

Social Determinants: What Does It Mean for Community Action?

Over the last few months, NC Community Action Association (NCCAA) has been featuring several of our upcoming pilot programs in our new Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) initiative. NCCAA is partnering with 4 of the network's Community Action agencies to address five SDOH domains: food insecurity, housing, transportation, toxic stress and education. The impact of this initiative could be groundbreaking, and life altering, for many of our clients and communities. And Community Action agencies have been doing it for decades.

The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) have become a popular term in public health and sociology over the last 20 years. The term was initially introduced and defined in the 2010 Healthy People framework, a national benchmark released every decade to set goals to improve health and wellness of all Americans. The initiative began in 1979, when Surgeon General Julius Richmond issued a landmark report entitled, *Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention*. This initial report focused on reducing preventable death and injury, and included specific objectives to achieve national wellness and disease prevention goals for the United States by 1990, a ten-year period. The report is now updated each decade, building on the lessons of the previous ten years' data and collective feedback since the report's inception. Now in its 5th iteration, Healthy People 2030 continues to emphasize the importance of SDOH considerations in health promotion and disease prevention.



Source: Secretary's Advisory Committee on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives for 2020. *Healthy People 2020: An Opportunity to Address the Societal Determinants of Health in the United States*. July 26, 2010. Available from: <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2010/hp2020/advisory/SocietalDeterminantsHealth.htm>

But what exactly does this mean? What *is* a social determinant? And what does it mean for community action and our clients? Simply put, social determinants are all about **PLACE**. And place matters, and often, matters a lot. Our health is determined by several key conditions, including:

- Where we are born
- Where we grow up
- Where we age
- Where we live
- Where we work

Notice the common theme: all the outcomes revolve around place. The right to health is intrinsically an inclusive right for all Americans, which includes not only the right to health services, but also to a wide range of things that help us live in good health - *the social determinants of health*. In fact, 80% of all health outcomes can be attributed to the social determinants, with only 20% of those outcomes derived from healthcare. The social determinants of health include:

- housing
- education
- employment
- social support
- family income
- our communities
- childhood experience
- access to health services

To impact the determinants of health and health inequities, community action agencies work at the local, state, national, and even global levels, to create positive, long-term change in the social, built and natural environments of our clients and our communities. Stay tuned to this space and our monthly updates for more information and progress of this new grant initiative for NC Community Action Association. We will be sharing success stories from around the state and opportunities to collaborate in the weeks and months to come. For more details, contact Elle Evans Peterson, SDOH Community Impact Manager, at NCCAA: elle.evanspeterson@nccaa.net