

## Health - Strategic Conversation Proceedings October 12, 2007

San Mateo County Health Center  
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San Mateo, California 94403

This document summarizes key themes and discussion points shared during the Health strategic conversation held as part of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Community Input Project. This was the sixth of nine strategic conversations convened by the community foundation as part of this project. A total of 39 participants attended the convening, representing philanthropic organizations, community advocates, health, social service and mental health agencies, medical facilities and others engaged in addressing the broad range of health issues in the region. In addition, various representatives of the community foundation's board of directors and leadership team attended this convening, including CEO and President, Emmett Carson, Chief of Donor Engagement and Giving, Eleanor Clement Glass, Vice President, Community Initiatives, Convening and Research, Erica Wood and Vice President, Grantmaking, Ellen Clear.

### Overview of the Community Input Project

Silicon Valley Community Foundation is committed to the best ideas and most effective solutions—at the local and the regional levels. With those goals in mind, the community foundation has initiated the Community Input Project, a series of strategic conversations, data review and community surveying around needs and issues that matter most. The issues were selected based on a review of local data, the many excellent assessments available about the health, social and environmental concerns in the region, and issues community members and leaders have raised.

The community foundation anticipates this process will spur a greater interest in regional partnerships as well as strategic solutions for meaningful, lasting and transformative change. The community foundation's board of directors will take the results of the community input process into consideration when making decisions about future directions and strategies.

This project focuses on the following nine issue areas:

- Arts and Culture
- Children and Youth
- Civic Engagement
- Community Economic Development
- Education from K-16
- Environment
- Health
- Housing and Basic Needs
- Immigration

## Structure of the Strategic Conversations

Each CIP strategic conversation follows a similar model, designed to provide participants with a common context and framing for productive discussion. Community foundation staff opens the session with a welcome and overview, and then introduces a keynote speaker who delivers an inspirational presentation with the goal of creating a sense of energy and purpose for the group's conversations to follow.

Participants engage in direct conversation with each other and the community foundation through facilitated small-group discussions organized around the key issues identified in the issue briefs prepared in advance of the conversation. Issue briefs are available for download at [www.siliconvalleycf.org](http://www.siliconvalleycf.org). These small-group discussions are generative in nature, as participants respond to two key questions:

- What are the region's key issues in the area under examination for today's conversation?
- What are the most promising solutions and ripe opportunities for significant impact?

Participants reconvene as a large group following the small-group discussions to engage in integrative thinking. As a large group, participants share "big ideas" and strategies to impact the region's most critical issues.

All aspects of the conversations are recorded, and are synthesized for the community foundation to take under consideration.

## Keynote Presentation and Subject Matter Experts

**Dr. Scott Morrow**, public health officer and medical director of the San Mateo County Health Services Agency provided the keynote address for the health conversation. He has been the public health officer and medical director for San Mateo County for 15 years. In this role, he is responsible for oversight of the county agency's medical, nursing and professional staff. He keeps county management informed of issues pertaining to public health, and he coordinates all medical and health activities across county departments.

Dr. Morrow's experience in San Mateo County as well as his work on more regional efforts such as the Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII) has provided him with a significant perspective on the health of Bay Area communities. The following summarizes his key points:

- Areas of significant focus and concern in the region include: youth, older adults, alcohol, tobacco and other drug use and health disparities.
- In spite of decreasing mortality rates, risk factors and behaviors are increasing, including rates of poverty, inadequate nutrition and physical exercise and use and abuse of substances such as alcohol.

- Policy decisions have positively impacted some risk behaviors (i.e., smoking) but more is needed in other areas such as food security and mental health services.
- Communities of color, and African Americans in particular, have poorer health outcomes than their white counterparts.
- The “built environment” impacts health outcomes and does not support healthy choices or lifestyles, particularly in suburban communities.
- Mental health, violence, social isolation and substance abuse are serious concerns facing today’s youth; these issues are underreported and not being sufficiently addressed.
- Local/neighborhood solutions and strategies to address these issues are critical.

### **Issues for Discussion: Pressing Needs and Opportunities for Impact**

The three issues for discussion that participants engaged with in the community economic development conversation were:

1. Access to Health Care
2. Behavioral and Mental Health
3. Community Health

The following summarizes the top-level themes from the small-group discussions on these topics.

#### *Access to Health Care*

##### Pressing Needs

- Lack of providers that accept Medi-Cal, Medi-care or other government sponsored insurance
- Inaccessibility of existing services due to physical location and transportation challenges
- Lack of insurance coverage and access to care for immigrant populations
- Lack of preventative, specialty and emergency oral health services for all populations
- Lack of preventive care and a coordinated approach to address the health needs of adolescents, transition-age youth, men and other special populations
- Lack of affordable coverage for medical prescriptions
- Limited provider system capacity due to the high cost of living in the region and low reimbursement rates
- Insufficient cultural competence in the current system of providers
- Lack of specialty care including gerontologists
- Lack of understanding of the perspectives and utilization patterns of different communities

### Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Opportunity to implement a loan forgiveness program to help providers and allied health professions remain in the region
- Coordinate specialty care among different providers to increase access
- Access federal matching programs to provide additional funding to the system and to address medically underserved areas.
- Broaden the dissemination of health promotion and health education information through the internet and other media to individuals, providers and the community
- Research and disseminate findings regarding the causal factors and strategies to address utilization patterns of vulnerable populations
- Identify and build upon existing culturally competent health education and health access models (i.e., Promotores, community health centers, school clinics)
- Advocate for policy changes regarding financing at the local, state and federal level
- Support public/private partnerships to address service gaps and to leverage resources

### *Behavioral and Mental Health*

#### Pressing Needs

- Increasing health disparities between first and second generation immigrants
- Lack of social connectedness due to the “manic” nature of the region
- Lack of recognition of the stressors faced with cultural integration
- Lack of knowledge of the existing behavioral and mental health services available
- Limited definition of acceptable services and treatments which might be more effective and appropriate to diverse populations
- Lack of coordinated funding streams that address both behavioral and mental health needs
- Lack of comprehensive strategies to address behavioral and mental health issues in a holistic manner
- Stigma associated with mental health presents a significant barrier
- Lack of culturally appropriate and evidence based approaches to behavioral and mental health issues in different populations
- Lack of clearly understood and accepted definition of “mental health” different than “mental illness”
- Need to identify specific behavioral and mental health issues of adolescents, older adults, transition-age youth, children

### Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Opportunity to study and bring to scale promising efforts in the region (i.e., Body and Soul, Get Fit EPA, Sports4Kids)
- Opportunity to foster public-private and community partnerships
- Identify and/or create multiple entry points into a coordinated system of services and supports

- Implement a community campaign to increase awareness of mental health and the variety of services and strategies to address
- Continue to convene conversations regarding mental health in specific communities
- Identify creative financing strategies to fund services (i.e., tobacco tax, sales tax)
- Commit to ensuring that each youth has a minimum of two to three healthy meaningful relationships
- Fund related issues which support mental health such as arts and culture

### *Community Health*

#### Pressing Needs

- Disregard of the relationship between environmental health and individual health (i.e., fertility, asthma, lead poisoning)
- Need to identify what will work for each community
- Lack of connectivity and sense of connection in communities
- Limited access to living wage jobs which affects access to health and healthy foods
- Need for oral and general health education and access
- Challenges in addressing the health issues of undocumented, migratory and geographically isolated workers
- Lack of sufficient numbers of qualified culturally competent service providers
- Lack of “voice” among disenfranchised communities to address community and environmental issues which impact health
- Need to acknowledge institutional racism which impacts access to care and health outcomes
- Lack of support within a community and safety nets when individuals are no longer incarcerated

#### Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Identify, build upon and disseminate information on models that are working in the community (e.g., community gardens, Promotores)
- Develop nontraditional partnerships (i.e., gardens and local grocery stores, technology and health education)
- Provide mentoring for disconnected youth
- Advocate and convene groups to include their input in respective County general plans
- Reach out to departments of education to build on existing networks and groups of parents
- Seed research and disseminate findings to shed light on disparities
- Invest in activities that build power in marginalized communities (e.g., mobilized immigrant vote)
- Support coordinated community and organizational capacity building efforts

## Participants' Overarching Suggestions

Building on the ideas and discussions generated during the facilitated small group rotations, participants shared their overarching suggestions that are at the intersection of critical issues, ripe opportunities and potential for meaningful impact. The following provides a summary overview of these suggestions. Please note that there may be overlap with ideas generated in the small-group discussions summarized above, and that some ideas may have been subsumed or categorized with others to reduce redundancies. It is also important to bear in mind that these overarching suggestions are not only for Silicon Valley Community Foundation's consideration, but also for all those who are interested in and supporting the health sector in the region.

### *Summary of Overarching Suggestions*

- Lead a regional effort to establish universal health care in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties ahead of State and Federal governments
- Assist with bringing together healthcare organizations, local government schools and especially corporations to create solutions and funding to local health issues
- Serve as a repository of information about successful community-based models
- Influence General Plan development efforts so they are consistent and also include a health impact element in cities/region
- Share knowledge/learning with other foundations to identify partnership/leveraging opportunities and develop "critical mass" or momentum on the most pressing issues or those for which promising solutions already exist
- Serve as a community leader and convener around creating systems to build a more connected community
- Create a database/clearinghouse/info center that would publicize where insured and uninsured people can access treatment providers whose methods have been proven to be most effective for specific needs
- Focus on comprehensive and systematic impacts so funding leads to multi-level impact and enhancement that further engages the grantees and other community partners
- Work with partners to deliver trainings on helping community organizations adapt evidence-based planning/evidence based health research to their programs and interventions

## Next Steps

Silicon Valley Community Foundation staff is reviewing and analyzing the content from all nine strategic conversations, alongside results from a community survey and comprehensive review of local research reports, to provide input and recommendations for the Board of Directors to consider in determining future directions and strategies. These strategies will include all of the community foundations tools: grantmaking, community initiatives, convening, research, donor engagement and policy/advocacy efforts.

For more information, to download the issue brief for the conversation or archived webcast presentation of the keynote address, please visit our website at [www.siliconvalleycf.org](http://www.siliconvalleycf.org). You can also email questions, comments or suggestions to Charu Seth, administrative assistant at [cseth@siliconvalleycf.org](mailto:cseth@siliconvalleycf.org).