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**THE HEALTH COLLABORATE UPDATES THE COMMUNITY
ON ITS 2010 COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT**

Expanded data sources, neighborhood involvement and a nationally-recognized health research firm to contribute to success of the assessment

The leadership of the city's major healthcare organizations joined city leaders today (May 4) in updating the community on the progress of the 2010 Bexar County Community Health Assessment, which they predict will be the best research to date on the health status of the community.

"The principal factor why this year's assessment will be the best yet is that we are one of the first cities in the country to use the social determinant model as our approach to describing community health," said Steve Blanchard, M.P.H, Ph.D., Health Collaborative board member and chair of the 2010 Community Health Assessment. "The social determinant model views outcomes as a product of health-related behaviors and the behaviors themselves as a likely product of social dynamics at the level of the social context of the neighborhood.

"Our assessment is organized over the year by phases that reflect the three elements of the model. In Phase 1, early in the year, we build a community profile at the neighborhood level and above of health outcomes. In Phase 2, in mid year, we build a community profile of health-related behaviors. In Phase 3, at the end of the year, we build a community profile of neighborhood social contexts that contribute to the health-related behaviors. Phase 2 creates opportunities for programmatic responses to change behaviors. Phase 3 creates opportunities for local policy to change contexts," he said. "Through true collaboration with community partners we have expanded the data available to us, integrated neighborhoods in the process and brought in a nationally-recognized health research organization. We expect the assessment to enable the community to see its health status in ways never before seen and in ways linked to solutions for community health improvement"

The study will look at the area's overall health status, examine the shifting patterns on key health issues over time, and identify the community's strengths and resources as well as gaps in services to help The Health Collaborative and its partners set future funding and programming priorities.

The 2010 assessment is the fourth in a series of assessments issued by The Health Collaborative every four years since 1998. It is being conducted in three phases throughout the year with a final report due in early 2011.

One of the factors that makes this year's assessment the best yet is the active involvement of the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health). Phase I of the assessment utilizes data from Metro Health's Health Profiles, an annual report which looks at health trends, area demographics and information on prevalence of disease and other findings.

"The health assessment will provide fresh insights into the overall health of our community and the challenges we face with chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and others," said Dr. Fernando Guerra, director of health. "Combining this information with the yearly data Metro Health gathers will help us better address risk factors related to behaviors, the environment, occupations and lifestyles."

Phase 2 focuses on the behavioral risk factors that give rise to the outcomes described in Phase 1. The centerpiece for Phase 2 is the Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey, an annual probability survey of the Centers for Disease Control and APrevention that is administered by the states. It provides timely and accurate data on health-related behaviors.

Working together The Health Collaborative, Bexar County and Metro Health provided funds to increase the number of families surveyed locally, which became effective with the 2008 BRFSS survey. "Enlarging the survey provides the opportunity to examine with greater accuracy sub-county variations in health-related behaviors," said Dr. Blanchard.

Phase 3 involves collecting data at the neighborhood level with the intent of describing the social contexts that possibly give rise to the health-related behaviors described in Phase 2. The findings of Phase 3 can lead to policy considerations by the City of San Antonio and the County that can change neighborhood contexts in ways that will influence health-related behaviors,. "Phase 3 is the concluding piece of the social determinant model where social context is viewed as a major influence on health-related behaviors which, in turn, are the proximate causes of the health outcomes of interest described in Phase 1," said Dr. Blanchard

A third factor, and really the most important one, is the greater involvement of the community in the 2010 assessment. A week-long series of community and neighborhood meetings is scheduled at the end of each phase to give residents an opportunity to voice ideas regarding health status issues and solutions centered on the theme of each phase. "This is the first time the community has been integrated into the research process in this

way,” said Dr. Blanchard. These meetings will be covered by NOWCastSA, a grassroots project of Community Information NOW, and the public can log on to observe the meetings and submit their comments.

A fourth factor that makes this the best assessment yet is the awarding of the assessment contract to Health Resources in Action (HRiA) of Boston, a nationally-recognized health research organization. Serving health-oriented non-profit and governmental organizations across the country, HRiA works to help people live healthier lives and create healthy communities through prevention, health promotion, policy development and research.

“HRia will engage a range of stakeholders and community partners through the study process and conduct numerous focus groups and interviews with community residents, healthcare providers and staff from health and social service agencies,” explained Dr. Blanchard. “They are experienced in working in culturally diverse environments.”

The assessment is a major initiative of The Health Collaborative, a cutting edge, public-private model for solving community health issues. Members of The Health Collaborative include: Baptist Health System, the Bexar County Department of Community Resources, Steve Blanchard, Ph.D., Community First Health Plans, Methodist Healthcare, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, University Health System, WellMed Management, Inc., and the YMCA of Greater San Antonio.

Non-profit organizations throughout the city have found the assessment to be an insightful planning tool, using its data when writing grants and evaluating and developing their programs. Area health care systems have used data from previous assessments to make critical program decisions and meet community benefits reporting requirements. Previous assessments have led to research that was instrumental in the development of countywide programs such as Project Measure Up, the San Antonio Health Literacy Initiative and Fit City. Funders of the 2010 assessment are The Baptist Health Foundation, the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation, the United Way, and Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas.

For more information, visit our Web site, www.healthcollaborative.net.

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For additional information on Health Resources in Action, visit www.hria.org.