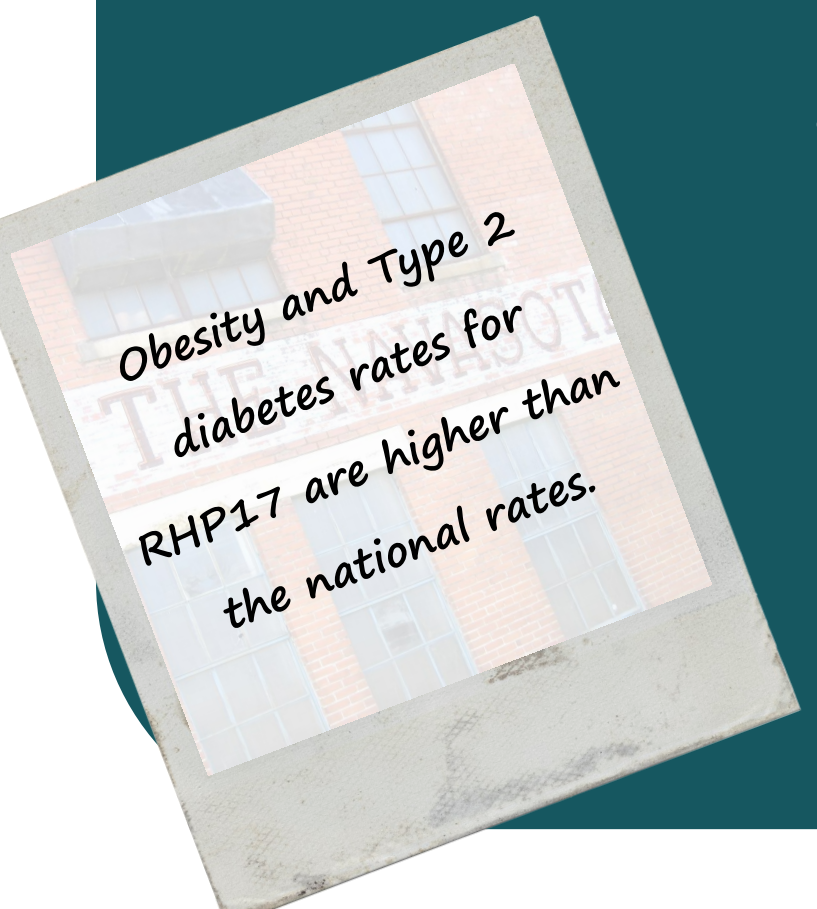
## Disparities

The rural communities, the low-income, and those of a minority population continue to face substantial disparities in access to resources and services, as well as in health outcomes.

- ⇒ Across the region, a greater proportion of those without a high school education reported fair or poor health status.
- ⇒ A greater proportion of those who were uninsured did not have a regular health provider, delayed medical care because of cost, and rated their access to care as fair, poor, or very poor.

## Communication

- ⇒ Every community expressed concern with communication and outreach, particularly in its inability to reach the growing Hispanic community.
- ⇒ Residents feel that there is not enough communication between them and the decision-makers in their communities.
- ⇒ Communication among organizations that provide services is not organized; many do not know what other organizations provide.
- ⇒ Community leaders see a need for better information distribution about available services to those who may need them.



Obesity and Type 2 diabetes rates for RHP17 are higher than the national rates.

## Community Advice

- ⇒ Do your homework. Residents emphasized the importance of knowing the community, its history, and learning the community values.
- ⇒ Communicate. Efforts should be communicated early, often, and to the entire community. Utilize word of mouth and local media outlets.
- ⇒ Be inclusive and engage the community. Residents highlighted the importance of including the entire community and finding ways to reach those who might not be well-connected. Get involved locally and listen to the feedback given.
- ⇒ Collaborate and leverage resources. Work together and build partnerships, use existing initiatives to maximize efficiency.