

Community Health Project on Underage Drinking and STIs

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An unmet health need refers to a situation where a participant needs healthcare but does not receive it. The primary unmet health need in the city of Worcester is patients' access to care. The challenge arises from the lack of adequate health insurance for obtaining the required care and the high costs of healthcare in the region. Besides, a survey conducted in the region also shows that there are increasing incidences of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among the teenage population arising from a lack of health education. The Service Learning Project identifies and intervenes in the unmet needs mentioned above, which were identified in the community health assessment (City of Worcester, 2024).

Unmet Need

Reduced access to healthcare and rising incidences of STDs among the youths are the primary unmet needs in the city of Worcester. The increasing cases of STDs arise from a lack of health education. Despite the fact that Worcester houses various healthcare institutions and schools, a lot of people do not seek medical attention. As a result, there is a dire need for health education to teach teenagers and adults the importance of seeking medical assistance. Current research has established that a high percentage of teenagers are involved in underage drinking and frequently experiment with various addictive substances. Current national statistics show that alcohol contributes to thousands of deaths among people younger than 21, including motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides, and other injuries (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [NIAAA], 2026). Furthermore, alcohol is involved in a substantial proportion of sexual assaults among college students. These were found to be the most pressing health needs in the City of Worcester, located in Central Massachusetts, United States of America.

A report released by LT. Jim Johnston from the Worcester Police Department (WPD) showed that most of the students from 10-12 colleges in the region are involved in drug abuse and underage drinking. The issue of drug abuse in Worcester is serious, and this has forced the police to start arresting students who drink below the age of 18 years. Moreover, the WPD also conducts inspections in bars and restaurants to ensure that underage drinking is stopped. However, it is difficult to combat the issue completely because some old folks are facilitating the purchase of liquor for the underage generation. Furthermore, the number of fake IDs in Worcester have increased dramatically, complicating the fight against drug and substance abuse.

There are various consequences associated with drug abuse. Some of these include rape which leads to the spread of STDs. National surveillance indicates that adolescents and young adults account for a

large share of reported sexually transmitted infections, while substance use is associated with sexual behaviors that increase risks for HIV, STIs, and unintended pregnancy (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024). Massachusetts also publishes county-level STI surveillance summaries, including a 2024 summary for Worcester County (Massachusetts Department of Public Health [MDPH], 2025). It is in that regard that the Worcester public schools increased the number of health centres to cater for the increasing number of STDs among the students. Therefore, it is important to carry out the project to determine the interventions for the increased STDs and reduced access to healthcare among the residents of Worcester region.

Description Of The Organization

The Service Learning Project will be conducted in the Division of Public Health in the city of Worcester. The department serves a population of 181,045, according to the U.S. census of 2010. The Public Health Department offers its services to 10 major colleges, 3-4 major hospitals in the region and various outpatient clinics and urgent care institutions. Additionally, the department also extends its services to all the people residing in the Worcester region. The department attends to a large number of homeless people and drug addicts. College and high school students are the most people who are affected by addiction to drugs.

The mission of the Public Health Department in Worcester is “to improve, protect and promote the health and safety of the residents in participating Massachusetts municipalities through the formation of strong community and academic partnerships, data-driven decision making and delivery of high-quality public health services.” The department serves various populations, including students from 10-12 colleges in Worcester, healthcare professionals from 3-4 hospitals in the region, outpatient clinics and urgent care institutions, patients and other residents of the City of Worcester (City of Worcester, 2024).

The Worcester Division of Public Health (WDPH) offers various services. Some of these include promoting the well-being of the community, fighting against diseases and preventing injury, and promoting environmental, social and economic factors, which are crucial components of health. I will be working with various personnel on the Board of the Worcester Division of Public Health. These include David Fort who is the chairperson, Edith Carlos who is the vice chairperson, Abigail R. Averbach who is a board member, Joanne Calista who is a board member, and Jerry Gurwitz who is a board member.

Intervention

The Service Learning Project aims to establish a feasible intervention for controlling the increasing cases of STDs in Worcester town. Current evidence shows that youth and adolescents comprise the majority of people who are sexually active. The majority of these young people are in danger of

contracting STIs and unwanted pregnancies. According to research, the majority of all health conditions, inclusive of STDs, arise from risk-taking behaviours. Social, behavioural, institutional, biological and psychological behaviours are the primary indicators of STDs among youths. As a consequence, health education will be employed as an intervention for curbing the spread of STDs. The Service Learning Project will include various activities such as teaching theory-based education in Worcester schools, holding seminars and workshops aimed at sensitizing the youth on the effects of drug abuse and immoral behaviour, and quality assessment. Furthermore, necessary efforts will be made to advise the management of the Division of Public Health of Worcester to increase the number of health facilities in the region to increase the rate of accessing healthcare services (CDC, 2024).

I will employ various ways of evaluating whether the objectives of the project were met. Some of these ways include interviews with key participants of the study and behavioural surveys. For instance, I will conduct interviews with college and high school students, healthcare professionals, the Worcester Police Department and the staff of the Worcester Division of Public Health to determine whether the interventions imposed were effective or failed in one way or another. I will also conduct behavioural surveys to determine the number of rape cases reported from drug abuse among college students in Worcester to determine the efficacy of the interventions.

Opportunities And Barriers

One opportunity to achieve the objectives of the project is the backup provided by the Worcester Police Department, which is working hard to control the incidences of underage drinking and substance abuse. They are inspecting bars and restaurants to ensure that the behaviour does not continue among the youths. If carried out effectively, the process will lead to a reduction in rape and sexual harassment cases hence minimizing STDs. However, one major barrier towards achieving the desired goals is the increase of fake IDs, hence making it difficult to assess whether one is above 18 years of age. Besides, the older people have become involved in the purchasing of liquor to the underage generation, impairing the success of the project. Worcester's current HOPE initiative provides another opportunity by training adults who work with youth to build positive childhood experiences and reduce substance misuse (City of Worcester, 2024).

Timeline

The following is the timeline for the completion of the project.

Activity	Date
Meeting with the staff of Worcester Division of Public Health.	April 14 th , 2018.

Preparation of handouts and evaluation tools.	April 17 th , 2018.
Implementation of the plan.	April 20 th , 2018.
Evaluation of Service Learning Project.	April 22 nd , 2018.

Conclusion

An unmet need refers to a condition where a participant is in need of healthcare but does not get it. The unmet needs in the City of Worcester include reduced access to healthcare and increased cases of STDs, especially among the young generation. In addition, a large population of youths in the region are involved in underage drinking and substance abuse. As a consequence of these unmet needs, a service learning project is conducted in the Division of Public Health in the City of Worcester with the aim of developing a feasible intervention for preventing the spread of STDs. Various interventions were adopted, such as teaching theory-based education in Worcester schools and holding seminars and workshops. Behavioural surveys and participant interviews were used to evaluate the efficacy of the interventions mentioned above. The Worcester Police Department aided in the fight against underage drinking, hence helping to minimize the cases of STDs among the youths. However, the number of fake IDs has been on the rise, hindering the war against drug and substance abuse (CDC, 2024; NIAAA, 2026).

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