

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT ALLIANCE



Partnering To Build Healthier Communities Since 2003

First Edition
October 2023

WHAT IS HIA?

Established in 2003 and originally named the Primary Care Action Group, the Health Improvement Alliance (HIA), was created to help address the health needs of the residents living in Greater Bridgeport. This is an area which includes Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Milford, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull.

HIA is a regional partnership of two neighboring hospitals, Bridgeport Hospital and St. Vincent's Medical Center, all seven local departments of public health, Optimus Healthcare, Southwest Community Health Center, and about 65 community and non-profit organizations that serve the region. HIA currently has more than 200 active members across its partner organizations.

Celebrating 20 years of serving Greater Bridgeport!



On September 26, 2023, more than 90 HIA members, representing about 40 organizations, gathered to celebrate the 20th Anniversary. The group spent the morning discussing the past two decades and planning for the future. HIA received proclamations from the City of Bridgeport and the Town of Stratford marking this day as the Health Improvement Alliance Day.



CHOOSING OUR FOCUS AREAS

HIA conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) of Greater Bridgeport every three years and together we have completed four CHNAs since 2013. The CHNA helps us track the health and wellbeing of the community and identify priority areas for us to focus on.

The most recent CHNA included data collection and input from community residents, health and social services experts, and people who serve our community every day. Our current priority areas, selected as a result of the CHNA process, are Access to Care, Behavioral Health, Child Wellbeing, and Healthy Lifestyles. HIA has one task force dedicated to each priority area and these groups meet monthly.

Scan QR code to read
our latest CHNA completed in 2022



7

Towns served

90

Hours of meetings per
year

200+

Active members

65

Participating organizations

4

Task forces

MAJOR MILESTONES

- Established the Hope Charitable Pharmacy (Hope) in Bridgeport in 2011 providing medication assistance to eligible patients. From September 2022 to October 2023, Hope assisted 4,044 patients and filled 18,778 prescriptions valued at more than \$1.2M.
- Created the Know Your Numbers program (KYN), which provides free health screenings in local food pantries empowering residents with information about their health status and educating them on how to reduce their risks of chronic disease. KYN has served more than **3,000** people in the region since 2014.
- Developed the Walk 'n Talk program in 2016 to increase free physical activity opportunities and to foster stronger relationships between community members and health care providers. Since then, similar walks have been hosted in multiple towns throughout Greater Bridgeport and beyond.
- In 2014, HIA helped form the regional Community Care Team, also known as the CCT. The CCT is a group of local organizations that meets weekly to support the care of patients with chronic physical and mental health needs with an overall goal of reducing unnecessary emergency department visits.

Partnering Through a Pandemic



All committees continued to meet virtually each month and HIA expanded to include the Child Wellbeing Task Force in early 2021



HIA launched a website, social media, and online resource page to share reliable Covid-19 resources with the community



In late 2020, HIA began hosting weekly regional Covid-19 coordination calls with healthcare and public health partners



The Trusted Voices video series was created with community leaders talking about why they decided to get vaccinated



Through December 2021, HIA partners hosted more than **18,988** vaccination clinics administering more than **320,969** doses combined

COVID RESPONSE

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic became a main focus for our partner organizations and the partnership as a whole. Each task force worked together to respond to community needs that were a result of or made worse by the pandemic.

During 2020, every HIA committee continued to meet monthly via Zoom. By December 2020, it was decided that further collaboration was needed and HIA leaders convened a weekly regional COVID-19 coordination meeting with representatives from both hospitals, both federally qualified health centers, and the 7 departments of public health.

At each phase of the pandemic, from education around masking, to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, partners found it valuable to collaborate on discussing challenges, sharing resources and building a response together. Since 2020, HIA has taken multiple steps to align its work and deepen relationships to better serve the community, especially in response to needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.



A Year in Review: October 2022-September 2023

OVERALL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The development of the HIA Linktree, an interactive online list of resources for food, health services, and other services with maps to guide the user experience.
- Collaborating to provide our first HIA Community Health Fair at Make the Road CT in Bridgeport. In May 2023, twelve partner organizations attended this event to provide free health screenings, valuable information related to primary care referrals, nutrition education, behavioral health resource information, HIV testing, and more.
- In partnership with Connecticut Hospital Association and The Diaper Bank of Connecticut, Bridgeport Hospital and St. Vincent's Medical Center implemented Diaper Connections, a pilot program that addresses diaper need. To date, both hospitals combined have enrolled more than **300** children with plans to expand distribution through additional HIA partners.



A group of nursing students from Fairfield University provided Know Your Numbers screenings to participants at Make the Road CT.



Scan QR code to visit the HIA Linktree and learn more about valuable resources throughout the Greater Bridgeport region.

ACCESS TO CARE TASK FORCE

- Monthly Access to Care meetings continue to be a place where local health professionals work together to troubleshoot healthcare access issues that their patients and clients are facing, allowing for sharing of resources and connections to services in real time.
- Recently created a list of immunization clinics in the region. This list was developed in response to meeting conversations where task force members shared the challenges of meeting the school immunization needs for under-resourced, immigrant populations.
- Recently created a guide of all local health care providers that serve uninsured and underinsured patients. This guide was created in English and Spanish and has been distributed across community events.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TASK FORCE

- Currently exploring funding opportunities to support 12 new trainers in delivering Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). This training equips individuals with the knowledge, skills and resources that will empower community members to reduce mental health challenges and support each other.
- Participated in two resource fairs, where for the first time, there was an HIA presence at different community events. Distributed information about HIA and the CHNA to inform the community and recruit volunteers.
- Currently developing a Waitlist Toolkit to provide resources to those waiting to see a behavioral health provider.
- Working on compiling a list of best practices to share across HIA organizations on how to retain and recruit behavioral health professionals.

CHILD WELLBEING TASK FORCE

- Hosted several Walk and Talks with local partners, such as family resource centers, United Way, behavioral health clinics, hospitals, and the YMCA. These events provided an opportunity for parents and caregivers of young children to get outside and socialize while learning about important health topics from public health and healthcare professionals.
- Formed the new HIA Community Health Worker (CHW) Work Group to increase engagement of CHWs in the work of HIA.
- Offered screenings of the documentary film, *Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope*, to raise awareness of Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) and the lifelong effect they have on health and behavior. The overall goal is to encourage the addition of ACEs screenings in more healthcare settings.
- In partnership with the Connecticut Institute for Refugees and Immigrants (CIRI), the task force plans to address behavioral health needs of new Bridgeport refugees. Using a culturally-informed model of care, the task force will offer weekly support groups with four cohorts over five 90-minute sessions.



Photo from a Walk and Talk event held in Stratford in 2023.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES TASKFORCE

- Hosted a #GiveHealthy virtual food drive collecting **1,119** pounds of healthy food for five food pantries across the region.
- Bridgeport Hospital, St. Vincent's Medical Center, and Stratford Health Department worked with CT Foodshare to host biweekly free food distributions, serving more than **12,500** people.
- Designed a simple healthy eating handout for use at HIA events which was then tested with community members and found to be a useful tool for educating on the importance of healthy eating to manage blood sugar and blood pressure.
- Received funding to sponsor Bridgeport Bucks, \$5 vouchers accepted at all nine Bridgeport Farmers Market locations.
- Region 1 Local Health Departments hosted a mental health webinar series, "Mental Health in a Post COVID World." The three webinars focused on different mental health topics like knowing when and how to ask for help, the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, how to access support, and other topics.



HIA Bridgeport Bucks
These \$5 vouchers are accepted at all 9 Bridgeport markets and help residents buy more fresh produce.

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QUESTIONS ?
WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

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