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The State of Mental Health in Davidson County

Significance: The state of mental health in Davidson County is an important question as Nashville grows in tandem with the needs of the population, new and old. Citizens, leaders, and stakeholders alike have demanded this exponential growth not foreshadow the detriment of those native to Nashville and surrounding areas. One vital aspect of this demand is to evaluate the state of mental health and fortify the behavioral health system.

Methods: Vanderbilt University Medical Center Community Health Improvement Team (VUMC CHIT), in accordance with Internal Revenue Code Section 501(r), conducted a community health needs assessment (CHNA). For the CHNA, the VUMC CHIT team employed a three-prong qualitative data collection protocol that included community surveys, community listening sessions, and face-to-face interviews. Each collection method employed open-ended questions to stakeholders about community strengths, limitations, and needs. Coupled with extensive local secondary data findings, the mental health of Davidson County was evaluated from many sides including programming, health outcomes, community input.

Results: Results from analysis show Davidson County's growth outpaces any other county in the state. Concordantly, Davidson County has more mental health professionals than any other county. Furthermore, citizens have knowledge about mental health needs, trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and vulnerable populations. However, people lack connections to the vast resources available in the county and there is a low mental health professional to citizen ratio.

Conclusion: Conclusions from the practicum project include the need to build bridges between health silos, connect patients with existing programs, and invest more local resources to address ACEs.

