

Windshield Survey of Plainfield Township in Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Windshield Survey

The purpose of a windshield survey is to learn about a client's community by performing an assessment of the environment in order to understand more about where the client lives, their health obstacles, and health resources (Harkness & DeMarco, 2012). The windshield survey has its shortcomings because it is subjective and is often accomplished by looking through the windshield of a car or by walking on foot (Harkness & DeMarco, 2012). The purpose of this paper is to complete a windshield survey of Plainfield Township located in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Community

According to Harkness and DeMarco (2012) the word community can have various meanings that can be significant to the assessment process. A community can be defined as a group of people who share similar interests or goals which is called a phenomenological community (Harkness & DeMarco, 2012). An example of this type of community would be the group of people belonging to Alcoholics Anonymous because they share the common goal of staying sober and that objective strongly binds them together. For the purpose of this paper, community will be defined "as a specific area possessing geographic boundaries and sharing the same governing structure [which] is often called a geopolitical community (Harkness & DeMarco, 2012, p. 177). Townships, cities, and municipalities are good examples of geopolitical communities (Harkness & DeMarco, 2012).

Community Health

"Community health is more than the sum of the health of its individual members; it encompasses the characteristics of the community as a whole" (Pender, Murdaugh, & Parsons, 2011, p. 26). Many research studies have substantiated that the health of the community in

which an individual lives is directly related to and influences the health of the individuals that reside within the community (Pender, Murdaugh, & Parsons, 2011). The relationship between an individual and their community is so intertwined that all aspects of the social and physical environment must be assessed in order to create a plan for a healthier community (Pender, Murdaugh, & Parsons, 2011).

Community as Client

Just as it is important to do a complete physical assessment on an individual to assess their health; it is equally important to do a physical assessment on a community when developing a plan of action for increasing a community's health. The outcomes of a health assessment are outlined by Pender, Murdaugh, and Parsons (2011) as: (1) health assets, (2) health problems, (3) health-related lifestyle strengths, (4) key health related beliefs, (5) health behaviors that put the client at risk, and (6) desired changes to improve quality of life (p. 91). This preliminary evaluation of the community will help the nurse obtain a valuable baseline for the community's health and to assist in the preparation for creating a healthier community and ultimately the individuals that reside within the community. It is important to remember that when assessing a community it is necessary to give a detailed purpose regarding the goal of the assessment (Harkness & DeMarco, 2012). By doing this, it will strengthen the focus of the development plan, assessment of the data obtained, and validation of the findings; making it easier to form a strategy for interventions and follow-up with results (Harkness & DeMarco, 2012).

Healthy People 2020 Leading Health Indicator

The subject of this windshield survey is Plainfield Township and is located in Grand Rapids, which is in Kent County, Michigan. According to County Health Rankings (2013) Kent County, Michigan has one of the highest rankings for sexually transmitted infections (STI) in

Michigan for 2012. Healthy People 2020 Leading Health Indicators (LHI) has identified Reproductive and Sexual Health as one of the top twelve topics for LHI (DHHS, 2012). Education would be the greatest nursing role to help reduce the risk of spreading STI. Teaching children, young adults, and guardians the importance of knowledge, education, and communication regarding reproductive and sexual health is the most effective tool in decreasing the rate of infection.

I believe there are several identifiable health risks present in the Plainfield Township community, for instance, I saw many fast food restaurants and sit down restaurants which can contribute to obesity epidemic. There were many liquor stores and several tobacco stores located in the area as well, which promotes addictions that can lead to serious health risks. I also noticed that even though there were many pedestrians running/jogging and walking their dogs, there was little area for them to do it safely with all of the snow. Many sidewalks were not plowed and much of the neighborhoods did not have sidewalks present at all; this could have the potential to lead to traumatic pedestrian vs. motor vehicle accidents. Besides the Michigan Unemployment Agency there seems to be little help for the vulnerable population in the community; I saw many churches that I can assume give back to the community, but no advertised local food pantries, shelters or free health clinics.

Conclusion

Windshield surveys are a great tool to help promote understanding of a client's community to aid in the developing of a plan of action for a healthier lifestyle. This paper has summarized the essential necessities for a successful windshield survey. It is important to outline and define the community, community health, community as a client, the appropriate

Health People 2020 LHI, and any possible health risks to the public in order to promote a healthier community.

References

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<p><u>Housing & Zoning</u> The housing in this area varies in size and age. The houses range from 900 square feet to 2000 square feet and were built as late as the 1950's and as recent as 2012. The houses are single family dwellings and there are several nicely maintained apartment complexes.</p>	<p><u>Transportation</u> I saw many personal cars and many pedestrians. I did not see any taxi cabs, but I did notice many people waiting at bus stops and using public transportation. I did observe a lot of people running, jogging and walking their dogs.</p>	<p><u>Race & Ethnicity</u> The majority of people I observe in this area were caucasian and I feel the population was made up equally of men and woman. According to the 2010 Demographic Profile of Plainfield Township the total population is 30,952 and 29,006 of this population is white. I did not see any minorities during my survey.</p>
<p><u>Open Space</u> This area has many parks and open areas for the public to utilize. Due to the time of year the parks are vacant and covered in snow. There are many new housing developments in the area that represent a lot of the open area in the community.</p>	<p><u>Service Centers</u> There is a Spectrum Health Urgent Care facility in the community and numerous doctor, dentist, chiropractic, and specialists in the area. Plainfield Township is in close proximity to the downtown Grand Rapids area which has several medical facilities available. The Michigan Unemployment Agency is also located in the area, along with the Michigan Lottery Building. There is also a public library and many daycare buildings.</p>	<p><u>Religion & Politics</u> This community has many churches located in close vicinity to each other. All are of Christian faith, mostly Lutheran. There are no obvious clues that lead me to assume any political views held by the community.</p>
<p><u>Boundaries</u> Plainfield Township is approximately 36.5 square miles and is shaped like a square. The top of the border is 10 Mile Rd in Rockford. The east border is Wolverine Blvd NE. Southern border is 4 Mile Rd and the west border is Division Ave. (Information obtained from http://maps.google.com).</p>	<p><u>Stores & Street People</u> I did not observe any "street people". There are many stores in the community. There are numerous pharmacies, three Meijer stores, and multiple small businesses. There are a great deal of fast food restaurants, car dealerships, banks and gas stations.</p>	<p><u>Health & Morbidity</u> I saw many elderly in the community. They appear to have many resources available to them considering the easy access to public transportation, numerous pharmacies/stores, and the close proximity of health care facilities.</p>

<u>Commons</u>	<u>Signs of Decay</u>	<u>Media</u>
<p>There are many public parks and several schools in the area that the public has regular access to.</p>	<p>There are no significant signs of decay. The roads and public areas seem well maintained and the houses are in good condition. There were many houses with for sale signs and a few with foreclosure signs. I didn't notice many vacant houses or buildings.</p>	<p>The area has several billboards and a local Fox 17 news station. It appears that more people use cable TV because there is a lack of TV dishes and antennas. I see a lot people using cell phones and other forms of technology.</p>