

## Blackfeet Tribal Health Department Releases Community Health Assessment

The Blackfeet Tribal Health Department is pleased to announce the publication of the [2017 Blackfeet Reservation Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#)! This CHA contains information and data about health on the Blackfeet Reservation in 2016-17. Featured community health priorities include mental health, substance abuse, access to primary health care, violence and public safety, and maternal/infant health.



Photo by Kirsten Krane

Although the assessment reveals many health challenges, the sometimes grim data will help the tribe going forward. Before this report, little information on the health of Blackfeet community members was available. Now, data from the CHA can be used to plan future health improvement projects and programs to serve the community, as well as a baseline for tracking change. The CHA shows a tremendous community effort to improve overall Blackfeet health.



Photo by Rosemary Cree Medicine

“This project involved broad community input and hard work on behalf of so many individuals and organizations. In [the] document, you'll find information on tremendous health issues we are tackling ... Despite all of it, I take heart thinking of the strength our people possess and the struggles we have come through in the past” said Rosemary Cree Medicine, Director, Blackfeet Tribal Health Department. She further stressed the constant efforts towards greater community health saying, “We've been building our



Photo by Kirsten Krane

health resources and capacity over the past several years with the creation of the 2 new tribally-run health clinics, the new Community Health Representatives building, and a Wellness Center on the way. I truly feel we are on the right path to tackle these issues.”

Some data from the CHA:

- Breastfeeding initiation at the IHS Blackfeet Community Hospital (BCH) is 78%, and 44% of all mother breastfed exclusively
- In 2016, 33% of mothers who gave birth at BCH were still exclusively breastfeeding their infants at 2 months of age
- The top cause of death on Blackfeet in 2014-15 was cancer
- 39% of respondents to the CHA survey said they use traditional healers
- Falls were the top cause of injury
- 69% of Blackfeet residents reported food insecurity
- 33% of Browning 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported attempting suicide in 2016
- Rates of substance abuse are high in many sectors of the community
- Diabetes was the #1 diagnosis for adults seen at BCH



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The CHA was conducted with the help of community partners, the Billings Area Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Indian Health Service, tribal organizations including Blackfeet Community College, Blackfeet Tribal Business Council, Browning/Heart Butte Public Schools, and the Rocky Mountain Tribal Epidemiology Center. The Center for Health Equity, Education and Research (CHEER) at Boston Medical Center provided technical assistance. Funding for the assessment was provided by the State of Montana's Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with the Montana Healthcare Foundation.



The CHA is made available with permission from Rosemary Cree Medicine, Director, Blackfeet Tribal Health Department. Copies of the CHA are available from the Blackfeet Tribal Health Director, from CHEER and via the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders' Council website. For questions regarding the report or for more information, contact the CHEER office at [CHEERequity@gmail.com](mailto:CHEERequity@gmail.com).