



## Riverside County Public Health

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## More than 150 gather to discuss health issues in Riverside County and how to resolve problems

More than 150 community members, representatives of local organizations and officials from various governmental agencies gathered Wednesday to discuss the health issues facing Riverside County residents and ways to address those problems.

The gathering, coordinated by the Riverside County Department of Public Health, is part of the Strategic Health Alliance Pursuing Equity (SHAPE) campaign that was started earlier this year and featured a series of community health forums held throughout the county.

Participants spent part of the meeting brainstorming ideas on how to address issues highlighted in a recently compiled health assessment report. Since January, more than 4,000 surveys were filled out during the community forums, other public gatherings and online, and are a key element of the health assessment report.

The issues discussed at Wednesday's meeting included the impact education, income and environment have on health, and how the SHAPE survey results align with existing efforts. Some suggested the need to improve access to healthcare and community education as a way of optimizing the good health message; creating incentives for businesses and partnering organizations to support a healthy environment; and addressing the shift in jobs and local economy to benefit families.

Also discussed was the need to increase access to public and health services, especially in vulnerable communities. In addition to such issues as air quality, drug abuse and obesity,

among the top areas of concern for residents are jobs/economy, homelessness and safe neighborhoods.

Riverside County CEO Jay Orr opened the gathering and discussed the importance of banding together to address the region's top health challenges, including childhood obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

"It was good to see people from so many disciplines come together in one location. We were successful in identifying real, tangible solutions to some of the health and wellness issues facing residents," said Riverside County Public Health Director Susan Harrington. "There is plenty of work that still must take place, but we now have a better road map on where we want to go."

Harrington said the information will be summarized and will help shape the Community Health Improvement Plan, the guiding document towards health in Riverside County.

It's not too late to get involved. Email [shape@rivcocha.org](mailto:shape@rivcocha.org) or call 951.358.5557 for more information.