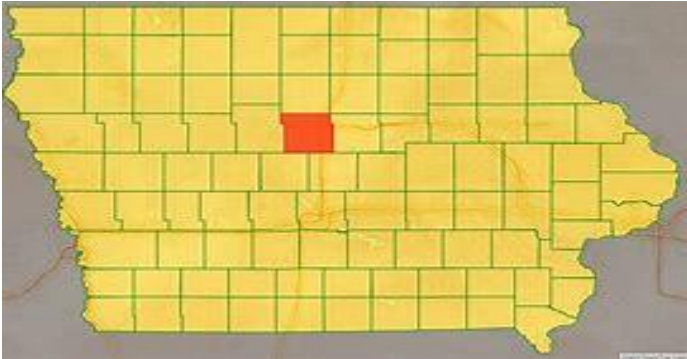


Hamilton County's Community Health Needs Assessment

July 2023



Acknowledgments

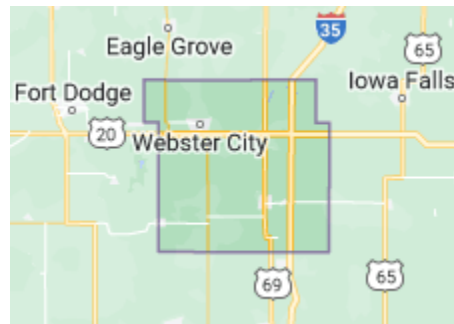
Thank you to all who participated in assessing the health of Hamilton County and helping us put a plan in place for the future.

Introduction:

Every five years, the Iowa Department of Public Health, now under the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, requests that counties review data and assess the health of their counties.

This document is the 2023 review for Hamilton County, Iowa and was completed by Hamilton County Public Health Nursing Services.

Hamilton County



The county was founded in 1856 and includes the following cities: Webster City (county seat), Jewell, Blairsburg, Kamrar, Williams, Stanhope, Randall, Stratford, and Ellsworth.

There are 14,887 people who live in Hamilton County according to the US Census. Children under the age of five make up 6% of the population, and 21% are over the age of 65. In 7% of the homes in Hamilton County, the primary language is not English. Like other rural communities, Hamilton County has experienced an outgrowth of 0.4% a year between 2010 and 2021.

Hamilton County has the follow Race/ethnicity break down:

Race and Hispanic Origin	
White alone	93.9%
Black or African American alone	1.3%
Asian alone	0.6%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone	2.4%
Two or more races	1.8%
Hispanic/Latino	7.1%
White alone not Hispanic or Latino	87.7%
(US Census Bureau)	

According to the Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings, the county places in the lower middle range (25-50%) of Iowa counties for health outcomes. Health outcomes represent how healthy a county is right now in terms of length of life and quality of life. Hamilton County is in the higher middle range (50-75%) of Iowa counties for Health Factors. Health Factors are those things that change or improve the length and or quality of life for people.

Salud America reports that 1 in 8 children and 1 in 16 adults living in Hamilton County are Latino. The Latino community varies in access to quality childcare, education, affordable housing, transportation, green space, health food and healthcare – all of which are necessary for a healthy life.

Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks. These systems in which we all live influence the outcomes of our health. This document will use the Social Determinants of Health as a framework for Hamilton County.

Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment	Housing	Literacy	Hunger	Social integration	Health coverage
Income	Transportation	Language	Access to healthy options	Support systems	Provider availability
Expenses	Safety	Early childhood education		Community engagement	Provider
Debt	Parks	Vocational training		Discrimination	linguistic and cultural competency
Medical bills	Playgrounds	Higher education		Stress	Quality of care
Support	Walkability				
	Zip code/ geography				

Health Outcomes
Mortality, Morbidity, Life Expectancy, Health Care Expenditures, Health Status, Functional Limitations

Source: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

Quality of Life

Quality of Life is defined by the World Health Organization as “an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns”. Standard indicators of the quality of life include wealth, employment, the environment, physical and mental health, and education.

The following data points, reported by the County Health Rankings (Robert Woods Johnson 2023), place Hamilton County in the lower middle range (55 out of 99 counties) in Iowa quality of life. These data sets include premature deaths, poor or fair health, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, and low birthweights.

Life expectancy in Hamilton County is the same as that of the United States, in general. The leading causes of death in Hamilton County for individuals under 75 are:

Leading Causes of Death under age 75 in Hamilton (HA) County		
Leading Causes of Death Underage 75 Deaths Age-Adjusted Rate per 100,000		
Malignant neoplasms	54	87.4
Diseases of heart	32	53.1
Accidents	21	48.8
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	13	Unreliable
Cerebrovascular diseases	12	Unreliable

Source: [CDC WONDER](#). 2021

According to the County Health Ranking data, 89% of the respondents say their health is good to excellent. Poor physical health days are defined as the number of physically unhealthy days in the past 30 days, and poor mental health is defined as the number of mentally unhealthy days in the past 30 days. Individuals ranked poor physical health days as 2.7 per month, and poor mental health days as 4.1 days per month. When comparing the state of Iowa and national data, the rates of these are the same.

While the adult mental health data shows the county ranks the same as the state and national data, Hamilton County teen data has a different story. According to the CDC, there has been a rise in teen mental health concerns. In the most recent Youth Survey, 47% of teen girls and 27% of teen boys report feelings of hopelessness, depression, and anxiety. In addition, 15% of these teens have thought of or have a suicide plan.

Economic Stability

Economic Stability Indicators include employment and income. Financial stability provides access to resources to meet an individual's or family's needs.

The median household income was \$62,183 (29.89/hour) in 2021. Iowa families are working hard, but wages have not kept up with costs and productivity. All workers, especially those with children, must earn well above the minimum wage to meet even a bare-bones budget. This chart compares the needed wages for Iowans, in general, to those in Hamilton County.

	Hamilton County	Iowa
Wage needed to meet basic needs: single parent with 1 child under 6	\$18.17	\$21.16
Wage needed to meet basic needs: 2 working parents with 2 children	14.80	\$16.11
Median hourly wage	29.89	19.19
Minimum wage	7.25	7.25

Source: Common Good Iowa, The Cost of Living in Iowa, 2022

The unemployment rate is an indicator of economic stability. In Hamilton County, the unemployment rate is 4.2%, which is the same as the state but slightly lower than the 5.4% national rate. (RWJ County Health Rankings 2023).

The overall poverty rate in Hamilton County, according to the US Census Bureau, is 8%, however, the most recent data shows children living in poverty is 11% (RWJ County Health Rankings 2023). The rate of children living in poverty has fluctuated over the past five years, with the highest rate being 14%. Currently, the rate of children living in poverty in Hamilton County remains lower than the national rate of 17%. (RWJ County Health Rankings 2023).

Disabilities: 8.6% of the county population under the age of 65 are reported to have at least one disability. People who are disabled may experience barriers to school, work, access to quality-of-life activities, transportation, and access to safe physical activity spaces. These barriers could affect both mental and physical health.

The above data would suggest the county appears to have economic stability, however, Upper Des Moines Opportunity, the community action agency for Hamilton County, reported serving 5,000 individuals through their programs for low-income individuals in 2022 compared to 4,000 in 2021. Their programs include energy assistance, food pantries, school supplies, and coats for kids, as well as some home repairs and chore services. They report that the need will continue to increase in 2023.

Neighborhood and Physical Environment

Hamilton County has many city and county parks where people can go for recreational activities. There are also swimming pools in three cities and walking trails throughout the county. Webster City has a small skateboard park, a new soccer pitch and pickle ball courts. The physical environment where we live, work, and play has an impact on our health behaviors.

According to RWJ County Health Rankings, Hamilton County has not had any issues with air pollution, drinking water violations, severe housing problems or long commutes to work. Hamilton County has ranked lower than Iowa or the United States in these over the past 4 years.

While 75% of residents acknowledge having access to exercise opportunities in their community, 23% report being physically inactive. The obesity rate for the county is 37%, meaning people with a BMI over 30 {source RWJ County Health Rankings 2023}.



Walk Score is a source that looks at the walking and biking abilities and opportunities of a city or neighborhood. Their mission is to promote walkable neighborhoods where people can access food, recreation, and services by walking or biking. Hamilton County is a rural county, and most of the time, people are dependent on their car to access services. Below are the Walk and Bike Scores for some areas of the county.

	Walk score	Bike score
Jewell Iowa	34	36
Stratford Iowa	32	38
Downtown area Webster City	76	53
Fair Meadow area Webster City	43	52

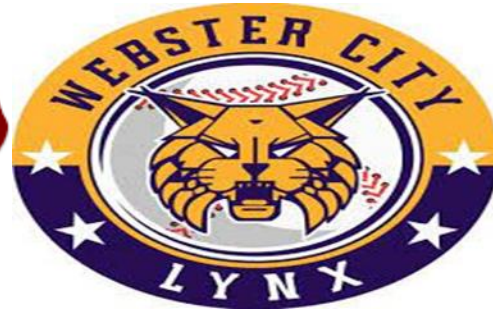
Source WalkScore.com Walk and Bike score use a 0-100 Scale 100 being the best zero being the worst.

Education

Education Indicators include literacy, language, and education, including early childhood education. Health and education are linked. When individuals are healthy, they are better able to learn, and education influences our knowledge and healthy behaviors.

**SOUTH
HAMILTON
SCHOOLS**
home of the hawks

serving the communities of
Ellsworth, Jewell, Randall, & Stanhope



Quality preschool and prekindergarten programs can improve school readiness. Children in Hamilton County have access to 3-4 yr. old preschool in each District, including Head Start. 45.2% of children access these preschools. (Kids County Data 2016-2020). The Health Department also offers Early Head Start and HOPES (Building Families) family support programs for families prenatally and with children 0-3. These in-home visitation programs aid with early literacy and parent engagement.

Hamilton County has two School Districts, South Hamilton and Webster City Community Schools. The cities of Stratford and Blairsburg maintain their elementary schools as part of the Webster City School District. There is one elementary parochial school (St. Thomas) in Webster City. After 6th grade, these children have the option to enroll in the Webster City School system or continue their education in another district, such as the parochial school in Ft Dodge (St. Edmonds).

Hamilton County maintains a high school graduation rate of 94% (source RWJ County Health Rankings), and 71% of the population have some college education. Salud America reports that in Hamilton County, 56.96% of the Hispanic population does not have a high school diploma. There is an economic cost for individuals who do not graduate from high school. Not having a high school diploma may affect health, wages, and employment opportunities over the individual's life span.

Early indicators of students risking dropping out of high school are reading and math proficiency. In Hamilton County, 73.6% of children are proficient in reading by 4th grade, and 8th grade math proficiency is 70.1%. Both data points have remained consistent over the past four years. This data comes from Kid Count 2020.

Hamilton County has satellite college classrooms through Iowa Central Community College, one in Ellsworth the other in Webster City.

Childcare is of great concern in Hamilton County. Currently, there are over 70 children on waiting lists for childcare centers. Access to safe affordable childcare supports the workforce in the community. In Hamilton County, 83% of parents of young children are in the workforce which is higher than the 76% for Iowa statistic (Sources: Costs: Common Good Iowa calculations from 2022 Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral data).

Food

Access to sufficient food is critical for proper nutrition and health for both children and adults. Children are particularly susceptible to the negative impacts of food insecurity and the lack of consistent access

to enough food because their brains and bodies are still developing.



Feeding America 2020 data shows 960 individuals (350 are children under 18) in Hamilton County report food insecurity (6.5%). Food insecurity is defined by the US Dept. of Agriculture as the lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. It is associated with numerous adverse social and health outcomes and is increasingly considered a critical public health issue. Key drivers of food insecurity include unemployment, poverty, and income shocks, which can prevent adequate access to food (Feeding America.org Website).

Hamilton County has a thriving Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program to help with food insecurity and serves 324 families. This program has grown over the past year from 240 families.

As mentioned earlier, our poverty rate overall is 8% and for children, specifically, it is 11%. 42.3% of students in the county participate in the free and reduced lunch program (RWJ County Health Rankings 2023 Poverty, Kids Count data for free and reduced lunches). Food insecurity among children increases in the summer when children do not have access to it. Over the past few years, Webster City schools have offered a summer lunch program.

The Iowa Youth data shows that our younger kids experience times when they are hungry. The Iowa Youth Survey asked “In the past 30 days, did you ever go hungry because there was not enough food in your home?” The responses were:

2021 Iowa Youth Survey						
	6th Grade		8th Grade		11th grade	
	Ham Co	State	Ham Co	State	Ham Co	State
Yes	12%	8%	5%	5%	4%	5%
No	88%	92%	95%	95%	96%	95%
# Responding	144	15450	170	17020	119	13521



Webster City serves 36 people through the Meals on Wheels program and has a congregate meal site on weekdays. Jewell grocery offers meals to local seniors in the Jewell area. The other possible option for seniors throughout the county is home delivered frozen meals through Sister Meals.

Hamilton County also has several food pantries available to individuals and families who do not have adequate amounts of food.

Upper Des Moines Opportunity reports 400 additional families have accessed their food pantry this year, bringing the total number of families served to 1,000.

During the summer of 2022, Webster City’s Market Nights included a farmers market, which increased access to local fresh vegetables and fruits. Jewell also has a community wide farmers market every Thursday throughout the summer.

Community and Social Context



Community and Social Context indicators include support systems for community engagement, social integration, discrimination, and stress. US News Report on Healthy Communities examines community vitality by assessing the stability and social cohesion of a community through population growth, voter participation and home ownership. Social connectedness and support have been associated with lower morbidity and mortality rates.

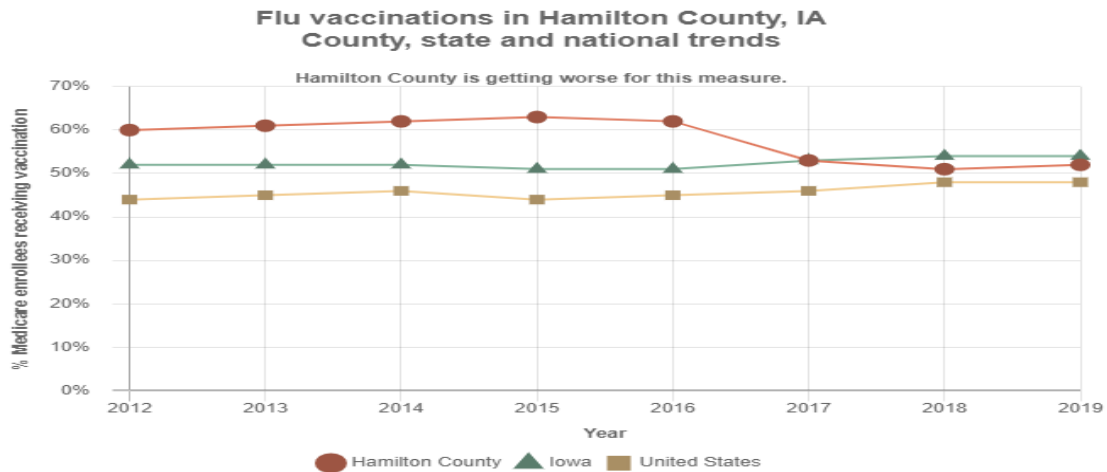
Students who completed the Iowa Youth Survey were asked about their community engagement. When we have engaged youth, we find engaged adults. Below is data from the 2021 Iowa Youth Survey.

Source 2021 Iowa Youth Survey						
	6 th Grade		8 th Grade		11 th grade	
	Ham Co	IA State	Ham Co	IA State	Ham Co	IA State
Worked in a paid job	13%	13%	18%	29%	76%	71%
Volunteered in the community	29%	28%	32%	34%	48%	53%
Participated in extra-curricular activities	79%	77%	86%	82%	84%	79%
Participated in religious activities	57%	51%	57%	3%	45%	50%

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) can also influence the long-term risk for health problems. Between 2010 and 2021, the percentage of child abuse and neglect cases fell in Hamilton County by 51.6%. The current rate of founded cases of neglect and abuse is 8.6% (source Kids County data).

Home ownership in Hamilton County is 74.6%, just slightly above the national rate of 73.2%. The out migration is 2.4% for Hamilton County, and the national median is 0.2%. The voter

Vaccination rates, a preventative health activity, are an indicator of health of the community. Hamilton County’s vaccination rates for children have fallen over the last couple of years, partially due to the pandemic, when access was more restricted. The COVID vaccine rate for Hamilton County was 68% for fully vaccinated individuals. The graph shows the Influenza vaccine rate declined sharply during the 2016 vaccination year and has continued to go down over the next few years.



Data from RWJ’s Community Health Rankings does show that for many in Hamilton County, access to a healthcare provider could be an issue. See Hamilton County Compared to like counties in Iowa. These counties mirror our demographic, social, and economic indicators.

Source RWJ County Health Rankings 2023	Hamilton County	Carrol County	Green County	Iowa
Ratio of population to primary care physicians	2,940:1	1,170:1	1,760:1	1,360:1
Ratio of population to dentists	2,980:1	1,590:1	2,910:1	1,430:1
Ratio of population to mental health providers	1,860:1	860:1	1,090:1	530:1

This increase of person to provider ratio may show access to care could be an issue and/or individuals may wait longer for appointments causing a delay in their treatment.

Unhealthy behaviors are lifestyle choices or habits that can increase the risk of poor health outcomes typically include obesity, smoking, physical inactivity, and alcohol consumption.

	Hamilton County	Iowa	United States
Adult Smoking	17%	17%	16%
Adult Obesity	37%	37%	32%
Physical Inactivity	23%	23%	22%
Excessive Drinking	25%	25%	19%

Sexually transmitted infections	270:1	476:1	481:1
RWJ Community Health Rankings 2023			

For adults, the population of Hamilton County mirrors the States' averages except in sexually transmitted infections. Here, our rate is higher than those of Iowa and the US. Excessive drinking is also an area where we could improve in comparison to the US.

Data from our Iowa Youth Survey presents health behaviors as perceptions of risk and ease of access to harmful substances. The following tables look at 6th, 8th and 11th grade responses for harmful substances and use of alcohol and tobacco.

The question addressed the ease at which harmful substances can be obtained. The chart shows the percentage of youth who answered "easy/very easy".

IA Youth Survey 2021	6 th grade		8 th grade		11th grade	
	Ham Co	IA State	Ham Co	IA State	Ham Co	IA State
Cigarettes	20%	17%	33%	37%	57%	57%
E-cigarettes Vaping	23%	18%	52%	53%	72%	75%
Alcohol	24%	22%	47%	49%	73%	72%
Marijuana	6%	7%	19%	23%	56%	53%
Other illegal drugs	8%	6%	10%	14%	24%	23%
Firearms	23%	19%	26%	31%	25%	37%
Prescription medication not prescribed for you by a doctor.	20%	20%	29%	34%	39%	40%

This next chart looks at the use of alcohol and tobacco.

IA youth Survey 2021	6 th grade		8 th grade		11th grade	
	Ham Co	IA State	Ham Co	IA State	Ham Co	IA State
Drank Beer in the past 30 days	2%	1%	2%	3%	8%	10%
Drank any other alcohol in the past 30 days	1%	1%	3%	5%	17%	16%
Binged drinking in the past 30 days	0%	1%	2%	2%	13%	9%
Ever driven a car or motorized vehicle (ATV Tractor Moped after using Alcohol or non-prescription drugs	5%	5%	2%	5%	4%	7%
Smoked cigarettes or used any tobacco product	3%	1%	4%	4%	8%	10%
Vaped or used e-cigarettes	1%	1%	12%	10%	22%	24%

It does appear that the youths' perception of easy access does not reflect significant increases in use. Binge drinking among 11th graders does stand out as a potential issue. There also is a progressive increase in use with age for vaping and e-cigarettes. During our interviews/focus groups, vaping was identified as an emerging issue.

Community Feedback and Prioritized Needs

In 2019 Hamilton County Health Assessment Hamilton County Public Health and Van Diest Medical Center completed the assessment and the following priority areas were named:

2019 Perception of health concerns in Hamilton County

1. Mental Illness	6. Alcohol use/abuse
2. Obesity	7. Suicide
3. Teen Health (Drinking/Abuse/Safety/Pregnancy)	8. Chronic Disease (Diabetes, heart disease, Stroke)
4. Abuse and Violence	9. Poverty
5. Aging and Dementia	10. Family Planning (Delivering babies and Women's Health)

Surveys were asked for from several agencies, individuals and available at the Health Fair and the Awareness walk. The survey asked the following three questions.

1. Is this priority from the 2019 community assessment still an issue in Hamilton County? The following are the Yes responses:

	Yes
Mental Illness	96
Obesity	89
Teen Health (Drinking/ abuse/ safety/ pregnancy)	66
Abuse and Violence	92
Alcohol use/abuse	89
Suicide	75
Chronic Disease (diabetes, heart disease, stroke)	80
Poverty	84
Family Planning (Delivering Babies/Women's Health)	49

2. Should this topic be included in the 2023 Community Assessment as a priority?

	Yes
Mental Illness	90

Obesity	83
Teen Health (Drinking/ abuse/ safety/ pregnancy)	62
Abuse and Violence	90
Alcohol use/abuse	92
Suicide	73
Chronic Disease (diabetes, heart disease, stroke)	72
Poverty	79
Family Planning (Delivering Babies/Women's Health)	52

3. Of these priorities which three would you say are the top concerns?

	Yes
Mental Illness	90
Obesity	40
Teen Health (Drinking/ abuse/ safety/ pregnancy)	35
Abuse and Violence	56
Alcohol use/abuse	68
Suicide	45
Chronic Disease (diabetes, heart disease, stroke)	45
Poverty	50
Family Planning (Delivering Babies/Women's Health)	34

The top three identified issues Mental Illness, Alcohol use/abuse, abuse and violence. The top two Mental Illness and Alcohol use/abuse not only mirrors the State of Iowa but the nation in health priorities.

Emerging or newly identified areas of concern for Hamilton County:

Transportation	Bullying
Language barriers	Assist with health care applications.
Eldercare	Access to affordable health care
Food Insecurity	Lack of Health care for children (Pediatricians)
School safety	Livable wages
Vaping	Parenting skills
Overdosing	Climate Change
Hospital aftercare	
More health care for veterans	

A steering committee reviewed the Community Assessment document and survey results and identified priorities for the Health Improvement Plan. This committee had representative from public health, Van Diest Medical Center, Building Families/CAPP, Community and Family Resources, and ISU Extension.

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