



Benton County SHIP

Community health profile

A P R I L 2 0 1 4

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Introduction

This report draws from publicly available and locally accessed data that provides background information about Benton County in relation to the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) strategies:

- Healthy eating in schools
- Physical activity in schools
- Tobacco-free living
- Healthy eating in the community
- Healthy eating and physical activity in child care
- Physical activity in the community
- Worksite wellness
- Community-clinical linkages

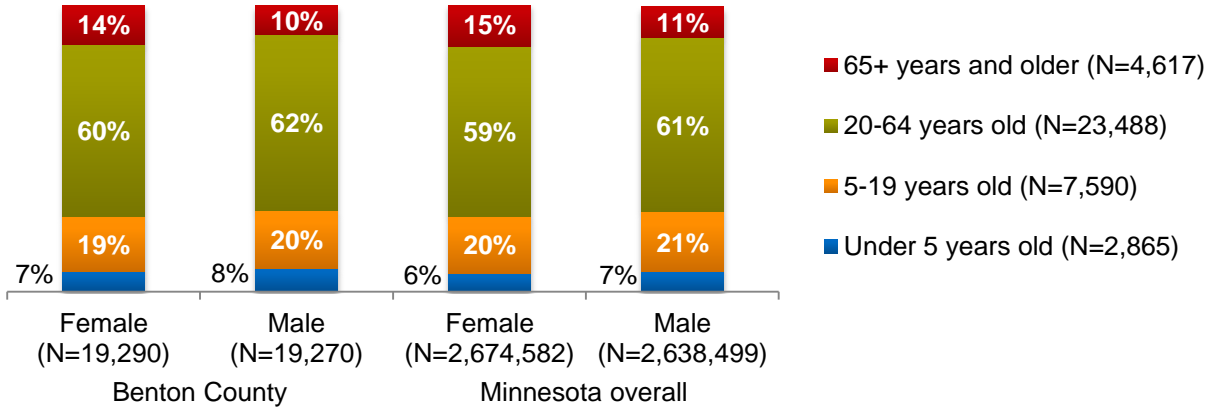
The purpose of this report is to inform Benton County Public Health and the Benton County SHIP Community Leadership Team (CLT) about the needs and gaps, as well as strengths, existing partnerships, and opportunities in the community related to nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco. The Benton County Community Leadership Team (CLT) is a partnership among public health, county, school, and other community organizations to strategize comprehensive wellness approaches, with the goal of policy, systems and environment changes to promote healthier living and reduce chronic disease caused by tobacco use and exposure and obesity due to unhealthy eating and physical inactivity. Sustainable changes that lead to health improvement need to be part of an ongoing plan and reflected in policies in order to produce change over time.

In February 2014, Wilder Research conducted a study of the existing data available regarding various SHIP strategies in Benton County to better understand where the county is at regarding programming, policies, systems, and environments related to healthy eating, active living, and tobacco. This report is part of the required community assessment for the SHIP planning grant. These findings provide guidance for the Benton County SHIP implementation plan.

Characteristics of Benton County residents

Benton County has a total population size of 38,560 residents (19,270 males and 19,290 females). The demographic characteristics of Benton County are similar to those of the state of Minnesota overall. Of note, Benton County has a slightly higher proportion of older adults compared to the state of Minnesota, and a lower proportion of non-white residents.

1. Population by gender (N=38,560)

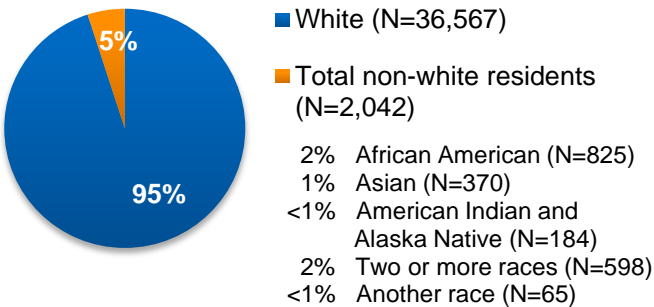


Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 5-year estimates.

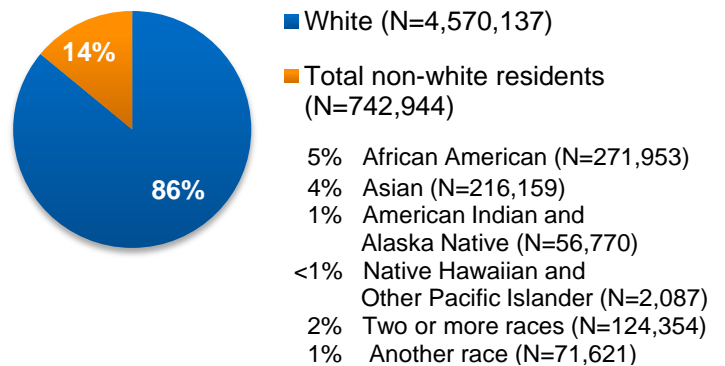
The majority of Benton County residents are non-Hispanic whites (N=36,567 residents). Non-white residents comprise just 5 percent of Benton County's population, including 651 residents who are of Hispanic ethnicity (who can be of any race, not shown in chart below). This is much lower than the state of Minnesota overall where 14 percent of residents are non-white (N=742,944) and 5 percent of the population is comprised of Hispanic or Latino residents (N=250,025). See the chart below for more details regarding non-white Benton County and Minnesota residents.

2. Population by race for Benton County (N=38,560) and Minnesota (N=5,313,081)

Benton County



Minnesota

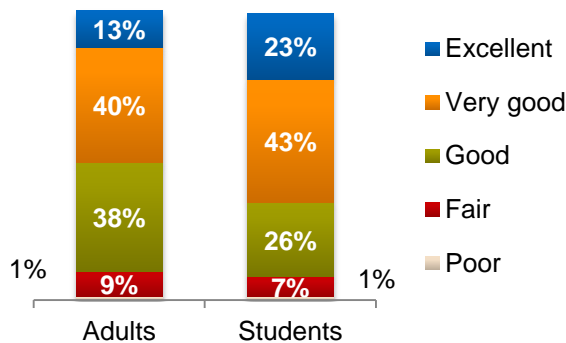


Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 5-year estimates.

Health status of Benton County residents

In 2013, more than 9 in 10 Benton County adults (91%) and students (92%) rated their health as good, very good, or excellent. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ranked Benton County as 56th out of all 87 counties in Minnesota in terms of health outcomes. This ranking is based on county-level indicators including length and quality of life, health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and the physical environment of the county.

3. Overall health perception



Sources: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2013 MN Student Survey.

Note: Table includes aggregate data for 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th grade students in Benton County.

Despite generally very good self-reported health status, 62 percent of adults in Benton County and 22 percent of middle and high school students were overweight or obese in 2013. See the table below for the rate of obesity and other chronic health conditions experienced by Benton County adult residents and students.

4. Chronic health conditions

	Adults	Students	Minnesota adults overall
Overweight	36%	12%	37%
Obesity	26%	10%	26%
High cholesterol	29%	N/A	N/A
High blood pressure	26%	N/A	N/A
Asthma	N/A	19%	11%
Diabetes	9%	1%	7%
Cancer	N/A	N/A	NA

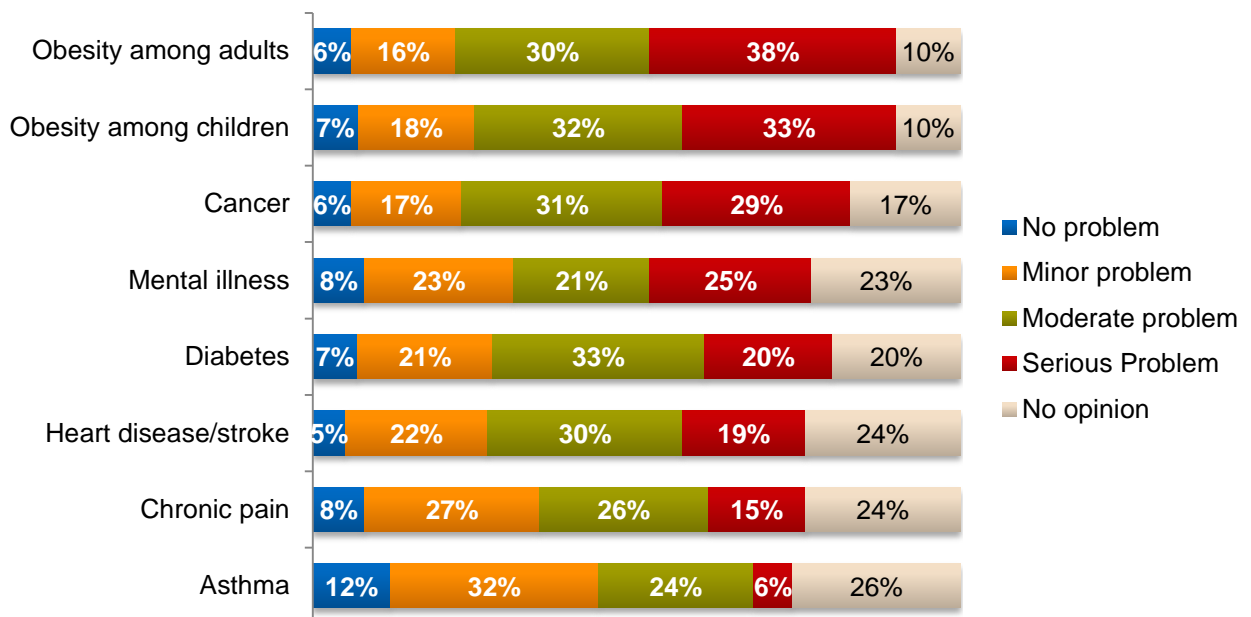
Source: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2013 MN Student Survey, 2012, 2012 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data

Notes: Table includes aggregate data for 8th, 9th, and 11th grade students in Benton County. Weight status was not calculated for 5th grade students.

When asked their opinions about various public health related issues on a recent survey (Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2013), 8 in 10 Benton County residents rated obesity among adults (84%) and children (83%) as a problem in their community. This includes nearly two-fifths (38%) of residents who indicated that adult obesity is a “serious problem” in their community, and one-third (33%) who said childhood obesity was a “serious problem.” Therefore, an emphasis on obesity and how SHIP strategies can contribute to reducing obesity in the community should be a focus of the Benton County SHIP implementation plan.

It may also be worthwhile for the Benton County SHIP Community Leadership Team to consider the relatively small proportion of adults in Benton County (6%) who think asthma is a serious problem (and 26% of residents had “no opinion”) when, in contrast, one out of five Benton County students (19%) reported having asthma on the Minnesota Student Survey. This finding may be particularly relevant with regard to the child care tobacco and multi-unit housing tobacco SHIP strategies.

5. Community perceptions of chronic health conditions



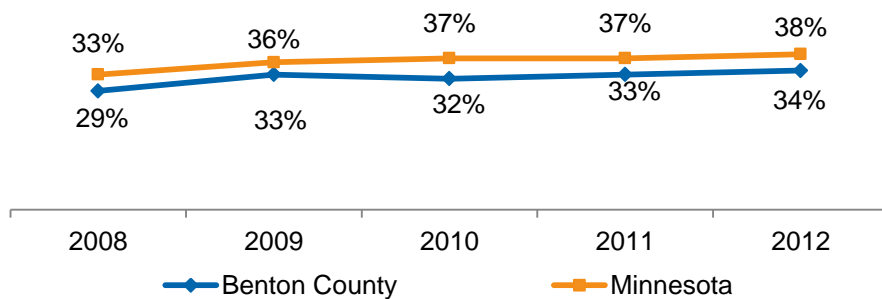
Source: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey.

Healthy eating in schools

There are 9,466 school-age children living in Benton County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). The Minnesota Department of Education lists 13 public schools and four non-public schools in Benton County. These schools are located in following school districts: Foley, Saint Cloud, and Sauk Rapids/Rice.

In 2012, one-third (34%) of students in Benton County received free or reduced price school lunch, which is an indicator of low-income status (eligible students come from households whose income is 185% or less of federal poverty level). This is slightly lower than the proportion of students in Minnesota overall who receive free or reduced price school lunch (38%). Over the past five years, there has been an increase in the proportion of students who are eligible for free and reduced price school lunch, in Benton County and statewide. For these children from low-income households in particular, their school lunch (and breakfast, if applicable) may be their primary opportunity during the week to get healthy, fresh fruit and vegetables and other healthy foods low in fat, sugar, sodium, and preservatives.

6. Children receiving free/reduced lunch



Source: 2012 Selected Kids Count Indicators for Benton County.

The US Department of Agriculture recommends two to three servings of fruit and three to five servings of vegetables every day (US Department of Agriculture, 2013). In 2013, just 24 percent of middle and high school students in Benton County consumed fruit at least twice per day and only 8 percent ate vegetables at least three times per day.

7. Fruit and vegetable consumption in the past seven days for middle school and high school students in Benton County

	Fruit	Vegetables	Fruit juice
I did not eat or drink this	7%	8%	25%
1-3 times in the last seven days	30%	30%	44%
4-6 times in the last seven days	21%	20%	14%
1 time per day	18%	19%	8%
2 times per day	15%	15%	4%
3 times per day	5%	4%	2%
4 or more times per day	4%	4%	3%

Source: 2013 MN Student Survey.

Note: Table includes aggregate data for 8th, 9th, and 11th grade students in Benton County. 5th grade students were not asked this question.

SHIP grants support healthy eating initiatives that have components of access, health literacy for institutional decision-makers, and policy. This may include approaches such as salad bars and Farm-to-School programs. The Benton County Food Assessment (2010), a study conducted by Benton County Public Health to better understand what changes are needed to improve the county's food environment, recommended that schools in Benton County should explore and pilot Farm-to-School programs and establish school gardens for all schools in the county. These initiatives would serve both as educational tools and as nutritional resources.

Currently, there are several policies and practices in place in Benton County to promote healthy eating among school-aged youth, including:

- **Wellness policies** in schools outline goals and strategies to promote all aspects of student wellness, including healthy eating. Any school district receiving funding from the federal school lunch program is required to have a wellness policy. Federal guidelines instruct these school districts to create nutrition guidelines and procedures for the selection of food items and beverages available in schools. In these school districts, some infrastructure already exists to support healthy eating programs. Foley and Sauk Rapids/Rice school districts have wellness policies in place. Strategies for healthy eating outlined by these school district wellness policies include: making healthy food choices such as offering extra servings of fruit and vegetables at no extra charge for school lunches, selecting vending machine food choices that meet USDA guidelines, encourage and support healthy eating through nutrition promotion by providing students with knowledge and skills to protect their health, and limiting food at school celebrations and using foods as a reward.

- **Healthy snacks in after-school programs.** Sauk Rapids/Rice has two healthy snack programs for their elementary schools. Snacks served at the programs are whole grain, low sugar, and low sodium.
- **Farm-to-school programs.** Foley Public Schools spends about 10% of its food budget on local food sources (compared to the Minnesota state average of 13%). In addition to serving local foods in schools, the district held taste tests of local foods and from school gardens, provided field trips to farms, and promoted local foods at school. The Sauk Rapids/Rice school district spends about 3% of its food budget on local food sources. They also promoted local, healthy foods overall, provided taste tests of local foods and foods from school gardens, and celebrated Farm-to-School Month.

Other opportunities that the Benton County SHIP CLT is currently exploring, or could explore, include:

- **Including all types of after-school programming in SHIP strategy for healthy eating in schools.** One CLT member suggested that Benton County consider including and partnering with other types of after school programming, including programs offered outside of the school districts, such as KidStop offered through the Boys and Girls Clubs, service programs such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and event programming such as dance, music, or other after-school clubs.
- **Exploring NuVal® Nutritional Systems in school vending machines and a la carte lines.** According to BLEND (Better Living Exercise and Nutrition Daily), a collaboration of community organizations in the Saint Cloud area, the NuVal® Nutritional Scoring System was launched in the a la carte lunch lines and vending machines in 2012 in Sartell-Saint Stephen Schools in nearby Stearns County. The NuVal® Nutritional System takes more than 30 different nutrients into account and gives foods and beverages items a score from 1 to 100; the higher the score, the higher the item's nutritional content. NuVal® scores are displayed directly on the price tags in the vending machines and a la carte lines, making it easy for students and faculty to compare the overall nutrition of the foods they choose. This will assist students and faculty to make healthier food choices on a daily basis. Sartell—Saint Stephen Schools are the first in Minnesota and second in the nation to offer the system to middle and high school students. The CLT should consider this and other labeling options for schools in Benton County to help students and faculty make the healthy choice the easy choice when selecting vending and a la carte items. Student, parent, and staff awareness, education, and buy-in are key steps to consider when introducing significant environmental/policy changes such as labeling.

- **Strengthening school wellness policies.** Benton County SHIP should consider working with the school districts in your community that already have wellness policies to assess the gaps in the policies and the opportunities for further strengthening them. Benton County SHIP could also play a role in supporting the school districts that do not have a wellness policy currently to develop and implement one. Connecting these districts in Benton County (and to districts in neighboring counties that are doing similar SHIP work) is an efficient and effective way to support and encourage implementation of best-practices for school nutrition policies, systems, and environments. Specific areas of the school wellness policies that may be of particular interest include: ensuring a certain (higher) proportion of the district’s food budget goes toward purchasing locally grown, fresh produce; providing more training for district food service staff on food purchasing, preparation, and presentation of healthy, fresh foods; addressing the healthfulness of foods served as school celebrations, for rewards, through vending and concessions, and for school fundraisers; and increasing the awareness of students, parents, and staff about existing and upcoming opportunities to eat healthier in school.

Physical activity in schools

The Center for Disease Control recommends that youth (ages 6-17) engage in at least 60 minutes of aerobic activity every day, at least 60 minutes of muscle strengthening 3-5 days per week, and at least 60 minutes of bone strengthening exercises (such as jumping rope or running) three days per week (Center for Disease Control, 2011).

On a typical school day, two-thirds of students in Benton County (65%) went outside, took a walk, or went for a bike ride *outside of school hours* for at least an hour. However, only about 15 percent of students were physically active for at least 60 total minutes every day of a seven day period (Minnesota Student Survey, 2013). Frequency and duration of student physical activity may be substantially impacted by the extent of physical education classes taken and other opportunities for physical activity during school hours. See the table below for frequency of physical education classes by grade.

8. During a typical school week, on how many days do you go to physical education classes?

	8th grade	9th grade	11th grade
0 days	32%	1%	78%
1 day	6%	1%	0%
2 days	22%	20%	0%
3 days	7%	70%	3%
4 days	<1%	2%	1%
5 days	34%	7%	19%

Source: 2013 MN Student Survey.

Note: Table includes aggregate data for 8th, 9th, and 11th grade students in Benton County. 5th grade students were not asked this question.

According to the CLT, elementary schools in Benton County have physical education classes much more often than middle schools and high schools. Elementary school students take PE classes 20-25 minutes per day, every day. Middle school students in Benton County have PE classes for an average of 60 minutes *per week*, and high school students are only in PE class for an average of 45 minutes *per week*. For some high school students, PE classes are offered even less frequently. According to CLT members, PE class is only required for 9th grade students for one semester in Sauk Rapids/Rice. After that, it is only offered through elective courses for two trimesters for two years of high school. Sauk Rapids/Rice also has indoor recess for their elementary students in

their gymnasium with structured activities throughout recess whether the students are inside or outside.

In general, incorporating structured activities and games into students' recess is an effective way to increase students' physical activity levels (and it also can reduce bullying and other problem behaviors that tend to occur during recess). Benton County SHIP could encourage and support more structured activities during recess for elementary schools by providing resources (such as existing programs and models), and staff training and support (because structured active games during recess require a high level of staff involvement). School wellness policies are a good place to institutionalize these strategies to ensure sustainability and uniform implementation.

Part of the school day is the period before and after school including the time students spend getting to and from school, as well as any time they spend in activities or programs before and after school. Over half (54%) of adults in Benton County said the lack of safe places to walk or bike is a problem in their community (Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2013). Therefore, addressing the safety of the roads and sidewalks surrounding the schools is an important consideration for this SHIP strategy. Safe Routes to School and Walking School Bus are two options that have been successfully used by school districts to address pedestrian safety concerns.

In 2012, the Sauk Rapids/Rice school district pledged to work with community agencies to encourage student access to safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to and from school. Currently, there is a planning grant for Safe Routes to School in Rice Elementary and a grant to construct sidewalks and improve crossings at Pleasantview Elementary in the Sauk Rapids/Rice District (Minnesota Department of Transportation, 2013). Foley has no plan in place at this time, but according to the CLT the district is interested in pursuing a Safe Routes to Schools initiative.

As noted previously, any school district receiving funding from the federal school lunch program must have a wellness policy. Wellness policies also include strategies to increase physical activity. Currently, some school districts in Benton County offer the following strategies to increase physical activity among students: opportunities to incorporate physical activity into lessons in non-PE classes, providing short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, promoting physical activity during elementary recess, and encouraging students to participate in physical activities outside the school day through extracurricular activities and community education. Currently, Foley Public Schools has some standing desks available for a few students, but they are not available to everyone. Additionally, the school districts state in their wellness policies that they provide information to parents about physical education and other school-based physical

activity opportunities and pledge to support parent efforts to provide their children with these opportunities.

To increase the level of weekly physical activity among youth, Benton County should consider supporting changes in the school districts' wellness policies and other ways of increasing the amount of PE classes or other opportunities for physical activity before, during, and after school, especially for middle school and high school students.

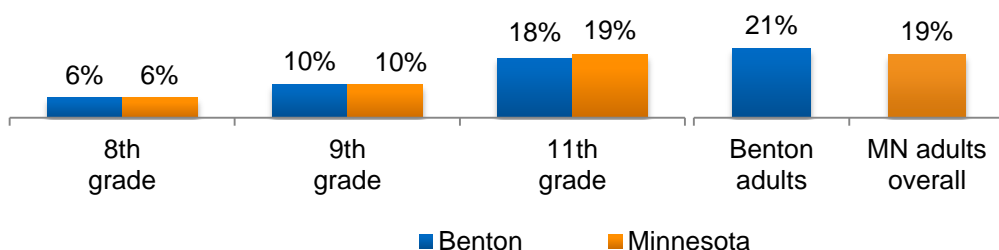
Other opportunities suggested by the CLT for expansion in this area include:

- **Assessing whether teachers are active in their classrooms.** The CLT suggested determining if teachers themselves are active inside the classroom and learning more about age-appropriate physical activities in the classroom that are being presented by teachers. There are a number of evidence-based programs to support physical activity in classrooms that Benton County SHIP could consider testing and/or making available to schools.
- **Increasing the use of school facilities for families to engage in physical activity.** Additionally, the CLT is interested in using school facilities, such as the Foley Fieldhouse, for family-friendly events and children's programming aimed at encouraging all community residents to be physically active. The CLT is also interested in learning more about whether or not families whose children receive free or reduced price lunches participate in physical activities through community education programming, and the CLT is interested in exploring options to provide subsidies for low income families for to participate in activities provided at school facilities such as passes to the swimming pool, walking programs, or gymnasiums.

Tobacco-free living

In 2013, one-fifth of adults who lived in Benton County (21%) were current smokers. Among students, nearly one in five 11th graders (18%) reported using tobacco. Not surprisingly, the rate of tobacco use among students in Benton County increases with their age. Benton County has similar incidence of student tobacco use when compared to the overall Minnesota student population. See the table below for grade-specific tobacco use findings.

9. Use of tobacco products during the past 30 days



Sources: 2013 MN Student Survey, 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2012 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data

Note: Students in 5th grade were not asked this question as part of the Minnesota Student Survey.

Three-quarters of adults in Benton County (76%) believe smoking and other tobacco use is a problem in their community (Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2013). A significant proportion of adults and youth in Benton County are exposed to secondhand smoke. See the table below.

10. Exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke

	Adults	Students
Live with someone who smokes	14%	N/A
Been in the same room as someone who was smoking in the past seven days	N/A	36%
Been in a car with someone who was smoking in the past seven days	N/A	27%

Sources: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2013 MN Student Survey.

Note: Table includes aggregate data for 8th, 9th, and 11th grade students in Benton County. Students in 5th grade were not asked these questions.

One SHIP strategy focuses on smoke-free multi-unit housing. In Benton County, there are 4,570 occupied rental housing units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). Of those, 3,765 units are in complexes with two or more units (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). It should be noted that 2,656 of these units are in complexes with 20 or more units, which may partially reflect the number of residents in college dormitories or other multi-unit complexes near Saint Cloud State University and other postsecondary campuses located near Benton County and generally indicates the presence of relatively large multi-unit housing complexes, where addressing tobacco policies could have an impact on secondhand smoke exposure for a substantial number of people.

Benton County may benefit from creating new or leveraging existing partnerships through other state and local organizations, such as the American Lung Association-Minnesota chapter (ALA-MN) and the Minnesota Association for Nonsmokers (ANSR) to strengthen the tobacco component of their SHIP initiative.

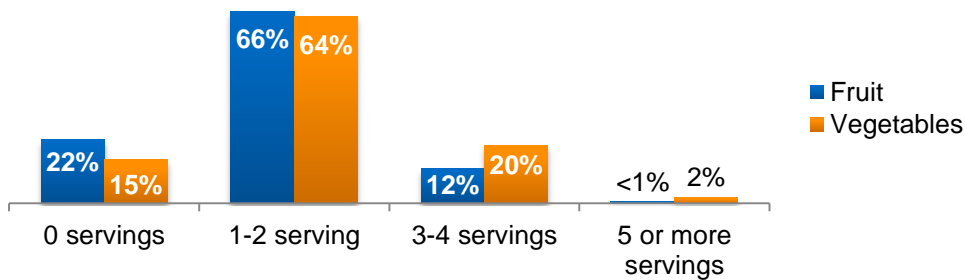
The CLT listed these potential areas to explore to enhance Benton County's SHIP initiative around tobacco-free living:

- **Decrease second-hand smoke exposure and tobacco use in multi-unit housing.** Smoke Free Communities, a coalition of individuals and community organizations who are committed to reducing the harmful impact of tobacco in Central Minnesota, is currently conducting an assessment to determine the smoking status of multi-unit housing residents and the tobacco policies of multi-unit housing sites in Benton County. CLT members noted that data from this assessment would be helpful in guiding future policies and strategies. Additionally, partnering with Smoke Free Communities, CentraCare, Saint Cloud State University Health Services, and foster care organizations in the community is an opportunity to enhance current work around smoke-free multi-unit housing.
- **Explore alternative methods for smoking cessation available to community members.** One CLT member suggested that some community members might benefit from other methods of smoking cessation such as hypnotism or other community education classes. This may be an opportunity to overlap the tobacco-free communities and community-clinical linkages SHIP strategies in Benton County.

Healthy eating in the community

In 2013, over three-quarters of adults in Benton County (78%) ate at least one serving of fruit while nearly one-quarter of adults (22%) did not eat any fruit the previous day. A majority (85%) of adults ate at least one serving of vegetables the previous day, while 15 percent did not eat any vegetables. For information about student fruit and vegetable consumption, see the previous report section titled “Healthy eating in schools.”

11. Adult fruit and vegetable consumption in the past day

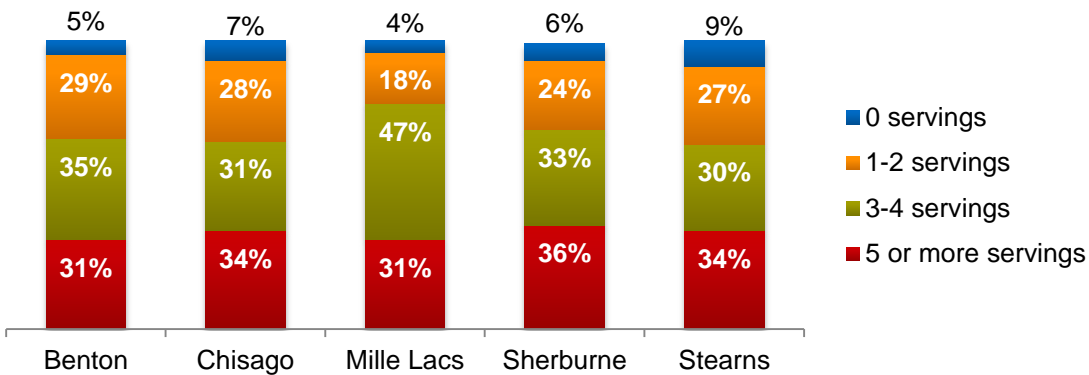


Source: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey.

A table illustrating adult fruit and vegetable consumption by household income can be found in the Appendix. An analysis by household income shows large discrepancies in fruit and vegetable consumption by household income, with adults who live in households that earn less than \$20,000 per year being significantly less likely to consume an adequate daily number of servings of fruits and vegetables compared to adults from household incomes that have annual household incomes of \$20,000 or more.

According to the Central Minnesota Community Health Survey (2013), Benton County had a smaller proportion of residents consuming five or more servings of fruits and vegetables in a day compared with four other counties in the surrounding area (Chisago, Mille Lacs, Sherburne, and Stearns). The chart below illustrates the number of servings of fruit and vegetables consumed by Benton County adults compared with adults in neighboring counties.

12. Fruit and vegetable consumption for the past day in Central Minnesota

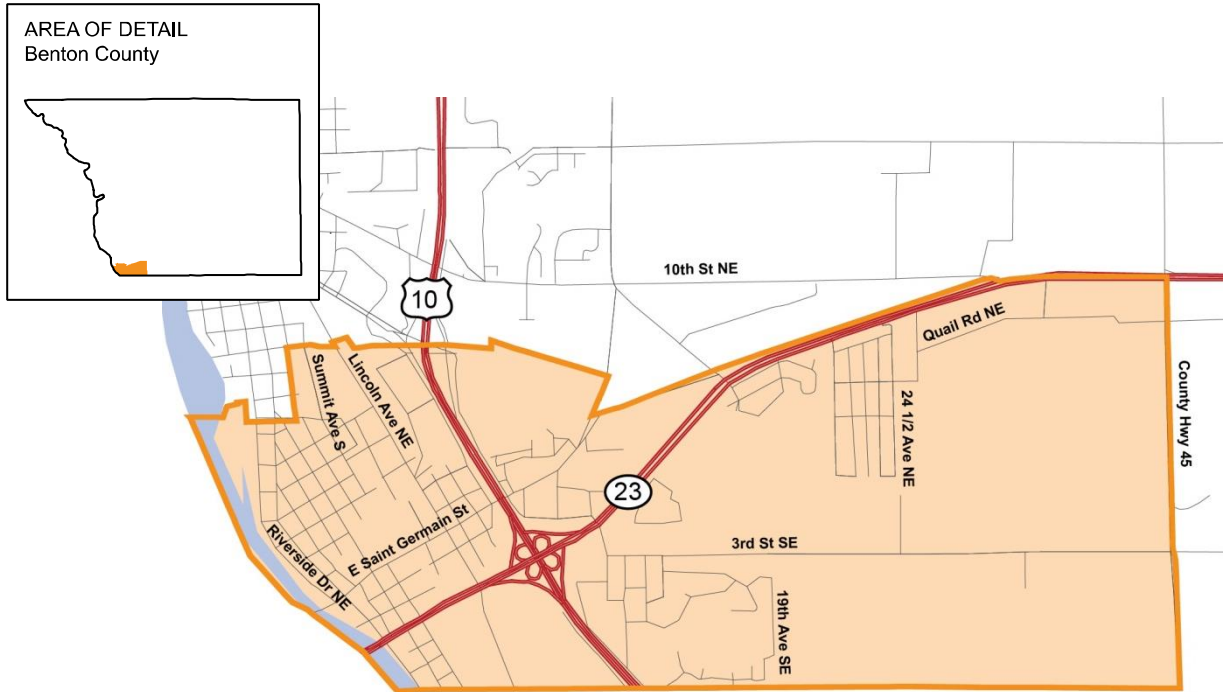


Source: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey.

Nearly two-thirds of Benton County residents (65%) indicate that lack of access to healthy food is a problem in their community (Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 2013). In Benton County, one Census tract in the city of Saint Cloud has been identified as a “food desert” by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which can be seen in the map on the next page. In urban areas, a “food desert” refers to an urban area in which a substantial portion of the residents are low-income (200% of the poverty threshold) and live more than one mile from a supermarket or grocery store. In 2013, 7 percent of residents in Benton County had limited access to healthy food due to food desert conditions. Additionally, 12 percent of low-income residents in Benton County live more than a mile from a grocery store. It should be noted that the location of the food desert is near to Saint Cloud State University. The average income level for these areas may be affected by the number of full-time students residing there.

Benton County SHIP should consider working through existing organizations in the community, possibly including Saint Cloud State University, to add farmers’ market sites and find other ways to increase access to fresh, affordable, locally grown foods in and around this food desert and in other areas of need throughout Benton County.

13. Food deserts in Benton County



A substantial portion of Benton County residents are affected by food insecurity. Over half (54%) of households in Benton County receiving SNAP benefits have children under 18 years of age living in the home. See the table below for food assistance and insecurity information in Benton County.

14. Food assistance and insecurity in Benton County (total pop. = 38,560)

Food assistance and insecurity in Benton County	N
Total SNAP participants (2011)	3,943
Children receiving SNAP benefits (2012)	1,679
Households who visited food shelves (2011)	3,464
Mothers and children receiving WIC (2010)	1,759

Source: 2010-2012 Selected Kids Count Indicators for Benton County.

SHIP grants support activities that have components of access, health literacy for institutional decision-makers, and policy. With regard to community nutrition, this may include approaches such as healthy retail outlets, farmers' markets, community gardens, and regional food policy councils.

SHIP grants also outline "priority populations." Regarding healthy eating in the community, priority populations include those who live in communities that have higher than average rates of chronic diseases, meals missing, and/or those who live in a food desert. See Figure 4 on page 3 of this report for instance of chronic disease in Benton County. When compared to other counties in Minnesota, Benton County has higher than average rates of residents missing meals (see Figure A2, Appendix).

Other community resources for healthy eating include:

- Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, which is administered by the Central Minnesota Council on Aging, has a healthy eating component
- SNAP education in senior dining sites and at emergency food shelves
- The NuVal® Nutrition System (see "Healthy Eating in Schools" for further definition) was implemented in eight pilot grocery stores in the greater Saint Cloud area. Nutritional scores are placed near the price of the item so shoppers can select healthy foods based on the NuVal® score. Coborns, Inc. recently announced the expansion of NuVal® to their remaining 21 store locations across the Midwest.
- Catholic Charities also offers adults ages 60 and older healthy eating options for lunch at congregate or restaurant dining sites in 47 communities across Central Minnesota, including Foley and Rice in Benton County. Additionally, some of these sites host monthly Nutrition Clinics to provide education and information about the special nutrition needs for senior citizens.
- According to the CLT, one program sponsored by the USDA that is available to Benton County residents is Eat Right When Money's Tight. This is a SNAP-Ed

Connection initiative designed to educate current and eligible Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients about food assistance options and how to save money while still eating healthy, nutritious foods like fruit and vegetables. SNAP-Ed Connection is an online resource center for state and local SNAP-Ed providers.

The Benton County CLT also identified the following opportunities to expand healthy eating in the community:

- **Expanding CSA programs.** According to the Benton County Food Assessment (2010) there are 11 Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms and/or drop sites serving an eight-county region including Benton County. However, there were no drop sites for CSA farms in Benton County, although residents in Foley do pick up boxes at nearby Webster Organic Farms in Foreston. These CSA farms provide fresh produce to 1,010 subscribers. Increasing accessibility of CSAs in Benton County the potential to increase the consumption of healthy foods by Benton County residents, offer more affordable access to fresh produce for low-income residents, and increase the agricultural economy in the region.
- **Community gardens.** According to the Benton County Community Food Assessment (2010), there are seven community gardens located in Benton County. Six of these gardens are in Sauk Rapids and one is in Saint Cloud. A strategy the CLT would like to explore is enhancing community gardens in the most populated areas of Sauk Rapids Township and the area surrounding East Saint Cloud for individual and family use.
- **Plant a Row for the Hungry.** One CLT member suggested that Benton County might benefit from more awareness around the Plant a Row for the Hungry concept, which is a nationwide initiative that is supported by Second Harvest Heartland. The initiative encourages gardeners to grow a little extra and donate this fresh and nutritious produce to local hunger-relief organizations like food shelves or soup kitchens.

The CLT also identified providing more resources to food deserts, making fresh food more available in convenience stores, and providing volunteer opportunities as specific needs or opportunities that need to be addressed in Benton County.

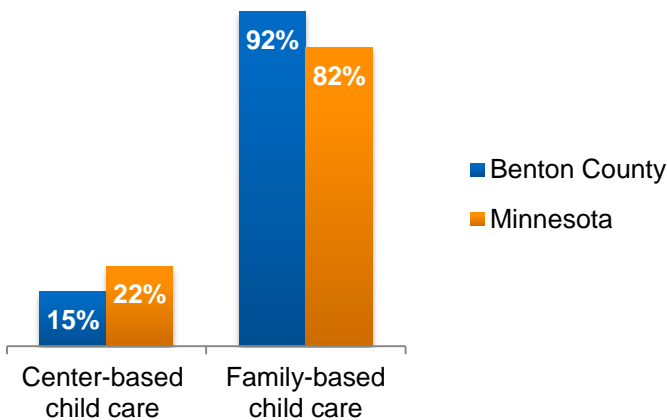
Healthy eating and physical activity in child care

In Benton County, more than three-quarters (78%) of families with children who are six years old or younger have all parents in the labor force (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). This indicates that the majority of children six years old or younger may receive some type of child care.

The Minnesota Department of Health identifies child care providers that are eligible for Tier 1 reimbursement rates from the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)¹ as a “priority population” for SHIP grants. Therefore, Benton County SHIP should consider ways of specifically partnering with these child care providers to implement child care-related SHIP strategies.

Center-based child care providers in Benton County are less likely than center-based providers around the state as a whole to participate in CACFP, whereas family-based providers in Benton County are more likely than family-based providers around the state as a whole to participate. Targeting family-based providers may be the best opportunity for Benton County SHIP to address a priority population for this SHIP strategy.

15. Child care program participation in the USDA Food Program



Source: 2012 Selected Kids Count Indicators for Benton County.

¹ The CACFP reimburses nonprofit child care providers, Head Start programs, and afterschool programs at free, reduced-price, or paid rates for eligible meals and snacks. In order to be eligible for Tier 1 reimbursement, child care providers must serve low-income areas or, for family-based centers, the provider’s household must be low-income. Providers that are not located in low-income areas are reimbursed at a lower rate (Tier 2) unless they identify income-eligible children through income applications. For-profit centers are also eligible if enrolled children meet income eligibility criteria. In these instances, providers receive reimbursement for meals served to eligible children.

SHIP grants support a comprehensive approach in early care and education settings that includes active living and healthy eating components, including support for breastfeeding. Examples of specific programs/curricula that Benton County could promote and support include Learning about Nutrition through Activities (LANA), I am Moving, I am Learning (IMIL), and Let's Move. Some child care providers in Benton County already use the Let's Move and LANA programs at their facilities. Benton County offers training on each of the programs listed above.

Working with the child care providers who use these programs and other similar program to incorporate them into their wellness policies (and helping child care providers to create wellness policies) is one way Benton County SHIP can ensure sustainability of these initiatives beyond the current SHIP funding cycle. In addition, supporting child care providers who do not currently have a wellness policy to develop a policy and train staff to implement it, as well as to communicate it to parents about the policy and its rationale, is another way Benton County SHIP could have a lasting impact on healthy eating and physical activity in child care in your community.

Benton County SHIP also collaborated with BLEND (Better Living: Exercise and Nutrition Daily) and used the BLEND Beginnings Program to assist child care providers to build environments for young children that support increasing consumption of healthy foods and promote more opportunities to engage in physical activity. Upon completion of the program, the child care provider is encouraged to create a policy based around healthy food options and increased opportunities for physical activity. Once the provider creates such a policy, they can receive a certificate to display at their site.

Other existing programs, practices, policies, and procedures currently being used in Benton County include:

- Parent Aware—in-house assessments and mentoring for providers that includes a healthy eating, nutrition, and physical activity component.
- Child and Adult Care Food Program—training is available for child and adult care providers on how to administer the program, types of food that qualifies for reimbursement, and record keeping on meals served and children present.

Through its SHIP grants, the Minnesota Department of Health also suggests policies to promote smoke-free child care programs. According to 2013 Minnesota State Statute 144.414, child care providers and others cannot smoke inside a center-based or family-based child care facility while children are present. Providers and others, however, are permitted to smoke outside while children are present. (This can, unfortunately, result in secondhand and third-hand exposure to tobacco among the children who attend this child

care site.) Providers are required by law to provide notice to parents if smoking occurs in the house before or after child care hours.

At this time, Benton County has not strengthened the language to include times when child care children are not present. Similarly, Benton County has not adopted smoke-free foster care requirements. Ten daycare facilities in Benton County are known to allow smoking in their homes outside of childcare hours.

The CLT identified the following opportunities for improving healthy eating and physical activity, and reducing tobacco exposure, in child care settings in Benton County:

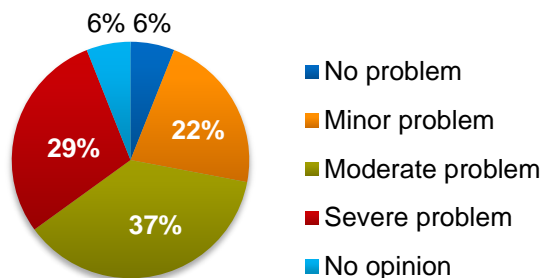
- **Increasing participation in existing trainings**, such as LANA, Parent Aware, and potentially new curriculums, of child care program staff and providers
- **Identifying and providing more resources to assist child care providers in implementing healthier strategies**, such as providing information about nutrition and physical activity to churches and other religious establishments for their nurseries and child care centers.
- **Promote a child care expo** with breakout sessions for providers focusing on nutrition, physical activity, and tobacco.
- **Collect data on the amount of fruit and vegetables being served** and the amount of physical activities currently being offered in child care settings in Benton County. (The CLT wants to collect this data as a part of their SHIP planning efforts.)
- **Promote a smoke-free childcare policy during non-childcare hours.** CLT members support enhancing the language of current Benton County licensing policies regarding smoking in licensed child care homes.

Physical activity in the community

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Rankings ranks Benton County as 56th out of Minnesota’s 87 counties with regard to health behaviors. This is partly based in part on the fact that Benton County’s adult physical inactivity rate is 22 percent (which is slightly higher than Minnesota’s rate overall of 20%).

The CDC recommends that adults get 150 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise (i.e. brisk walking) each week or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise (i.e. jogging or running) every week) or an equivalent mix of moderate and vigorous physical activity (CDC, 2011). In 2013, two-thirds of adults in Benton County (66%) reported participating in moderate aerobic activities for three or more days per week and about two-fifths (39%) reported participating in moderate aerobic exercise for at least 30 minutes five or more days per week. Nearly 9 out of 10 (88%) adults in Benton County perceive lack of physical activity as a problem for their community (2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey).

16. Perceptions of lack of physical exercise in Benton County



Source: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey.

In 2013, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reported that Benton County has eight recreational facilities per 100,000 residents, which is half of the national benchmark of 16. Recreational facilities are defined as establishments primarily engaged in operating fitness and recreational sports facilities, featuring exercise and other active physical fitness conditioning or recreational sports activities such as swimming, skating, or racquet sports.

Membership-based facilities for physical fitness in Benton County include a Snap Fitness Center in Foley and an Anytime Fitness in Sauk Rapids. Also, residents can take part in a wide variety of programs with moderate fees through Community Education, including school walking and swimming programs.

Half of Benton County residents (49%) indicated that lack of access to community recreational facilities is a problem in their community. SHIP grants support approaches that focus on walking, biking, transit, and land use planning. Benton County SHIP should examine whether lack of facilities is the issue or whether lack of awareness and/or access (affordability, proximity/transportation, hours of operation, over-use, etc.) is the issue. From there, Benton County SHIP could identify possible partnership opportunities in the community to add more facilities and options for physical activity and/or to increase residents' access to existing options.

Recently, Benton County and the City of Sauk Rapids have developed a preliminary design for improvements to Golden Spike Road (between Highway 10 and Mayhew Lake Road). These improvements are needed to serve existing and future traffic demands anticipated due to private development in this corridor. In addition to roundabouts, which will slow traffic, a multi-purpose trail for biking and walking will run parallel to the road. This will create safer options for walking and biking for residents living in this part of Benton County. Additionally, these new road improvements have the potential to impact the Safe Routes to School plan currently underway in Benton County by providing students with an additional option of walking to school using this new route.

The Benton County CLT identified many opportunities to enhance opportunities for physical activity in the community, including:

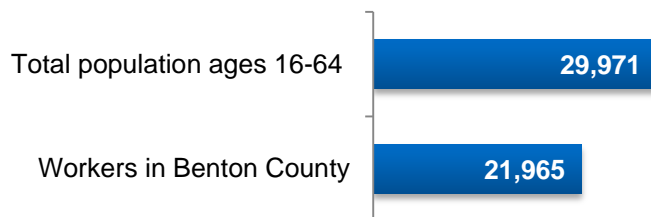
- Collaboration with Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright counties to enhance and potentially expand trail and roadway systems that cross into these neighboring counties.
- Potential inclusion of Benton County in a future Bridge to Health Survey, conducted and sponsored by a collaboration of counties and health care organizations, or other assessment, to determine resident access to trails and other outdoor recreational activities, how safe they feel visiting these places, and whether or not traffic poses a barrier to trail use.
- Increasing the availability and safety of sidewalks, bike paths, maps. Improving use of these outdoor resources for physical activity, with distances marked and highlighted along trails, bike racks, etc. Consider maintenance and sustainability of sidewalks and trails in Benton County, with special consideration for the elderly who may have trouble shoveling sidewalks and accessing trails. Additionally, providing active areas such as dog parks and dog runs for pets and owners to exercise.

Worksite wellness

Overall, there are 16,475 jobs located in Benton County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). Educational services, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, and retail trade make up the largest industries. Half of business in Benton County (50%) employ one to four people. One-fifth of business in Benton County (18%) have five to nine employees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). Of the 22,044 workers who live in Benton County, just 2 percent walk to work and 1 percent use public transportation. The average commute time is 22 minutes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey). These findings, coupled with the findings reported earlier in this report about eating and physical activity habits and tobacco use of adults, indicate that worksite wellness initiatives, especially those targeting small employers, could have a substantial impact on the overall health of Benton County adults.

17. Total working age population and total workers in Benton County

Source: American Community Survey 2008-2012 5-year estimates.



SHIP grants support a comprehensive worksite wellness assessment and planning process that includes healthy eating, active living, tobacco cessation, and breastfeeding support strategies. Each participating worksite identifies at least one strategy to implement in the first year of the SHIP grant through changes in policy, environment, and social supports.

Sauk Rapids/Rice Public Schools, one of the largest employers in Benton County, has been piloting an employee wellness program since January 2012. For the duration of the pilot, employees will be provided with financial incentives (reduced health insurance premiums) to participate in and complete a variety of wellness program options, including health risk assessments and biometric screenings.

Given the number of small businesses in Benton County, it might be useful for the Benton County SHIP Community Leadership Team to especially identify health and wellness programs that are affordable and structured more for small employers' needs. Blue Cross Blue Shield conducted a training (*Achieving Wellness in the Workplace*) in Benton County last month on and so far there has been no response from this event. The

Community Leadership Team should consider ways of recruiting and supporting employers in Benton County who are willing to participate in a wellness program.

The CLT identified a few potential opportunities to enhance Benton County SHIP initiatives regarding worksite wellness:

- Develop or use existing tool kits for worksite wellness and promote via the Benton County SHIP website or reach out to business directly and offer the tool kit.
- Create or use existing healthcare organization collaborations around worksite wellness. BLEND and CentraCare are two potential organizations to consider as partners.
- Conduct additional assessments to determine what is already being done by employers in Benton County and what the needs are for business owners around worksite wellness.

Community-clinical linkages

According to the 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey, 9 in 10 Benton County residents (90%) had insurance coverage. However, for every primary care physician in Benton County, there were 3,867 residents, which is more than three times the national benchmark (1,067:1) (The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2014). According to CLT members, Benton County has zero hospitals, one privately owned clinic, and three long-term care facilities. Creating and strengthening community-clinical linkages is a useful strategy for Benton County SHIP to reach those residents who are under- or uninsured and/or who lack access to providers.

SHIP grants encourage chronic disease management and prevention through community services and in a patient's community. In the past, Catholic Charities offered chronic disease management and prevention classes delivered in community settings in Benton County. This program is still offered in neighboring Stearns County, but may not be accessible for lower income older adults and those with limited access to transportation.

Additionally, all Benton County residents (like all Minnesota residents) have access to the QuitPlan helpline from Clearway.

To increase community-clinical linkages, Benton County should consider implementing an active referrals initiative, which focuses on building partnerships among healthcare providers and community-based organizations to better facilitate active referrals of patients to local resources that increase access to healthy foods, opportunities for physical activity, and tobacco use cessation. The Benton County SHIP CLT should start by identifying local community-based providers who are willing to offer (and who already offer) needed services and assess their interest and needs for participating. Then, Benton County SHIP should identify champions within local healthcare systems to facilitate building partnerships across these healthcare and community-based providers.

Other existing programs, practices, policies, and procedures currently going on in the community to support community and clinical linkages include:

- The Central Minnesota Council on Aging has several services in Benton County, including a Senior LinkAge Line that makes it easy for older adults and their families to find community services. By making a single call, people can find particular services near them or get help evaluating their situation to determine what kinds of services are right for them. Other services provided by Catholic Charities and funded by the Council on Aging include "A Matter of Balance" and "Powerful Tools for Caregivers" classes.

- According to the Benton County SHIP CLT, nursing homes, senior apartments, parish nurses from Saint John’s University, and Home Health Horizon are currently providing needed services to older adults in Benton County, and these community-based organizations would be potential partners for strengthening the current SHIP work in this area.

- The CLT also listed other community-based organizations to possibly partner with to strengthen community-clinical linkages including Catholic Charities, the Cross Center, CARE, University of Minnesota Extension Services, Rexall and Coborn’s pharmacies, Benton County Public Health, and support groups such as stroke survivors, grief and loss, and mental health.

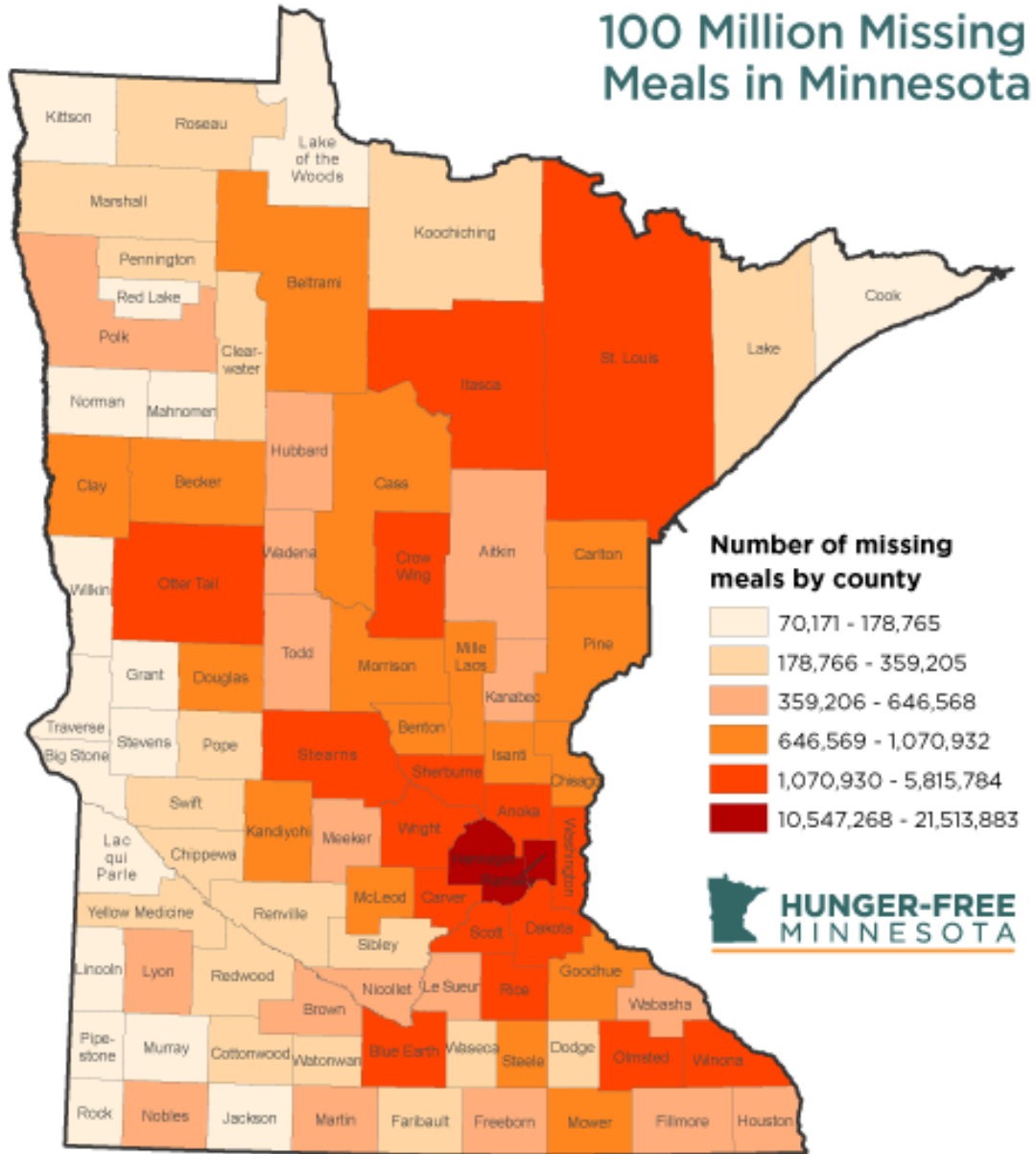
Appendix

A1. Number of fruits and vegetables consumed on the day prior to being surveyed; adults in Benton County, categorized by annual household income

Annual household income	0 servings	1-2 servings	3-4 servings	5 or more servings
Less than \$20,000	19%	34%	31%	16%
\$20,000-\$34,999	5%	33%	30%	33%
\$35,000-\$49,999	6%	27%	29%	39%
\$50,000-\$99,999	1%	32%	34%	33%
\$100,000+	2%	23%	41%	34%

Source: 2013 Central Minnesota Community Health Survey

A2. Hunger prevalence by county



Data source: Feeding America - www.feedingamerica.org; Reproduced for Hunger Free Minnesota (HPMN) with permission - www.hungerfreemin.org
 Data compiled by: EnSearch, Inc., Dr. Stacey Stockdill - www.ensearchmn.com; Cartography by: Muehlenhaus Studios, Birgit Muehlenhaus - www.muehlenhaus.com

Source: Feeding America (www.feedingamerica.org) reproduced for Hunger Free Minnesota (2013)

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