KITSAP COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT REPORT: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY INPUT, NOVEMBER 2019

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Introduction
In 2019, the Kitsap Community Health Priorities (KCHP) Steering Committee conducted a Community Health Assessment (CHA) to inform the development of the next community health priorities. The Assessment has three parts: an online community survey, quantitative indicators, and community voice. Each identifies challenges, assets and needs of the community through the lens of a different community stakeholder. The intent of the community voice data is to provide perspective into the assets and challenges of the County from the viewpoint of key experts and individuals that don't typically have a voice in community planning efforts. This report summarizes findings from community input and key informant interviews.

Methods
Qualitative data collection methods included key informant interviews and a community input form. Questionnaires (*see Appendix A*) were developed and adapted from previous county surveys, with an emphasis on the following topics:
1. Identify main health concerns of Kitsap County residents
2. Identify existing programming designed to address main health concerns
3. Explore gaps in resources and coordination related to health concerns
4. Explore key elements in Kitsap County that promote health

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

KCHP leadership identified key informants based on their community involvement, leadership roles, representation of a health service provider, and/or direct involvement with a sub-group or population. Twelve key informants were identified and ten participated in the interviews. Key informants represented stakeholder/sector perspectives including behavioral health, schools and youth, health care, veterans, human rights, social services, aging, housing, law enforcement and public health.

Interviews were conducted in September and October of 2019. Respondents were given the option to complete over the phone, through an email response, or in-person. Seven of the key informants completed the survey through an email response, and three completed the survey over the phone. Responses were compiled in excel for theme analysis.

COMMUNITY VOICE SURVEY

A three-question survey was administered by eight different community organizations to capture the voice of community members. These organizations were selected by KCHP leadership, with representation from direct clinical care providers, community support services, behavioral health, and public services. Surveys (n=145) were collected in September and October 2019. Responses to the open-ended questions were entered into Survey Monkey for theme analysis.

THEME ANALYSIS
Open coding of both the key informant and community voice survey was completed to identify overarching themes. Then, a closed coding framework was applied based on indicator sections from the quantitative data. Word cloud frequency lists were created in SurveyMonkey, then data was cleaned and recoded based on context of responses.

This project was considered a public health surveillance activity for the purpose of informing local health improvement efforts and was therefore exempt from review by the Washington State Institutional Review Board.

Key Findings
SUMMARY
Key informants and community members identified priorities, strengths, and challenges contributing to the health and wellness of Kitsap County. Indicators to improve the overall health of Kitsap County residents included: socioeconomic factors, health care resources, and health related behaviors.

Several themes addressing the socioeconomics, or economic factors, contributing to health in Kitsap were identified by key informants and community members. **Schools and the education system provide a platform for community improvement efforts**. Among schools, services such as school-based clinics and after school programming vary greatly. A coordinated effort to develop and align community prevention coalitions among every school district was identified by key informants to increase substance abuse prevention among elementary aged children.

> *"Community prevention coalitions are present in Bremerton and North Kitsap School districts, the development of coalitions in the other three districts would increase substance abuse prevention for the county." "This would be particularly effective for elementary aged children,"* stated a different key informant.

Opportunity to earn a living wage was identified by community members to keep up with increasing costs to live in Kitsap County. Healthcare, fresh food, housing, and taxes were referenced as areas that continue to become more expensive. **Ensuring that all residents have access to affordable housing** was a theme that surfaced from both key informants and community members. Supply for affordable housing is low while demand is high. This creates pressure on programs, such as rental assistance, which experience long waits in order to help those in need.

> *"Our waiting lists for affordable rental assistance are ridiculously long. The supply of affordable housing resources for low income vulnerable populations are woefully inadequate compared to the tremendous need. This disparity between intense demand and shrinking supply is present not only in Kitsap County, but across the country."*

"Affordable housing – housing that people on minimum wage can afford. No health measures make a long-lasting impact when there is nowhere to live."

Both key informants and community members identified systemic challenges to support those that are homeless. Just as the number of affordable housing is low, so are shelter beds and permanent supportive housing stock. Agencies are lacking the capacity to **reduce the number of those experiencing homelessness.** Pendleton Place, a 74-unit supportive housing project, has been proposed to serve the most vulnerable populations in the County, including those experiencing chronic homelessness and living with severe and persistent mental illness, substance use disorders, and other disabling conditions.

Health care access and availability are main factors driving health care resources as a priority area. A need to **increase the number of access points through community-based clinical care** was identified as a theme by key informants. Peninsula Community Health Services is working to increase the availability of access points by *"delivering care in more places within the community where patients are more frequently gathered."* This includes mobile care for behavioral health, school-based clinics, developing partnerships with community organizations for co-located services, and adding specialty services (e.g. dental and prenatal/OB care).

"All school-based services aim to provide medical and behavioral health services, as well as referrals to higher level services and care coordination when needed." While another key informant stated*, "[There is a] lack of access to behavioral health treatment in schools… PCHS integrated school clinic should be in every school."*

The most commonly cited **barriers to accessing care** from community members included **rising costs** for healthcare services and medications, **awareness of available services**, and **limited public transportation options**. Community members cited challenges to access mental and behavioral health services. The existing healthcare landscape is especially **challenging for youth, aging adults, and racial minority groups,** several key informants stated**.**

"It is hard to pit one underserved group (e.g. victims of domestic violence, veterans, elderly and disabled, chronic homeless, mentally ill, etc.) yet that is what we are faced with as we look for equity in allocating scarce resources."

Health related behaviors such as substance use and physical activity play a key role in the health of the community. Key informants identified the **coordination of efforts around substance use disorder and mental health services** as a main priority. A multi-sector approach to increase substance use disorder prevention is currently underway through a 3-county coalition. This coalition has convened partners including jail superintendents, first responders, medical personnel and behavioral health specialists to address the issue across the community.

"Three County Coordinated Opioid Response Project [3CCORP, a project of Olympic Community of Health] has improved opioid prescribing."

Preventing opioid overdose and ensuring access to opioid treatment was a theme across several key informants. Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) programs for those addicted to opioids should be more accessible to the community. The jail has recently partnered to expand services to deliver a MAT program. The distribution of Naloxone kits, with training, is aimed at reducing the number of opioid related overdoses across the county.

> *"This [jail MAT program] has been a very successful program in just the last six months, and we have helped about 112 people attempt to avoid using opioids upon release."*

While increasing access to preventive care and treatment, key informants also identified the need to **educate the community about mental health and chemical dependency.** 3CCORP is in the process of developing a communications plan to reduce stigma and educate youth.

> *"We need to do a better job of educating our community about mental health and chemical dependency, understanding that is a disease, and not a choice. Even those with an addiction to opioids did not necessarily choose to be addicted, it happened because of an injury and they were prescribed pain medicine."*

The environment in Kitsap County lends itself healthy behaviors according to the community. Residents benefit from the parks and abundance of walking trails. Community members were concerned about **a lack of affordable gyms**. Several key informants identified a need to address the lack of health and wellness, and **rural community members feel as though the number of safe sidewalks is lacking**.

> *"The continuing problem of sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition [is having an impact on health.]"*

Additional health concerns, gaps, strengths and quotes relating to the 2019 Kitsap Community Health Priorities (KCHP) qualitative Community Health Assessment indicators are provided below in the **Themes** and **Findings** columns.

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INDICATOR THEMES

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
SOCIOECONOMICS	Education	Schools provide a platform for community improvement efforts	After school programs vary greatly between schools. A member of the community identified that there are not enough after school activities for low-income youth, and a key informant stated, "gaps in after school programming exist." Community prevention coalitions are present in Bremerton and North Kitsap School districts. One key informant stated that the development of coalitions in the other three districts would increase substance abuse prevention for the county. This would be particularly effective for elementary aged children, stated a different key informant. School based health clinics provide care to children and staff. Peninsula Community Health Services currently operates three school-based clinics in Bremerton and Central Kitsap. "All school based services aim to provide medical and behavioral health services, as well as referrals to higher level services and care coordination when needed." While another key informant stated, "[There is a] lack of access to behavioral health treatment in schools… PCHS integrated school clinic should be in every school."

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
	Employment	More opportunity to earn a living wage is needed	When asked what will be needed in the next 1-3 years, community members cited <u>employment as a key factor to be healthy</u>. The cost to live a healthy life is increasing according to other community members. Healthcare, fresh food, housing, & taxes were referenced as areas that continue to become more expensive.
	Housing	Ensure all residents have access to affordable housing	**Housing was identified as a theme with the largest gap in resources and coordination** by key informants. Supply for affordable housing is low, while the demand is high. <u>Rental assistance program waits are very long.</u> One key informant stated: "Our waiting lists for affordable rental assistance are ridiculously long. The supply of affordable housing resources for low income vulnerable populations are woefully inadequate compared to the tremendous need. This disparity between intense demand and shrinking supply is present not only in Kitsap County, but all across the country." Community members identified <u>the rising costs of rent as a challenge to be healthy.</u> "Affordable housing – housing that people on minimum wage can afford. *No health measures make a long-lasting impact when there is nowhere to live.*" Older adults, individuals with serious behavioral health issues, youth, and young families are facing the largest disparities to housing challenges in the County according to key informants.

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
			A 74-unit supportive housing project, Pendleton Place, has been proposed by Kitsap Mental Health Services. It will prioritize the most vulnerable populations in Kitsap County, including individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and living with severe and persistent mental illness, substance use disorders, and/or other disabling conditions.
		Reduce the number of those experiencing homelessness	Both key informants and community members **identified systemic challenges with homelessness in Kitsap County**. The number of shelter beds is low, as is permanent supportive housing stock. Pendleton place may provide an opportunity for those with moderate and severe behavioral healthcare needs to access services. One key informant stated: "Kitsap Housing and Homelessness Coalition is a strong network of providers that promotes a collaborative and coordinated approach to addressing homelessness." While another advocated, "continue to fund and strengthen the network of homeless crisis response system providers. Medical supportive respite beds are needed for people who need step down care from hospitals to homeless according to one key informant. Discharge planning for those experiencing homelessness and transitioning from support system networks can be improved. Agencies are lacking the capacity to take on this growing challenge in the County according to a key informant, while the community fears public safety concerns.

2019 KCHP QUALITATIVE REPORT

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH	Natural Environment	Our county has many parks and walking trails	Community members identified the number and quality of parks and walking trails as a great asset to the community. One key informant stated, "[The] natural environment lends itself to engaging in healthy activities." When asked, what are some things about Kitsap County that help you to be healthy, 20 individuals cited easy access to parks and walking trails. Respondents also stated that rural areas have less access to safe sidewalks. Clean air and water were identified as key assets to the County by community members.
		Healthy food options are limited and expensive	Food affordability was a theme identified by the community. Many respondents identified the high number of fast foods as a barrier to eating healthy. While eating healthy is expensive, according to community respondents, the farmers market is a key factor that allows for Kitsap County to access fresh food. Eighteen respondents identified food as a key factor to be healthy in the next one to three years.
	Transportation	Public transportation	One key informant stated that, "Transportation remains a challenge for many trying to access healthcare services. Especially for those that receive care outside of Kitsap County." According to community respondents, public transportation can be improved, making it a challenge to be healthy in the county. Another key informant said,

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
			"Transportation to and from medical appointments is a problem, [there's] no program to do that. [I] Get calls from people because they need someone with them due to procedure meds, and can't taxi." "There's limited access to transportation, especially for healthcare."
HEALTH CARE RESOURCES	Health Care Availability	Gaps exist in the care delivery system	Gaps exist in the behavioral health workforce, according to two key informants, that need to be addressed to improve the health of Kitsap County. While no specific areas within the behavioral health workforce were identified, a key informant said: "Physical health and nutrition – could be should be [the main priorities] – but really the biggest issue is challenges with behavioral health – chemical dependency and mental health." Accessing necessary dental care is a challenge for community members, and a needed to be healthy in the future. One key informant stated: "Dental access is always a problem. The dental van at stand down was jam packed; providing free dental services that day, all donated."
	Health Care Access	Continue to expand access points into clinical care	School based health clinics were identified by key informants as important priorities for Kitsap County to improve health. Integrated school clinics provide an entry point to youth behavioral and mental health services, which were identified as a gap. "[We are prioritizing] community-based care - delivering care in more places within the community where patients are more frequently gathered – [by focusing on] mobile care, school based clinics, co-located with community partners."

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
			Mobile clinics play a key role as identified by experts in the community. Several key informants identified access to specialty care, such as prenatal and OB services for those on Medicaid, as a challenge for the county. PCHS expects to begin seeing OB patients in 2020, delivering care at CHI-Harrison. Connect patients to care by supporting transitions across the healthcare system is another theme that came up. One key informant stated that discharge planning for individuals exiting medical and behavioral health settings is a gap in the existing system. Integration of behavioral health services, including Medication Assistant Treatment, into jails is a priority that is gaining traction in Kitsap. One key informant describes: "In 2019, a reentry officer and reentry coordinator that are conducting risk assessments in the jail to help refer people into services such as MAT. …These two new positions have helped over 300 people get referrals into services to help reduce the likelihood they will return to jail. There are many programs in this community that are proving services, and each one of them is very important to helping the people incarcerated succeed."
		Barriers to accessing care	As stated in the transportation theme above, several key informants identified transportation to access healthcare as a barrier. "Transportation to and from medical appointments is a problem, [there's] no program to do that. [I] get calls from people because they need someone with them due to procedure meds, and can't taxi." "There's limited access to transportation, especially for healthcare."

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
			Individuals in the community shared that transportation is a general challenge but didn't specifically mention needing transportation for healthcare services. Community members identified that the <u>affordability and options for care is limiting</u>. One respondent identified sliding scale clinics as one way to stay healthy. Additionally, experts in the community stated disparities exist among specific population subgroups. <u>Finding care for certain populations is challenging due to stigma</u>, for example the LGBTQIA+ population. "Cultural gaps exist for African Americans, Spanish, Asian and Native American cohorts. Culturally diverse curriculum and resources are needed. [We need to] identify strategies to reduce racial disparities in how we serve different racial populations."
PREGNANCY AND BIRTHS	Pregnancy, Birth, & Postpartum	Support young families toward prevention of infant mortality	Several key informants identified <u>prenatal care access, especially for those on Medicaid as a challenge.</u> The family medicine residency is set to be fully functioning as they welcome their third class of residents in 2020 and will provide more access to prenatal services. Additionally, Peninsula Community Health Services expects to begin seeing OB patients in 2020, delivering care at CHI-Harrison. "[We need continued] Support for young families toward prevention of infant mortality and other poor birth outcomes"

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
QUALITY OF LIFE	Well-Being	Depression increasing among youth	Three key informants identified youth behavioral health as a main priority. Several key informants identified work being done by Kitsap Strong as instrumental to support trauma-informed models of care that promote health and wellness. "Kody & Allison from Kitsap Strong build awareness and shared community impact," said one key informant. Another stated: "Quantitatively and subjectively through experience, [I see an] ongoing rise in anxiety and depression, and an inability to effectively cope with those feelings… resulting in behaviors seen in schools."
		Increase awareness of suicide and prevention	Improving suicide awareness and prevention efforts for all ages and groups is another theme identified by key informants, with the intent to <u>decrease suicide ideation.</u> "We recently began a suicide awareness and prevention workgroup to work on planning around this issue. The group includes school administrators, the ESD, school resource officers, the coroner's office, aging and long-term care, the health district, the BHO, and others."
HEALTH RELATED BEHAVIORS	Substance Use	A multi-sector approach to increase substance use disorder prevention	Several key informants identified the coordination of efforts around substance use disorder and mental health services as main priorities for Kitsap County. One stated: "Three County Coordinated Opioid Response Project [3CCORP, a project of Olympic Community of Health] has improved opioid prescribing." Another said: "Community prevention coalitions in every district would increase substance use prevention for the County."

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
			Engaging multiple sectors to address substance use disorder across the community – from those entering jail to those seeking recovery services – was a theme identified from experts in the community.
		Prevent opioid overdose and ensure access to opioid treatment	Several key informants identified Medication Assisted Treatment programs for those addicted to opioids should be more accessible to the community. The jail has recently expanded services to deliver a Medication Assisted Treatment program to help those addicted to opioids. "This [jail MAT program] has been a very successful program in just the last six months, and we have helped about 112 people attempt to avoid using opioids upon release." Another key informant reported plans to distribute naloxone kits and provide training to reduce the number of fatal overdoses.
		Educate the community about mental health and chemical dependency	"We need to do a better job of educating our community about mental health and chemical dependency, understanding that is a disease, and not a choice. Even those with an addiction to opioids did not necessarily choose to be addicted, it happened because of an injury and they were prescribed pain medicine." Several key informants identified community education and awareness for youth as a priority area. 3CCORP is in the process of developing a communications plan to reduce stigma and educate youth.

Section	Subsection	Theme	Finding
	Weight, Nutrition and Physical Activity	Foster an environment for increased physical activity	Several key informants identified a need to address the lack of health and wellness. "The continuing problem of sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition [is having an impact on health]." Another identified the work of the Marvin Williams Center as an organization that supports the whole picture of health. "Health and wellness fair at community centers are a great way to deliver services in a space that is inclusive and fosters community. Feeling connected to community is the most important element." Community members noted the clean environment, walking trails and park systems as a way to increase physical activity. However, the lack of affordable gyms makes living in Kitsap County a challenge, according to others.

STRENGTHS of the COMMUNITY

Topic	Theme	Finding
Partnerships and Collaboration	Kitsap County is small enough to coordinate and collaborate	Communication among organizations is high; specifically, Kitsap Community Resources was identified as a key resource for community leaders. When asked about key elements that promote health, safety, and community strength, one key informant stated: "Communication and coordination between organizations and increased support, including financially, for [health improvement] efforts." Another stated: "…collaborating to accomplish shared purposes is quite possible." "We believe that coordination among service providers and community partners is a bright spot on an otherwise bleak resource landscape."

Topic	Theme	Finding

	Coalitions help drive improvements	<u>Coalitions and work groups help to drive work in focus areas forward.</u> Specifically, the following backbone organizations were recognized as key assets of the community by key informants. Their purpose is to coordinate, plan, and convene stakeholders across multiple sectors.
		   o Olympic Community of Health
		   o Housing and Homelessness Coalition
		   o Kitsap Community Resources
		   o Community Prevention Coalitions
		   o Commission on Children and Youth
		   o Suicide Awareness and Prevention workgroup
		
		A key informant stated that, "Any collaborations that bring together various sectors have the opportunity to improve care."

Community Leadership	Leaders care about all residents	Forward thinking leadership helps to elevate problems while bringing novel solutions forward – whether policy or programming. One Key informant stated, "Executive directors of organizations are tireless advocates for health improvement."

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Topic	Theme	Finding
Funding	Underfunded community services a challenge to long term success	Key informants identified <u>the underfunding of community services as a major challenge; specifically, mental health and substance use treatment, permanent supportive housing, and school-based behavioral health services.</u> "There is little specific funding for mental health prevention/wellness and funds for suicide prevention efforts. A small workgroup without specific funding can improve coordination and make some improvements, but larger

Topic	Theme	Finding
		community leadership support will be important for greater and longer-term success." l
Equity	Resources are scarce for minority groups	Cultural gaps exist for groups of people in Kitsap County. African American, Spanish, Asian, and Native American cohorts were identified as groups that experience the greatest cultural gaps. One key informant stated: "For people in our community, skin color, sexual orientation, and amount of income greatly influence the availability to resources." Another stated, "It is hard to pit one underserved group (victims of domestic violence, veterans, elderly and disabled, chronic homeless, mentally ill, etc.) yet that is what we are faced with as we look for equity in allocating scarce resources."

APPENDIX
  A. QUESTIONNAIRES

Key Informant	Community Voice
1. What are the main priorities you have for improving the health of Kitsap County residents right now?	1. What are some things about Kitsap County that help you to be healthy?
2. What programs or projects are happening or planned that are most relevant to these priorities?	2. What are some things about Kitsap County that make being healthy a challenge?
3. What are the most significant gaps in resources, coordination, etc.? Mention specific subgroups or populations if relevant (age groups, race/ethnicity, veterans, LGBTQ, or others)	3. What do you need to be healthy in the next 1 - 3 years?
4. What are the most significant gaps in resources, coordination, etc.? Mention specific subgroups or populations if relevant (age groups, race/ethnicity, veterans, LGBTQ, or others)	
5. Is there anything else you would like to share?	

B. Word Cloud Responses – Larger words represent a higher frequency of responses

What are some things about Kitsap County that help you to be healthy?	Accessibility FarmersMarket FreshFood Resources Outdoor Stores Water Healthcare Park YMCA Walking+Trails Agape Family Programs Gyms Activities Community Clean
What are some things about Kitsap County that make being healthy a challenge?	CostofLiving FastFood Homeless Drugs Weather AffordableHousing PublicTransportation Walking
What do you need to be healthy in the next 1 - 3 years?	Healthcare MentalHealth Medical Access Housing HealthyFood Exercise Jobs Diet Education Community

C. Response Summaries by Section

Strengths of the community

Kitsap is small enough to coordinate and collaborate	Coalitions help drive health improvements	Leadership cares about all residents
Communication among organizations is high	Coalitions and work groups help to drive work in focus areas forward	Forward thinking leadership helps to elevate problems while bringing novel solutions forward – whether policy or programming.

Socioeconomics

Schools provide a platform for community improvement efforts	Opportunities to earn a living wage is becoing challenging	Ensure all residents have affordable housing	Reduce the number of those experiencing homelessness
After school programs vary greatly between schools	Employment is a key factor to be healthy	Rental assistnace program waits are very long	The number of shelter beds is low, as is permanent housing stock
Community prevention coalitions are needed in every school district		The rising costs of rent is a challenge for many residents	Medical supportive respite beds are needed for people who need step down care from hospitals to homeless
School based health clinics bring behavioral and physical healthcare to those in need			Agencies are lacking the capacity to take on this growing problem

Environmental Health

Kitsap County has many parks and walking trails

The number and quality of parks and walking trails are a great asset to the community

Rural areas have less access to safe sidewalks

Clean air and water were identified as an aspect that helps keep residents healthy

Healthy food options are limited and expensive

Food Affordability

High number of fast food is a barrier to eating healthy

The farmers market allows for residents to access fresh food

Public Transportation

Transportation remains a challenge for many trying to access healthcare services

Quality of Life

Depression increasing among youth

Youth behavioral health is a main priority

Kitsap strong is working to support trauma informed models of care that promote health and wellness

Increase awareness of Suicide Prevention

decrease suicide ideation among all age groups, with a youth focus

Health Care Resources

Gaps exist in the care delivery system

behavioral health workforce shortages

Access to dental care is a challenge

Access to specialty care, specifically OB services is a challenge

Continue to expand access points into clinical care

School based health clinics are important to improve health

Moblile clinics play a key role

Access to specialty care, specifically OB services is a challenge

Connecting patients to care by suppoting transitions across the healthcare system

Integration of behavioral health services, including Medication Assistant Treatment, into jails

Barriers to accessing care

Transportation to access healthcare is a barrier

Affordability and options for care is limiting

Finding care for certain populations is challenging due to stigma

Support young families toward prevention of infant mortality

Prenatal care access, especially for those on Medicaid is challenging

Health Related Behaviors

A multi-sector approach to increase substance use disorder prevention

coordination of efforts around substance use disorder and mental health services is a main priority

Engage partners across the community - from jails to first responders.

Prevent opioid overdose and ensure access to opioid treatment

Medication Assisted Treatment programs for those addicted to opioids should be more accessible

Distribute naloxon kits and provide training to reduce fatal overdoses

Educate the community about mental health and chemical dependency

3CCORP (Olympic Community of Health) is developing a communications plan to reduce stigma and educate youth

Foster an environment for increased physical activity

A persistent problem of sedentary lifestyles and poor nutrition is having an impact on health

Feeling connected to the community is the most important element

The lack of affordable gyms makes working out a challenge

Community Challenges

Underfunded community services a challenge for long term success

Mental health and substance use treatment

permanent supportive housing

school based behavioral health services

Resources are scarce for minority groups

Cultural gaps exist for different groups in Kitsap county

Race, sexual orientation, and income greatly influence availability to resources