

Executive Summary

The study, *The Need for Caring in North and Central Brooklyn*, was undertaken as a Community Health Needs Assessment to determine needs, barriers, and gaps in access to health care services in 15 zip codes in this part of Brooklyn. The communities identified have long been known as medically underserved and in need of more equal treatment. The communities are: Bushwick, Beford-Stuyvesant, East New York, Williamsburg, Brownsville and East Flatbush, Crown Heights, Flatbush, Fort Greene. Other communities included in this study are: Downtown Brooklyn, Gowanus, and Greenpoint.

The *Need for Caring* study was undertaken by a partnership of three community organizations with significant academic back-up. The original goal was to undertake a survey of 600 community residents and a series of focus groups to capture populations that would not be part of the survey. Six hundred forty four surveys were completed in the 15 zip codes. To ensure that the surveyed reflected the community, there were four screening questions: income and household size, age, and residence in one of the 15 zip codes.

The quantitative part of the survey contains ten demographic questions and 29 questions that address the persons' health care experience, including access to and barriers to care. The survey also includes qualitative questions in the form of three open-ended questions and additional requests for information added to the quantitative questions. The focus groups bring an additional dimension and focus on the qualitative findings of this study.

Important Findings:

- The population captured in this survey mirrors the general population of the community in which the 15 zip codes are located in North and Central Brooklyn.
 - 39% of the respondents in this survey are foreign-born, and 40% of the population of Brooklyn is foreign-born.
 - Race and Ethnicity -- over 80% of the respondents in the survey are Black and Latino. The population of Central Brooklyn is 80% Black, including African Americans and Caribbean/West Indians.
 - The income for people who are working in this study appears to be lower than the median income in the identified zip codes. In the *Need for Caring* 58 percent (201 of the 300 respondents) indicated an income less than \$30,000 per year. The lowest median income is found in 11237

(\$23,104). Several of the zip codes had median incomes a little higher than \$30,000 per year (11206, 11233, 11216, 11208, 11207). The highest median incomes are found in: 11201 (\$56,293) and 11217 (\$49,567).

Access to care was not always available within all of the zip codes studied. Doctors and Dentists are the most frequently named providers that are needed. The types of services which respondents had most difficulty accessing by zip code are:

- A doctor or nurse – 11212 (20.5%), 11226 (25.9%), 11201 (31.3%).
- Dentist – 11221 (27.8%), 11206 (29.6%), 11208 (29.4%), 11212 (23.1%), 11205 (30.4%), 11217 (30.4%), 11222 (33.3%).
- Prenatal Care – 11212 (15.4%), 11238 (21.7%)
- Pediatrics – 11221 (19.4%)

In the open-ended questions on the survey, the same types of services were identified as needed in the community: Dental care (86), more doctors and clinics (76), pediatricians (35), OB/GYN (38), mental health (32), and geriatric services (18), were the most frequently mentioned as services needed in the community. A 2008 study by the City Council and done by the Health and Hospitals Corporation, listed the same services as needed in the community. Put in cite.

Specialty care services were also mentioned frequently as needed in the community are: general specialists (44), eye doctor (14), cardiologist (10), and orthopedist. Services for special populations, is identified ten times. Recreation and preventive services was identified by eight people.

Barriers to care were also identified. Respondents were read a list of issues and asked to check all that apply. “Did any of the following ever limit your ability to secure health care or cause you to wait before you or your household member went to the doctor or nurse in your neighborhood?” Almost half of the respondents (48.6%) have not had limited ability to secure health care services. The highest percent of reasons given by zip code as barriers to care are:

- Could not afford the bill by zip code – 11238 (37.5%), 11201 (22.2%)
- No health insurance by zip code – 11208 (19.5%), 11212 (21.4%), 11238 (25%), 11201 (33.3%), and 11233 (29.6%).
- Had to wait too long to get an appointment by zip code – 11237 (42.9%), 11221 (52.6%), 11212 (21.4%), 11238 (20.8%), and 11222 (33.3%), 11213 (14.5%)
- Had to wait too long at the appointment by zip code – 11237 (36.7%), 11221 (28.9%), and 11238 (16.9%).
- Have not had limits accessing doctor or nurse by zip code – 11206 (29.6%), 11207 (25.5%), 11217 (38.5%) and 11213 (49.1%).

Special Findings

Of all of the people with different race and ethnicity cited, African Americans had the highest number and percent of persons using the emergency room in the last two years, 155, which was 51.5% of the African American respondents. Of this total, the highest number of visits to the ER by African Americans was found in: 11205 (12), 11207 (17), 11208 (17), 11212 (30 – more than half of those surveyed), 11216 (16), and 11226 (12). 54 of the African American ER users are male, 95 are female. 22 are married, 126 are not married. 67 are working and 79 are not working. 140 of the 155 African Americans (90%) have health insurance coverage, 79 are covered by Medicaid. There is high incidence of illnesses found in the African American population surveyed: 50 have asthma; 26 have diabetes; 46 have high blood pressure, 23 have bone and joint problems, 29 have hearing or vision problems, and 19 are depressed.

Pictures of the Communities

To develop the pictures of the communities below, zip codes were combined based on: contiguous borders; similar populations; and the priority code assigned to them. The data in each zip code that was collected during the survey and reported in this profile, is out-of-the-ordinary, and stands out as important information to review and understand. This information about the communities is from the analysis of the Community Health Survey – *The Need for Caring in North and Central Brooklyn*.

The data on median income for these zip codes is for the population of the entire zip code.

11237 has the lowest median income - \$23,104. In 11206, the median income is somewhat higher at \$33,657. In 11221, 11233, and 11216, the median income ranges from \$34,863 to \$43,236. In 11205, \$32,698 is the median income. In 11238, the median income is \$39,503. In 11207, the median income is \$33,657. In 11208, the median income is \$33,657. In 11212, the median income is \$44,264. In 11213, the median income is \$39,503. In 11216, the median income is \$42,071. The median income in 11201 is the highest of any of the zip codes, \$56,293. In 11217, the median income is \$49,567. In 11222, the median income is \$33,578.

Bushwick – 11237 (49 surveyed) – Williamsburg – 11206 (55 surveyed)

Race/Ethnicity/Foreign-born- In 11237, 95.9% self-identified as Latino/Hispanic, with 89.4% foreign-born,

- **Insurance-** 16.3% uninsured
- **Illnesses** – In 11237, 12% Asthma, 30.6% High Blood Pressure, 20.4% Diabetes, 28.6% Hearing and Vision Problems. In 11206, 36.4% indicated they

have none of the health conditions. 34% said they go to a doctor when they don't feel well.

- **Provider type-** In 11237, 68.9% receive care in a hospital clinic. In 11206, 73.3% of visits are made to a doctors' office.
- **Reason for going for care outside the neighborhood-** In 11237, 40% wait too long to get an appointment. 40% wait too long at an appointment. In 11206, 70.4% of visits outside of the neighborhood are to see a specialist. 33.3% of the time is for referred care.

Bedford – Stuyvesant – 11221, 11233, 11216. (40, 27, 38 surveyed respectively)

- **Race/Ethnicity/Foreign-born-** More than 50% of population in 11216 is African American. Large Caribbean/West Indian population in 11216. Latino population in 11221. 67.5% in 11221 are foreign-born. 40.7% in 11233 are foreign born.
- **Insurance/Employment-** 14.8% are uninsured in 11233, 60.5% in 11216 are not working. .
- **Illnesses** – 22.5% Asthma in 11221. 18.5% (11233) and 21.1% have hypertension in 11216. 18.4% have diabetes in 11216. 30% (11221) and 18.4% (11216) have hearing or vision problems.
- **Reason for visiting provider** – 11233 medical emergency 33.3%.
- 8.5% had no visits in the neighborhood in 11233.
- **Provider type** – 45.9% in 11221 received care in a hospital clinic. 41.4% received care in a community health center in 11216.
- **Reasons for going for care outside the neighborhood** – referred to care 33.3% in 11216, 22.2% not satisfied with care in 11216.

Bedford Stuyvesant and Fort Greene – 11205 (64 surveyed) – Prospect Heights – 11238 (27 surveyed)

- **Employment-** in 11205, 46.8% of the respondents are not working
- **Illnesses-** in 11205, 35.9% indicated hypertension. In 11238, 51.9% said they have none of the conditions named.
- **Reason for visiting provider-** In 11205, 41.7% sent to the doctor because they were not feeling well.
- **Provider type-** In 11205, 55.2% received their care in a doctors' office. In 11238, 61.6% received their care in a doctors' office.
- **Reasons for going for care outside the neighborhood** – In 11205, 58.6% to see a specialist and 27.6% not satisfied with care in the neighborhood. In 11238, 30% said they were referred for care outside the neighborhood.

East New York – 11207 (50 surveyed) -- Cypress Hills/Clinton Hill -- 11208 (54 surveyed) – Brownsville/East Flatbush – 11212 (53 surveyed)

- **Race/Ethnicity/Foreign-born-** In 11207, More than 50% of the population is African American. There is also a large number of Caribbean/West Indians. In 11208, more than 50% of the population are African American. In 11212, more than 50% of the population are African American.
- **Employment/Insurance-** In 11207, 58% of this population is not working. 16% are uninsured. In 11208, 51.9% said they are not working. 13% are uninsured. In 11212, 51% said they are not working.
- **Illnesses-** in 11207, 22% have Asthma, 24% have high blood pressure, 42% have none of the conditions. In 11208, 29.6% have Asthma, 16.7% have diabetes, 38.9% have none of the health conditions. In 11212, 39.6% have Asthma, 39.6% have high blood pressure, 30.2% have diabetes, 15.1% have hearing or vision problems.
- **Reason for visiting a provider** – In 11207, 44.4% did not feel well. 34.8% for a medical emergency, 41.3% when they do not feel well. In 11212, 52.9% for an emergency, 58.8% when they do not feel well.
- In 11207, 11% of visits are outside the neighborhood. **Reasons for going for care outside the neighborhood** – 57.9% are to see a specialist. In 11208, 9.3% have no visits in the neighborhood. 25.9% said they are not satisfied with the care in the neighborhood.
- **Provider type-** In 11207, 41.7% of visits to a provider are made at a Community Health Center. In 11208, 46.3% of visits are to a Community Health Center and 48.8% are to a doctors' office. In 11212, 37% of visits are to an emergency room, 54.3% are made at Community Health Center, and 45.7% are at a doctors' office.

Crown Heights – 11213 (55 surveyed)

- **Race/Ethnicity/Foreign-born-** More than 50% of the population are African Americans.
- **Employment** - 43.7% are not working.
- **Illnesses-** 23.6% have high blood pressure, 16.4% have hearing or vision problems, 47.4% indicated they had none of the health conditions.
- **Reason for visiting provider-** 47.2% when they do not feel well.
- **Provider type-** 53.3% of visits in hospital clinics.
- 8.5% have no visits in the neighborhood. **Reasons for going for care outside the neighborhood-** 52.2% of visits outside the neighborhood are to see a specialist, 30.4% are because the person was referred.

Flatbush – 11226 (83 surveyed)

- **Race/Ethnicity/Foreign-born-** There are large numbers of Caribbean/West Indians. 74.7% of those interviewed are foreign-born.
- **Insurance-** 14.5% of those interviewed are uninsured.
- **Illnesses-** 28.9% have high blood pressure, 22.9% have diabetes, 36.1% have none of the conditions named.
- **Reason for visiting provider-** 44.6% go to the doctor when they do not feel well.
- **Provider type-** 57.3% go for care at a doctors' office.

Downtown Brooklyn – 11201 (18 surveyed) -- Gowanus – 11217 (28 surveyed) – Greenpoint – 11222 (3 surveyed)

- **Race/Ethnicity/Foreign-born-** In 11217, More than 50% of the population surveyed are African American. There were many Latinos interviewed. In 11222, of the 3 people interviewed, a number are Latino. In 11201, 61.1% are foreign-born. 13 of the 18 people surveyed in 11201 self-identified as Arab/Middle Eastern.
- **Employment/Insurance-** In 11201, 72.2% are not working. 22.2% are uninsured. In 11217, 46.8% are not working, and 21.4% are uninsured.
- **Illnesses-** In 11201, 50% indicated they have none of the conditions named. In 11217, 35.7% have high blood pressure. 35.7% have none of the conditions named.
- **Provider type-** In 11217, 42.9% go for care in a hospital clinics, 50% go for care in a doctors' office. In 11222, 66.7% visit a Community Health Center for their care.
- In 11217, 10.2% made no visits in their neighborhood.

Recommendations

The information gathered from the 644 community residents in the North and Central Brooklyn communities provides important directions for moving forward in providing services and coordinating efforts to improve health and living conditions. The target of this survey was lower-income residents so the recommendations we make may not be applicable to the whole community, but does address needs of the population not necessarily well-served now by the health system.

The 15 zip codes targeted for this survey differ from other communities, and from each other in many respects. In preparing to survey within these zip codes, priority was given to those areas with: over 50% of residents Medicaid and uninsured, the least number of

Full Time Equivalent primary care providers per 1,000 population, the highest percent of African American and Latino residents, and those identified in another study as “Hot Spots.” The highest need communities were defined as: Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, Williamsburg, Brownsville, Crown Height, Clinton Hills and Cypress Hills, Flatbush, Prospect Heights, and Fort Greene. The analysis of the surveys show that these communities have important health care access and health care needs. Particular services needed were identified by survey respondents in some zip codes, however this does not mean that other zip codes have sufficient amount of these services.

Our recommendations, based on this survey, are:

- Focused attention on particular illnesses and communities in order to target services where they are most needed.
 - Asthma, Diabetes, and Hypertension were identified as prevalent conditions and often the reason for a visit to the Emergency Room. These conditions can be treated on an outpatient basis, when comprehensive, continuous primary care is available to residents. Targeting of additional services to many of the community, is important and in particular to Bushwick (11237), East New York (11207), and Cypress Hills (11208).
- The highest prevalence of Asthma is found in a cluster of neighborhoods: Brownsville (11212), Cypress Hills (11208), East New York (11207), and Bushwick (11237). Medical care alone cannot ameliorate this condition. We recommend the need for an air quality study and identification of triggers in ambient air in these neighborhoods, with a plan to address this problem.
- There is a need for more primary care practitioners that accept public health insurance, particularly in Brownsville and East Flatbush (11212), Flatbush (11226), and Arabic-speaking doctors who accept public health insurance in 11201. We recommend a coordinated campaign to reach out to, and work with, practitioners in these and other zip codes to encourage doctors and clinics to accept public health insurance and broaden the numbers of managed care companies that they contract with since almost all Medicaid patients are now required to be enrolled in managed care. With the introduction of the Affordable Care Act’s increase in primary care reimbursement, there may be more receptivity to this campaign.
- Other primary care practitioners in short supply and mentioned as needed are OB/GYN and pediatricians. Prenatal care is needed in Brownsville and Flatbush (11212), and Prospect Heights (11238). Pediatricians are needed in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick (11211).

- Dental care was the most often cited service not available, but needed in North and Central Brooklyn communities. Considering our knowledge of how important proper care of the mouth is to better health status, this should be a priority for action and resources. These services are particularly needed in: Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick (11211), Williamsburg (11206), Cypress Hills (11208), Brownsville and East Flatbush (11212), Bedford Stuyvesant and Fort Greene (11205), Gowanus (11217), and Greenpoint (11222).
- The finding of high use of Emergency Room services by African American residents and persons insured by Medicaid requires special attention. One way of addressing this problem is to ensure that primary care services are available in the community and that the hours of operation of these services address people's work, school, or other schedules. Another way to address this problem is to interview and work with community residents to help in defining a message and means of conveying the message, to encourage use of alternative services. The problem has been well-documented in this and other studies, but the process of figuring out ground-level solutions is still elusive. Special attention should be paid to: Brownsville and East Flatbush (11212), Cypress Hills (11208), East New York (11207), and Bushwick (11237).
- Two major barriers to accessing care identified by many of the respondents are: too long a wait to get an appointment and too long a wait at the appointment. One recommendation to address these access barriers is a coordinated effort amongst providers in the community to share provider resources and ensure that services are available where they are needed, and where people go for care.
- To ensure that culturally and linguistically competent information is available in the communities it would be helpful to develop a coordinated network of health care providers, social service providers, and community-based organizations to ensure that they are working together to assist community residents.