

“Prioritizing access to care reflects the compassion a community has for its residents.”

K. Brooks Miller, Jr., Executive Director, Jordan Valley Community Health Center

Springfield-Greene County serves as a regional hub for health care. Two nationally recognized hospitals lead the way, supported by public health specialists and smaller health care providers, all dedicated to excellence.

In spite of these resources, major challenges remain. Access to affordable health care, lifestyle choices that contribute to chronic diseases and the possibility of emerging infectious diseases such as pandemic influenza continue to loom as major threats to our community’s health. Innovative local solutions to these complex challenges must be encouraged and supported.

SPRINGFIELD-GREENE COUNTY HEALTH SNAPSHOT			
	2004	2005	2006
Maternal Health (percent of total live births)			
Low Birth Weight	7.4	7.2	6.9
Mothers as Medicaid Participants	52.8	52.7	52.3
First Trimester Prenatal Care	89.3	87.4	89.2
Births to Mothers Under Age 18	3.6	3.5	3.3
Mothers Smoking During Pregnancy	20.4	19.2	19.4
Communicable Diseases (incidence per 100,000)			
Gonorrhea	128.5	86.7	104.0
Tuberculosis	3.2	2.8	2.4
HIV	2.5	5.6	7.7
Deaths (rate per 100,000)			
Cardiovascular Disease	354.9	325.8	321.1
Lung Cancer	65.7	68.6	71.0
Breast Cancer	13.3	13.2	18.8
Motor Vehicle Crash	14.1	18.7	17.3
Suicide	16.1	12.0	14.9



CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT.

Greene County’s statistical profile shows a decrease in substantiated child abuse reports. Recent legislative changes in the last two years increased the burden of proof from probable cause to preponderance of evidence, making it more difficult to substantiate child abuse cases. Even so, Greene County is still above the state average for substantiation of sexual abuse, neglect, medical neglect and emotional maltreatment.

Also alarming is the fact that Greene County’s child fatality rate due to substantiated abuse or neglect has increased (five deaths in 2005) while fatalities throughout the state are trending downward. At the time of publication, the most current data (2006) showed Greene County’s child abuse and neglect rate at 7.9, still well above Missouri’s rate of 5.3 per 1,000 children.

Greene County’s longstanding issue with methamphetamine, coupled with the increasing rate of child poverty, continue to impact the lives of children.

CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND WELLNESS			
	Greene Co. 2004	Greene Co. 2005	Missouri 2005
Child Abuse/Neglect (rate per 1,000 children)	10.1	8.5	5.7
Immunization Rate (percentage of children, public clinics)	88.6	83.5	73.1
Infant Deaths (per 1,000 live births)	8.3	4.4	7.5
WIC Nutrition Program (# of Participants)	5,666	5,864	132,225

Health Care Policy Priorities. The number of uninsured people in Greene County continues to increase; 8.4% of the total population, and 13.5% of those 18 years and older, are uninsured. Currently, there are 35,198 Medicaid participants in Greene County.

Those in poverty tend to delay seeking health care, mostly because of financial limitations. The result is more costly care once their illness has escalated to a more serious nature. Nearly half of all emergency room visits are publicly funded and almost 20% are uninsured.

Behavioral Health/Substance Abuse. As recommended in the first ever Surgeon General’s Report on Mental Health (1999), behavioral health services are an essential part of health care.

A wealth of behavioral health services are available in the Springfield area, delivered by one of the most comprehensive

and integrated community mental health centers in the country, along with two major health care systems, a free-standing professional school of psychology, multiple university-based counseling programs and other community-based providers.

Unfortunately, access to these services is often limited due to disproportionately low mental health reimbursement rates for Southwest Missouri providers, and an absence of local funding streams for mental health, such as those that have been approved by voters in other parts of Missouri (for example, the children's mental health tax passed in St. Charles County in 2004).

The needs of indigent persons with severe mental illness can be met through state funding, and those with personal resources or employer-provided health insurance can access mental health services almost at will. However, of greatest concern is that access to mental health services is most limited for one of the fastest-growing demographics in our community: the working poor who are often uninsured or underinsured, but not eligible for entitlements such as Medicaid or Medicare.

Oral/Dental Health. Dental access for adults and children at or below the poverty level is still limited. Three institutions focus the majority of their efforts on the underserved, The Ronald McDonald Tooth Truck, The Kitchen Medical and Dental Clinic, and the Jordan Valley Community Health Center. Jordan Valley is by far the busiest of the three. In 2006, the center logged 14,000 "encounters," of which 80% were children.



EMERGING ISSUES.

Obesity and Other Lifestyle Choices. A study by Springfield Public Schools in 2005–06 revealed that nearly 37% of Springfield middle school students are overweight. Overweight children and adolescents are more likely to become obese as adults. For example, one report found that approximately 80% of children who were overweight at ages 10 to 15 were obese adults by age 25.

Springfield Public Schools has implemented a program in all schools to provide healthy, nutritious food choices during school hours. Some vending machines and soda machines are inoperable during class hours and others are stocked with healthy selections. The school system offers physical activity before and after school.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department partners with childcare providers in Springfield to address obesity.

Preparedness/Pandemic Training. Since 2000, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department has been reaching out to


community partners with bioterrorism/emergency response planning activities. In 2006, the health department began preparedness efforts specifically focused on a pandemic influenza outbreak.

Pandemic influenza and its potential for region-wide illness, death and interruption of services, demands response from the whole community. An effective community-wide plan would slow the spread of pandemic influenza.


Medical Home. A medical home is an emerging concept among health care professionals. For example, Jordan Valley Community Health Center provides comprehensive medical, dental and mental health care for the entire family. In 2006, Jordan Valley provided a medical home to more than 15,000 residents.

 **PUBLIC HEALTH FOCUS.** Community leaders understand the importance of a quality public health system.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department is the community's public health leader with support from many partners like the City of Springfield, the Greene County Commission, the Greene County Medical Society, Jordan Valley Community Health Center and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. The Health Department provides the community a broad range of services based on a national framework of essential public health services customized to our local community.

 **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE.** Springfield's economy owes much of its robust health to the area's medical arts. Springfield is home to two of the nation's "Top 100" integrated health care networks, St. John's Health System and CoxHealth. Together, they employ nearly 15,000 individuals. Added to Lakeland Regional Hospital and Doctors Hospital, there are more than 2,000 available hospital beds in Springfield. About 800 physicians are employed here, and numerous clinics provide a range of specialties.

In all, the health care industry in the Springfield region employs well over 20,000 people and provides an annual economic impact of \$4.5 billion.

 **ALLIED HEALTH EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.** Education and training of new health professionals is accomplished through a variety of programs available through Springfield's higher education institutions.

Missouri State University opened its new Jordan Valley Innovation Center in 2007, with departments focused on applied research in biomaterials, nanotechnologies, advanced technologies, genomics/proteomics, bio-systems software engineering and bio-medical instrument development.

WIC NUTRITION PROGRAM. The Springfield-Greene County Health Department's Women, Infants and Children program leads the state in providing nutrition education and supplements to pregnant women, infants and children under age 5.