



# Carbon County Nonprofit Forum

September 21, 2021

Summary

Presented By:



## Overview

On September 21, 2021, approximately 40 community members met at Blue Mountain Resort for the annual Carbon County Nonprofit Forum. The Forum included representatives from local area nonprofit organizations, the two health networks in the region, community volunteers, and funders. The event focused on networking, professional development, and collaboration for the benefit of Carbon County.

The Forum featured an afternoon session for *Community Conversations* to learn about existing partnerships in Carbon County and address issues organizations and residents face, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Top concerns include:

- Transportation
- Housing
- Mental Health
- Community Support Awareness

The Carbon County Community Foundation is partnering with the Carbon Collaborative and other organizations to identify opportunities to make an impact in these areas over the next twelve months. All concerned residents are invited to participate in these activities. Details of the sessions follow.

If you have questions, would like further information, or want to get involved, please contact the Carbon County Community Foundation at [info@cccfoundpa.org](mailto:info@cccfoundpa.org) or 1-855-545-1311.

## Summary | Cross-Sector Spotlight: Carbon Collaborative

This presentation highlighted the work and accomplishments of the Carbon Collaborative, formerly known as the Interagency and Family Collaborative Board. Founded in 2010, the Carbon Collaborative is a network of more than 20 organizations committed to a community-wide approach to address health and human services issues in Carbon County. The goal is to encourage collaboration across multiple agencies to address the needs of area residents. Rosemarie Lister, Senior Network Director, Community Health for St. Luke's University Health Network, and Secretary for the Carbon Collaborative, presented on behalf of the partnership.



The Carbon Collaborative meets five times a year, and each meeting features a brief presentation from an area agency. The September 2021 session featured Lanta and Carbon Transit speakers, followed by updates regarding their respective organizations. Representatives from the Carbon County Commissioners' office, county health and human service agencies, nonprofit organizations, and funders participate in the meetings. Multiple sub-committees work to address the community issues raised during the Carbon Collaborative meetings.

Nonprofit Forum participants were invited to join the Carbon Collaborative and follow the updates and meeting notes. Carbon Collaborative meeting records are available on the Carbon County CommunityFoundation website: [www.cccfoundpa.org/collaborative-board/](http://www.cccfoundpa.org/collaborative-board/)

## **Summary | Community Health Needs Assessment**

Preliminary results from St. Luke's University Health Network's *Community Health Needs Assessment* were shared with Nonprofit Forum attendees. The assessment is conducted every three years as mandated by the Affordable Care Act. St. Luke's hosted a Carbon-County-specific session in March 2021 to gather data and reports from community representatives.

Preliminary results show:

Assets in the Carbon County:

- Improved economic opportunity
- Arrival of increased and expanded health services
- Solid community organizations and partnerships.

Issues of concern exacerbated by COVID-19:

- Opioid and substance misuse
- Mental health and access to care
- Chronic medical conditions and aging populations.

Short Term Challenges:

- Housing access and evictions
- Food insecurity
- Strains on the senior population

Long Term Challenges:

- Transportation limitations
- Insufficient mental health care capacity and services

The complete Community Health Needs St. Luke's University Health Network will release an assessment report in 2022.



## Summary | Issues & Solutions for Carbon County

Participants then formed small discussion groups to consider the *Community Health Needs Assessment* data and their observations and interactions with the community. Each small group (4-5 people) discussed the following questions before sharing key points with the larger audience.

- What issues do you see in the community?
- Where are the gaps in services or facilities?
- What are the greatest needs or barriers to your organization's success?

### Transportation

- Lack of awareness and understanding of the resources that exist in the county (Lanta, Carbon Transit) and how they operate.
- Uber and Lyft are not widely available in the county.
- Transportation to and from work is essential for residents, especially those in recovery from substance abuse and do not currently have a driver's license. Job stability is critical, and the instability of transportation is a danger to their recovery.
- Physical structure of the roads and pedestrian paths is a concern. People and children who rely on walking are at risk because of the routes they need to take.

### Housing

- No shelter options for single women, only for men and for families.
- Lack of options for affordable housing. It is rare to find an apartment for rent under \$900/month.
- No secure shelter options for victims of domestic abuse.

### Mental Health/Support Groups

- Limited services for those affected by a cancer diagnosis. Cancer Support Community of the Lehigh Valley is currently the only agency offering programs.
- "Meth Psychosis" – severe personality changes in clients as a result of continued drug use.
- Difficult to attract people to pursue a career in the mental health field.
- Difficult for an organization to access the resources to maintain a mental health professional on staff.
- Insurance does not always cover mental health support, so the cost is a barrier.

### General Awareness

- Agencies are not always aware of what other resources exist or what the guidelines are.
- 2-1-1 is a referral hotline, but many do not know it exists. An informal poll of the room showed that only 2 or 3 people knew what 2-1-1 is.



Participants were then asked to return to their smaller groups and discuss the following questions. They were encouraged to share any idea, regardless of the cost or resources required – "no wrong answers here."

- What are the possible solutions?
- What resources are needed to address some of these issues?
- Who should be at the table to solve this issue?

#### Transportation

- Other counties (possibly Schuylkill) offer services like job coaching, including taking people to and from work.
- Are other counties providing other options that can be replicated in Carbon County?
- Increase the presence of Uber and Lyft – this can assist with transportation and provide additional employment opportunities for residents.
- Is there an organization that can get cars donated to support this effort?
- Create a transportation authority. There are hundreds of transportation grant opportunities through the PA DCED. Would need to work with elected officials to apply.

#### Housing

- Change the zoning so multiple people can rent one house and split the \$900 rent (with separate leases).

#### General Awareness

- Partnerships with local media
- Change the perception of how services are delivered – "there are no wrong doors."
- Create awareness where people show up for help (for example, a mental health professional in a primary care facility).

#### Other

- Law changes and advocacy
- Money and other resources for organizations
- Federal minimum wage increase
- Build off the assets that exist in Carbon County. It is a great place to live, work, and play.
- Start a small business initiative. Instead of recruiting a larger company to replace retailers who have left, small businesses should join forces. They can be the lifeline of the county.



## **Conclusion | Next Steps**

The main points of discussion from the Nonprofit Forum will be compiled into a summary and shared with participants and a wider audience of community members. In partnership with members of the Carbon Collaborative, the Carbon County Community Foundation will lead efforts to tap into existing partnerships to explore the most viable solutions. The team will also consider developing new partnerships and collaborations (without duplicating efforts) to explore workable solutions. Participants were encouraged to volunteer in areas where they have a passion for assisting and seeing a resolution.

The Carbon County Community Foundation's goal is to report positive results and impact at the 2022 Carbon County Nonprofit Forum.