

# HUD Healthy Communities Transformation Initiative

## Defining Healthy Communities

What makes a community healthy? Is it the number of people with disease? Or is community health a product of neighborhood factors such as quality parks and schools, good housing, accessible shops and services, efficient transportation, and safe, clean environments? Across the country, many communities are taking action to improve the health and well-being of their residents by promoting sustainable and healthy neighborhoods. Identifying the right indicators to track and evaluate determinants of neighborhood health can be challenging because there are few reliable, and standardize measures designed to address the range of physical and social determinants of health at the neighborhood level. As more communities take on the challenge of integrating health into community planning and development, there is an growing need for a comprehensive, standard set of neighborhood-level indicators of health and well-being to help communities establish baseline conditions, prioritize investments, and evaluate progress towards community health goals.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is a leader in promoting community health. Using housing as a platform to improve quality of life, HUD's mission is "to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and affordable homes for all." The Healthy Communities Transformation Initiative (HCTI) supports and advances this holistic vision of community health.

## Healthy Communities Transformation Initiative (HCTI)

The Healthy Communities Transformation Initiative (HCTI), funded by HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (OLHCHH), is designed to help improve the health systems and the physical, social, and economic service structures that support healthy living and healthy behaviors in our communities. Healthy Housing Solutions, Inc.

(Solutions) is leading the team developing this initiative. Two key elements of the HCTI are the Healthy Communities Index (HCI) and Healthy Communities Assessment Tool (HCAT).

HUD launched the HCTI with the goal of developing a systematic, evidence-based approach to assist local jurisdictions assess the physical, social, and economic roots of community health, and to identify actionable policy and program activities to improve residents' health and quality of life. While numerous communities have begun integrating health into community development and planning, until the HCTI, many have lacked access to standard, comprehensive and practical tools to help them evaluate the most important community determinants of health. The HCI and HCAT provide standardized, evidence-based measures that communities can use as a starting point to identify and prioritize issues of greatest concern.

**The main objective of the HCTI is to create a unified national effort that:**

- Defines criteria and metrics for community health;
- Supports healthy communities research; and
- Showcases best and most promising practices for healthy communities.



# HCTI AT A GLANCE

## OBJECTIVES

To create a unified national effort that:

- Defines healthy community criteria
- Supports healthy communities research
- Showcases best and most promising practices for healthy communities

## DOMAINS/TOPIC AREAS

- Environmental Hazards
- Healthy Systems & Public Safety
- Neighborhood Characteristics
- Transportation
- Natural Areas
- Housing
- Employment Opportunities
- Educational Opportunities
- Social Cohesion
- Economic Health

## ANTICIPATED PRODUCTS

1. **Community Health Indicator System:** Indicators of social, environmental and economic conditions can be used to evaluate baseline conditions and monitor progress towards objectives in a neighborhood, planning area or city.
2. **“Healthy Development” Checklist:** A downloadable checklist of development targets (associated with each indicator) to help jurisdictions assess whether plans and projects help achieve community health objectives.
3. **Menu of Policies and Design Strategies:** A listing of potential actions that project sponsors or policymakers can take to achieve development targets in the checklist and advance community health objectives.

**Contact us for more information:**

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### HEALTHY HOUSING SOLUTIONS

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The HCTI supports community efforts to improve neighborhood conditions and transform community health with standardized healthy community indicators. HCI indicators were selected based on their measurability, nexus to health, and relationship to established national public health objectives. All indicators were evaluated for their ability to be easily interpreted, scalable for a range of communities, and to motivate and create actionable policy and program change.

HCI indicators form the foundation of the HCAT, which has been designed to be easily navigated so HCI indicators can be broadly applied in any community. In addition to facilitating use of the HCI to evaluate community health, the HCAT features resources and tools to help communities set and achieve goals. These may eventually include a Healthy Development Checklist of suggested health or development targets and a menu of policies strategies to advance community health objectives.

The HCI and HCAT are being piloted in four cities that have demonstrated an interest in and commitment to measuring and improving community health. The HCTI project team provides technical assistance to organizations in the pilot cities as well as access to national experts and opportunities to help integrate healthy community criteria into local policies and programs. Additionally, the HCTI goal is to promote interagency collaboration and opportunities to define and expand a national commitment to creating healthy communities.

Solutions is leading a team of uniquely qualified partners (ICF International, the International City/County Management Association, the National Center for Healthy Housing, and the Urban Institute) and been guided by a panel of national experts to develop these innovative tools to support healthy communities. We encourage you to contact us for more information.

“The HCTI supports community efforts to improve neighborhood conditions and transform community health through the development and application of standardized healthy community indicators.”

