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Strategic health plan to address important health issues

A long-range strategic plan to address the issues residents say are the most important health risks to the community has been released by the Oak Park Department of Public Health.

Called MHOP – or *Mapping a Healthier Oak Park* – the initiative grew from a community health assessment last year that identified improving the connectivity and visibility of the local public health system, reducing substance abuse, encouraging responsible sexual behavior and reducing obesity and its related diseases as the most important health issues faced by the community.

“MHOP represents a comprehensive strategic planning approach to creating programs to help address issues most important to the community,” said Georgeen Polyak, Ph.D., Oak Park’s public health director. “This approach gives us the information and tools to better focus resources on the health issues that are most important to residents.”

The MHOP process began last year by polling the community through a behavioral risk survey conducted with the help of Northern Illinois University. An assessment of the overall public health system in the community also was conducted. Information from these efforts will now be used to create specific programs to help combat major health risks.

“Mapping a Healthier Oak Park is a blueprint for the future. It provides the parameters within which we can effectively plan for how best to focus resources on meeting the public health needs of the community,” Polyak said. “MHOP is not the tactics we will implement, but the broader objectives and strategies. It provides a tool that is flexible enough to change as community needs change, but structured enough to bring consistency to our approaches.”

For more information on MHOP and the strategic planning for public health in Oak Park, call 358.5480 or email health@oak-park.us. The MHOP also will be posted on the Health Department’s pages at www.oak-park.us.

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