

Case Study

Kane County Health Department

“I want to prevent rather than react and Healthy Communities Institute is helping us do just that by putting systems in place that improve quality of life, access to health, and education.”

– Barbara Jeffers
Executive Director, Kane County Health Department

At-A-Glance

Market Segment:
Health Department

Service Area:
Kane County, Illinois

Population:
531,469

Customer Since:
2015

Solution:
HCI Platform

Most Visited Indicator:
Poverty in Children

Most Used Features:
Funding Opportunities,
Promising Practices, Mapping
Visualizations, Zip Code Data

Results:

- Full-time epidemiologist able to re-focus 40% of her time on data collection towards analysis and evaluation
- Rapid proliferation of use among diverse stakeholders (Public Health Department, Community Groups, Public Officials, Schools and Universities, Courts, Correctional Systems)
- Restructured organization to become eligible for grant funding
- Won HCI Achievement Award and NACCHO Model Practice Award for innovation and public health leadership



The Data Challenge

As Illinois' most diverse community in both demographics and landscape, Barbara Jeffers knew she had her work cut out for her when she started as Executive Director of the Kane County Health Department. She led the charge for Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) accreditation, a process that seeks to advance quality and performance within public health departments, ultimately improving service, value, and accountability to stakeholders. Kane County became the first PHAB accredited county in Illinois. To pursue the accreditation vision, Jeffers established goals to have the highest standards in every public health function. Kane County would centralize its data, increase data access and transparency, systematize comparisons against local, state and national goals, and mobilize its partners. At the center of these goals was a data challenge. When Jeffers started, the process of collecting, analyzing, and sharing this data was time-consuming and laborious. “I knew we needed to address data infrastructure fragmentation in order to strengthen our partnership network and build up data-driven decision making.”

The department epidemiologist spent a significant portion of her time monitoring, accessing, and updating data. The process of accessing the most recent data was not intuitive or user friendly and required ongoing monitoring of local, state, and national surveys. This necessitated constant communication with and requests for data from many external agencies. Even after gathering all the data, it was most often in a static spreadsheet or report, which quickly would become outdated, and completely lacked comparison values. Throughout the data pipeline, only the epidemiologist had access to develop reports and queries, requiring others to be reliant on one individual.

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Finding the Solution

With clear goals in place, Jeffers knew they needed a user-friendly solution that would address their varied data infrastructure needs. When the epidemiologist found and introduced Conduent® Community Health Solutions (CHS) to the team, Jeffers was struck by its ease of use. “The platform was not pre-canned and it was clear we would have a lot of opportunity to develop a customized look and feel. CHS listened to our needs, provided us with great customer service, and gave us a scope far wider than we anticipated,” said Jeffers.

CHS would not only develop and maintain state and national indicators, but would also provide context so that Kane County could be compared to all U.S. counties, Illinois counties, state and national averages, as well as national goals for health promotion and disease prevention. All health department staff and their extended network of partners would be able to access the public platform, analyze data, and even upload their own.

The Community Impact

Jeffers and her team launched **Kane Health Counts** in November 2015 and the response was immediate. All five hospitals, Rush Copley, Northwestern Medical/Delnore, Presence Mercy Medical, Presence Saint Joseph Medical, and Advocate Sherman Hospital, began using the site. Local universities including Northern Illinois University, Aurora University, and Waubesa Community College, partnered as well. The local federally qualified health care centers, Kane County’s court services, the chief judge of Kane County, probation services, elected officials and the sheriff’s office also took up use.

Jeffers noted, “All the decisions we make are data-backed because we now have easy access to data and comparisons. Many of my staff even use the site’s tools directly in presentations.” What’s more, the epidemiologist was able to move away from spending an estimated 40% of her time on laborious data pipeline and analysis tasks.

With access to a continuously updated platform, she now focuses on demonstrating its use (internally and externally) and engaging community meetings for Kane’s Community Health Improvement Plan where she pulls data directly from the site for the committee. The committee subsequently uses that data to inform their action plans on chronic disease management, behavioral health and income and education. She also creates ways to capture and integrate new data sources.

“The HCI tool identifies funding opportunities combined with its evidence-based interventions help me and my colleagues bridge the gap with non-traditional public health partners to understand their impact on health,” says Jeffers.

“We recently won a federal grant on chronic disease sourced from HCI that bridges partnerships between hospitals, schools and pharmacies.” Grants have also become a source for edification. “I like to scroll through the grants to see what is out there. I came across one we didn’t qualify for due to our organizational structure and we were able to make the changes necessary so in the future, we’d be eligible.”

Jeffers, the Health Department, and Kane County have been thrilled with HCI. HCI has likewise been thrilled with Kane County, awarding them the 2015 Achievement Award for their chronic disease project. It uniquely engaged local medical providers in a quality improvement initiative to promote tobacco cessation. “As our non-traditional partners access HCI to dig into disparities, they are seeing that public health is more than the medical model,” says Jeffers. “I want to prevent rather than react and HCI is helping us do just that by putting systems in place that improve quality of life, access to health and education.”

Visit Kane Health Counts:
www.kanehealthcounts.org

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