

2023-2025

STRATEGIC PLAN

VENTURA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH



VENTURA COUNTY
PUBLIC HEALTH

A Department of Ventura County Health Care Agency



OUR MISSION

To protect and promote the health and well-being of everyone in Ventura County



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INTRODUCTION



Strategic planning is an activity used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, assist employees and other stakeholders to work toward common goals, and assess and adjust the organization’s direction in response to a changing environment.

Public health promotes the welfare of the entire population and protects it from chronic disease, the spread of infectious disease, environmental hazards, and disasters. Public health works to ensure access to safe and quality care for the entire population.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought immediate focus on the important role of public health in our communities in responding to illness, providing vaccines, broadcasting health messages and assuring access to health care. As we move forward, there are opportunities to deepen and strengthen public health infrastructure to make certain that our department is fully prepared to respond to future threats to community health.

This Strategic Plan addresses our commitment to making changes at all levels of the public health services that we offer. During this three-year plan, Ventura County Public Health (VCPH) will work to achieve the goals set in each of the priority areas with the intent of improving population health outcomes for all Ventura County residents.

BACKGROUND ON VENTURA COUNTY

Ventura County is a diverse region with geography ranging from agricultural fields to coastal plains to mountain communities. Ventura County covers over 1,845 square miles that includes 43 miles of coastline. The Los Padres National Forest accounts for 46.7% of its land mass or 860 square miles in the northern portion of the County. Ventura County is home to the only deep-water port between Los Angeles and San Francisco, which is the shipping point for agriculture and is the largest refrigerated fruit terminal on the West Coast.

According to 2022 Claritas Pop-Facts, Ventura County has a population of 842,465. The population is approximately 65% white, 7% Asian, 2% African American, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 24% other race. In Ventura County, 44.66% of residents identify as Hispanic/Latino (of any race) and 55.34% identify as Non-Hispanic/Non-Latino. About one fifth (21%) of the population is foreign-born, and 38.6% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. In Ventura County, 8.9% of the population is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, and 11% of students dropped out at some point during their high school years. During the 2016-2020 period, almost 60% of Ventura County residents spent 30% or more of their household income on rent. This is greater than the California value of 54%.

ABOUT US

FROM OUR PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR

At Ventura County Public Health, we have a dedicated and diverse team of almost 400 employees who work to prevent epidemics, the spread of disease and injuries, promote and encourage healthy living opportunities, respond to disasters and assist communities in recovery, and assure the quality and accessibility of preventive and health care services throughout the County.

Our Public Health team is committed to forging new partnerships with organizations, engaging with community members, and empowering our staff to accomplish our mission and move further towards realizing our vision. We invite you to share in our quest to become the healthiest county in the nation. Please visit us at vchca.org/ph and healthmattersinvc.org.



Rigoberto Vargas, MPH



Our MISSION...

states the purpose of our department; it is our roadmap:

To protect and promote the health and well-being of everyone in Ventura County

Our VISION...

articulates our ideal state; it provides direction in fulfilling our Mission:

To be the healthiest county in the nation

Our CORE VALUES...

support our Mission and Vision and reflect the principles that guide all of our actions:

Collaboration

We use teamwork to achieve common goals and partner on solutions to transform our health system and community environment to focus on prevention and well-being

Diversity

We support the development of an inclusive and culturally competent workforce that reflects the diversity of the community we serve

Accountability

We deliver quality services with transparency and integrity as responsible stewards of public funds

Customer Service Excellence

We provide exceptional and equitable services to all

Performance Improvement

We utilize evidence-based practices and foster a culture of continuous quality improvement to achieve service efficiency and efficacy

GUIDING FRAMEWORKS

NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH ACCREDITATION

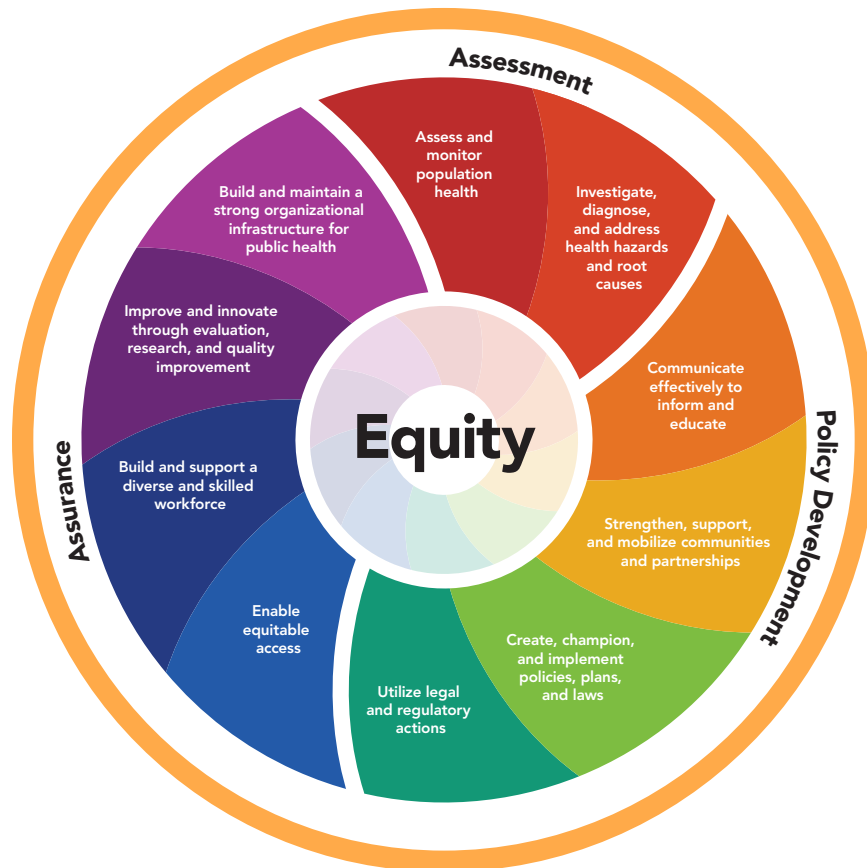
The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) measures health department performance against a set of nationally recognized, practice-focused and evidence-based standards. The comprehensive set of standards sets uniform expectations for health departments to provide the services necessary to keep communities healthy.

In June of 2014, VCPH was the first local public health department in California to achieve accreditation and later reaccreditation in June of 2020. We continue to maintain high standards and set new goals for improvement to better serve our community.



THE 10 ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

The framework for public health to protect and promote the health of all people is illustrated in the 10 Essential Public Health Services. To achieve equity, the Essential Public Health Services actively promote policies, systems, and overall community conditions that enable optimal health for all and seek to remove systemic and structural barriers that have resulted in health inequities. The dedicated, professional team at VCPH provides these services daily to assure that all people in Ventura County have a fair and equitable opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.

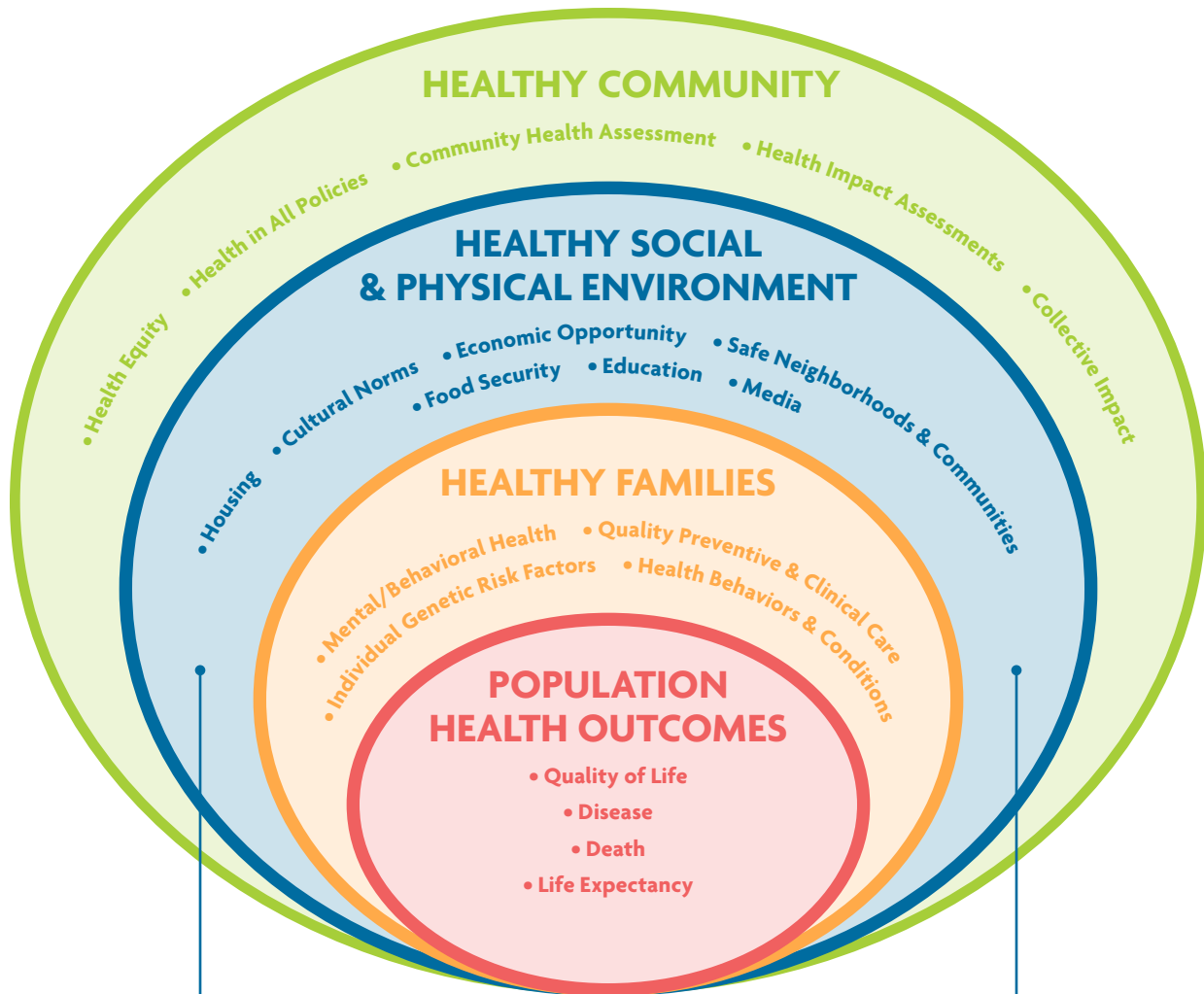


Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/publichealthservices/essentialhealthservices.html>

GUIDING FRAMEWORKS

MODEL FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

A Healthy Community as depicted in the diagram below provides for a quality and sustainable environment, adequate levels of economic and social development, health and social equity, social relationships that are supportive and respectful, and meets the basic needs of everyone across the lifespan.



Public Health's Role in Addressing Social Determinants:

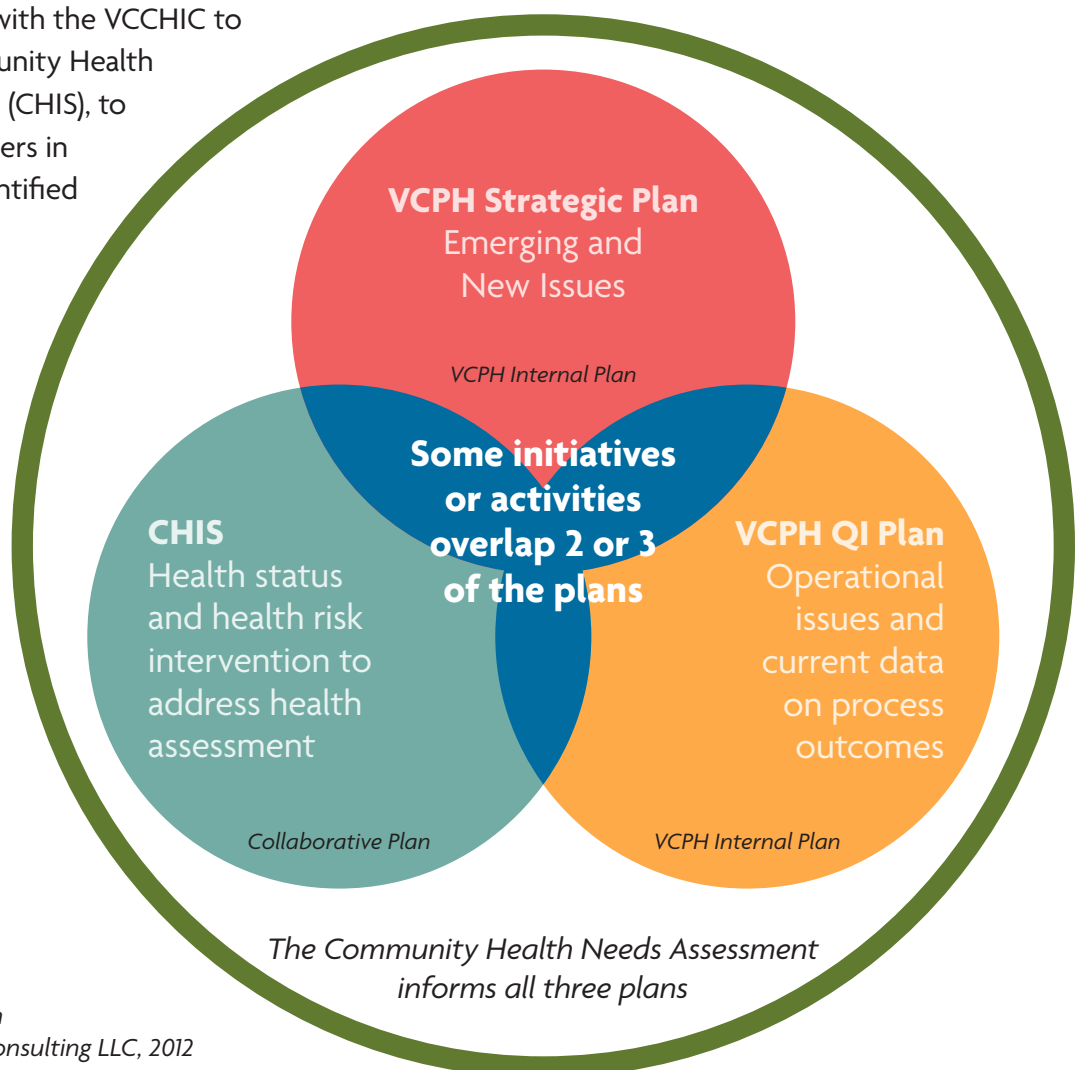
- Data collection, monitoring and surveillance
- Population-based interventions to address health factors
- Community engagement and capacity building
- Advocating for and defining public policy to achieve health equity
- Coordinated interagency efforts
- Creating organizational environments that enable change

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

VCPH engaged in a multi-stage process to develop this Strategic Plan which included collaborative efforts with community partners and internal activities. The department began by conducting a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis with both VCPH managers and line staff to help inform the development of potential strategic priority areas and goals that would be the focus over the next three years. This process was led by the VCPH Performance Excellence Council (PEC). The PEC oversees and guides the department's performance management system, which includes activities related to performance standards, performance measurement, reporting progress, and quality improvement.

VCPH works in partnership with the Ventura County Community Health Improvement Collaborative (VCCHIC) to assess overall population health and develop priorities that inform planning for building a healthier community. In June, 2022, the collaborative published the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). VCPH managers reviewed the CHNA and the results of the internal SWOT, then developed goals for the identified priority areas. The VCPH PEC finalized the goals in collaboration with managers and department leadership. Specific objectives for each goal will be developed and tracked annually by the PEC.

VCPH also collaborated with the VCCHIC to develop the 2022 Community Health Implementation Strategy (CHIS), to further engage our partners in addressing the issues identified through the CHNA. The diagram below depicts the connection between the CHNA, CHIS, and VCPH's Strategic and Quality Improvement (QI) Plans.



*Adapted from
MarMason Consulting LLC, 2012*

VC COMMUNITY PROFILE

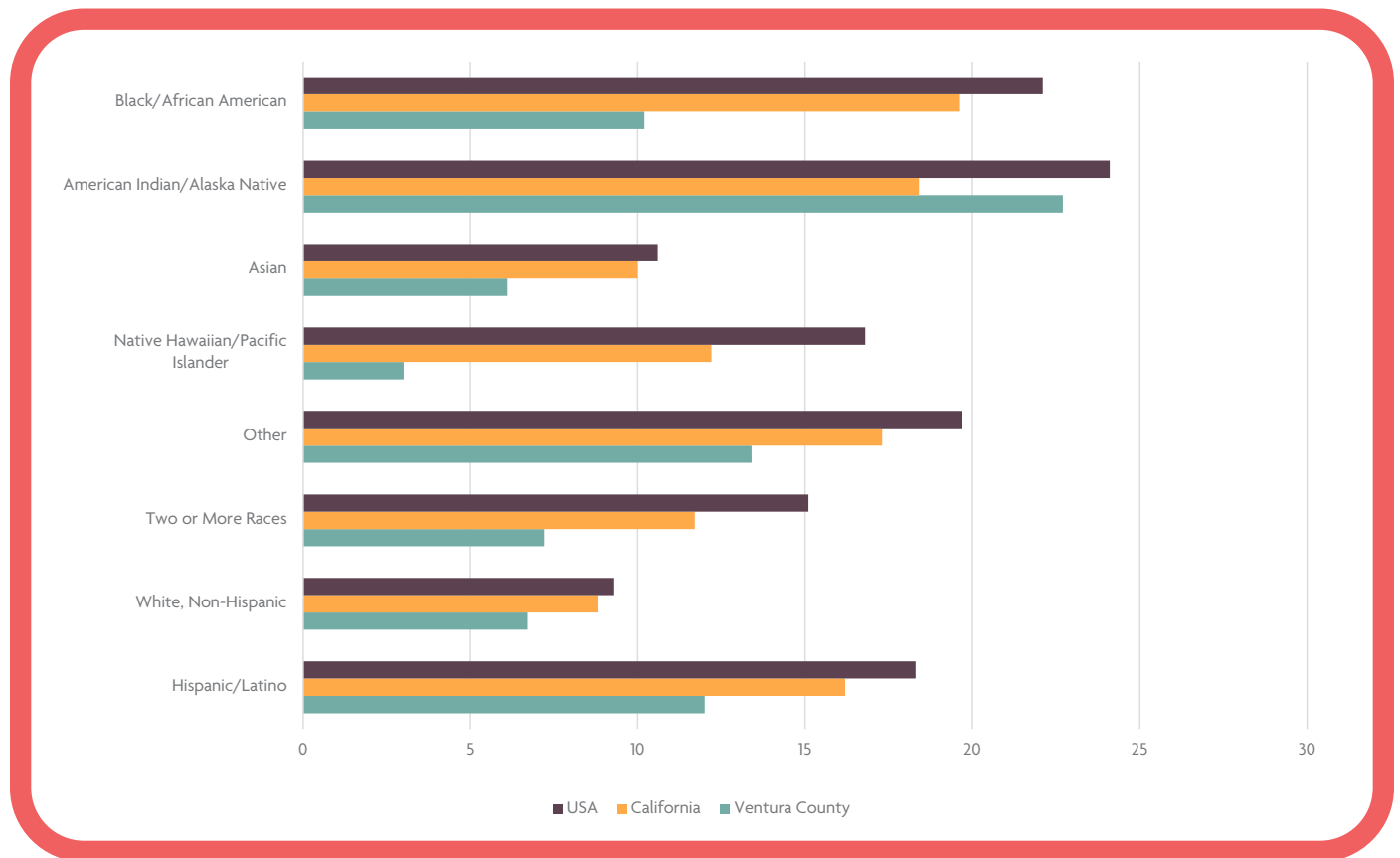


Demographic information helps us to understand trends and project potential needs for public health services for the population. For our Strategic Plan, VCPH chose three key health indicators to illustrate problems and barriers faced by some of our more vulnerable populations: People living below poverty level by race or ethnicity, premature death due to diseases of the heart, and health equity index.

PEOPLE LIVING BELOW POVERTY LEVEL BY RACE OR ETHNICITY

Figure 1 shows the percentage of people living below poverty level by race and ethnicity in comparison to state and national values. All race and ethnic groups in Ventura County, except American Indian/Alaska Native, have lower percentages of people living in poverty compared to state and national levels. The race or ethnic group in Ventura County with the greatest percentage of its population living in poverty is the American Indian/Alaska Native population with 22.7%, while the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander population has the lowest percentage with 3%.

Figure 1



Source: American Community Survey 2016-2020

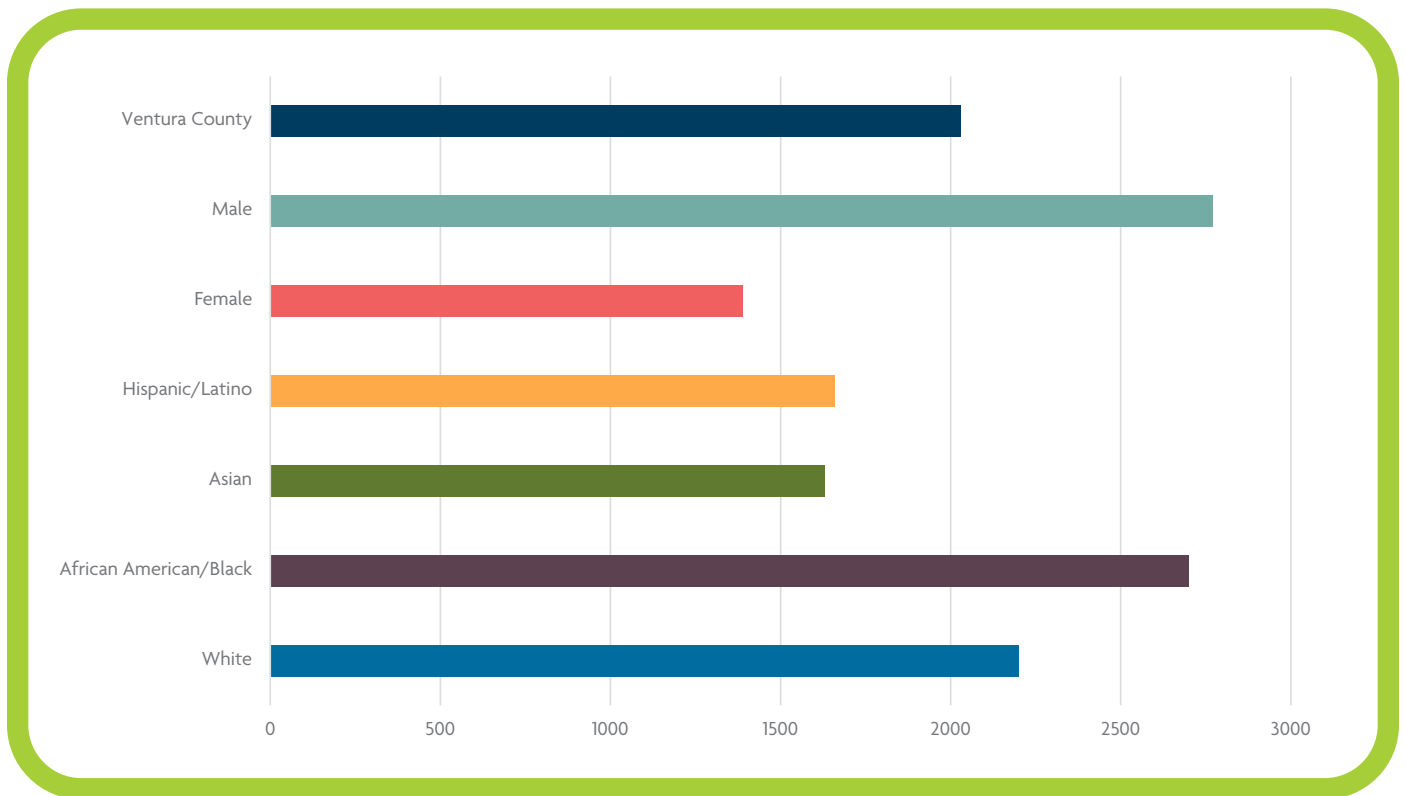
VC COMMUNITY PROFILE

PREMATURE DEATH DUE TO DISEASES OF THE HEART

Diseases of the heart were the leading cause of death and second leading cause of premature death in Ventura County from 2019-2021. Figure 2 shows the age-adjusted years of life lost¹ (YLL) rate per 100,000 population per year from diseases of the heart. Males had a higher rate of premature death from diseases of the heart than females. Black or African Americans (Non-Hispanic) experienced the highest premature death rate of any race or ethnic group followed by Whites (Non-Hispanic), Hispanics and then Asians (Non-Hispanic). Males lost an average of 16.8 years due to heart disease compared to 11.9 years for females. Black or African Americans (Non-Hispanic) (18.8 years) had the highest average YLL per death from heart disease followed by Hispanics (17.5 years), Asians (Non-Hispanic) (15.7 years) and then Whites (Non-Hispanic) (13.5 years). On average, there were 14.3 YLL per death from heart disease.



Figure 2



Source: Vital Records Business Intelligence System (deaths 2019–2021) and Claritas Pop-Facts (2020), analysis by Ventura County Public Health, March, 2022.

¹ Years of Life Lost (YLL) is a summary measure used in public health planning to compare the relative importance of a cause of premature death in a population. YLL estimates the years of potential life lost due to premature deaths. YLL takes into account the age at which deaths occur, giving greater weight to deaths at a younger age and lower weight to deaths at older age.

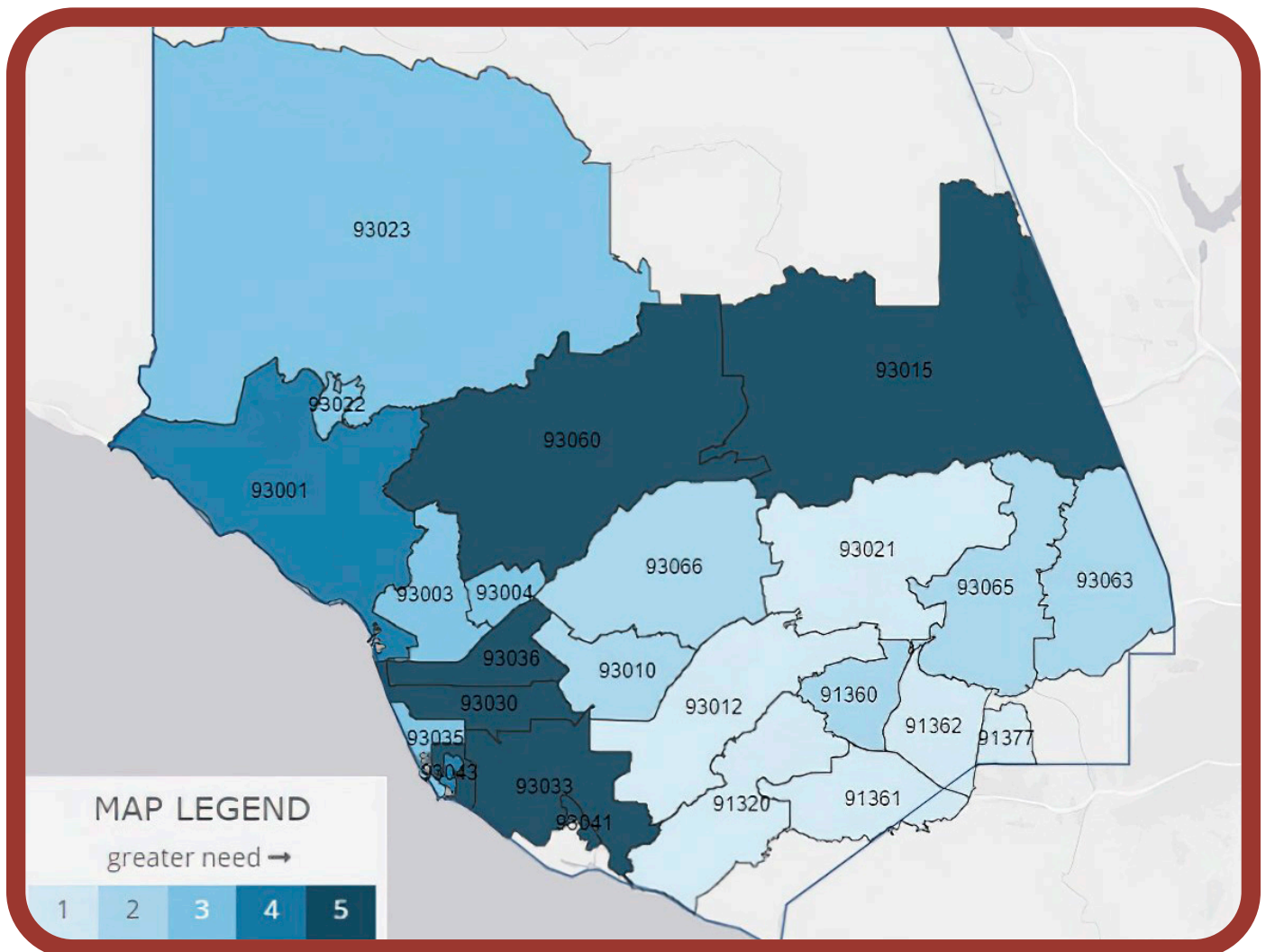
VC COMMUNITY PROFILE

HEALTH EQUITY INDEX

The Health Equity Index incorporates estimates for six different social and economic determinants of health – income, poverty, unemployment, occupation, educational attainment, and linguistic barriers – that are associated with poor health outcomes including preventable hospitalizations and premature death. Within Ventura County, zip codes are ranked based on their index value to identify the relative levels of need. Those geographic areas with the highest values (from 0-100) are estimated to have the highest socioeconomic need which can be correlated with preventable hospitalizations and premature death (Healthy Communities Institute, 2019).

Figure 3 shows that Oxnard (93030, 93033 and 93036), Santa Paula (93060), and Fillmore (93015) are the areas within the county that have the highest socioeconomic needs. In general, the areas of the county with higher socioeconomic needs have a lower average life expectancy than the Ventura County average of 81.4 years.

Figure 3



Source: Health Matters in Ventura County

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The department will focus its efforts on the following strategic priorities and goals:

COLLABORATIVE PRIORITY AREAS		
Promote Lifelong Wellness	Advance Health Equity	Enhance Community Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote access to physical and mental health services for children and families. Expand chronic and communicable disease prevention and control efforts among diverse populations experiencing health disparities. Encourage healthy lifestyles by implementing innovative prevention strategies and elevating public awareness of key health messages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement targeted messaging campaigns to underserved populations in order to increase awareness and utilization of available health and social services. Utilize technological advances to further address social determinants of health. Enhance departmental capacity and practice towards the advancement of health equity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen multi-sector partnerships with community stakeholders and agencies to improve health outcomes. Enhance collaboration with entities providing mental health and social services. Support disaster preparedness among healthcare system stakeholders, community members and emergency response organizations.

INTERNAL PRIORITY AREAS	
Increase Communication and Engagement	Support our Public Health Workforce
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase internal departmental communication. Maximize opportunities to engage the community and increase awareness of public health services. Strengthen the departmental capacity to communicate emerging public health issues to the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract, retain, and develop a skilled, and competent workforce. Sustain a work culture where staff are acknowledged, empowered, and engaged. Expand and implement continuous quality improvement practices throughout the department.

ONGOING PRIORITY AREAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect the population of Ventura County from chronic disease, the spread of infectious disease, environmental hazards, and disasters. Improve VCPH use of, and contributions to, the evidence-base of public health science, practice and epidemiology. Provide culturally specific public health services to children, families and communities to ensure the full health potential of all residents.



SUMMARY OF INTERNAL INPUT

The summary below combines input from an all-public health staff SWOT activity. This information was used to help further refine the strategic priorities. Consistent themes identified through the analysis were increasing access to healthcare, using technological advances to broadcast health messages, reaching underserved populations, and workforce development. This analysis encompasses both internal and external realms of improvement and will be further defined in the department's Workforce Development Plan.

S

STRENGTHS

- Workforce experience, low turnover
- Customer service/client oriented
- Resilient, flexible staff
- Collaboration/partnerships
- Bilingual/trilingual staff
- Teamwork/supportive environment

W

WEAKNESS

- Interdepartmental communication/silos
- Technology inconsistencies
- Funding uncertainties
- Work schedule flexibility
- Human resources processes
- Short staffing

O

OPPORTUNITIES

- Staff training
- Employee recognition
- Employee wellness
- Work schedule flexibility
- Enhanced website/social media presence
- More outreach to disadvantaged populations
- Leverage new technology

T

THREATS

- Ongoing pandemic response
- Unsecured funding
- Fears related to immigration laws
- Increasing healthcare costs
- Lack of affordable housing
- Legislative changes
- Technological barriers



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