

Community Needs Assessment in Barre, Massachusetts

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Abstract

Our team worked with Dr. Konstantinos Deligiannidis at the Barre Family Health Center (BFHC) in Barre, MA. Our work focused on the population living in Barre, Petersham, Oakham, Hardwick, New Braintree and Hubbardston, MA.

Our mission was to determine what the region’s health concerns and community concerns are and to consider solutions that address them.

To determine the region’s issues and concerns we performed a Community Needs Assessment. We asked participants to rank the severity of 11 issues of potential concern.

We conducted the assessment as we canvassed the community, visited local institutions and spoke to the region’s residents.

We hope that the BFHC will use the information we gathered and the solutions we have considered to help guide their regional improvement efforts and community outreach programs going forward.



Figure 1. Photos from our visits to Imbier-Monson Farm in New Braintree, MA and Quabbin Regional High School in Barre, MA

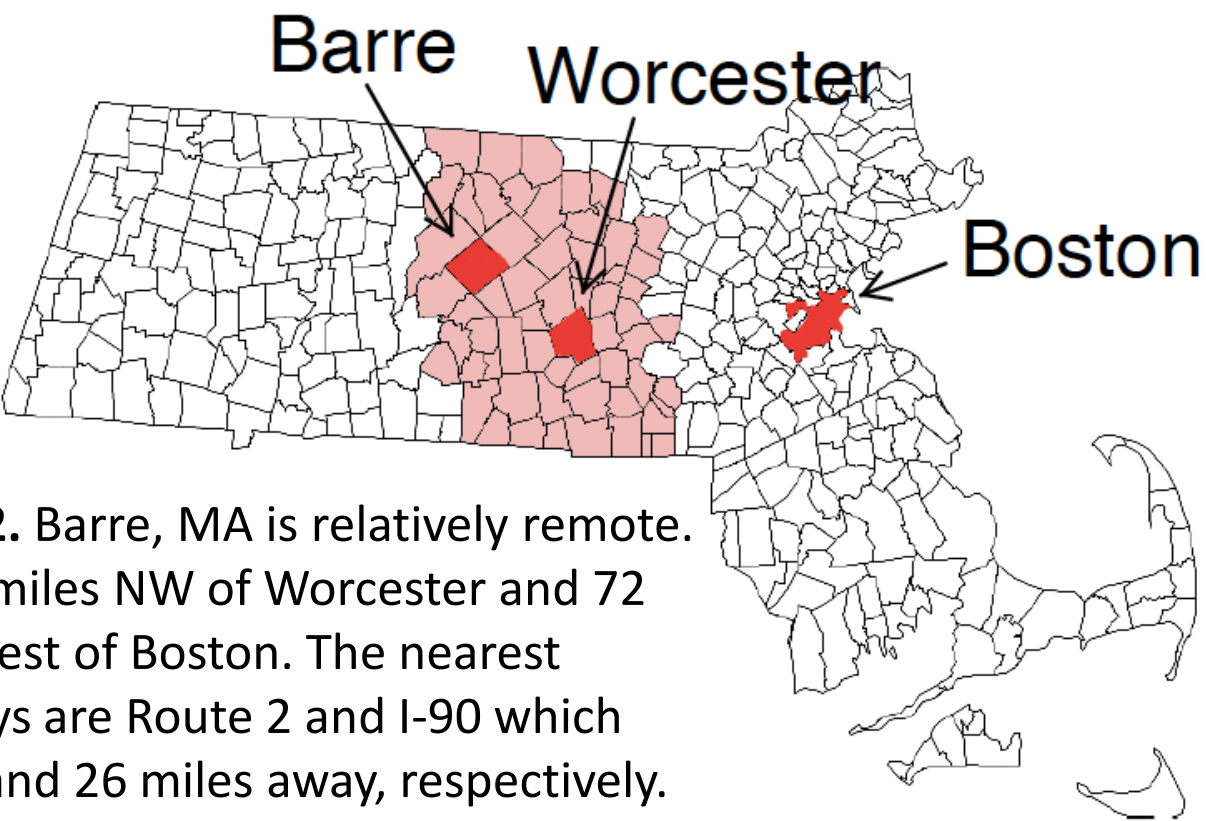


Figure 2. Barre, MA is relatively remote. It is 22 miles NW of Worcester and 72 miles west of Boston. The nearest highways are Route 2 and I-90 which are 12 and 26 miles away, respectively.

Methods

Canvassing the Community

- We visited farms, local schools, commercial districts, churches, police stations, municipal buildings, the local pharmacy, mutual aid organizations and town centers.

Assessing Community Needs

The Community Health Survey

- We developed a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire to rate participants’ feelings about 11 different community concerns. The scale ranged from 1 = not a problem to 5 = a very big problem.
- Two open ended questions asked participants to share their main concern about the community and to provide ideas for improving the community.

Administration of the Survey

- We randomly distributed the survey to 74 area residents

Characteristics of Participants:

- 53% were residents of Barre, MA
- 47% were residents of surrounding towns
- 61% were women, 31% male, 8% did not specify

Concerns Addressed in the Community Needs Assessment

- See Figure 3

Data Analysis

- We determined the community’s greatest concerns by tallying the number of times that each concern was ranked “4=often a problem” or “5=a very big problem”.
- Results are displayed in Figure 3.

Results

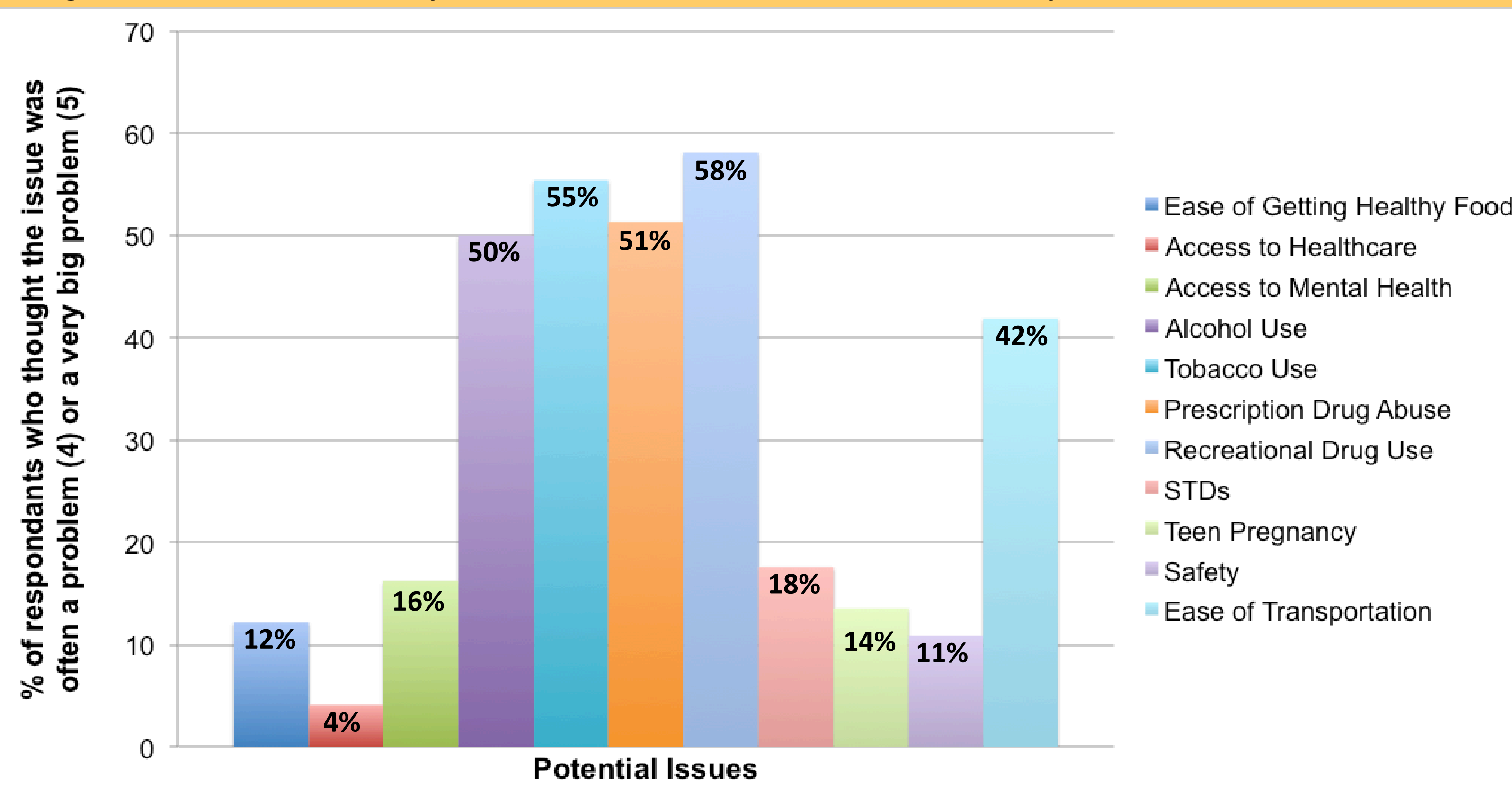
>40% of the survey participants rated alcohol use, tobacco use, prescription drug abuse, recreational drug use, and ease of transportation as either “4=often a problem” or “5=a big problem”.

Conclusions

The results of our survey suggest that the community’s greatest concerns are:

- Substance abuse
- Ease of transportation

Figure 3. Barre Community Needs Assessment Results - “What are you Barre concerned about?”



Solutions

Solutions for Prescription Drug Abuse

1. Massachusetts Online Prescription Monitoring Program

- All BFHC physicians must use the program to review a patient’s Rx opiate history prior to writing a 1st time Rx.

2. Take advantage of the public record

- Local arrest reports and court reports are published online on a weekly basis.
- Create and implement a workflow to enable physicians and nurses to read these reports.

3. Implement the FDA’s latest recommendations for tighter controls on Rx painkillers containing hydrocodone

- Fewer refills; require patients to take Rx to pharmacy, i.e., physicians can no longer phone them in.

4. Require identification when picking up Rx at BFHC

5. Implement prescription take-back days at locations like the senior center and BFHC

Solutions for General Substance Abuse

1. Institute community oriented talks at BFHC addressing substance abuse topics

2. Reinstitute D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)

- Secure funding and reinstitute the program in area schools.

3. Promote & elicit the help of Mutual Aid Organizations

- Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous

Solutions for Transportation Problems

- Establish a volunteer car-pooling program
- Establish bike lanes and strictly enforce road safety
- Improve the late bus program for students participating in after-school activities (which will also increase student participation in activities)
- Enlist more transportation services for the elderly and disabled

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