

## Local Health Departments are Preparing for the Health Impacts of Climate Change

October 2017

### Green River District Health Department

#### Project Summary

The National Association of County and City Health Officials, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), selected the Green River District Health Department (KY) as one of 11 local health departments (LHDs) to better understand how city and county health departments are preparing for the health impacts of climate change. The goal of this project was to highlight local efforts to prepare for and build resiliency to the health impacts of climate change and to share these success stories to support new and ongoing initiatives in other LHDs. This project sought to identify best practices and provide real-world case studies. LHDs play an important role in connecting health impacts with the effects of climate change. This project highlights only a few of the many departments actively engaged in climate change efforts.

#### Background

The Green River District Health Department (GRDHD) is located in Daviess County, KY (City of Owensboro, KY). GRDHD provides health care programs and services to seven Kentucky Counties (Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster) and serves a total population of nearly 217,000.<sup>1</sup> These land-locked counties in northwest Kentucky border Illinois and Indiana, separated by the Ohio River. All counties in the district are predominantly rural (>27% rural), with aging, less affluent, and less educated populations compared to their urban counterparts (15–19% are older than 65 years of age). The counties also have greater than the national average number of people living in poverty (>13.5%).

*GRDHD is studying how climate events such as extreme heat, drought, and flooding affect the health of local populations and using data to identify public health interventions to protect the health of vulnerable populations living in the district.*

#### Climate Challenge

The mission of GRDHD is to improve quality of life by promoting, protecting, and enhancing the health and well-being of the public. With satellite offices in each of the seven counties, GRDHD is faced with the many public health challenges that accompany such regions of poverty and gaps in education levels. The district also has higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, and cerebrovascular disease than the national averages. Despite these challenges, GRDHD is studying how climate events such as extreme heat, drought, and flooding affect the health of local populations and using data to identify public health interventions to protect the health of vulnerable populations living in the district.

#### Goal

The goal of GRDHD is to identify local climate hazards and implement evidence-based policies and programs in areas of epidemiology, community health assessment, and emergency

#### OBJECTIVES

- Train health department staff in research and policy development for climate change;
- Incorporate climate-related health indicators in epidemiological surveillance, community health assessment, and emergency preparedness;
- Communicate climate-related health policy recommendations to community partners; and
- Procure funding to continue research and analysis of local climate-related health indicators.



preparedness to address hazards related to climate change. The health department developed several objectives to address this overarching goal and has achieved a number of successes so far.

## Achievements and Successes

- Received a grant from Kentucky's state environmental health tracking system, EnviroHealthLink, which provided funding and technical assistance to identify local climate-related health indicators; and
- Using these health indicators, GRDHD conducted a community health assessment and developed policy recommendations for internal and external use.

## References

1. United States Census Bureau. Quick Facts webpage. Retrieved September 13, 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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