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**NWCAC Qualitative Findings: Executive Summary**

Qualitative input for the Northwest Minnesota Community Assessment Collaborative was gathered in three ways, 1) two meetings of the NWCAC, 2) an in-depth examination of individual interview notes and transcripts from SHIP (Statewide Health Initiative Program) interviews conducted in 2010, and 3) a series of over 40 interviews/community forums were held during the winter 2012/spring 2013.

The first research question examined***“What do you believe are the 2-3 most important issues that should be addressed in order to help improve the quality of life further for people in our community (our county)?”*** Responses included: healthcare costs and access, youth and adult community recreation opportunities (lack of), mental illness, obesity, jobs/employment, housing, transportation, and low income. These areas of concern were directed specifically at families and children as well as the elderly. Furthermore, areas of greatest problem behaviors/disease states described were (in no particular order of importance: drug use, violence, tobacco use, alcohol use, asthma, cancer and heart disease.

The second research question explored **“*What (if anything) is holding our community back from doing what needs to be done to improve health and quality of life for residents (our county)?”***

* Lack of financial resources
* Low educational attainment of target populations
* Lack of knowledge
* Poor awareness of programs/resources
* Poverty
* Apathy
* Need more personal responsibility/self-discipline
* Need stronger leadership
* Cost of insurance is prohibitive
* Rural Isolation/rural factors
* Transportation
* Lack of access to exercise facilities

The final research question sought to identify***“What types of actions, policies or funding priorities would you support in order to build a better community?*** Responses included:

* Provide more information about what services are available
* Construct more assisted living facilities
* Help elderly remain in their homes longer
* Community, school and workplace education classes
* Increase access to more mental health services

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