

ALACHUA COUNTY LABOR COALITION

Health Access and Outcomes in Alachua County

Introduction

The Alachua County Labor Coalition (ACLC) is composed of individuals, unions, and worker-friendly organizations committed to the economic, environmental, civil, and social rights of working people, their families, and communities, and to the ecological systems that sustain us. Access to health care is key to achieving these outcomes for residents of Alachua County and the surrounding areas. Although Gainesville is home to a world class health system, there are disparities in access for low-income residents and other vulnerable communities. Examined through the lens of social determinants of health, these disparities are both caused by and contribute to persisting inequalities.

Overall Health Outcomes

Alachua County fares well in aggregate health care statistics, ranking #23 in overall health outcomes- based on length of life and quality of life- and ranking #5 in health factors- which predicts a population's future health based on behavior, physical environment and more. While these summary statistics indicate an overall healthy county, further analysis shows that Alachua County health outcomes are greatly influenced by racial, ethnic and socioeconomic factors, creating widespread disparities among its residents.

Existing Health Care Disparities

Health care disparities exist among racial and geographical lines in Alachua County, creating a disproportionately negative impact on racial minorities and the east side of Gainesville. In short, the west side of Gainesville- highlighted by the University of Florida's campus and the city's wealthier neighborhoods- is heavily concentrated by white persons, while the less developed east side is more concentrated by non-white residents. Alachua County's Racial Residential Segregation Index highlights this east-west divide, as the county is classified as moderately segregated and fails to meet modern integration standards.

Access

Insurance coverage - the primary vehicle through which residents access health care- provides one summary statistic of the county's racial disparities: 11.5 percent of whites are uninsured, while 18 percent of blacks and 18.6 percent of Hispanics are uninsured.

Infrastructure

In addition, health care infrastructure is heavily concentrated on the west side of Gainesville. UF Health Shands recently opened a new emergency center in west Gainesville- marking the second on Archer Rd. and third on the west side- while east Gainesville contains just one non-emergency medical center and a health department that all close at 5 p.m. A survey of more than 1,000 east Gainesville residents cited transportation issues, insurance coverage and work scheduling conflicts as the main barriers to receiving health care. While access and infrastructure are two primary drivers of health outcomes, other societal factors profoundly impact residents' ability to obtain sufficient health care.

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Additional Social Determinants of Health

Beyond health care, widespread disparities within Alachua County penetrate housing, income, infrastructure and more. Alachua County has the highest income inequality coefficient among 67 Florida counties, indicating massive income inequality within the county. The median household income per race shows that white families' median income is \$54,994, while black families' median income is \$31,183.

These inequalities are exacerbated through lack of access to essential goods and services, particularly in east Gainesville. As the more downtrodden side of Gainesville, the east side contains 11 tracts defined as food deserts, yet only three USDA approved grocery stores exist in an area covering more than 10 miles. Food insecurity not only harms one's health and increases the likelihood of diseases, but it also leads to much psychological distress. As a combination of various factors affect health outcomes, any successful solution(s) must take on a multi-pronged approach to improving small- and large-scale inequalities within Alachua County.

Guiding Principles for Policy Solutions

Addressing the challenges of health care access in Alachua shows the need for various policy solutions at all levels of government (local, state, and federal). However, these findings suggest that any health policy targeted for implementation should follow several guiding principles:

- **Community Driven** – Residents from impacted communities should have a direct say in deciding priority concerns and designing appropriate solutions.
- **Evidence Based** – Where possible, the policy solutions considered should be backed by qualitative and/or quantitative data.
- **Targeted** – The policies considered should be specifically assessed for its impact on high-disparity communities. Where possible, the policies should be designed to address targeted issues in targeted locations.
- **Comprehensive** – The policies and their impact should be examined through the lens of the social determinants of health. They should also be assessed for how they work with existing policy.
- **Measurable** – Policies should be designed and implemented with the aim of measuring impact over time. This data can be used to further improve existing policy and to identify new ones.

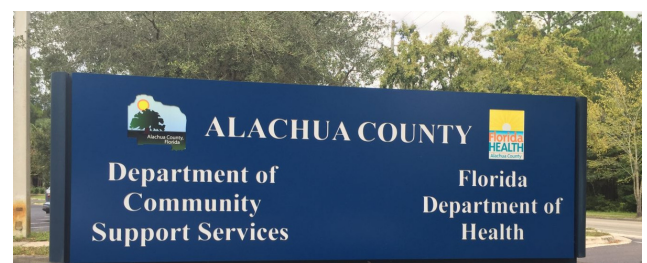
The ACLC's Just Healthcare Committee (JHC) is well positioned to drive this work in Alachua County. As a trusted community convener and voice, the JHC can bring impacted residents into the advocacy process. These efforts can address immediate needs, advance large scale policy solutions (ex: Medicare for All and Medicaid expansion), and build a lasting infrastructure for community-driven change in Alachua.



Single Payer Health Care would ensure lifetime coverage to every resident of the US and save over \$400 billion/yr.



Medicaid expansion would cover nearly 10,000 uninsured, low-income Alachua County residents.



Programs like RTS "First Mile/Last Mile" can be used to shuttle east-side residents to medical appointments on the west side of Gainesville.