



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 22, 2025

**Clay County Health Department
Continuing Improvements for the Community with IPLAN Research**

The Clay County Health Department (CCHD) in conjunction with the Health for Generations Coalition (H4G) is preparing to launch the Community Health Assessment Survey for the Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs (IPLAN) research. IPLAN was developed by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to meet the requirements set forth in 77 Illinois Administrative Code 600. This administrative code mandates that all certified local health departments in Illinois conduct an IPLAN process every five years for recertification. IPLAN requires local health departments to create an organizational strategic plan, conduct a community health needs assessment, and develop a community health plan.

Clay County's Health for Generations Coalition plays a vital role in the IPLAN process. The coalition is made up of people from the community and different local agencies such as the health department, healthcare providers, local schools, law enforcement offices, faith-based organizations and so many more. H4G meets monthly to discuss the health, concerns, and triumphs of our county. These meetings are always open to the public at noon on the third Tuesday of the month at CCHD.

Clay County's most recent IPLAN was completed in July of 2023 and will guide local public health planning through 2027. The IPLAN process incorporated data gathered from Community Health Assessment (CHA) surveys, reputable national sources, and other relevant research. Based on a thorough analysis of these data sets, the H4G Coalition identified three top health priorities for the current five-year cycle:

1. Access to Care
2. Heart Disease and Obesity
3. Behavioral Health

"These focus areas represent the most pressing health concerns identified by our community," says CCHD's administrator Jeff Workman. "With targeted programs, strategic partnerships, and continued community input, we're committed to making measurable improvements in each of these areas."

Since 2023, we have addressed each of these areas of concern as a community fearlessly and wholeheartedly. In the aspect of access to care, ARISE grant funding allowed Clay County Health Department the ability to provide free bus passes through Central Illinois Public Transit (CIPT) to help those in need with transportation to and from medical and dental appointments. In addition, Friendship Connection of Clay County was also able to provide transportation to certain individuals.

With continued support from ARISE funding, CCHD was able to assist Friendship Connection in opening a tele-lab which allows individuals to attend appointments virtually. This lab has allowed community

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members to connect to a wide range of services including medical, mental/behavioral, probation and court-related appointments, and meetings with DCFS case workers.

In May of 2024, CCHD addressed the need and access for dental services in the area. With gratitude of funding from IDPH and IPHCA, they launched free adult dental clinics with services provided by Public Health Dental Hygienists (PHDHs). To qualify for these services, the individual must: be 20 years of age or older, have Medicaid or no insurance, be income eligible, and have not seen the dentist in over a year. We continue to explore additional avenues to increase dental services for community members due to recently retired dentists in the area.

Obesity and heart disease often go hand-in-hand with diabetes, and Clay County has taken proactive steps to address these interconnected health concerns. At the forefront of this effort are Kamy Vail and Katie Weaver of Clay County Hospital, who have worked diligently to expand the hospital's Diabetes Education and Prevention Programs. Currently serving more than 300 individuals, the program continues to grow. The Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) now features a newly developed curriculum that is easier to follow and effective in helping participants manage or prevent diabetes from progressing. Community members are encouraged to call Katie Weaver for a brief screening to see if they qualify.

In addition to the DPP, Clay County Hospital was able to encourage healthy eating by distributing a variety of fruits and vegetables to community members at no cost to them. To further promote a healthy and active lifestyle, Clay County has adopted a SilverSneakers program as well as senior aerobics at CCHD every Tuesday and Thursday at 1:30 p.m.

On the side of behavioral health, Clay County Hospital and Medical clinics have taken the necessary steps to expand their behavioral and mental health clinic by adding more providers to better serve individuals seeking support. Friendship Connection of Clay County also offers Celebrate Recovery meetings weekly which is meant to serve as a safe space for those dealing with addiction, trauma, and other life challenges. In these meetings, individuals can find support, assistance, and camaraderie among peers.

These three areas of focus have been a challenge to improve, but it has been nothing our county cannot handle. The dedication and hard work of these individuals and agencies has not gone unnoticed. If you would like to let us know how any of the above has helped you or a loved one, or you would like to add your own story, contact April Carruthers at 618-662-4406.

Furthermore, if you would like to make your voice heard about what needs improved in our county as we prepare to gather data for the next IPLAN, please take the time to fill out the Community Health Assessment Survey that will be live in August. You will be able to click a link on CCHD's website or Facebook page, or you can call 618-662-4406 and ask for April to fill it out over the phone. You can also stop by the health department and fill out the survey in person.

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