

Executive Summary:

Health Disparities & The YMCA OF Greater Indianapolis

The YMCA of Greater Indianapolis (YOGI) seeks to strengthen communities and improve the lives of its community members. This project, carried out by graduate students from Indiana University's School of Public & Environmental Affairs (SPEA) and advised by Professor Barry Rubin, answers the following four questions:

1. What are the health disparities in each of the YMCA communities?
2. What are the barriers to working with disparate populations?
3. How should this affect the services and programs that the YOGI offers as well as how it offers them?
4. How do we make this analysis sustainable and repeatable in the future?

Our four work teams, Quantitative Analysis, Qualitative Analysis, Program Evaluation, and Policy and Management, addressed these questions, focusing on cancer deaths, hypertension hospitalizations, diabetes diagnoses, asthma diagnoses, and heart disease diagnoses, and found the following:

Identifying Health Disparities and Barriers to Working with Disparate Populations

A health disparity is a difference in health outcomes between different groups of people. The Quantitative Analysis Team used trend analysis, analysis of variance tests, and correlation analysis to identify health disparities and barriers to working with disparate populations. The result of this work is a series of center-specific portraits describing how each center varies from Marion County averages—demonstrating that every center has a distinct population with unique needs.

The Qualitative Analysis Team conducted a membership survey and a community survey in the areas surrounding the Jordan and Pike centers. While the health status survey results were inconclusive, the team found that the major barriers to regular exercise in the Indianapolis community are lack of time, lack of motivation, and lack of physical energy.

Overall, YOGI members are proportionally more white and female than the overall population of Marion County. The most underrepresented groups in the YOGI membership are those making less than \$49,999 a year and African-American and Hispanic community members. Athenaeum and Indy Bike Hub have the greatest difference between membership demographics and the centers' service area demographics of the ten centers analyzed. The center portraits also reveal that four centers (Athenaeum, Avondale Meadows, City Way, and Indianapolis Bike Hub) have a rate of diabetes diagnosis greater than the Marion County average while three centers (Baxter, Jordan, and Pike) have a diabetes diagnosis rate less than the average. Survey results show that YOGI members generally feel safe in the centers and in their neighborhoods, but feel less safe in YOGI parking lots.

Evaluation of YMCA Programming Addressing Health Disparities

The Program Evaluation Team researched three wellness programs—Diabetes Prevention Program, Enhance®Fitness, and LIVESTRONG®—by interviewing center and Association wellness staff and examining the relevant program data. The Policy and Management Team reviewed YOGI policies, procedures, and practices through extensive review of existing policies, interviews with staff, and site visits.

At the organizational level, the teams found two major strengths: first, that the staff are well connected to the mission and, second, that new YOGI staff members are introduced to the Association Strategic Plan during their orientation. These both help staff engage with YOGI's mission. However, we recommend YOGI involve its staff more in the strategic planning process and implementation. The team found that most of the center staff were unaware of YOGI's strategic plan and were not implementing it on a day-to-day basis. Better connection between the center staff to the wider YOGI organization is a major theme of this Capstone's recommendations.

The major organizational recommendations for YOGI are to:

- Provide a Framework for Staff Involvement in Creating the Strategic Plan
- Assign Individual Metrics to Broader Organizational Goals
- Develop New Membership Options to Accommodate Larger Families
- Provide Staff Trainings on Programs, Emphasizing the Importance of Program Data Collection and Entry

Based on the findings of the Community Survey conducted at the Jordan and Pike Centers, we make the following recommendations:

- Consider Offering ½ Hour Group Exercise Classes
- Consider Scheduling High-Use Equipment
- Consider Assisting Individuals in Finding Work-out Partners

Making this Analysis Sustainable

Repeating the analyses we have conducted over the past few months will allow YOGI to see the evolution of its organization and impact on the community over time. We have provided tools in the full report that will help make this analysis sustainable. These resources include data sources like savi.org, implementation steps for the member health survey and community interviews, questions used for staff interviews, data points to collect internally, and logic models to clarify the connection between the program activities and outcomes for the Diabetes Prevention Program, Enhance®Fitness, and LIVESTRONG®.

This Capstone team hopes that its investigation into health disparities, barriers to helping disparate populations, and wellness programming will help YOGI and the individual centers best serve their communities. Additionally, strategically using the tools produced by this project will allow YOGI to continue to adapt its programs to its environment and optimize its impact.