

# NORTHBOROUGH HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

PREPARED BY THE  
CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL  
PLANNING COMMISSION (CMRPC)

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## I. Executive Summary

The Northborough Health and Human Services Strategic Assessment comprehensively examined the town's current Health Department and Family Youth Services (FYS) to assess the feasibility of merging these entities into a unified department. This inquiry was rooted in an understanding that while Northborough boasts a strong tradition of health and human services, the evolving needs of its community and the complexities of modern public health and social service delivery necessitate a review of existing structures and processes.

The assessment was informed by a blend of methods, including a thorough community survey, interviews with key stakeholders, analysis of similar integrated models in other communities, and a review of current operations within Northborough's Health and FYS departments. This multi-faceted approach provided a deep dive into the community's needs, service gaps, and opportunities for enhanced efficiency and effectiveness through potential integration. The following methods unearthed insights from key stakeholders and the community:

- **Community Survey:** Highlighted a strong community desire for more accessible mental health support and substance use prevention services. Many respondents had not utilized FYS, pointing to potential underutilization or lack of awareness of available services.
- **Interviews and Stakeholder Feedback:** Emphasized the importance of addressing service gaps, particularly for the 18-65 age group, and highlighted opportunities for greater collaboration across municipal departments and with community organizations.
- **Review of Similar Integrated Models:** Offered insights into the benefits and challenges of merging health and human services departments, with examples from Needham, Hudson, Plymouth, and Nantucket illustrating various approaches to integration.

In light of these findings, key recommendations proposed in this report advocate for integrating the Health Department and FYS into a unified Health and Human Services Department. This strategic realignment is envisioned to foster a more coordinated, efficient, and impactful approach to addressing the broad spectrum of health and social service needs within Northborough. By consolidating resources, enhancing interdepartmental collaboration, and leveraging a unified strategic direction, Northborough can significantly improve accessibility to services, fill existing service gaps—particularly for the underserved 18-65 age group—and strengthen its capacity to respond to public health challenges. Critical to the success of this proposed integration are the following:

- A proactive approach to capitalizing on grant and funding opportunities, including opioid abatement settlement funds, to support vital services and innovative programs.
- The expansion of outreach and preventative programming, focusing on mental health awareness, substance use prevention, and healthy living initiatives.
- Strengthened partnerships with other municipal departments, schools, and community organizations to ensure a holistic response to community health issues.

- A focus on recruitment and staff development, emphasizing the need for a dynamic, mission-aligned team capable of adapting to the integrated department's needs.

Financial considerations play a pivotal role in this strategic shift, with a proposed budget reflecting the reallocation and efficient use of resources to maximize service delivery and impact. The report outlines an organizational structure optimized for the integrated Health and Human Services Department, detailing key roles and responsibilities that will underpin the department's success. Through thoughtful implementation, ongoing evaluation, and community engagement, Northborough stands on the brink of a significant leap toward enhanced public health and well-being for all its residents.

## II. Introduction

### A. Purpose and scope of the assessment

This strategic assessment aims to comprehensively evaluate the current operations, structures, and collaboration efforts of Northborough's Health Department and Family Youth Services (FYS). By identifying key areas of strength, the potential for improvement, and opportunities for integration, this report seeks to enhance the efficiency, reach, and impact of health and human services offered to the community. The scope of this assessment encompasses an in-depth analysis of each department's roles, budget allocations, program effectiveness, and community engagement strategies. Furthermore, it explores the feasibility and strategic benefits of merging the Health Department and FYS into a unified Health and Human Services Department. It draws on insights from similar integrations in other communities and direct feedback from Northborough's residents.

### B. Background

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) is a pivotal resource in facilitating regional planning efforts across Central Massachusetts, aiming to enhance community living standards and economic prosperity. Offering a wide range of planning services, CMRPC supports municipalities in navigating complex land use, transportation, environmental sustainability, public health, and safety challenges. In response to Northborough's pursuit of optimizing its health and human service offerings, the town issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking expert analysis and strategic planning assistance. Our team was selected through this competitive RFP process, underscoring our commitment to delivering actionable insights and tailored recommendations that align with CMRPC's mission and the specific needs of the Northborough community. This report is a culmination of our comprehensive assessment, aimed at providing a roadmap for enhancing the coordination, accessibility, and impact of Northborough's Health Department and Family Youth Services, thereby contributing to the well-being and resilience of the community.

### III. Current Operations and Structure of the Health Department

The Northborough Health Department, guided by the Board of Health, is a dynamic entity dedicated to promoting and safeguarding the health and wellness of its residents, employees, and visitors. In recent years, the department adeptly navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting its focus towards recovery and resilience. Major initiatives like Be Well Northborough and the Northborough Southborough Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, now known as “Encompass,” epitomize the department's adaptive response and commitment to community well-being.

Developing a comprehensive 60-page Community Resource Guide, funded through ARPA allocations to Be Well Northborough, exemplifies the department's proactive approach. This guide, encompassing municipal services and a broad range of local, state, and federal resources, addresses the pandemic's long-term impacts and was distributed to all households in the fall. The Northborough Public Library updated the [Be Well Northborough Community Resource Guide](#) in November of 2023 and hopes to continue providing updates annually.

The Health Department continues to host the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health (GBPH), enhancing regional collaboration. In 2022, key staff additions, including a new Health Agent and Epidemiologist and the introduction of a Drug-Free Communities Coordinator in 2023, significantly bolstered the support for the 4-town region comprising Northborough, Boylston, Southborough, and Westborough. This expansion facilitated the launch of several new programs and initiatives, responding to specific community needs. In Northborough alone, 58 Home Wellness Checks offered residents vital health assessments and support. Additionally, the department has proactively addressed public health concerns through regular blood pressure screenings held twice weekly at the senior center. In the realm of substance abuse prevention, the department has conducted 18 Narcan training courses, with over 500 doses distributed, empowering individuals to respond to cases of opioid overdoses effectively. The department also partnered with IMPACT Melanoma and used funds to get sunscreen dispensers in the four Greater Boroughs towns. These initiatives reflect the department's commitment to comprehensive community health and safety.

Contracting with Salmon VNA & Hospice for public health nursing services, the department has remained steadfast in its disease investigation efforts and annual flu clinics. The organization of COVID-19 vaccination clinics at the Northborough Senior Center, with over 1,091 vaccines administered, highlights the department's crucial role in public health emergencies. These clinics, supported by Medical Reserve Corps volunteers and contracted nurses providing in-home vaccinations, underscore a comprehensive approach to public health. In 2023, the Health Department Coordinated four flu clinics, delivering over 400 doses for Northborough. They took place at the Melican Middle School, Town Hall, Migrant Shelter, and Algonquin Regional High School, which features a drive-through vaccination structure. Additionally, contracted Public Health Nurses delivered 20 flu vaccines to homebound residents in Northborough. The nurses perform blood pressure screenings twice weekly at the senior center.

The department's financial stewardship is evident in its efficient management of permits, licenses, and fees, totaling \$68,053 in fiscal year 2022, and substantial grants received amounting to \$510,000. Grant awards have only increased in fiscal years 2023 and 2024. This financial acumen has been instrumental in sustaining and expanding the department's various health initiatives.

The following sections detail the operational structure of the Health Department, its ongoing initiatives, and its budget, reflecting its multifaceted approach to addressing the evolving health needs of the Northborough community.

#### A. Review of Job Descriptions

Understanding the operations and structure of the Northborough Health Department requires an understanding of job descriptions and how the staff has approached recent and ongoing projects. Given the critical role of grant funding for the department, note the distinction between town-funded positions and grant-funded positions. These descriptions provide insight into the staff's day-to-day responsibilities, organizational structure, and departmental hierarchy.

- **Health Director:** Responsible for overseeing the town's Public Health Program, including enforcing health laws, managing the operating budget, and supervising contractual services. This role involves significant interaction with the public, town departments, and state agencies. Given the over one million dollars in grant funding received by Northborough's Health Department in Fiscal Year 2024, this position is also heavily focused on grant management and serves as the Program Director for the Drug-Free Communities federal grant. The Health Director position is locally funded and receives a \$10,000 annual stipend to administer the Public Health Excellence Grant.
- **Administrative Assistant:** Responsible for administrative, clerical, and record-keeping support. Tasks include screening mail, calls, and visitors, scheduling appointments, responding to customer inquiries, and handling confidential personnel information. The employee also prepares correspondence, memoranda, and financial data and manages office supplies. This position is locally funded, and according to staff interviews, two administrative positions are shared with the Building Department, leaving approximately a 1.0 full-time equivalent dedicated to the Health Department.
- **Health Agent (Shared with the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health):** Plays a significant role in conducting sanitary inspections, reviewing food service applications, maintaining records, and enforcing health regulations. The employee also performs community outreach and educational activities on public health issues. Notably, this position is mainly funded by a Public Health Excellence Grant from the Department of Public Health and is a shared position across Northborough, Boylston, Southborough, and Westborough. That said, \$13,000 of the Health Agent's salary is from Northborough.
- **On-call Health Agents:** The Northborough Health Department also utilizes on-call Health Agents to provide additional support, particularly during staff absences or for specific

needs such as septic inspections. These agents, experienced health directors in neighboring towns, are employed per diem, averaging 0-5 hours per week. Their work is funded through the \$4,000 Northborough Health budget under Health Agent Wages, with allocated funds to cover their services. These on-call agents bring valuable expertise and flexibility to the department, ensuring continuity and efficiency in health services, especially when the regular staff is unavailable.

- **Epidemiologist (Shared with the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health):** The role of the Epidemiologist, funded by a Public Health Excellence Grant from the Department of Public Health, extends beyond traditional epidemiological support. While still focusing on analyzing communicable disease data, developing public health protocols, and assisting in contact tracing efforts, this position has taken on additional responsibilities. The epidemiologist produces regular COVID Dashboards and biweekly updates for boards, maintains and updates website data, and manages relevant social media communications. Additionally, the Epidemiologist handles ad hoc vaccine data and broader community health data analysis. A significant aspect of their role involves engaging with youth through conducting youth risk behavior surveys, organizing youth focus groups, and overseeing parent surveys. These activities are crucial in understanding and addressing the younger demographic's health needs and risks. Moreover, the Epidemiologist plays a pivotal role in grant writing, successfully securing funding for vital initiatives like the Drug-Free Communities and Community Foundation for MetroWest grants.
- **Shared Services Coordinator (Shared with the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health):** The Epidemiologist also completes this role part-time. The Shared Services Coordinator for grantees of the Public Health Excellence program fosters collaboration among various public health entities involved in the grant. This role consists of managing and implementing public health initiatives, ensuring effective use of resources, and facilitating communication between different departments. The coordinator is responsible for coordinating activities, allocating resources, and ensuring compliance with grant requirements. They also play a crucial role in community engagement and reporting on program outcomes. Essentially, the Shared Services Coordinator is vital in maximizing the impact of public health programs funded by the Public Health Excellence grant, ensuring the community's health needs are efficiently met.
- **Public Health Nurse (Shared with the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health):** Although the Public Health Nurse position in the Northborough Health Department is yet to be filled, The role is typically pivotal in providing a wide range of community health services. Generally, a Public Health Nurse focuses on promoting and protecting the population's health. This includes conducting health screenings, immunization clinics, and educational outreach programs on various public health issues. As described in Section III, Public Health Nurses also perform homebound vaccinations, blood pressure screenings at the Senior Center twice weekly, and Narcan training. The Public Health Nurse plays a crucial role in disease prevention and health promotion within the community, often

collaborating with other health professionals and community organizations. Public Health Nurses may also be involved in emergency preparedness and response and monitoring and addressing public health concerns in the community. Their expertise is essential in developing and implementing public health strategies that cater to the specific needs of the town's residents.

- **Drug-Free Communities Coordinator:** The recent addition of a grant-funded Drug-Free Communities Coordinator to the Northborough Health Department marks a significant step in the town's efforts to address substance abuse issues. This role typically involves leading initiatives to reduce substance abuse among youth and the wider community. The coordinator is responsible for developing and implementing prevention strategies, organizing educational programs, and collaborating with local schools, law enforcement, and community organizations. This role also plays a vital role in grant management. The coordinator's work is crucial in fostering a safe and healthy environment, particularly by promoting awareness and providing resources to combat drug and substance misuse in the community.
- **Animal Inspector (Part of Animal Control Department):** Appointed by the Board of Health but functioning within the Animal Control Department contracted by the Town Administrator, the Inspector plays a pivotal role in rabies prevention and control. Under Massachusetts General Law, their primary responsibility involves annual inspections of barns and other animal facilities, a task crucial for ensuring animal health and welfare and monitoring potential rabies vectors. In 2023, the department issued 5 barn permits, reflecting its active involvement in overseeing animal housing facilities. The Animal Inspector verifies compliance with local and state regulations through these inspections.

These roles collectively contribute to the operational structure of the Health Department, providing a range of services from administrative support to specialized public health functions. Each position plays a crucial part in maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of the Northborough community. Current staff's ongoing initiatives provide additional context for their roles.

## B. Programs and Services

The Northborough Health Department staff work across several disciplines to promote and protect public health. Per the Town's Fiscal Year 2024 budget report, their major ongoing activities include the following:

### **Enforcement and Environmental Health:**

- **Septic Inspections and Environmental Services:** Conducting thorough inspections, plan reviews, permitting, and soil testing for septic systems. Regular checks are carried out to ensure environmental compliance and public safety.

- **Restaurant and Food Establishment Inspections:** Ensuring local food establishments adhere to health codes to prevent foodborne illnesses. This includes routine inspections and responses to complaints.
- **Housing and Tenant Complaints:** Addressing housing, noise, and odor complaints to maintain healthy living conditions.
- **Recreational Facility Oversight:** Inspecting and permitting recreational camps, semi-public and public swimming pools, tanning salons, and other leisure facilities.
- **Specialized Inspections:** Monitoring stables, barns, and capped landfills. Overseeing the permitting of motels and body art establishments.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Enforcing state and local tobacco regulations, managing nuisance complaints, and overseeing the safe operation of outdoor wood boilers.

#### **Public Health Services:**

- **Health Clinics and Campaigns:** Organizing seasonal flu and other vaccination clinics, health screening, and educational clinics. These efforts are essential in managing public health emergencies and maintaining community health.
- **Disease Management:** Investigating and following up on communicable diseases and implementing educational outreach for infectious diseases.
- **Substance Abuse Prevention:** Actively participating in the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition's activities, focusing on awareness and prevention strategies.

#### **Community Support:**

- **Mental Health Awareness:** Increasing accessibility to mental health resources, providing counseling information, and facilitating workshops and seminars.
- **Drug-Free Communities Program:** In collaboration with Southborough and with support from a newly acquired grant, focuses on community outreach and establishing strong collaborations with local schools and organizations. A vital component of this initiative is the involvement of the District Wellness Coordinator, who serves on the steering committee and acts as a liaison between the health department and the schools. This partnership ensures that effective health communication is disseminated through the school system, reaching a broad audience within the youth community. Moreover, the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey was conducted in collaboration with the schools, a critical step in understanding the specific needs and risks young people face in the community. The insights gained from this survey were instrumental in acquiring the Drug-Free Communities grant, as they provided a data-driven foundation for the program's strategies and objectives. This collaborative effort between the Health Department, the District Wellness Coordinator, and the local schools exemplifies a cohesive approach to

addressing youth substance abuse, combining resources, expertise, and community engagement to foster a healthier environment for young people in Northborough.

- **Migrant Shelter Support:** Offering health checks and support to the Northborough Migrant Shelter, highlighting the department's commitment to all community members. In July 2023, there were roughly 100 migrants initially, with that number closer to 80 as of February 2024.
- **Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health:** Northborough's Health department hosts two sizeable grants and collaborates on regional health initiatives, sharing resources and expertise to tackle broader health challenges in Northborough, Boylston, Southborough, and Westborough. These initiatives often focus on public health emergencies, chronic disease management, and health equity issues.
- **Partnership with Healthcare Providers:** The department has collaborated with local healthcare providers to enhance its service offerings. Notably, they have partnered with Wegmans pharmacy, which has been instrumental in offering vaccines to seniors at the Senior Center. Wegmans also contributes by donating food to various community events. Additionally, Dr. Safdar Medina, a highly active pediatrician in the community, plays multiple roles as the Northborough Southborough district physician, a Southborough Board of Health member, and an Encompass Coalition member. These partnerships enrich the department's ability to address various health needs and effectively engage with community segments.
- **Partnership with Northborough Public Schools:** The Northborough Health Department's partnership with local schools is bolstered by the Town's participation in the program to enhance young children's social-emotional and behavioral health. In 2022, the Northborough Health Department wrote a Metro West Health Foundation for the School System. The \$100,000 grant was awarded to the school system to expand clinical support to students and provide consultation to staff. This initiative, crucial for early intervention in mental health, involved the district's wellness coordinator acting as a steering committee member and school liaison, ensuring effective implementation of health communication through the school system. A key element of this collaboration is the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, which is vital for acquiring the Drug-Free Communities grant, highlighting the department's commitment to addressing mental health needs from an early age.

### **Animal and Vector Control**

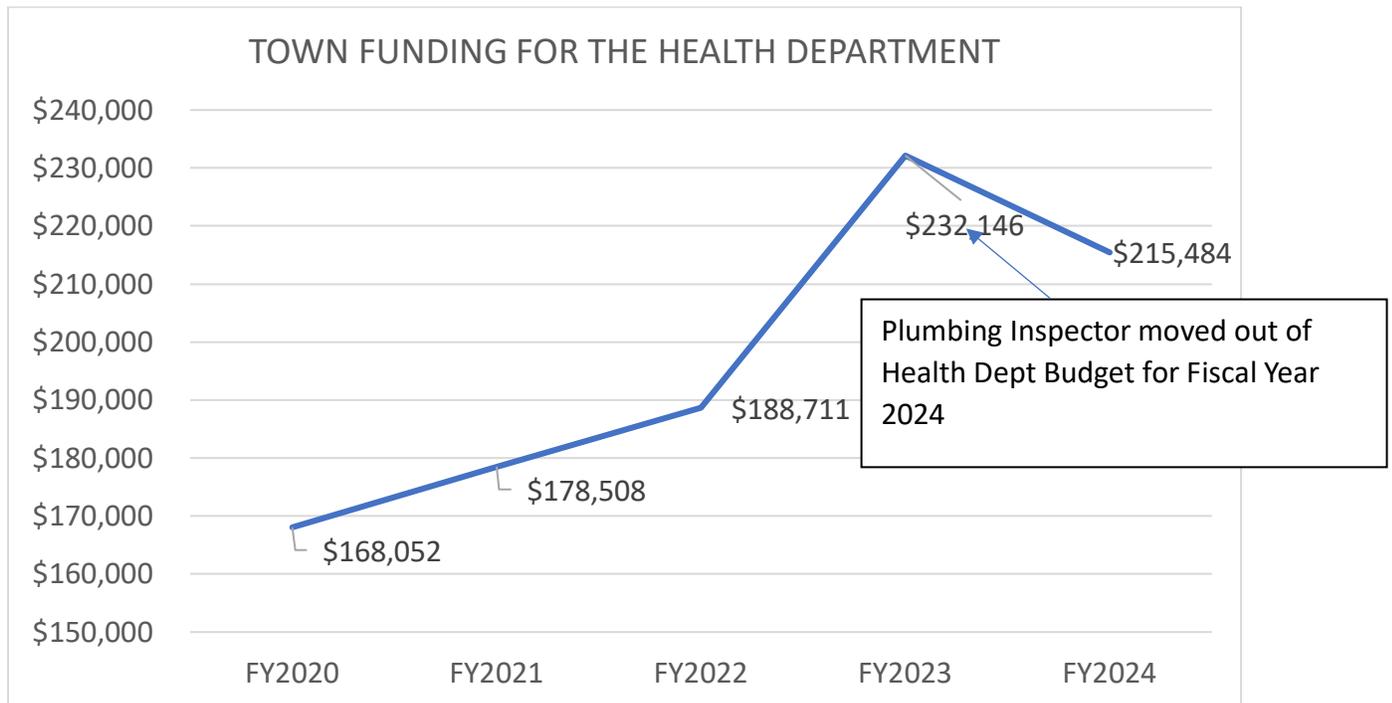
- **Rabies and Vector Management:** Conducting rabies investigations, issuing beaver trapping permits, and addressing public health concerns related to mosquito-borne illnesses and other vector or pest issues.

### **Emergency Planning**

- Public Health Emergency Preparedness: Engaging in regional emergency preparedness activities, managing Local Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) activities, and coordinating emergency dispensing site plans and drills. The department is also crucial in emergency shelter planning, isolation, and quarantine protocols.

This comprehensive approach to public health by the Northborough Health Department ensures a safe and healthy environment for all community members, effectively managing both routine and emergency health concerns.

### C. Budget Overview



Sources: Northborough Town Budgets Fiscal Year 2020-2024

The Northborough Health Department’s Fiscal Year 2020 to 2024 budget showcases a careful allocation of funds across various line items, with an overall upward trend in budget allocation. This progression indicates a strategic approach to enhancing the department's capacity to deliver essential health services.

For Fiscal Year 2024, the total budget is \$215,484, marking a reduction from Fiscal Year 2023's \$232,146, primarily attributed to the shift of the part-time plumbing inspector's role to the Building Department. This reallocation of responsibilities signifies an organizational restructuring aimed at improving service efficiency.

Salaries make up a significant portion of the budget, with the Health Director's salary increasing annually, reaching \$103,332 in Fiscal Year 2024. This consistent increase underlines the Town's investment in leadership within the Health Department. The budget for Administrative Assistant

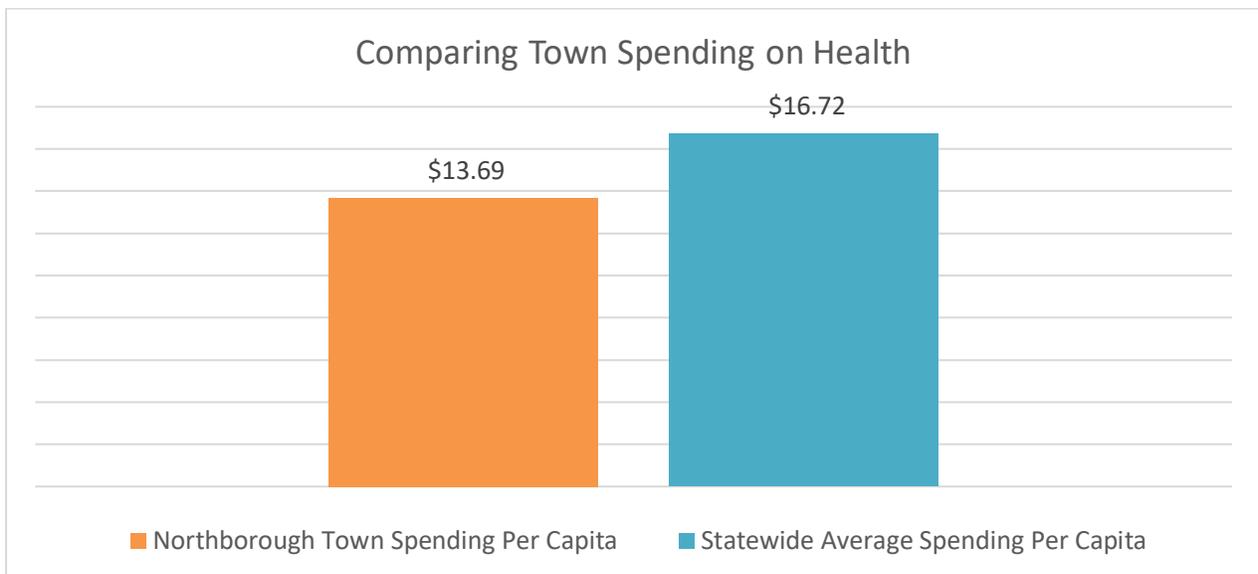
wages also saw a steady rise over the years, signifying the department's recognition of the critical support these roles provide.

The temporary wages line item has been reintroduced in Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 after a hiatus in Fiscal Year 2022, reflecting the department's need for flexible staffing solutions. Contractual services saw a notable increase in Fiscal Year 2022, which has continued into Fiscal Year 2024, illustrating the department's growing reliance on external expertise.

A considerable investment in testing services is planned for Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024, with each year budgeted at \$20,000. Conversely, the budget for nursing services shows a discontinuation in Fiscal Year 2024, suggesting a possible reevaluation of service delivery methods or a strategic shift in resource allocation.

The budget for office supplies, travel/mileage, dues/licensure fees, and meetings indicates the department's operational needs, ensuring that staff has the necessary resources and opportunities for professional development and engagement.

It is also noteworthy that despite the comprehensive services provided, Northborough's Health Department expenditure per capita stands at \$13.69, below the statewide average of \$16.72 for municipalities. This disparity highlights the department's efficiency in managing its resources while pointing to the potential need for increased funding to match or exceed the state average, allowing for further enhancements in public health service delivery.



*Source: 2023 Office of Local and Regional Health Capacity Assessment Results Toolkit*

The Northborough Health Department's budget reflects its strategic approach to public health management, emphasizing essential services while highlighting potential growth and development areas. The slight budget decrease in Fiscal Year 2024 prompts a closer examination of service priorities, bringing the spending per capita even lower than depicted in the chart above.

These factors highlight the ongoing need to seek and secure additional funding sources to sustain and expand health services in line with state averages and community expectations.

**Public Health Excellence Grant:**

The Public Health Excellence Grant is a funding initiative designed to support and enhance public health services, particularly at the local and regional levels. This grant aims to promote collaboration among neighboring towns and municipalities to improve public health outcomes. The key objectives of the grant include:

1. **Strengthening Public Health Infrastructure:** Providing resources to build and maintain communities' solid public health foundation. This might involve updating equipment, enhancing facilities, or improving technological capabilities.
2. **Enhancing Collaboration:** Encouraging and facilitating partnerships among local health departments and relevant agencies. This collaboration can lead to more coordinated and comprehensive health services across different regions.
3. **Supporting Key Health Initiatives:** Funding specific health programs or initiatives that address urgent or significant public health needs. This could include disease prevention campaigns, health education programs, community wellness projects, and emergency preparedness plans.
4. **Capacity Building:** Assisting in developing public health workforce capabilities through training, hiring additional staff, or enhancing the skills of existing personnel.

In the context of the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health (GBPH), the Town of Northborough receives all grant funds and provides services for the region, with the Northborough Health Department serving as the host for regional services. The state provided \$350,000 in Fiscal Year 2021-2022 to start the program, \$300,000 in Fiscal Year 2023 and has upped the annual baseline funding to \$460,856.22 in Fiscal Year 2024. This program is funded annually to bolster the region's capacity to deliver critical services and also aids in tackling broader health challenges through regional collaboration and resource sharing. State funds are expected to be ongoing, contingent on continued funding in the State Budget.

**Contact Tracing Grant:**

The Northborough Contact Tracing Grant is structured to ensure that the town maintains a robust public health response to infectious diseases. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health tasks funded entities with several key responsibilities, including thorough case investigation, reporting to the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN), and offering support for individuals facing challenges with isolation and quarantine instructions. The scope includes staff training and data analysis to track local epidemiology and disease trends.

To aid in these efforts, significant funding has been allocated for hiring epidemiological staff, including a Shared Services Coordinator and contracted nursing staff. While individual COVID-19

case investigations are no longer mandated, there is an emphasis on managing clusters in high-risk settings, such as schools and large congregate environments. There's also provision for other core local health activities, provided the main service elements are met, except for vaccination support.

The budget for these activities has evolved, with notable increases in specific areas like contracted nursing and significant community health assessment and planning investments. As of Fiscal Year 2024, the Epidemiologist salary line item has been transferred from the Contact Tracing Grant to the Public Health Excellence Grant (PHE), as the PHE funding is anticipated to continue indefinitely.

Overall, the grant's financial allocation to Northborough, which totals \$260,362 for Fiscal Year 2024, reflects a commitment to maintaining and enhancing the town's public health infrastructure and capabilities in the face of ongoing and emerging infectious disease challenges. It is possible that annual funding could sustain this program through March of 2026.

### **Drug-Free Communities Grant:**

In partnership with Southborough, Northborough receives and manages a highly competitive CDC Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Grant program, representing a significant commitment to youth substance misuse prevention, with a structured budget of \$125,000 annually over a span of 5 years. This federal grant underscores the community's proactive stance against substance misuse and fortifies the town's public health outreach and educational programs for its youth. It is also an example of the department's exceptional ability to write and manage even federal grants.

The program, designed to be comprehensive in scope, is geared towards creating and supporting a coalition that fosters substance misuse education, awareness, and prevention. Through this program, the town can develop and implement strategies that effectively engage all community sectors, ensuring that the efforts in combating substance misuse are collaborative and inclusive.

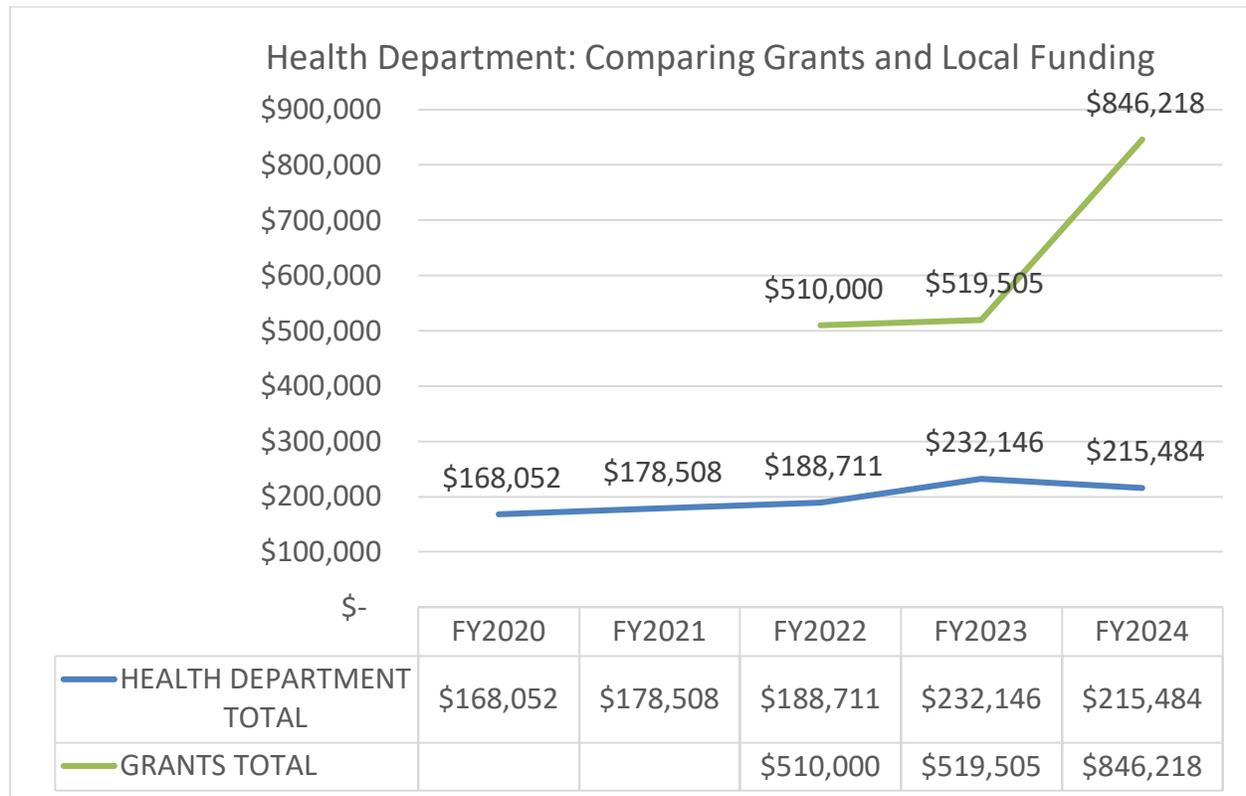
The grant's structure allows for continuity and long-term planning, possibly extending the initiative. After the initial five-year period, there is an opportunity to apply for additional funding for years 6-10, potentially bringing the town's total funding to a decade-long investment. This prospect of extended support is crucial for the program's sustainability. It allows for developing long-term strategies that can adapt over time to meet evolving community needs.

Overall, the DFC Grant serves as a testament to the importance placed on public health and the well-being of the younger members of the Northborough community, positioning the town to continue making strides in public health and prevention efforts well into the future.

### **The Impact and Potential of Grant Funding**

The Northborough Health Department's budget and operations are significantly augmented by state and foundational grants, most notably the Public Health Excellence Grant and the Contact Tracing Grant. These grants bolster the region's capacity to deliver essential services and address

broad health challenges through the Greater Boroughs Partnership for Health (GBPH), with Northborough serving as the host community. These grants have allowed the Town to fund shared staff, including an Epidemiologist, Health Agent, and Shared Services Coordinator, notably increasing staff capacity and expertise. The grants have also allowed for a significant expansion of Public Health Nursing services through the Salmon Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) as described in Section III.



*Sources: Northborough Town Budgets, Grant Budget Documents*

The scale and scope of these grants highlight the importance of continued grant-seeking to maintain and enhance public health services, considering recent changes in the role of local public health across the state and country. The increasing involvement of local public health departments in addressing social determinants of health expands their competitiveness for a broader spectrum of health-related grants. This trend underscores the need for ongoing funding to sustain and expand public health initiatives, with state and foundation grants becoming increasingly crucial for local health departments like Northborough's. Building the capacity to pursue and manage grants will be critical.

## IV. Current Operations and Structure of the Family and Youth Services Department

This assessment of Northborough's Family and Youth Services Department (FYS) is based on the comprehensive report provided by the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management, completed in April of 2023. Established in 1976, FYS has evolved significantly, adapting its services to meet the changing needs of youth, families, and individuals in the community. Initially one of the few resources for local families and youth, FYS has transformed its approach from direct service provision to a more collaborative and referral-based model. This shift aligns with developing a broader network of regional social, community, and nonprofit organizations.

Under the guidance of a seven-member Youth Commission, FYS is structured to enhance the quality of life in Northborough. Its mission centers on identifying and responding to the town's human service needs, particularly mental health and wellness. As a connector within the community, FYS leverages partnerships with Helping Hands and the Special Benevolent Fund to maximize its impact, playing an important role in coordinating resources and services.

This assessment will review the operational structure, staff roles, and ongoing activities of FYS, drawing from the insights provided in the Collins Center report. The department's commitment to mental health services, community collaboration, and partnership with local nonprofits showcase its multifaceted strategy in addressing the community's needs.

### A. Review of Job Descriptions

Understanding the operations and structure of the Northborough Family and Youth Services Department (FYS) requires an examination of the job descriptions of its staff, as these provide insight into day-to-day responsibilities, organizational structure, and the department's hierarchy.

- **FYS Director:** The Director is responsible for the overall management of the FYS Department, including administrative, financial, clinical, and programmatic functions. This role involves significant interaction with the public, town departments, state agencies, and community organizations. The Director's responsibilities extend to developing, managing, and monitoring the department's budget, providing clinical services, and serving as a resource and referral source for the community. An important aspect of this role is the connection to local nonprofits, which is essential for many individuals in need of support.
- **FYS Counselor:** The Counselor is critical in supporting residents through various human services, including psychotherapy, crisis intervention, and case management. They work closely with children, adults, couples, and families, offering therapeutic support and making necessary referrals. The Counselor's role also encompasses collaboration with various town personnel, police, courts, and social service agencies. Additionally, they contribute to developing and implementing community wellness and educational programs, aligning with the Department's mission and goals.

These positions within FYS are pivotal in addressing the diverse needs of Northborough's community. The Director's role in managing the department and partnering with local organizations reflects the department's strategic approach to service provision and community collaboration. Meanwhile, the Counselor's direct service to residents and their involvement in educational and wellness initiatives highlights the department's commitment to individuals' and families' mental health and well-being. The combined efforts of these roles contribute significantly to the operational effectiveness and community impact of the Family and Youth Services Department.

## B. Programs and Services

Northborough's Family and Youth Services Department (FYS) engages in diverse activities to support the community's well-being. While the department has staff vacancies now, their usual activities, as outlined in the town's Fiscal Year 2024 budget report, include:

### **Mental Health Services:**

- **Child Play Therapy:** Providing therapeutic play sessions for children to express and process emotions.
- **Adolescent Therapy:** Offering specialized therapy services for teenagers to address their unique challenges.
- **Individual Therapy:** Conducting therapy sessions for individuals needing personal psychological support.
- **School-Based Therapy:** Implementing therapy services within schools to support students' mental health.
- **Family & Couple Therapy:** Providing therapeutic interventions for families and couples to improve relationships and communication.
- **INTERFACE Referrals:** Coordinating with INTERFACE to refer individuals to appropriate mental health services.
- **Parent/Clinical Consults:** Offering consultations to parents and caregivers on various clinical issues.
- **Crisis Intervention Service:** Providing immediate support and intervention during mental health crises.
- **Trauma Support Network:** Participating in the network to offer support in response to traumatic community events.
- **Graduate Internship Site:** As a training ground for graduate students in mental health.

**Case Management:**

- **Basic Health Needs:** Addressing essential health needs of community members and connecting individuals to services.
- **Fuel Assistance Application Site:** Aiding residents with applications for fuel assistance programs.
- **SNAP Benefits Assistance:** Helping with applications for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- **MassHealth Applications:** Facilitating applications for Massachusetts' Medicaid program.
- **Northborough Cares:** Collaborating on community initiatives for residents in need.
- **Information & Referrals:** Providing vital information and referrals to various services.
- **Special Benevolent Funds:** Managing funds to aid residents facing financial hardships.
- **Backpack Program:** Assisting with programs providing school supplies to children in need.
- **Accessing Benefits/Resources:** Helping residents navigate local, federal, and state benefits and resources.

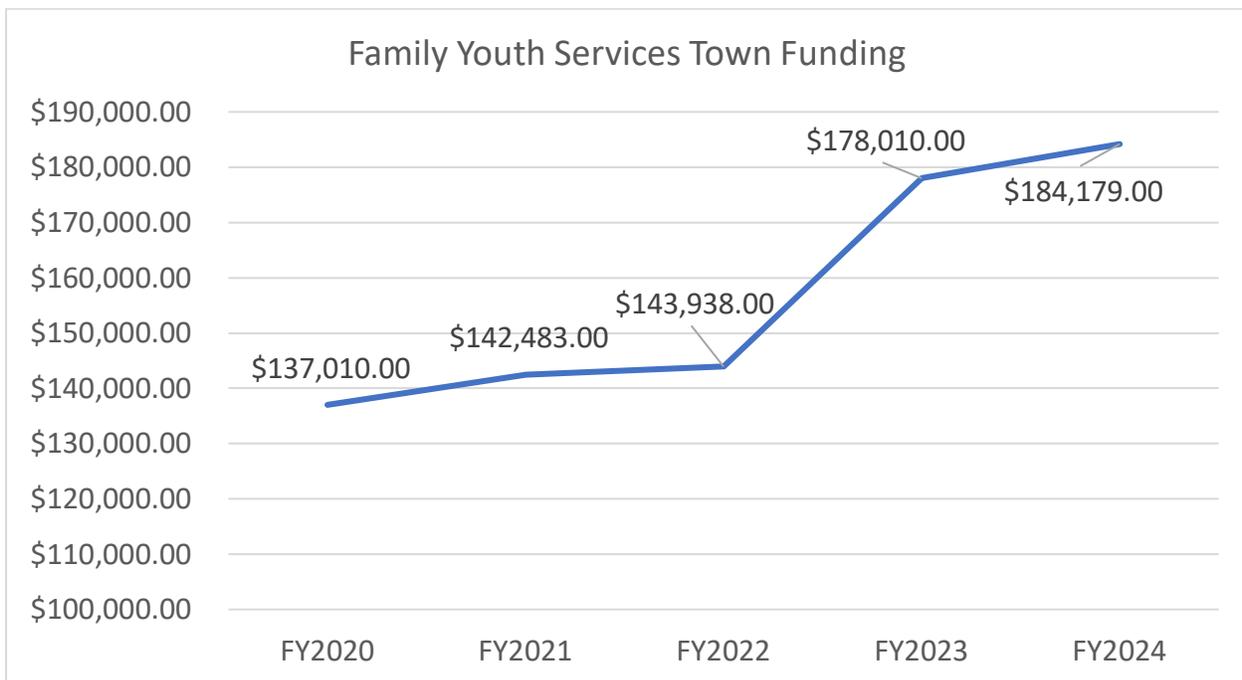
**Other Programs & Partnerships:**

- **Northborough Public Schools:** Working closely with the local schools to address students' educational and developmental needs, particularly in mental health and family support areas.
- **Northborough Helping Hands and Northborough Food Pantry:** Partnering with these organizations to address basic needs, such as food security and emergency assistance for families and individuals in need. These collaborations are vital in ensuring residents have access to the necessary resources.
- **Northborough Extended Day, William James College, and the Junior Women's League:** Engaging with educational institutions and community groups to expand the range of services and support available to the residents, mainly focusing on extended care, educational initiatives, and community welfare.
- **Interfaith Clergy Network, MMA Human Services Council, and Neighborhood Brigade:** Participating in these networks to foster a sense of community and ensure a coordinated response to various social and human service needs within Northborough.
- **Family Success Partnership:** Contributing to this partnership to provide holistic support to families, encompassing various aspects of health, education, and welfare.

In reviewing the functions of Northborough's Family and Youth Services Department (FYS), the Collins Center report underscores FYS's adaptability in evolving from direct service provision to a referral-based model, leveraging external service providers to address community needs. However, the report highlights crucial challenges in data management and program evaluation and the need for strategic staffing and resource allocation. Addressing these issues is imperative for FYS to enhance its services and continue its vital role in supporting the Northborough community.

### C. Budget Overview

#### Financial Summary



*Source: Northborough FISCAL YEAR 2024 Town Budget*

The Northborough Family and Youth Services Department (FYS) has experienced a gradual increase in its budget from Fiscal Year 2020 to 2024, with the total budget rising from \$137,010 in Fiscal Year 2020 to \$184,179 in Fiscal Year 2024. This increase reflects the department's ongoing efforts to expand and enhance its services to meet the community's needs.

A significant portion of the budget is allocated to staff salaries, with the Director's salary steadily increasing yearly. The part-time counselor's salary fluctuated, with a notable decrease in Fiscal Year 2022, perhaps to offset the increase in contracted services to INTERFACE that year. Still, the salary returned to its previous trend in the following years, reaching \$34,580 in Fiscal Year 2024. It is important to note that actual spending has been lower than the funds budgeted for Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 due to vacancies in the Part-Time Counselor position and, more recently, in the Director position.

The part-time Administrative Assistant wages budget also shows an upward trend, increasing from \$18,779 in Fiscal Year 2020 to \$24,996 in Fiscal Year 2024, underscoring the importance of administrative support in the department's operations.

One of the most substantial changes in the budget is the allocation for contractual services, which was non-existent in Fiscal Year 2020 and Fiscal Year 2021 but was introduced in Fiscal Year 2022 and has increased each year since. In Fiscal Year 2024, the department budgeted \$16,250 for these services. This significant increase is primarily due to the department's investment in contracted services through the INTERFACE behavioral health referral program, a critical and practical component of the department's service delivery model.

The budget for clinical consultants has seen some variability but has settled at \$2,600 for Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024. Training and program supplies have seen moderate fluctuations but reflect the department's commitment to staff development and the necessary materials to support their programs.

Overall, the increasing trend in the Northborough FYS budget highlights the town's investment in human services and its proactive approach to addressing social determinants of health through services like INTERFACE. The actual spending, being lower than budgeted in the most recent fiscal years due to staffing vacancies, presents an opportunity for considering a new structure and approach for the department.

## V. Performance and Service Delivery

### A. Health Department Service Delivery

The [Massachusetts Blueprint for Public Health Excellence](#) emphasizes the importance of comprehensive public health standards, including the adoption of Foundational Public Health Services (FPHS), which cover essential capabilities and program areas critical for public health departments. In Northborough, roles like the Health Agent and Epidemiologist can find benchmarks and best practices in the Blueprint. The responsibilities outlined in their job descriptions and the work they are engaged with, such as disease prevention, community health, and environmental health oversight, demonstrate adherence to the foundational services described in the Blueprint.

The Blueprint outlines extensive statutory and regulatory duties, ranging from environmental health to infectious disease management. Northborough's Health Department reflects this through its focus on duties like sanitary inspections, food service reviews, and public health education, as indicated in the job descriptions of the Health Director and Health Agent.

Setting education and training standards for public health officials and staff is a critical recommendation in the Blueprint, acknowledging the evolving demands of public health challenges. The job descriptions from Northborough suggest a skilled workforce, but the

blueprint's emphasis on continuous training and credentialing should guide further professional development within the department. All positions should strive to meet the credentials listed on page 55 of the Blueprint, utilizing resources from the Regional DPH Training Hub hosted by the Town of Needham.

The Blueprint also highlights the consistent and equitable funding to meet current mandates and the needs of a 21st-century public health system. It is worth noting that Northborough's local funding is less than comparable communities. According to a recent Capacity Assessment conducted through the Office of Local and Regional Health, a key recommendation for improvement is integrating shared services to meet more standards in Disease Control & Prevention and Community Sanitation, particularly regarding nuisances. The Greater Boroughs Health Partnership plans to hire a Public Health Nurse using grant funds in Fiscal Year 2025.

Improved data reporting and analysis for planning and system accountability are recommended in the Blueprint. Northborough's use of data, particularly in the epidemiologist's role, indicates a commitment to these recommendations. Building on this, a comprehensive data reporting and analysis approach will be beneficial once DPH creates its new data reporting platform.

The Health Department's current approach substantially aligns with the Blueprint's public health standards and statutory duties. However, there are areas such as workforce training, resource allocation, and data analysis where further alignment with the Blueprint's recommendations could enhance the department's effectiveness in meeting contemporary public health challenges.

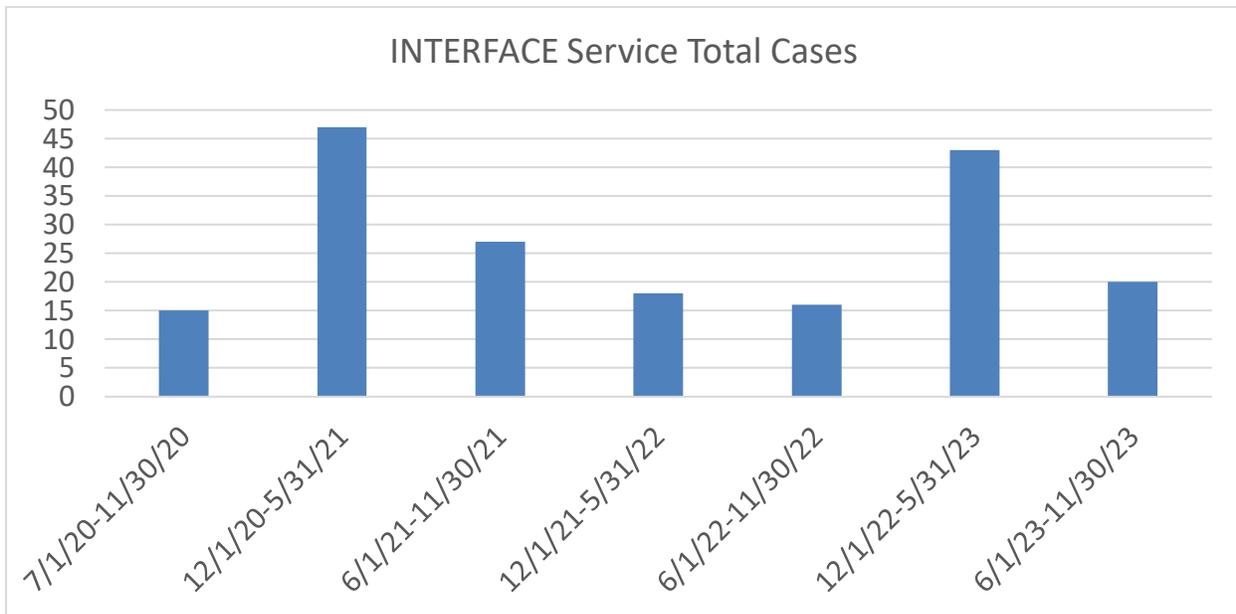
## B. FYS Department Service Delivery

As detailed in the Collins Center report (reference in Section IV), Northborough's Family and Youth Services Department (FYS) has undergone significant changes and adaptations in its operational approach to serve the community effectively. Central to its current operations is a transition in focus from direct service provision to a more referral-based model. This shift aligns with the area's growth of various human, social, and community organizations. This evolution in service delivery has positioned FYS as a provider and a crucial connector within the community, linking residents to appropriate services and resources.

In community engagement, FYS's collaboration with entities like the Northborough Public Schools and local non-profits underscores its commitment to community-based initiatives and programs. These partnerships reflect the department's integral role in fostering community well-being and support. However, while FYS continues to offer some direct services in mental health and wellness, the department is increasingly coordinating with external providers, emphasizing its role in facilitating access to specialized services.

The INTERFACE Activity Report for Northborough from June 1, 2023, to November 30, 2023, shows a continued utilization of mental health referral services, with 186 cases since the service began on July 1, 2020. During this reporting period, there were 20 new cases, mainly for children

and teens (11) over adults (9), which aligns with expected trends in most communities. Most referrals were for individuals identifying as Caucasian and female, with most having commercial insurance plans. All services requested were to be provided in English.



The most demanded service was Individual Therapy, followed by Medication Evaluation/Prescribing. The schools were the primary source through which many learned about the service, with two individuals citing the Senior Center. Repeat callers numbered five, suggesting satisfaction with the service. In the most recent period, common presenting concerns were Depression (10) and Anxiety (8), with notable mentions of Suicidal Ideation (3) and Self-Injurious Behaviors (1).

Of the 22 cases closed during this period, 10 reported successful connections with a provider through INTERFACE. However, there were ten instances where callers did not respond to follow-up attempts, leaving their outcomes undetermined. One caller opted not to pursue the offered services, and another found a provider independently but retained the INTERFACE options as a backup.

The report highlights INTERFACE's commitment to education and readiness to assist callers at various stages of seeking help, emphasizing the importance of the service in the community and its role in preparing individuals to engage in mental health services.

This data can be used to revise the Performance and Service Delivery section, focusing on the effective utilization of referral services like INTERFACE, which has been pivotal in addressing mental health concerns in Northborough. Emphasizing the service's adaptability and commitment to community needs, particularly during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, can be highlighted as a critical aspect of the department's performance.

Regarding data collection for the referral service, the current method poses challenges. The need for standardized data recording and analysis reduces the potential for the data to be used strategically for departmental planning and evaluation. The Collins Center's struggle to interpret the data reflects the need for a more systematic approach to data management.

Recommendations for Data Management:

1. **Client Information:** Continue to track client demographics and the number of referrals. Ensure that each referral is logged with consistent metadata, such as date, type of service referred to, and follow-up actions required.
2. **Service Outcomes:** Record the outcomes of the referrals. Did the client receive the service? Was there any feedback from the service provider or the client about the quality or suitability of the referral?
3. **Inter-departmental/Group Contacts:** Document interactions with other departments and community groups, especially those leading to a referral or collaborative case management. This can provide insights into partnership effectiveness and areas for improvement.
4. **Referral Sources:** Note the referral source to INTERFACE services. This data can help in understanding how clients learn about the service and where to focus outreach efforts.
5. **Case Complexity:** Develop a metric for case complexity to track the intensity of the department's involvement with each client. This can help in resource allocation and identifying trends in service needs.
6. **Service Gaps and Follow-ups:** Track instances where the department could not provide a direct referral or service and why. Follow-up actions or alternative solutions provided should also be recorded.
7. **Referral Feedback Loop:** Establish a mechanism to receive feedback from clients and service providers about the referral process and the services rendered. This feedback can be valuable for quality improvement.

By improving the data tracking in these areas, FYS can build a robust database that informs current operations and is a valuable tool for strategic planning and demonstrating the department's impact. Additionally, it is essential to protect the confidentiality of client information and comply with all relevant data privacy regulations.

The staffing structure within FYS also garners attention in the Collin's Center report, highlighting the importance of strategic human resource evaluation. This aspect is critical to optimize staffing and resource utilization for maximum service delivery efficiency. Furthermore, the department's work with local organizations like Helping Hands and the Special Benevolent Fund stands out as an essential component of its operations, underscoring the importance of this aspect for the department's financial sustainability and the continuation of crucial programs and services.

In essence, the narrative of FYS, as depicted in the Collins Center report, is one of a department that is dynamically adapting to the changing needs of its community. While facing challenges in data management and resource optimization, FYS's strengths in community partnerships, referral services, and local connections have historically marked its commitment to serving the Northborough community effectively.

## VI. Community Engagement and Needs

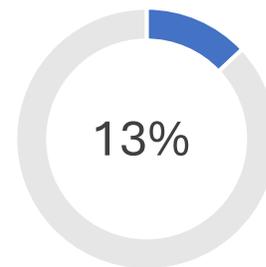
### A. Identification and analysis of community health needs and service gaps

The [MetroWest Community Health Assessment](#) (CHA) for 2023 encompasses feedback from over 1,000 residents across 25 communities, including 155 responses from Northborough, representing 14.2% of total responses. The assessment identified critical health priorities and areas for improvement to enhance the region's health outcomes and equity. This comprehensive assessment, supported by the MetroWest Health Foundation, aims to foster regional collaboration to address these identified needs effectively.

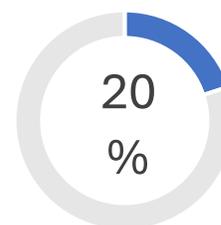
#### Key Findings and Health Priorities:

1. **Mental Health:** Emerged as the primary concern among residents, with a notable dissatisfaction regarding the availability of mental health services. The Community Health Assessment reveals that one in three individuals needing mental health services were unable to access them due to a lack of providers, long wait times, and insurance barriers. Substance use, particularly alcohol and nicotine, is also highlighted as a priority health issue. This is further substantiated by the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, indicating that 20% of middle school students and 38% of high school students in Northborough and Southborough reported high stress levels, with depressive symptoms on the rise. Alarming, 20% of middle school and 18% of high school students seriously considered suicide in 2021.
2. **Substance Use:** Although there has been a decline in substance use among youth, the adult population exhibits mixed results,

Mental Health not good for half or more of the past month, Adults 18+



Depression (as told by a medical professional) Adults 18+

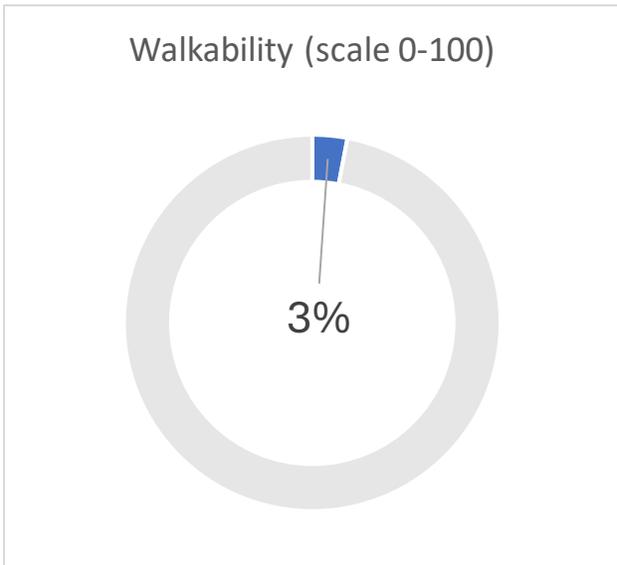
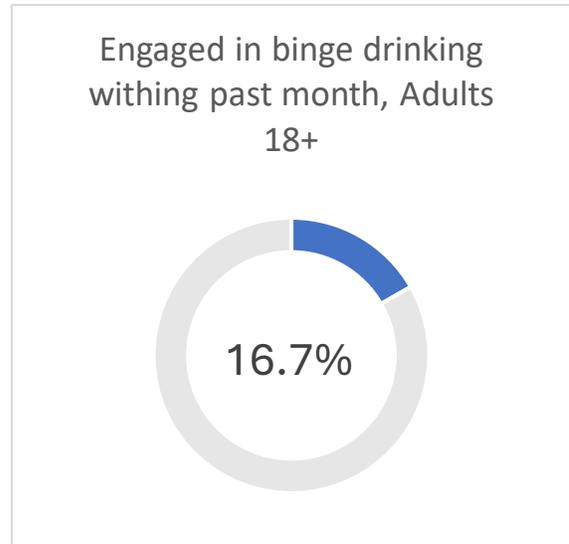


especially concerning alcohol consumption. Approximately 31% of Northborough and Southborough youth in grades 9-12 currently use alcohol, with a concerning 18% of those who currently use alcohol have engaged in binge drinking in the last 30 days. For nicotine use, 14.4% of high school youth and 2% of middle school youth have used nicotine, including electronic vapor products (EVPs), in the last 30 days.

Disparities in substance use by race and ethnicity, LGBTQ identification, and sex were noted. For instance, 30% of Black middle school students in Northborough and Southborough have ever used alcohol in their life, and 21.3% of Hispanic/Latino students, compared to 9.7% of White students. LGBTQ high school students in Northborough and Southborough have higher rates of lifetime cigarette use (11.3%) compared to their peers (7.6%), as well as increased current alcohol use (33.3% vs 30.1%) and lifetime prescription drug misuse (8.3% vs 5.1%).

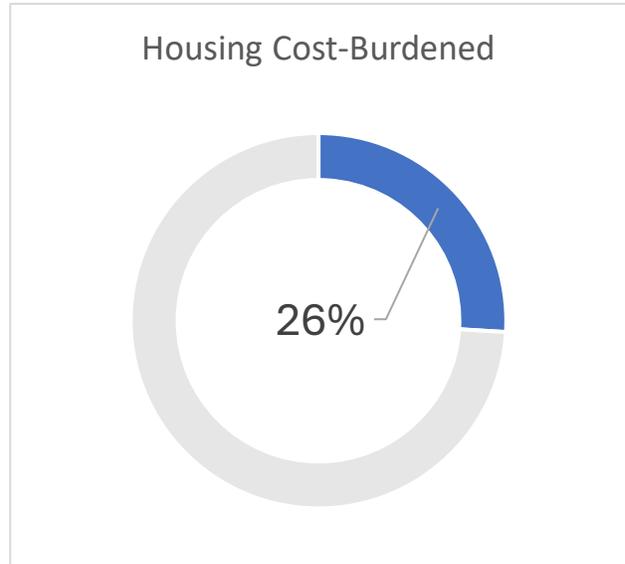
The region continues to grapple with the challenges posed by opioid use despite a decrease in overdose deaths since 2018. For opioid statistics in Northborough, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Bureau for Substance Addiction Services provides [data on admissions for treatment by city and town](#). In 2017, Northborough reported a total of 116 admissions for substance addiction treatment. Heroin was the most frequently cited "primary drug" for which individuals sought treatment. Among those admitted for treatment, 50% had received prior mental health treatment, and 60.8% had used alcohol in the past year. Notably, 7.8% of the admissions were among youth under 18. This data highlights the significant impact of opioid use within the community and underscores the need for targeted prevention and treatment efforts to address this issue.

3. Built and Natural Environment: The assessment highlighted the importance of community spaces and infrastructure in promoting social connections and physical activity. There is a call for more community spaces such as parks, community centers, and greenways, which are vital social

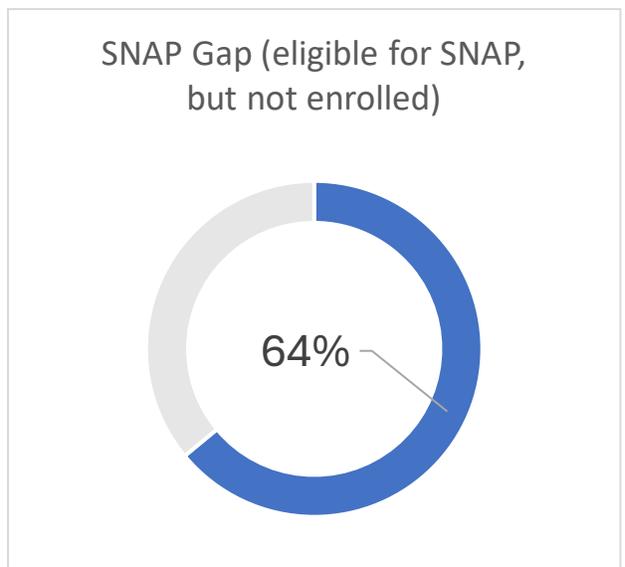


determinants of health. They provide venues for physical activity and serve as hubs for social interaction, which is crucial for mental health and community cohesion. This is an opportunity to address the lingering effects of social isolation from the COVID-19 pandemic and fill a critical gap in activities for youth.

4. **Housing Insecurity and Homelessness:** High housing costs have emerged as a significant stressor, contributing to housing insecurity and homelessness. This Community Health Assessment reports the number of households where housing costs are 30% or more of total household income. Of the 5,662 total households in Northborough, 1,470 or 25.96% of the population live in cost-burdened households. This creates a cascading impact on the finances of cost-burdened households and necessitates a better connection to resources.



5. **Food Insecurity:** The rising cost of living and the end of pandemic-related benefit programs have exacerbated food insecurity in the region. Low food access is defined as living more than 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket, supercenter, or large grocery store. This indicator is relevant because it highlights populations and geographies facing food insecurity. 57.68% of the total population in the reported area has low food access. There is a need for improved access to healthy foods and nutrition education, especially among vulnerable populations.



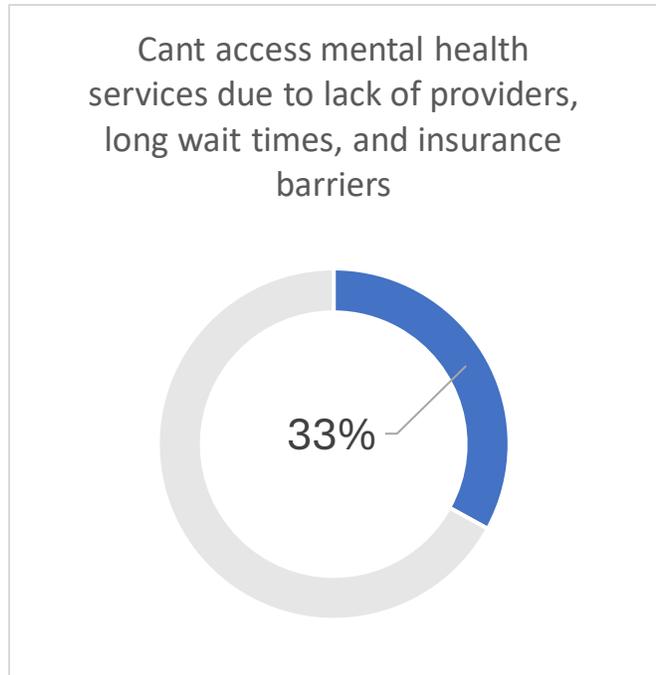
**Cross-Cutting Issue:**

- **Access to Care:** Access to medical and behavioral health care remains challenging, with disparities in insurance coverage and accessibility highlighted as significant barriers.

The CHA recommends a systemic approach focusing on social determinants of health. Strategies include forming broad coalitions for actionable planning, prioritizing equity in health initiatives, strengthening local public health capacity, promoting mental health and substance use treatment access, encouraging physical activity and social connections, and addressing housing and food insecurity. Collaborations like the COVID-19 pandemic response, the Be Well Northborough initiative, and support for the migrant shelter highlight successful community partnerships.

Further, the stakeholder interviews conducted for this Strategic Assessment

suggest a notable gap in services for the age group of 18-65 in Northborough, pointing out that while the schools offer substantial support for young people and the senior center provides resources for seniors, adults in this broad age range may find themselves with fewer targeted resources. This observation underscores the importance of developing and enhancing services that cater to the unique needs of the adult population, particularly those in their working and middle years who may face mental health challenges, substance use issues, or other health and wellness concerns. There are also limitations to what the schools and senior centers can provide, and individuals with significant needs may be better served by a social worker position that could provide ongoing case management for individuals. Addressing this service gap requires a strategic approach to ensure that all community members have access to the support and resources they need to maintain their health and well-being, regardless of their age group.



### **The Northborough Community Resource Guide**

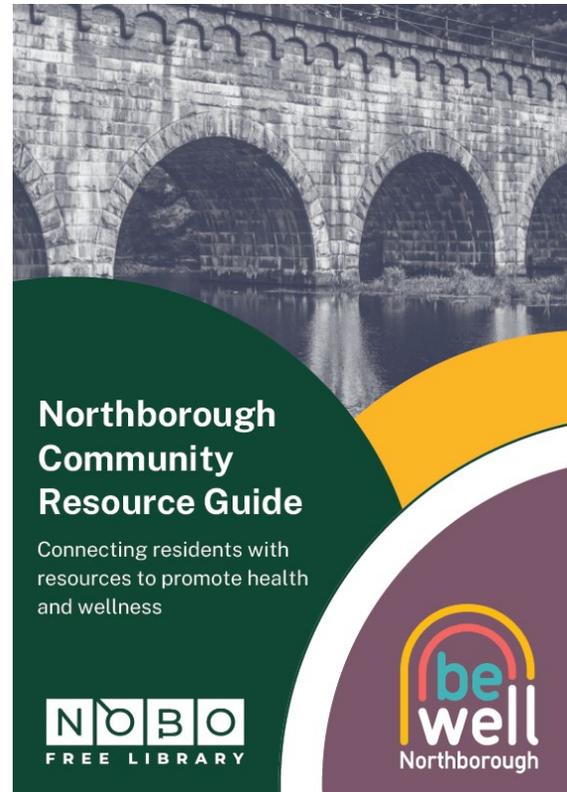
The [Northborough Community Resource Guide](#) is a comprehensive directory connecting residents with various health and wellness resources. It spans from town departments and public schools to crisis and mental health resources, LGBTQ+ support, recovery resources, and more. The guide is the result of the collaborative effort of the Be Well Northborough working group, aiming to assist the community in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. Updated in 2023, it includes local, regional, state, and national resources, reflecting the town's commitment to its residents' health and wellness.

The guide details contact information for Northborough's town departments thoroughly lists public schools and delves into essential services such as crisis intervention, mental health support, and substance recovery programs. It also covers resources for the LGBTQ+ community,

activities and opportunities for engagement within the community, and essential support services, including financial assistance, legal aid, and housing support.

One key highlight is the focus on mental health, showcasing a broad spectrum of resources from crisis hotlines to mental health and recovery services, evidencing a strong community commitment to mental health awareness and support. The guide also emphasizes the importance of accessibility to these resources, ensuring residents are aware of and able to reach out to the necessary services to support their mental and physical health needs.

This document serves as a vital tool for residents seeking support and information, and the Town hopes to continue updating it annually, potentially in a digital format. It illustrates the Town's proactive approach to addressing the diverse needs of its community members through effective resource-sharing and community support initiatives.



## VII. Collaboration and Interdepartmental Relations

### A. Examination of collaborative efforts with other municipal departments and external entities.

In the dynamic landscape of public health and social services, Northborough's Health and Family Youth Services (FYS) Departments serve as vital pillars, each uniquely nurturing the community's well-being. The Health Department has crafted a network of collaborations across various municipal departments and external organizations, forming a cohesive front to address the town's diverse health challenges. This synergy has maximized resource utilization and enriched community health initiatives, reflecting a commitment to unified public service.

The Family and Youth Services Department (FYS), dedicated to mental health and wellness, operates with a specialized framework that occasionally necessitates a more focused approach. While the department partners with critical services like the INTERFACE referral service, the Town's Special Benevolent Fund Committee, Helping Hands, and the Youth Commission to meet the immediate needs of residents, there is potential for an expanded collaborative footprint. Opportunities to weave FYS more intricately into the broader tapestry of municipal and community resources could further solidify its impact.

This section will delve into the details of collaborative efforts, highlighting successful partnerships and identifying opportunities where strengthened interdepartmental communication could elevate service delivery to new heights, ensuring that each effort is part of a more comprehensive supportive approach to health and human services.

In Northborough, the Health Department and Family Youth Services Department (FYS) collaborate with municipal departments and external entities, reflecting a multifaceted approach to community health and well-being. These collaborations highlight the departments' roles in leading and participating in initiatives that address a wide range of community needs.

- **Library Collaboration – Health and Wellness Consultant:** This partnership, primarily led by the Library and Health Departments, focuses on enhancing community access to health and wellness resources. The collaboration has led to the development of comprehensive resource guides and health-related programming, providing crucial support, especially amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Ride-Along Jail Diversion Coordinator:** Spearheaded by the Police Department and shared with Southborough, this initiative aims to integrate mental health support within law enforcement procedures, offering an alternative to incarceration for individuals facing mental health challenges. It exemplifies the department's proactive approach to mental health crises, emphasizing early intervention and support. However, this position has been challenging, and the Police Department hopes to collaborate with Health and FYS to improve the service model.
- **Opioid Settlement Funds Discussions:** Health and FYS Departments have initiated conversations about utilizing opioid settlement funds. These discussions are geared towards enhancing substance use prevention and treatment services, reflecting both departments' commitment to combating the opioid crisis within the community.
- **Drug-Free Communities:** The Health Department is leading the Drug-Free Communities program, focusing on reducing substance use among youth. Guided by a committee representing twelve sectors of the community, this partnership with Southborough exemplifies the department's collaborative spirit. This initiative underscores the department's dedication to fostering a safer, healthier environment for the community's younger members.
- **Local Non-Profit Collaboration:** Collaborations with local non-profits, such as food pantries, the Special Benevolent Fund Committee, and Helping Hands, are critical components of both departments' efforts to address food insecurity and provide emergency assistance.
  - The Northborough Food Pantry plays a crucial role in addressing food insecurity within the community, offering essential nutritional support to residents in need. By providing a range of food items, the pantry ensures that families and individuals

facing financial hardships have access to balanced meals, thereby promoting overall health and well-being.

- The Special Benevolent Fund Committee is vital for Northborough residents facing unexpected financial crises. This fund offers temporary assistance to help cover essential expenses such as housing, utilities, and medical bills, preventing minor financial setbacks from escalating into significant hardships. FYS will refer to and assist individuals through the Special Benevolent Fund process.
- Helping Hands is a community-driven initiative that provides various support services to residents facing challenging circumstances. From transportation assistance to helping with household tasks, Helping Hands volunteers work to ensure that community members receive the practical support they need, fostering a spirit of compassion and solidarity within Northborough.

These partnerships illustrate a community-centric approach to supporting residents in need, and their continued engagement will be crucial for health and social services in town.

- Senior Center Collaboration: The collaboration between the Health Department and the Senior Center represents a significant stride towards enhancing healthcare accessibility for Northborough's senior population. Through the successful acquisition of grant funding, the Health Department was able to introduce a part-time Public Health Nurse dedicated to serving the Senior Center. This initiative ensures that the nurse maintains regular office hours at the Senior Center, providing a direct and convenient healthcare resource for seniors. This arrangement facilitates timely health consultations and services and fosters a closer relationship between the Health Department and one of the town's key community hubs.
- ARPA Funds Discussions: The allocation of ARPA funds involved both departments in planning to enhance mental health services and address social determinants of health. This reflects a strategic use of federal funds to meet local health needs comprehensively.
- Be Well Northborough: As a distinct initiative led by the Health Department, Be Well Northborough was a \$100,000 ARPA-funded initiative focused on promoting overall wellness through various programs and services. This independent effort highlights the department's commitment to broad-based health promotion activities that benefit the community. Many interviewees reported missing the level of collaboration that occurred through this program.
- Migrant Shelter Support: The Health Department's continued support for the migrant shelter demonstrates a targeted approach to meeting the health needs of vulnerable populations. This effort represents the department's adaptability and responsiveness to emerging community needs.

- COVID Response and Vaccination Efforts: Led by the Health Department, the comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including public health guidance and vaccination clinics, showcases effective coordination and leadership in managing a public health emergency. The consensus among interviewees was that this experience has galvanized a collaborative spirit among municipal departments and staff.

#### B. Effectiveness of current partnerships and interdepartmental communication.

The effectiveness of the current partnerships and interdepartmental communication within Northborough's Health and Family Youth Services (FYS) Departments reveals a mixed landscape. The Health Department has demonstrated effective leadership and active involvement in health promotion, crisis response, and community support initiatives. Its collaborative efforts with other municipal departments and external entities are commendable, particularly in public health crises and community wellness programs.

However, there is an evident opportunity for the FYS Department to integrate more deeply and take a more prominent leadership role in collaborative initiatives. While the FYS Department participates in certain collaborative efforts, its impact could be significantly enhanced through greater involvement, especially in initiatives directly impacting youth and families. This would align with the department's core mission of supporting the mental and emotional well-being of children and families in Northborough.

Many stakeholders have highlighted the need for increased collaboration with schools, a crucial arena for early intervention and support for youth. Before the pandemic, there were more FYS programs in schools, but recent years have seen a decline in these initiatives. Southborough Family Youth Services has been more active in providing preventative programming at the regional school, indicating a gap that Northborough FYS could fill.

The Health Department's introduction of the Drug-Free Communities program, which includes school collaboration on substance use issues, presents an excellent opportunity for FYS to re-establish its presence in the school setting. This program could serve as a springboard for FYS to extend its reach and support for high-risk students and their families, addressing critical areas such as mental health, substance abuse, and overall family well-being.

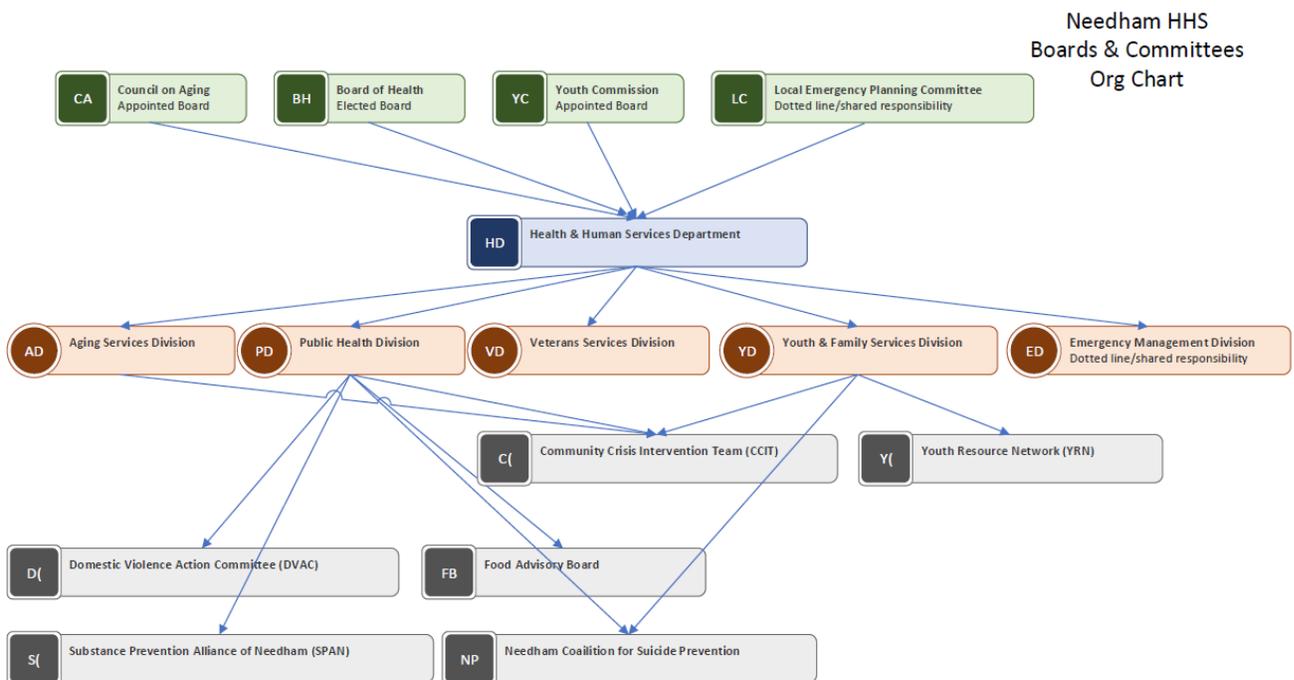
The distinction in roles and levels of involvement in various collaborations between the Health Department and the FYS Department suggests the potential for greater synergy. Both departments can amplify their collective impact on the community's health and well-being by enhancing collaboration and communication. This would require a concerted effort to bridge gaps in interdepartmental coordination and foster an environment where collaborative initiatives are more inclusive of both departments' expertise and resources.

## VIII. Exploration of Integrated Models in Other Communities

### A. Needham Health and Human Services

In the exploration of integrating Health and Human Services, Needham, Massachusetts, stands out as a model community, offering a comprehensive approach that underlines the potential benefits and considerations of such a structural evolution. This exploration of Needham, informed by the experiences and insights of Timothy McDonald and Tiffany Zike, unfolds across various dimensions of organizational structure, community impact, collaboration, challenges, solutions, and forward-looking strategies.

A unified management structure under Timothy McDonald, the HHS Director, characterizes Needham's Health and Human Services integration. This integrated model encompasses Health, Youth & Family Services, Aging Services, Veterans Services, and Emergency Management divisions, each with specific budgets and targeted responsibilities. This organizational framework promotes a cohesive approach to service delivery and underscores the strategic alignment of different service areas within the broader Health and Human Services spectrum.



### Community Impact and Collaboration

A significant facet of Needham's integrated approach is its proactive stance on substance use prevention and mental health initiatives. Programs such as Substance Prevention Alliance of Needham (SPAM) and youth alcohol prevention grants exemplify the department's commitment to addressing critical public health issues through collaborative efforts. Furthermore, the

integration facilitates natural collaboration within and across departments, enhancing the town's capacity to address broader social determinants of health, including housing, transportation, and access to healthy food. This collaborative ethos extends to partnerships with schools, first responders, and other community organizations, amplifying the impact of Health and Human Services on the community's well-being.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

Managing the expectations and budgets of different divisions within the department emerges as a notable challenge in Needham's integrated model. Like Northborough, Needham is also the lead municipality for a Public Health Excellence shared service region, hosting staff for member towns. Balancing needs and distributing resources effectively requires prioritizing strategic needs across services. Additionally, adapting to evolving community needs, particularly highlighted during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, showcases the department's flexibility and resilience. Implementing a hybrid model for staff meetings and training sessions has been part of the adaptive strategies employed to maintain continuity and effectiveness in service delivery.

### **Vision for the Future**

Looking ahead, Needham emphasizes strategic planning by division and aims for public health accreditation from the American Public Health Association, reflecting a forward-thinking and comprehensive approach to public health and services. Strategic planning, incorporating community engagement and stakeholder input, lays the groundwork for addressing current and future health and service needs, ensuring that the department remains aligned with the community's evolving priorities.

### **Considerations for Northborough**

Needham's integration of the Health and Human Services departments illustrates the significance of adaptable leadership and strategic vision in managing comprehensive community services. Leaders adept at embracing expertise within their teams and targeting service gaps ensure a well-rounded approach to health and social services. Grant funding is pivotal, bolstering the department's ability to innovate and extend its reach. This approach enables Needham to address broader health determinants through initiatives like substance use prevention and mental health first aid, funded significantly by grants.

The department's ability to secure grants, crucial for expanding services and fostering innovation, is a testament to effective leadership and strategic grant management. This success underscores the department's proactive stance on community health, going beyond reactive measures to anticipate and mitigate health challenges. The narrative from Needham serves as a model for the potential benefits of integrated Health and Human Services, emphasizing the roles of collaboration, adaptability, and community engagement in delivering enhanced services.

## B. Hudson Health Department

In Hudson, Massachusetts, the integration of Health and Human Services showcases a model of efficiency and adaptability, as detailed in an interview with Lauren Antonelli, Director of Public & Community Health. The town also funds a full-time Sanitarian, a Public Health Nurse, and a Community Health Coordinator. Hudson's approach to public health is marked by a keen emphasis on securing and managing grants to enhance community health initiatives. The town has historically excelled in acquiring competitive grants, such as the Substance Use Prevention Grant, Mass in Motion Grant, and the Public Health Excellence (PHE) Shared Service, which supports various additional roles, including a Shared Health Inspector, Shared Public Health Nurse, Community Health Worker (CHW), Health Communications Specialist, Epidemiologist, and Shared Services Coordinator.

The integration has allowed Hudson to address many community health needs more nimbly than larger cities might. These include efforts to tackle food access, mental health issues, and housing insecurity. One innovative initiative is the administration of a mobile food pantry directly from the Health Department, reflecting a proactive stance on food insecurity. The town also benefits from ARPA funding, which has enabled them to fund a full-time Public Health Nurse and a Community Social Worker, who provide direct counseling, group support, and case management. These roles are critical in addressing emergent challenges and opportunities, such as support for migrant shelters and tackling housing insecurity.

### **Community Impact and Collaboration**

Collaboration across departments and with community organizations is a cornerstone of Hudson's strategy. Although Hudson does not have a dedicated Family and Youth Services department, it maintains close relationships with the Senior Center, where a social worker is stationed, and with the Library and Veterans Services. This collaborative environment fosters a cohesive approach to health and human services, enhancing the town's ability to respond to its residents' needs.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

Despite these successes, Hudson faces challenges, particularly in staff capacity and navigating the new terrain of migrant shelter support. The future application of opioid abatement funds is under consideration, with potential plans to sustain the Social Worker position alongside separate grants for prevention efforts and post-overdose support.

### **Vision for the Future**

Looking to the future, Hudson aims to promote health and wellness through prevention and disease control, with an interest in undertaking strategic planning to refine its vision and goals further. Community engagement is inherently strong, as staff members are deeply connected to the community they serve. However, Hudson is exploring the engagement of a consultant to

enhance its social media outreach, recognizing the importance of digital platforms in today's communication landscape.

### **Considerations for Northborough**

For communities like Northborough considering similar integrations, Hudson's experience offers valuable insights. The comprehensive approach to public health, emphasizing the social determinants of health and the strategic acquisition of grants, positions Hudson as a model of how small towns can effectively respond to and meet the diverse health needs of their communities.

### **C. Plymouth Department of Health and Human Services**

Plymouth's Health and Human Services Department provides another compelling example of how integrated services can enhance community health outcomes. Under the guidance of the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Karen Keane, the department encompasses Public Health, Veterans Services, Recreation, Disability Services, the Center for Active Living, and the Library, illustrating a broad approach to community health and resources. Given the size of Plymouth and the number of employees in each division, each has an Assistant Director or other direct report to the commissioner.

### **Community Impact and Collaboration**

The integration, notably transitioning Public Health from Inspectional Services to a more comprehensive Health and Human Services framework, signifies a shift toward addressing the broader determinants of health. This new structure allows for a more holistic approach to community well-being, offering services ranging from public health nursing and food inspection to support veterans and recreational activities.

Plymouth's model emphasizes collaboration across various sectors, with the Public Health Department playing a pivotal role. The shared services coordinator and part-time public health nurse, supported by the Public Health Excellence (PHE) Grant, exemplify the collaborative efforts within the department. Furthermore, hiring a social worker and an epidemiologist reflects the town's commitment to addressing immediate and systemic health issues.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

One of the notable outcomes of this integration is the effective management of opioid settlement funds. Plymouth demonstrates a proactive stance in substance use prevention and recovery support by issuing RFPs for local nonprofit organizations and hosting forums to gather community input. These efforts are augmented by the department's extensive network, now shared under one umbrella, enhancing resource distribution and service accessibility.

Collaboration extends beyond internal departmental coordination to include partnerships with other municipal departments and the community. For example, a project to increase walking

trails showcased an innovative approach to addressing homelessness, where Health Department staff worked alongside the Police to offer resources and alternative housing solutions. The weekly inter-departmental meetings also ensure a unified approach to community service provision.

### **Vision for the Future**

The department's long-term vision is articulated through its vision and mission statements, guiding principles, and strategic planning efforts, all available online. Exciting future projects include utilizing opioid funds for school health initiatives and demonstrating Plymouth's ongoing commitment to addressing critical health issues through innovative and collaborative solutions.

Staff recruitment and training in Plymouth prioritize candidates with a collaborative background, strong communication skills, and an understanding of municipal operations. The emphasis on a candidate's ability to work across departments without fostering competition highlights the importance of teamwork and shared objectives in delivering effective health and human services.

### **Considerations for Northborough**

Plymouth's approach to integrating Health and Human Services offers valuable insights for communities like Northborough considering similar integration. The focus on addressing social determinants of health, along with the strategic use of grants and collaborative projects, highlights the potential of integrated services to support community health and well-being comprehensively.

Engagement with the community and stakeholders is a critical component of Plymouth's model. The department's open office, active Board of Health, and public forums facilitate direct interaction with residents, ensuring services are responsive and aligned with community needs. Success is measured through tangible outcomes, such as completing required inspections and effectively resolving community complaints, showcasing the department's impact on improving community well-being.

#### **D. [Nantucket Department of Health and Human Services](#)**

Nantucket provides a unique approach to health and human services, emphasizing a comprehensive and integrated model that addresses the diverse needs of its island community. The Human Services Division's mission is to connect residents to assistance and support through subdivisions for the Commission on Disability and Senior Services, including the Saltmarsh Senior Center, the Council on Aging, and Veterans' Services.

The Nantucket Public Health division, also under the Health and Human Services Department, is dedicated to improving the health status and quality of life for those who live or work on the island. This division provides environmental and community health services, focusing on various health determinants and outcomes. The division's mission includes a proactive stance on public

health, aiming to monitor and enhance the well-being of the island's population through various initiatives and programs.

### **Community Impact and Collaboration**

The integration of health and human services in Nantucket is characterized by its collaborative spirit within the island's departments and with external partners, including the Nantucket Cottage Hospital. This collaborative model has enabled the community to share vast networks and resources more effectively, addressing complex health needs comprehensively. The departments work closely on various initiatives, including addressing opioid use through settlement funds and increasing access to health and social services across the community.

Both departments actively engage with the community through public forums, workshops, and direct services to foster a connected and informed public. The Health Department's commitment to public health extends to initiatives like food safety, immunizations, and mosquito prevention, while the Social Services Department focuses on direct mental health support and advocacy.

### **Considerations for Northborough**

As with the other communities assessed, Nantucket's model showcases the effectiveness of integrating health and human services, emphasizing collaboration, community engagement, and a broad understanding of health determinants. This approach addresses immediate health concerns and works towards long-term health and well-being for the island's residents.

#### **E. Southborough Family Youth Services**

While Southborough does not have a unified health and human services department, many interviewees in Northborough see Southborough Family Youth Services as a model for Northborough to aspire to. Southborough Family Youth Services (FYS) operates with a specialized focus, distinguishing itself through a proactive and prevention-oriented approach to community health needs. While not a comprehensive integration of health and human services, Southborough's FYS offers valuable insights into the effectiveness of targeted support services within a municipal setting.

Southborough's FYS is structured around four full-time positions, each dedicated to distinct aspects of community support. A Business Manager manages budgets, serves as the point of contact for intakes, and handles marketing and registrations. Their Program Coordinator focuses on upstream prevention work, including mental health first aid and youth prevention programs, aiming to connect with at least two organizations per month. An Assistant Director provides licensed mental health support, offering consultations and short-term bridge support while navigating barriers to long-term assistance. The Director holds a smaller caseload for mental health support and coordinates social services, including camp scholarships and emergency funds, with paperwork support from the business administrator.

This structure enables FYS to deliver various services, from prevention programs and mental health support to need-based social services, addressing financial and income-eligible supports.

### **Community Impact and Collaboration**

Southborough FYS and the Assistant Health Director collaborate closely on initiatives like a community resource guide, Narcan trainings, and substance use prevention coalitions. This partnership extends to discussions on using opioid settlement funds, highlighting an integrated approach to addressing public health challenges.

The department's ability to serve a significant number of community members annually is a testament to its success. This success is further amplified by its upstream prevention work, placing FYS prominently within the community and making it a go-to resource for residents seeking health and social services guidance.

### **Considerations for Northborough**

One major challenge Southborough's FYS faces is staff capacity, especially for social services and case management. Operating within a municipal framework presents additional hurdles, such as responding quickly to community needs within the constraints of municipal regulations. Despite these challenges, FYS's collaborative background and its focus on shared achievements and goals have facilitated its success in addressing community health needs effectively.

Southborough's FYS serves as a noteworthy example for Northborough, especially in its efforts to engage with the community, manage complex health and social issues, and navigate the intricacies of municipal operations. While it may offer a partially integrated health and human services model, the targeted and specialized support provided by significant staff capacity at Southborough's FYS highlights the potential benefits of a focused approach to community health and well-being.

## **IX. Survey Results**

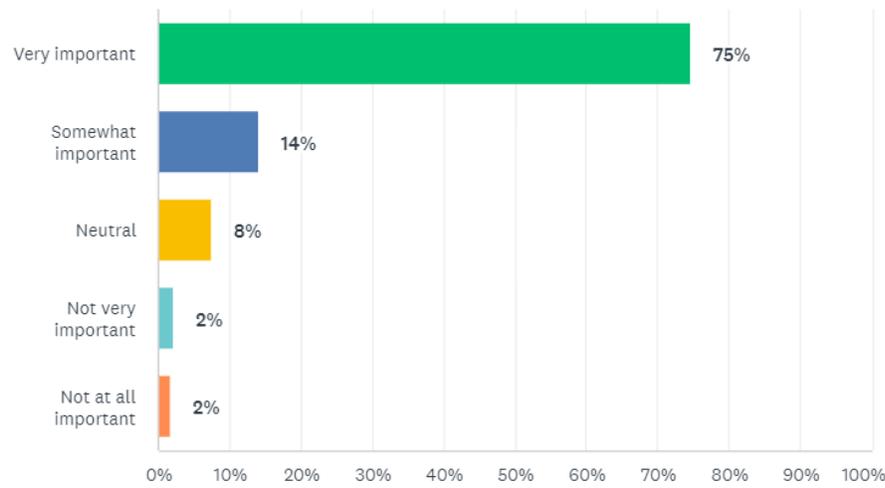
This assessment included a "Northborough Health and Human Services Public Survey," which reveals insightful data about community satisfaction, perceived health issues, and suggestions for improvement in municipal services. The survey was conducted from February 8<sup>th</sup> through February 20<sup>th</sup> of 2024 and was promoted on various town Facebook pages, the town website, with several social clubs, and through the superintendent's weekly newsletter. There were also flyers posted at the Town Hall, Senior Center, and Library, with a link to the survey and copies available. This outreach by the Health Department, Town Administration, and Clerk's Office resulted in an impressive 184 survey responses. Major survey themes are outlined below, with complete survey results as an appendix.

**Mental Health and Substance Use Prevention:** The importance of offering services for mental health support and substance use prevention was overwhelmingly acknowledged, with the majority (74.46%) considering it very important and 14.13% considering it somewhat important.

Public Satisfaction with Municipal Services: Most notable for both departments is the number of individuals responding as neutral or unsure about their satisfaction. Just over half of the respondents fell into one of these categories, suggesting the need for increased public outreach and engagement.

### How important is it that Northborough offers services for mental health support and substance use prevention?

Answered: 185 Skipped: 0



Utilization of Family and Youth Services: A substantial majority, 82.61%, reported not using the Family and Youth Services Department. Those who did avail themselves of services mentioned a range of supports, including counseling and food pantry access, underscoring a critical but underutilized resource within the community.

Suggestions for Improvement: The community provided valuable tips for new programs or services, emphasizing the need for more apparent access paths to services, with a strong call for more accessible mental health support and expanded early intervention programs. These suggestions reflect a community deeply invested in enhancing the quality and accessibility of health and human services.

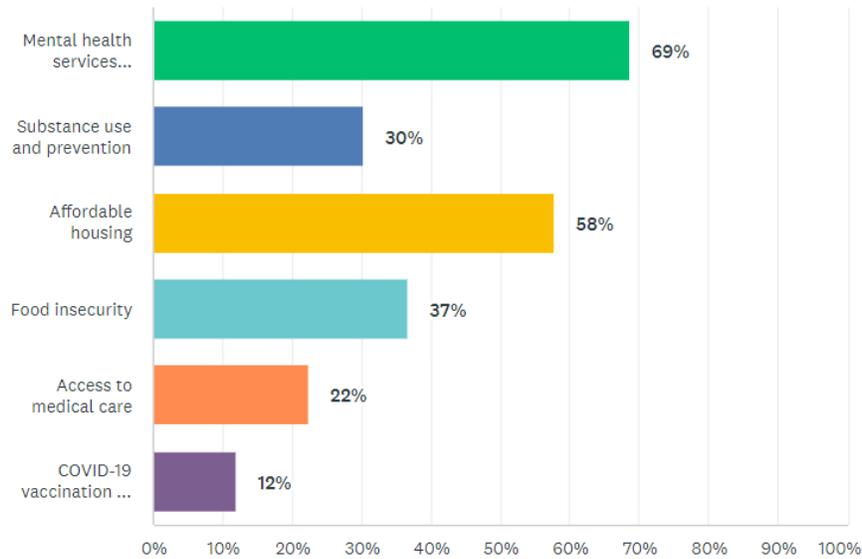
Barriers to Accessing Health Services: The survey shed light on substantial barriers residents face, with long wait times for appointments or services being the most significant at 65.76%. Other notable barriers include insufficient information about available services (39.13%) and financial barriers (32.07%), highlighting areas where the town could focus its efforts to improve service delivery.

Community Health Concerns: Respondents identified several pressing health issues, with 68.39% highlighting mental health services accessibility as a significant concern. Affordable housing and

food insecurity were also major concerns, cited by 57.47% and 36.78% of participants, respectively, pointing to broader socio-economic challenges impacting community health. These results align with the community health needs assessment completed by the Metro West Health Foundation.

What are the most pressing community health issues you have observed in Northborough? (Select up to three)

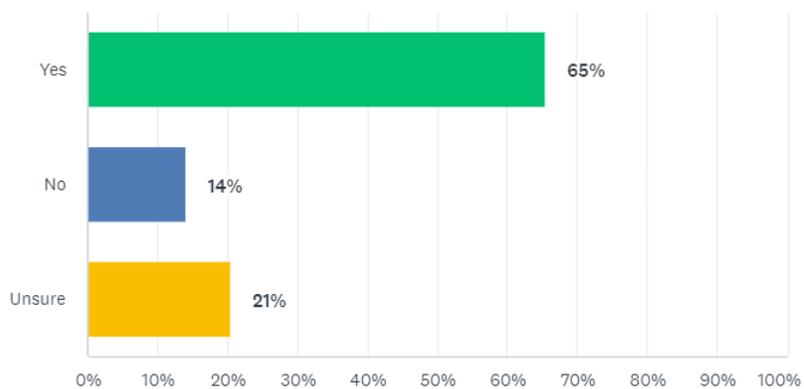
Answered: 175 Skipped: 10



Employment of a Social Worker: There was strong community support (65.22%) for employing a social worker to help residents navigate the complexities of accessing health and social services,

Should the town employ a social worker to help residents navigate these barriers and connect with appropriate health and social services?

Answered: 185 Skipped: 0



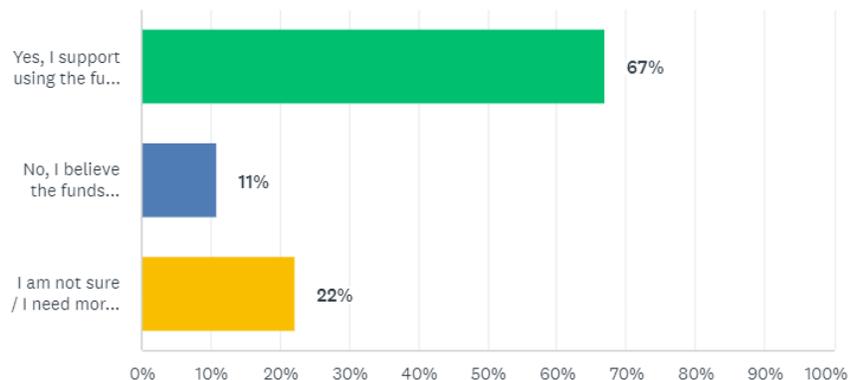
suggesting a community-wide recognition of the value of social work in enhancing public health outcomes.

**Integration of Services:** Opinions were mixed on integrating the Health Department and Family Youth Services, with 44.57% believing it would benefit the community. However, a significant portion (32.07%) needed more information before forming an opinion, and 13.59% had some reservations but were open to considering it, indicating a desire for a more detailed understanding of potential impacts. 9.78% indicated they do not believe it would be beneficial.

**Opioid Abatement Funds:** A majority (66.85%) supports using opioid abatement funds to subsidize positions focused on social services or community health, reflecting a proactive stance towards addressing substance use and mental health challenges within the community.

Northborough will receive approximately \$55,000 annually in the coming years as part of the opioid abatement funds settlement with opioid manufacturers and distributors. Do you support using a portion of these funds each year to subsidize a position focused on social services or community health?

Answered: 185 Skipped: 0



## X. Potential for Integration

### A. Feasibility and potential benefits

Exploring the feasibility and potential benefits of merging Northborough's Health Department and Family Youth Services (FYS) into a unified Health and Human Services Department reveals a promising path toward enhancing community health and well-being. This integrated approach, inspired by models in Needham, Hudson, Plymouth, and Nantucket and informed by local interviews, survey results, and departmental assessments, presents a strategic opportunity to

streamline services, improve accessibility, and foster a more coordinated response to public health challenges.

The potential benefits of such integration are manifold. By bringing staff under one roof and focusing on overlapping issues, the unified department can achieve greater efficiency and impact in addressing the community's health needs. A single director with a clear vision and strong connections within the community, other departments, organizations, and funding opportunities could leverage resources more effectively, ensuring a cohesive strategy across all health and human services. This centralized leadership would also enhance the department's capacity to navigate grant landscapes, securing additional funding to support innovative programs and services.

Moreover, an integrated department could better address the complex social determinants of health, as highlighted in the MetroWest Community Health Assessment, by coordinating efforts to tackle mental health, substance use, housing insecurity, and food access. The unified approach could also streamline access to care, reducing barriers and improving outcomes for residents across all age groups, particularly those between 18-65, who currently experience a service gap.

However, achieving these benefits requires careful consideration of potential challenges, such as ensuring balanced attention to all service areas and recruiting a suitably qualified and dynamic leader capable of steering the new department toward its goals. Additionally, attracting skilled social workers to support the department's expanded mission could present another hurdle, necessitating strategic recruitment and retention efforts to build a robust team.

Integrating Northborough's Health Department and FYS into a single Health and Human Services Department holds significant promise for enhancing service delivery, improving community health outcomes, and achieving greater operational efficiency. With careful planning, strong leadership, and community support, this integrated model could enable more effective and compassionate public health and social services.

## B. Considerations for Integration, Including Challenges and Strategic Advantages

Integrating Northborough's Health Department and Family Youth Services (FYS) involves carefully considering potential benefits and challenges. The integration aims to create a more cohesive and efficient approach to public health and human services, leveraging shared resources and expertise to address the community's needs better. The model communities examined, including Needham, Hudson, Plymouth, and Nantucket, demonstrate the viability and benefits of such integration, highlighting enhanced service delivery, improved community outreach, and more effective use of funding.

However, the integration process must navigate several challenges to ensure success. Balancing the unique mandates and priorities of the Health Department and FYS is crucial to ensure the

marginalization of both departments' core functions. It will require a dynamic director capable of leading a diverse team and developing cross-departmental relationships. A single director overseeing health and human services can ensure that efforts are distinct but instead directed towards overlapping issues with greater efficiency. This leader must identify and secure funding opportunities, foster partnerships with other departments and community organizations, and effectively manage a combined staff with various specializations.

Strategies for successful integration include establishing clear communication channels and decision-making processes that respect the expertise and contributions of all team members. Developing a shared vision and goals that align with the community's health and social service needs can guide the integration process and ensure that it remains focused on enhancing service delivery. Training and professional development opportunities can help staff adapt to new roles and responsibilities, while community engagement initiatives can solicit feedback and build support for the integrated services model. Ultimately, the feasibility and potential benefits of integrating Northborough's Health Department and FYS hinge on thoughtful hiring, strong leadership, and a commitment to maintaining the quality and scope of services provided to the community. By addressing the challenges head-on and leveraging the strengths of both departments, Northborough can create a more efficient, responsive, and comprehensive approach to public health and human services.

### C. Recruitment, Retention, Staff Development, and Compensation Structures

Integrating Health and Family Youth Services in Northborough presents unique opportunities for recruitment, retention, staff development, and compensation structures. Drawing on the Massachusetts Blueprint for Public Health Excellence, which emphasizes workforce requirements for health staff, the integration can create a robust department capable of attracting and retaining skilled professionals. Larger departments typically offer more dynamic and diverse career paths, potentially enhancing job satisfaction and staff retention. These structures also allow for more comprehensive staff development programs, aligning with best practices in public health and human services.

Moreover, a unified department can streamline management practices, facilitating cross-training opportunities and enhancing staff versatility and the department's overall resilience in responding to community needs. Staff development programs are essential in this integrated model, offering continuous education and training opportunities to keep the team abreast of the latest in public health and social services. This commitment to professional growth should be matched with a supportive work environment that values collaboration, innovation, and the well-being of its staff.

In considering compensation structures for a merged Health and Human Services department, it's crucial to establish a system that reflects the responsibilities, qualifications, and expertise required by the various roles within the department. Aligning compensation with industry

standards and regional benchmarks would support recruitment efforts and increase employee satisfaction and motivation. Additionally, offering a path for career development and progression, along with benefits that address work-life balance and professional growth, can enhance the department's appeal to potential candidates and support the overall stability and effectiveness of the team.

For recruitment, focusing on individuals who align with the mission and bring dynamism to their roles is crucial, particularly in a collaborative environment like an integrated Health and Human Services department. Engaging in a collaborative hiring process involving other departments—Police, Fire, Schools, Senior Center, and Library—can ensure that new hires are well-rounded, capable of cross-departmental cooperation, and share a common vision for community well-being. This approach enhances the selection process by incorporating diverse perspectives. It fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose among municipal services, which is vital for the holistic support of the community's health and social needs.

#### D. Opportunities for Improvement and Growth

Integrating the Health Department and Family Youth Services for Northborough presents significant improvement and growth opportunities. A proactive approach to grant opportunities is essential for sustaining services, with the community already expressing strong support for using opioid settlement funds to enhance social services and public health initiatives. This aligns with the general survey findings, emphasizing the need for more accessible mental health support and early intervention programs. Leveraging these funds strategically can address identified health priorities, such as mental health and substance use, directly impacting community well-being.

Outreach and engagement through preventative programming emerge as critical areas for expansion. Initiatives focusing on mental health, substance use prevention, and healthy lifestyle promotion can significantly contribute to early identification and intervention, reducing long-term healthcare costs and improving the quality of life for residents. These programs, especially when tailored to youth and underserved populations, can fill existing service gaps and foster a healthier community environment. Connecting individuals to resources is another area where survey respondents and interviewees noted a significant need. Especially for the population not served by the schools or senior center, those 18-65, there needs to be more services that should be addressed.

Furthermore, collaboration with other departments—Schools, Police, Fire, Library, Senior Center, and DPW —enhances the reach and effectiveness of Health and Human Services. Such partnerships facilitate a coordinated response to community needs, from educational programs to emergency services and social support, ensuring a comprehensive approach to public health and well-being. Each of these collaborations offers unique opportunities for synergy. For instance, collaborating with the Police Department's Jail Diversion Coordinator position and the Library's

role as a community interaction hub can address complex social issues more comprehensively. Serving as a resource for the Veterans Agent will help connect to the veteran population in town. Additionally, joint efforts in emergency planning and managing hoarding cases with the Fire Department underline the multifaceted benefits of a unified Health and Human Services approach.

#### E. Financial Considerations

The current budgets for both departments, as outlined above, demonstrate a commitment to addressing the health and social needs of the community, albeit through separate allocations. Merging these departments could lead to efficiencies in administrative costs, consolidating leadership roles, and streamlining operations.

One director overseeing the combined entity could enhance strategic planning and resource allocation, ensuring that programs are consistent and funds are used more effectively. This integration also creates opportunities for cross-training staff, enhancing their ability to address a broader range of community needs and improving service delivery.

Furthermore, a unified department could have a stronger position in pursuing grant opportunities. With a broader service scope, the department could apply for a more comprehensive range of grants, leveraging the combined expertise and data from both departments to make compelling cases for funding. The recent community survey support for using opioid settlement funds for social services or community health initiatives highlights the public's endorsement of strategic funding to improve health outcomes.

### XI. Recommendations and Action Plan

#### A. Strategic recommendations based on the assessment findings.

The Northborough Health and Human Services Strategic Assessment has highlighted significant areas for improvement and growth within the community, informed by robust data from the community survey, interviews, and an analysis of similar integrated models in other communities. Based on these findings, the following strategic recommendations are proposed:

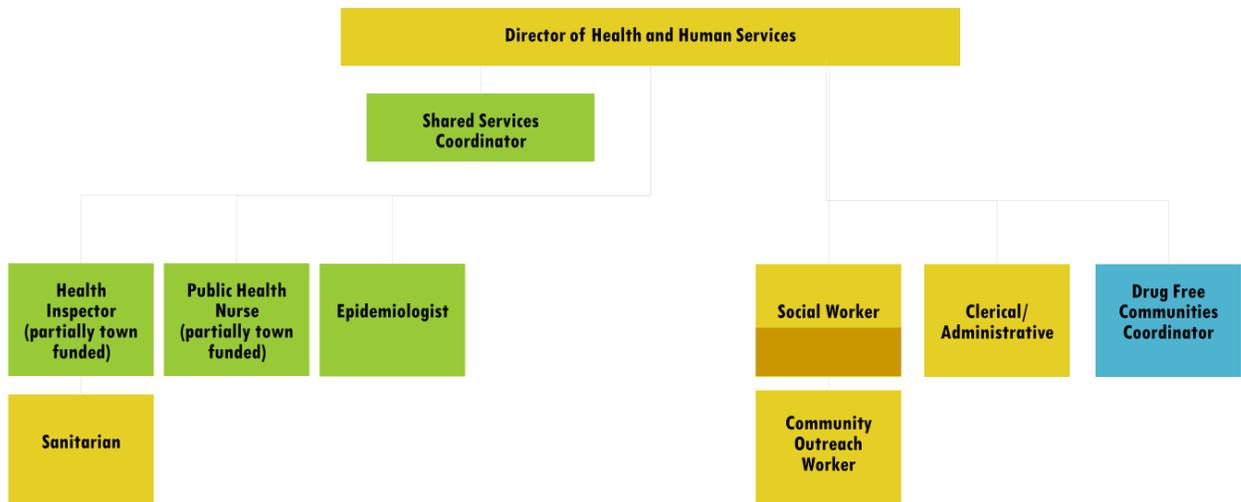
1. Integration of Health Department and Family Youth Services: To streamline services, enhance efficiency, and foster a more coordinated response to public health and social service needs. This integration aims to leverage shared resources and expertise, addressing identified gaps, especially for the 18-65 age group currently underserved, and bolster collaboration with other town departments, including Police, Fire, Schools, Library, and the Senior Center.
2. Proactive Approach to Grant Opportunities: Capitalizing on grant and other funding opportunities, including opioid abatement settlement funds, to bolster services focused

on mental health, substance use prevention, and social determinants of health. A unified department would be in a stronger position to pursue a broader range of grants, supporting innovative programs and services.

3. **Enhanced Outreach and Preventative Programming:** Expanding efforts in mental health awareness, substance use prevention, and healthy living initiatives to facilitate early intervention and improve community health outcomes.
4. **Expand Collaborative Efforts:** Strengthen partnerships with other municipal departments, schools, and community organizations to enhance service delivery and address overlapping community health issues.
5. **Recruitment and Staff Development:** Focusing on attracting mission-aligned, dynamic individuals through a collaborative hiring process involving multiple departments. Emphasize staff development and cross-training to enhance service delivery and adaptability within the integrated department. All positions should strive to meet the credentials listed in the Massachusetts Blueprint for Public Health Excellence, utilizing resources from the Regional Public Health Training Hub hosted by the Town of Needham.
6. **Financial Efficiency and Sustainability:** Evaluating the financial implications of integration to ensure the sustainability of services. A comprehensive review of both departments' budgets will identify areas where efficiencies can be realized, particularly in administrative costs and through strategic grant management.
7. **Data Collection and Informed Decision-Making:** Develop robust data collection methods to track service utilization, community health trends, and outcomes. This will involve setting clear metrics for FYS service delivery, client feedback, program effectiveness, and community health indicators. Some potential areas for data collection are outlined in Section V. B. of this report. Utilize this data to guide strategic planning, program development, and resource allocation.
8. **Community Outreach and Engagement:** Continue engaging with the community through surveys, forums, and direct outreach to understand evolving needs and adjust services accordingly. This ongoing dialogue will ensure the department remains responsive and aligned with the community's priorities.

## B. Proposed Organizational Structure

The following roles have been designed to ensure a comprehensive approach to public health and human services, building on existing capacity and enhancing the department's ability to meet the diverse needs of Northborough's residents.



## ORGANIZATION CHART



- **Director of Health and Human Services:** This individual will lead the department, ensuring all programs and services align with the town's strategic health and human services goals. They will be crucial in interdepartmental coordination, grant management, and community engagement.
- **Social Worker:** As a leader in direct social services, this role focuses on case management, program development, and oversight of human services initiatives. The position requires a dynamic individual capable of navigating complex social needs and fostering community partnerships.
- **Community Outreach Worker:** This role is pivotal in connecting the department with the community it serves. Responsibilities include outreach to identify community health needs, promoting available services, and implementing public health campaigns.
- **Health Agent:** Continuing in their critical role, they will oversee health inspections and environmental health issues and enforce public health laws within the unified department framework.

- Sanitarian (Part-time): This part-time position will supplement the Health Agent's capacity, focusing on environmental health inspections and related public health responsibilities. Southborough has expressed interest in sharing a full-time Sanitarian. A full-time position would be more attractive to candidates, which is helpful given the tight market for this skillset. This would require an amendment to the existing IMA with Southborough.
- Drug-Free Communities Coordinator: Dedicated to substance use prevention, this role manages initiatives to reduce drug use among youth, coordinating with schools, law enforcement, and community groups.
- Clerical/Administrative Position: Key to the department's day-to-day operations, this role supports all administrative tasks, including scheduling and document management, and is the first point of contact for department inquiries.
- Part-time Public Health Nurse: Aligned with public health nursing initiatives, this role, supported through shared services collaboration with the Greater Boroughs group, will support community-wide health screenings, vaccinations, and health education efforts.
- Epidemiologist: This role analyzes health data and monitors community health trends. The Epidemiologist plays a pivotal role in informing public health strategies and interventions by conducting rigorous data analysis, disease surveillance, and epidemiological studies. This focused approach will enable the department to respond proactively to emerging health issues and to tailor public health programs to the specific needs of the Northborough community.
- Shared Services Coordinator: This role concentrates on fostering collaboration and managing joint projects between Northborough and neighboring municipalities, as well as with health organizations. This role is essential for effectively leveraging shared resources, expertise, and funding opportunities to address common public health challenges. The coordinator will work to build and maintain partnerships, facilitate communication, and ensure that collaborative initiatives are executed efficiently and successfully.

### C. Implementation Action Plan

Implementing the integrated Health and Human Services Department in Northborough will require public education, approval at town meetings, recruitment, integration, and ongoing evaluation. The plan prioritizes establishing a new departmental structure, emphasizes collaborative hiring processes, and outlines a phased approach to recruitment, emphasizing positions that need immediate filling for operational effectiveness.

1. Public Education and Engagement: Before seeking town meeting approval, conduct outreach to educate the community about the proposed integration. This step aims to build public support, address concerns, and gather feedback, ensuring the community is well-informed and engaged.
  - a. Utilize Existing Communication Platforms:

- i. Town Newsletter: Include a section in the town's regular newsletter explaining the proposed integration, its benefits, and potential impacts on services. Encourage feedback through a dedicated email address.
    - ii. Social media: Post updates on the town's social media platforms and share a link to this report.
    - iii. Town Website: share a link to this report and post a concise explanation of the findings.
  - b. Public Meeting: Discuss the proposal at a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Health
  - c. Leverage Community Leaders and Organizations: Share this report with leaders of local community groups, such as neighborhood associations, schools, and non-profits, to share information and gather feedback.
  - d. Informational flyer: Develop a simple, concise informational flyer outlining the key points of integration. This brochure can be made available at the town hall, library, senior center, and other community hubs and be available for download on the town website.
- 2. Town Meeting Approval: Present the integration proposal at the town meeting, informed by public feedback and the implementation team's recommendations. Seek formal approval to proceed with the integration, including establishing new positions and reallocating budgets as required.
- 3. Formulate an Implementation Team: Establish a team comprising representatives from key departments: Police, Fire, Health, Family Youth Services (FYS), Schools, Library, and Senior Center. This team will spearhead the integration process, ensuring a collaborative hiring and program development approach.
- 4. Recruitment and Staffing: Post-approval, prioritize the recruitment for critical vacant positions, including the Director of Health and Human Services, Social Worker/Manager, Community Outreach Worker, part-time Sanitarian, and Public Health Nurse. Leverage the implementation team's expertise and networks to attract qualified candidates aligned with the department's mission and goals. Recruitment Priority:
  - a. Director of Health and Human Services: Initiate the recruitment for this key leadership position, ensuring the candidate aligns with strategic goals and possesses the capability to oversee the integrated services.
  - b. Social Worker: Focus on hiring a lead for direct social services, emphasizing case management, program development, and community engagement skills. If there is a candidate qualified to perform clinical counseling services, this would be a great help to individuals in crisis or as a bridge while they wait to be connected to services.
  - c. Community Outreach Worker: Target recruitment to enhance public engagement and service promotion.
  - d. Sanitarian (Part-time): Fill this role to support health inspection activities, complementing the Health Agent's responsibilities.

- e. Public Health Nurse: Support community-wide health screenings, vaccinations, and health education efforts.
- 5. Operational Integration and Program Development: With the key staff in place, focus on integrating operations and services. This includes aligning programs, policies, and procedures across the newly formed department, ensuring a unified health and human services approach.
- 6. Ongoing Evaluation and Adjustment: Implement a continuous evaluation process to assess the effectiveness of the integrated services, adjusting as necessary based on community needs, staff feedback, and performance metrics.
  - a. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
    - i. Service Utilization: Track the number of individuals and families accessing services annually, broken down by type of service (mental health support, substance abuse programs, public health initiatives).
    - ii. Community Engagement: Measure engagement through attendance at community outreach events, participation in preventative programs, and feedback collected from community surveys.
    - iii. Staff Performance and Retention: Conduct annual performance reviews, monitor turnover rates, and track completion of professional development opportunities.
    - iv. Grant Funding Success: Evaluate the number and amount of grants secured by the department, focusing on those that support new or expanded services.
    - v. Program Outcomes: For critical programs (e.g., Drug-Free Communities, mental health counseling, public health nursing), establish specific outcomes to measure effectiveness, such as reduced substance use among teens or increased vaccination rates.
  - b. Evaluation Process:
    - i. Regular Review Meetings: Meet with department staff, the implementation team, and critical stakeholders from collaborating departments (police, fire, schools, library, senior center) to review KPI data and discuss progress towards strategic goals.
    - ii. Community Feedback Sessions: Conduct public forums or community surveys to gather direct feedback from residents on the department's services and impact. Use this feedback to adjust programs and services as needed.
    - iii. Report to Town Administration: Provide a regular report to the Town Administrator detailing achievements, challenges, and plans for the upcoming year based on KPI outcomes and community feedback.
    - iv. Adjustment and Planning: Utilize the insights from the evaluation process to make informed adjustments to services, staffing, and programs. Plan for

the next phase of initiatives, focusing on areas needing improvement or expansion.

## D. Budget

With these new positions and structure, the town must also consider the appropriate salary for each role, marrying existing grant funds with local funding.

### Current Health Department Budget

FY24 Health Department Budget	Appropriation
HEALTH DIRECTOR	103,332
CLERICAL SALARY (Shared with Building Dept)	64,252
HEALTH AGENT WAGES*	17,000
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES**	4,000
ADVERTISING	250
TESTING (Landfill monitoring)	20,000
OFFICE SUPPLIES	1,080
TRAVEL/MILEAGE	2,500
DUES	1,370
MEETINGS	1,200
UNCLASSIFIED	300
NEW EQUIPMENT	200
<b>TOTAL HEALTH</b>	<b>215,484</b>

### Recent Family Youth Services Department Budget

FY24 FYS Budget	Appropriation
DIRECTOR SALARY	100,380
CLERICAL SALARY (19 hours with 5 paid rom Northborough Extended Day Program)	24,996
COUNSELOR	34,580
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES (Interface)	16,250
LONGEVITY PAY (June 10+ years)	500
CLINICAL CONSULTANTS (Required for LCSW)	2,600
TRAINING	1,020
PROGRAM SUPPLIES	1,500
TRAVEL/MILEAGE	1,260
SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,093
<b>TOTAL FAMILY YOUTH SERVICES</b>	<b>184,179</b>

**Current town spending: \$399,663**

## Department of Health and Human Services Budget Breakdown

Account Description	Compensation Grade	Combined Total Budget	Proposed Town Budget	FY24 Public Health Excellence Grant	Annual Opioid Settlement Funds	FY24 Contact Tracing Grant	FY24 Drug Free Communities Grant
HHS Director Salary (Pay stipend from \$69,228 PHE Admin)	I	\$ 115,000.00	\$ 105,000.00	\$ 10,000.00			
Admin/Clerical Salary	C	\$ 64,252.00	\$ 64,252.00				
Social Worker	F	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 50,000.00		\$ 30,000.00		
Outreach Worker (Pay \$10,000 from \$69,228 PHE Admin)	D	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 10,000.00			
Health Agent	F	\$ 81,098.52	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 64,098.52			
Drug Free Communities Coordinator	D	\$ 70,000.00					\$ 70,000.00
Shared Service Coordinator	C	\$ 30,599.41		\$ 30,599.41			
Epidemiologist	C	\$ 30,599.41		\$ 30,599.41			
Sanitarian (19 hours to support Northborough needs as director will have less time to do inspections)	E	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00				
Nurse (Approach like Health Agent, supplementing PHE Shared Services funds)	F	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 22,500.00		\$ 42,500.00	
Contractual Services		\$ 19,000.00					\$ 19,000.00
Misc. Contracts for under PHE and Contact Tracing Grants: translation, SOPs, communication, immunization clinics, etc		\$ 73,344.17		\$ 55,982.07		\$ 17,362.10	
Tobacco Control Consultant		\$ 4,000.00				\$ 4,000.00	
Contracted Regional Services		\$ 77,500.00				\$ 77,500.00	
Interface		\$ 16,250.00	\$ 16,250.00				
Salmon VNA		\$ 198,000.00	\$ -	\$ 131,000.00		\$ 67,000.00	
Backup Title 5, Housing, Food Inspector (per diem, part-time employee)		\$ 4,680.00	\$ -	\$ 4,680.00			
Testing (Landfill monitoring)		\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00				
Testing (animal testing)		\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00				
Longevity Pay		\$ -	\$ -				
Clinical Consultants		\$ 2,600.00	\$ 2,600.00				
Office Supplies		\$ 11,027.80	\$ 1,080.00	\$ 3,750.00			\$ 6,197.80
Software		\$ 30,260.00		\$ 25,260.00		\$ 5,000.00	
Meetings		\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00				
Trainings		\$ 6,000.00		\$ 5,000.00			\$ 1,000.00
Program Supplies		\$ 16,000.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 6,500.00		\$ 8,000.00	
Travel/Mileage		\$ 11,877.00	\$ 3,760.00	\$ 2,500.00			\$ 5,617.00
Subscriptions		\$ 1,093.00	\$ 1,093.00				
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$ 1,158,381.31</b>	<b>\$ 402,735.00</b>	<b>\$ 460,856.22</b>	<b>\$ 55,000.00</b>	<b>\$ 260,362.10</b>	<b>\$ 125,000.00</b>

## E. Job Descriptions

Job descriptions will be drafted upon BOS's and BOH's approval of the proposed structure.

## XII. Conclusion

The Northborough Health and Human Services Strategic Assessment assessed the feasibility and potential benefits of merging the town's Health Department and Family Youth Services into a unified entity. This exploration was driven by the need to understand how such a merger could enhance service delivery, address community health needs more effectively, and potentially create efficiencies in operation and budget utilization.

The assessment provided insights into the current state of services, community needs, and gaps in service delivery through community surveys, stakeholder interviews, and analyses of similar integrated models in other communities. The findings suggest that while there are clear benefits to incorporating these services, including improved coordination, efficiency, and access to services, there are also significant considerations regarding implementation, staff alignment, and community engagement.

The report's recommendations offer a strategic framework for considering integration, emphasizing the importance of a phased and inclusive approach that involves all stakeholders. The proposed organizational structure and implementation action plan outline a path forward, prioritizing critical steps such as community engagement, staff recruitment, and program alignment.

Merging the Health Department and Family Youth Services presents an opportunity for Northborough to enhance its public health and human services delivery. However, successful implementation will require careful planning, transparent communication, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that the unified department meets the community's needs effectively and sustainably. The decision to proceed with such a merger should be informed by further dialogue with the community and a detailed review of the operational and financial impacts.

## XIII. Appendices

### A. Interview Logs

#### Internal Interviews

Name	Department	Interview Date
Allie Lane	Recreation	1/10/2024
Andrea Leland	Special Benevolent Funds Committee	1/23/2024
David Parenti	Fire	1/12/2024
Diane Wackell	Assistant Town Administrator	3/1/2024
Doreen Genna	FYS	1/30/2024

Dr Jennifer Lipton	School Counsellor, Youth Commission	1/17/2024
Emily Flavin	Drug-Free Communities	1/11/2024
Erica Zeiger	Youth Commission, PTO, Helping Hands, Clothing Drive	1/23/2024
Isabella Caruso, Northborough	Health Department	12/10/2023
Jane O'Toole	Helping Hands	1/17/2024
Jenn Bruneau- Library Director (Jenn)	Library	1/17/2024
Joan Clementi	Youth Commission	2/15/2024
Kendra Faldetta - Northborough Senior Center	Senior Center	1/10/2024
Kristin Black, Northborough	Health Department	12/20/2023
Liz Nolan	Helping Hands and Migrant Shelter Volunteer	1/30/2024
Lt. Brian Griffin	Police	1/23/2024
Mary Ellen Duggan	Public Schools RN and Northborough Junior Woman's Club	1/12/2024
Michael Seager-Health Agent	Health Department	1/23/2024
Scott Charpentier	Public Works	2/16/2024
Sherry Clark	Youth Commission	1/30/2024
Tim McInerney	Town Administrator	1/2/2024
Northborough Department Heads Meeting	All	1/2/2024

### External Interviews

Contact	Town/Organization	Interview Date
Tiffany Zike	Needham	1/30/2024
Lauren Antonelli	Hudson	2/5/2024
Karen Keane	Plymouth	2/6/2024
Karin Carroll	Somerville	2/6/2024
Sarah Cassell	Southborough	2/5/2024
Rebecca Gallo	MetroWest Health Foundation	1/23/2024
Timothy McDonald	Massachusetts Health Officers Association and Needham	1/30/2024
Mike Hugo	Massachusetts Association of Health Boards and the Cape and Islands	2/29/2024

## B. Salary Comparisons

### Southborough

	<b>Min FY24</b>	<b>Max FY24</b>
Assistant Director Youth and Family Services	\$ 65,145	\$ 85,945
Inspector	\$ 65,145	\$ 85,945
Outreach Coordinator	\$ 65,145	\$ 85,945
Nurse	\$ 65,145	\$ 85,945
Admin Assistant	\$ 46,000	\$ 61,797
Program Coordinator	\$ 59,218	\$ 78,125
Program Manager	\$ 65,146	\$ 85,946
YFS Director	\$ 81,432	\$ 107,411
Assistant Director/Nurse/Outreach	\$ 81,432	\$ 107,411

### Hudson

	<b>Min FY24</b>	<b>Max FY24</b>
Clerical (0.5 FTE)		\$ 29,012.00
Public Health Director		\$ 95,331.00
Sanitarian		\$ 76,660.68
Health Inspector (0.5 FTE)		\$ 38,218.00
Social Worker		\$ 62,827.00
Public Health Nurse		\$ 81,036.00
Program Coordinator	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 80,000.00
Community Health Worker		\$ 56,858.00
Epidemiologist		\$ 79,291.00

### Town of Needham

	<b>Min FY25</b>	<b>Max FY25</b>
Director of Health and Human Services		\$ 141,139.00
Assistant Director of Public Health for Community and Environmental Health		\$ 108,674.00
Assistant Director of Public Health for Nursing and Behavioral Health		\$ 108,674.00
Program Coordinator	\$ 79,443.00	\$ 91,416.00
Environmental Health Agent	\$ 77,961.00	\$ 80,048.00
Public Health Nurse		\$ 84,981.00
Epidemiologist		\$ 71,741.00
Administrative Assistant (0.4 FTE)		\$ 22,948.00

### Current Job Postings

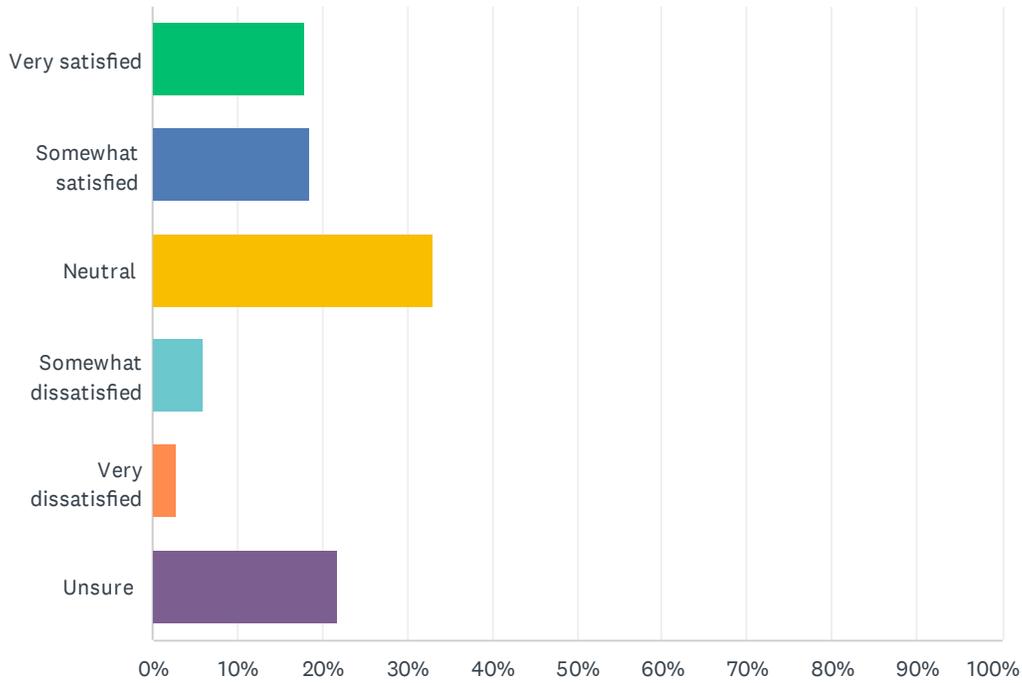
<a href="#">Burlington, MA Social Worker</a>	\$ 70,803.20	\$ 96,553.60
<a href="#">Cambridge, MA Social Worker</a>	\$ 88,007.00	\$ 99,323.00
<a href="#">Easthampton, MA Director of Public Health</a>	\$ 69,700.00	\$ 84,000.00

C. Survey responses

Survey responses are attached.

# Q1 How would you rate your overall satisfaction with Northborough's municipal public health services?

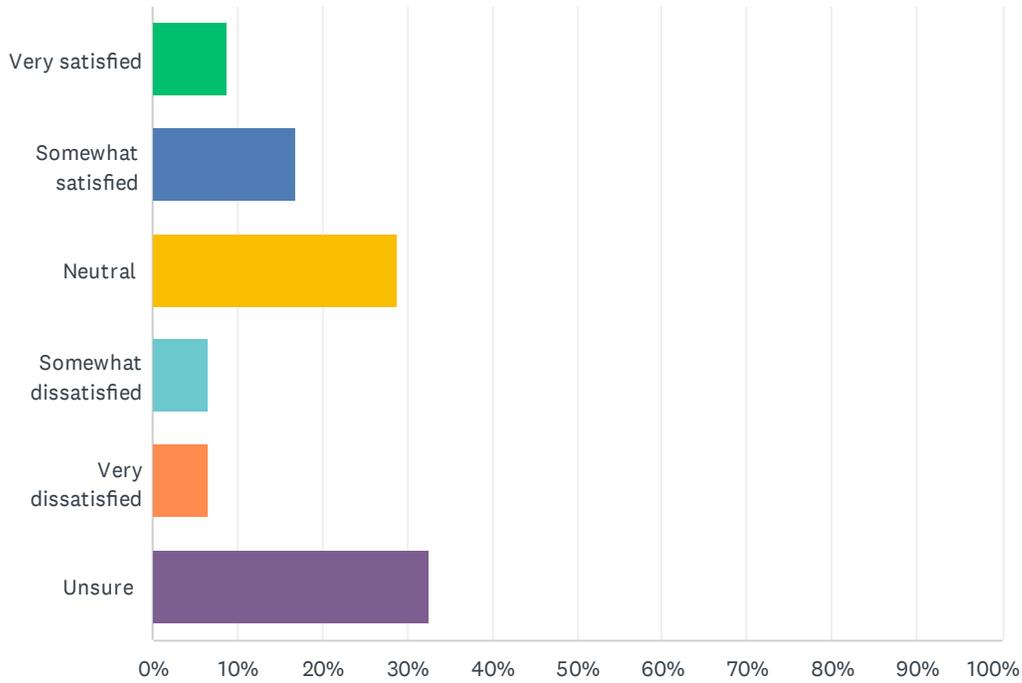
Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very satisfied	17.93%	33
Somewhat satisfied	18.48%	34
Neutral	33.15%	61
Somewhat dissatisfied	5.98%	11
Very dissatisfied	2.72%	5
Unsure	21.74%	40
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>184</b>

## Q2 How would you rate your overall satisfaction with Northborough's municipal family and youth services?

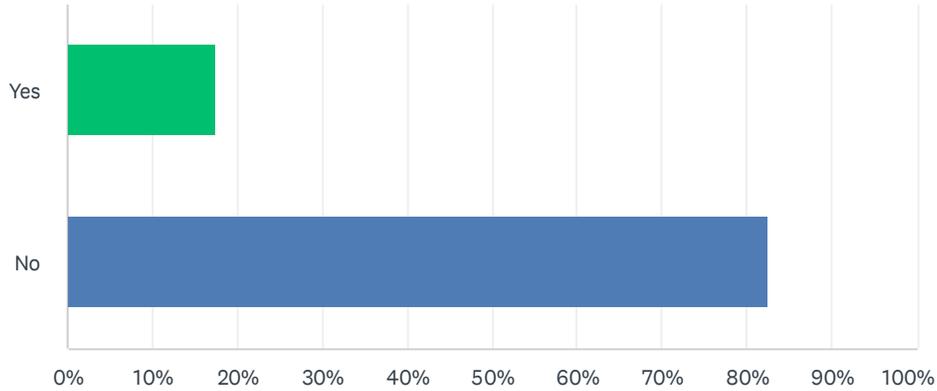
Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very satisfied	8.70%	16
Somewhat satisfied	16.85%	31
Neutral	28.80%	53
Somewhat dissatisfied	6.52%	12
Very dissatisfied	6.52%	12
Unsure	32.61%	60
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>184</b>

### Q3 Have you or someone in your household ever used the services provided by the Family and Youth Services Department?

Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	17.39%	32
No	82.61%	152
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>184</b>

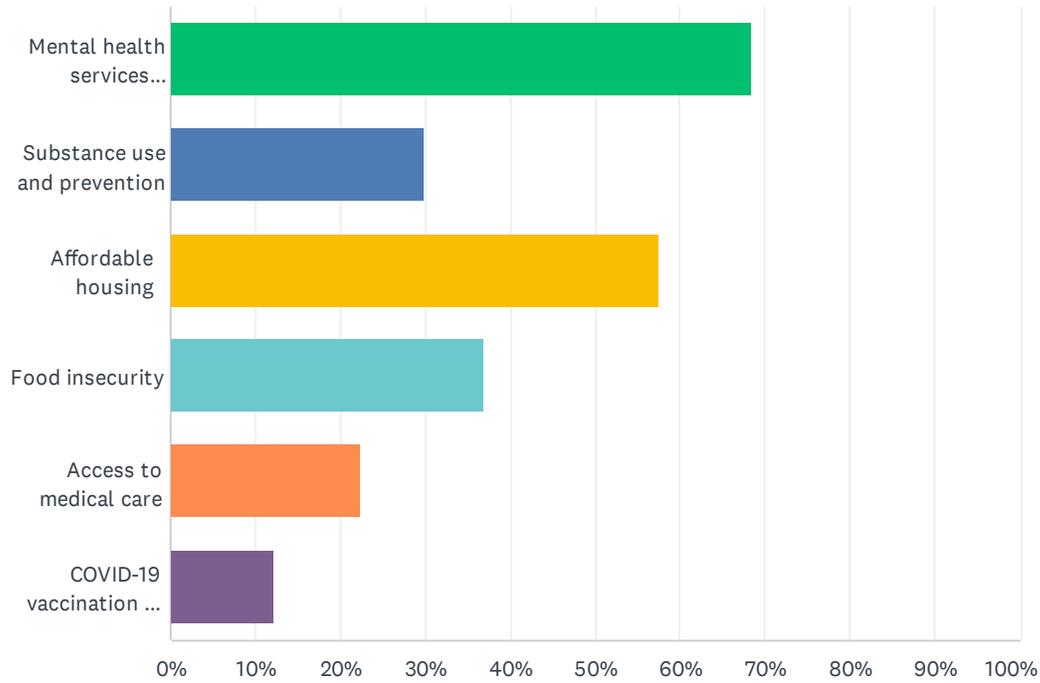
#	IF YES, WHAT SERVICES WERE UTILIZED?	DATE
1	Counseling - it was very good. Dept no longer exists.	2/19/2024 9:54 PM
2	I was looking for resources for Childcare and support groups. It would be very helpful to have someone that could provide Individual support to first time Mom's, or just families in general within the community	2/14/2024 8:58 AM
3	Food pantry. Office of the town.	2/13/2024 11:28 AM
4	Looking for a therapist for our child.	2/12/2024 6:07 PM
5	don't remember	2/12/2024 1:22 PM
6	Seek identification of counseling/therapist	2/11/2024 4:51 PM
7	Counseling	2/11/2024 8:20 AM
8	Tried to get guidance with mental health, told they couldn't help. Had major barriers in the school system, told they couldn't assist at all.	2/10/2024 10:40 AM
9	family counseling	2/10/2024 8:32 AM
10	after school care	2/9/2024 9:37 PM
11	counseling	2/9/2024 2:37 PM
12	Walker after surgery need	2/9/2024 2:33 PM
13	Be Well kick-off event	2/9/2024 1:07 PM
14	Urgent school aged counseling, referrals.	2/9/2024 1:05 PM
15	EBT application	2/9/2024 12:35 PM

## Northborough Health and Human Services Public Survey

16	Therapy	2/9/2024 12:34 PM
17	Years ago my sons did "A Place for Us" program on Sat mornings & 1 son received individual counseling & group/friendship counseling	2/9/2024 11:33 AM
18	Counseling	2/9/2024 11:13 AM
19	Year ago. Counseling and youth groups.	2/9/2024 11:10 AM
20	Interface referral service	2/9/2024 11:10 AM
21	Counciling	2/9/2024 11:01 AM
22	Counseling services for one of our children about 24 years ago	2/9/2024 10:54 AM
23	In school counseling support	2/9/2024 10:43 AM
24	Over 30 years ago we adopted two children and the town had an actual Youth and Family Services Dept. that helped our children transition from totally different culture to their new life. Nancy Berglund had a special class at town hall for my 4 year old.	2/9/2024 10:39 AM
25	Kids Night Out, Camps	2/9/2024 10:31 AM
26	-	2/9/2024 10:25 AM
27	Don't know. Don't know what all comes under this department.	2/9/2024 10:11 AM
28	Referral	2/9/2024 10:10 AM

## Q4 What are the most pressing community health issues you have observed in Northborough? (Select up to three)

Answered: 174 Skipped: 10



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Mental health services accessibility	68.39% 119
Substance use and prevention	29.89% 52
Affordable housing	57.47% 100
Food insecurity	36.78% 64
Access to medical care	22.41% 39
COVID-19 vaccination and information	12.07% 21
Total Respondents: 174	

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Health education	2/16/2024 10:56 AM
2	Resources for Newcomers/Immigrants and getting the information in a timely manner to help everyone.	2/14/2024 8:53 PM
3	The use of pronouns. Boys can't be girls, and girls can't be boys. Stop lying to our children.	2/12/2024 9:49 AM
4	lack of indoor public facilities to exercise and socialize. Transportation to a gym like the Y or WTSC which are not too convenient as they are a drive. Need something in the center of town that is available to all, especially youth. The seniors already have an active senior center. But a recreation center with an indoor pool would be amazing for all residents.	2/11/2024 9:22 AM

## Northborough Health and Human Services Public Survey

5	not familiar with any places people can go for STD testing or pregnancy stuff like abortive services	2/10/2024 4:35 PM
6	Cronyism and corruption spanning the select and planning boards, and the conservation in name only conservation committee	2/10/2024 6:35 AM
7	Not sure	2/9/2024 5:51 PM
8	None	2/9/2024 5:26 PM
9	None	2/9/2024 2:02 PM
10	Toxic farms allowed to operate in town. It affects a lot of people's health.	2/9/2024 1:59 PM
11	Improved transit - Public transportation and/or bike paths, more sidewalks, etc.	2/9/2024 1:07 PM
12	support for new parents, safe spaces for community to gather	2/9/2024 12:04 PM
13	The Northborough Public Schools should never have pushed their students or community members to get Covid shots. They should be held responsible for any injuries or deaths for promoting these shots through the newsletters etc. VAERS lists deaths & injuries. Health Rights MA. has videos of MA. residents giving accounts of their life altering injuries. I'm very disappointed with the stance that the schools took.	2/9/2024 11:35 AM
14	Young adult disability housing (autism & intellectual disability)	2/9/2024 11:33 AM
15	at home services for people unable to get out	2/9/2024 11:18 AM
16	Taxes!	2/9/2024 11:13 AM
17	Dementia care	2/9/2024 10:50 AM
18	Infrastructure, unsafe roads/no sidewalks, not bike friendly	2/9/2024 10:31 AM
19	-	2/9/2024 10:25 AM
20	home health care support	2/9/2024 10:16 AM
21	Need affordable housing for the 55+ population	2/9/2024 10:14 AM
22	can promote more exercise outdoor "just show up" events like pickleball, walks around the park, etc.	2/9/2024 10:11 AM
23	none	2/9/2024 10:00 AM

## Q5 What suggestions do you have for new programs or services that the Health Department or Family & Youth Services Department could offer to better meet community needs?

Answered: 80 Skipped: 104

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Need a CLEAR avenue for families and youth to find services. If part of health dept, that might not be clear	2/20/2024 4:17 PM
2	Remember that affordable housing does not mean low income housing. People earning "middle" income need affordable housing too.	2/20/2024 10:10 AM
3	Family and youth services no longer exists as a department. Create one or regionalize.	2/19/2024 9:54 PM
4	Open house or similar event. Participation at school parent nights or other school events. Perhaps programs with or through the recreation dept (if they can do a program just for N'boro residents-unfortunately they usually open to all)	2/18/2024 4:06 PM
5	More community activities promoting health!	2/18/2024 2:35 PM
6	Unsure	2/17/2024 8:42 AM
7	Offer health education programs. These could be online, in person, on cable tv. Have an emphasis on prevention. The importance of diet, exercise, seeing a doctor, etc. Maybe some healthy recipes?	2/16/2024 10:56 AM
8	Expanded programs and for Early Intervention.	2/15/2024 2:44 PM
9	Linkages to care.	2/15/2024 11:59 AM
10	Continually update the BeWell community resource book, so that residents can have access to the information.	2/14/2024 8:53 PM
11	In school mental health supports for children and teens. Parent mental health supports.	2/14/2024 3:40 PM
12	More education/support available to the community especially within the school system	2/14/2024 9:33 AM
13	I think it would be very beneficial to have a drop-in center for young adults who can access mental health or substance use services as well as provide peer support or groups that are led by people with their own mental health difficulties. I also to have free childcare and pre-K that is accessible. I think it also would be helpful to have someone that could outreach people in the community that are first time moms looking for resources as well as education on how to navigate the school system for first time parents. A resource that might be helpful to look at regarding peer support services if it is an option in the community would be Kiva centers.org they are out of Worcester, I think something like this in Northboro would be absolutely amazing.	2/14/2024 8:58 AM
14	Support groups for families with member with mental illness. Support group for the person with mental illness. Some diagnosis specific groups	2/14/2024 7:11 AM
15	have youth centered social workers who work with youth in schools for needs that are beyond identified school needs (ie beyond IEPs) but allow for equitable access to care during/on site at the school setting	2/13/2024 7:28 PM
16	I wonder if it makes sense to have a mental health drop in option at someplace like the library. This could be for adults or teens. A non threatening space that they may go to already, or be able to use as cover for going.	2/13/2024 7:17 PM
17	More counseling opportunities for families and students	2/13/2024 5:00 PM
18	Public housing needs update their staff and office and provide a good service, a nice treatment	2/13/2024 11:28 AM
19	hand out free bubble gum and ask people to walk.	2/12/2024 1:22 PM

## Northborough Health and Human Services Public Survey

20	Let parents parent their kids. Let parents make medical decisions for their children. Stop interfering and discriminating against children and adults who want medical privacy.	2/12/2024 9:49 AM
21	Understand and meet the needs of people's mental health struggles. Serve those in need including refugees, to connect with social services (mental health support, food, housing, employment).	2/12/2024 4:16 AM
22	Get into the schools. Be with the students and staff. Support through education.	2/11/2024 6:25 PM
23	Opportunities for young adults living at home, particularly those that are socially isolated, to connect with people with similar interests. Offer a place where they can feel like they can engage in their community and make a difference. Set up a mentorship program. a walking club	2/11/2024 4:32 PM
24	None	2/11/2024 2:43 PM
25	Some sort of drug program for kids ie DARE	2/11/2024 11:32 AM
26	Take care of our own residents who are waiting for housing before taking care of migrants. Have oversight over the families that are abusing housing resources. For example, look at the multiple families living at Avalon, working under the table, and stashing money to buy houses.	2/11/2024 10:46 AM
27	Help with the school bus situation which causes a lot of stress. Maybe allocate that money to bus companies for more reliable transportation for kids and families. More after school programs. NEDP should not monopolize our facilities after school. Art programs after school, sports programs, music programs programs.	2/11/2024 9:22 AM
28	Continue offering free covid test kits	2/11/2024 9:11 AM
29	Unfortunately FYS could only do so much because they were understaffed. If we hired fulltime staff for both departments, there could be more programs and out reach to help our residents in need. Both departments are essential and do so much on very little.	2/11/2024 8:20 AM
30	More support for people with diabetes	2/11/2024 7:06 AM
31	There is not really any services in Northborough that are advertised enough that I have even familiarized myself with over the 3 years I've been here. Maybe some more outdoor recreation events. I noticed the yoga offered at town hall gym and thought that was wonderful. Also some more easily accessible mental health screening or council could be offered.	2/10/2024 4:35 PM
32	More outreach. I'll be honest ... I don't know what you provide in addition to the food pantry (and don't know if that is provided by the town). Just FYI, I have lived here for 38 years and raised 3 children.	2/10/2024 11:04 AM
33	Really think we need mental health services or programs that help with that. Also, had barriers in the school system with this too. Need services or people who are knowledgeable of services. When I tried to get information or help, there was not any.	2/10/2024 10:40 AM
34	A youth center	2/10/2024 8:49 AM
35	visibility and accessibility. Service 24/7 awareness coming to public areas.	2/10/2024 8:32 AM
36	Take care of Northborough's citizens before taking care of refugees.	2/10/2024 8:25 AM
37	Resources for the many grandparents that are raising their grandchildren. Mental health support for grandchildren with behavioral issues	2/10/2024 8:01 AM
38	My family has never used town health services, but I know people who were turned away because no providers were available.	2/10/2024 7:21 AM
39	Preteen and teen mental health services for children and their adults to help with coping in a digital world, anxiety, and body image	2/10/2024 6:59 AM
40	Enforce all laws, remove illegal occupants from the town	2/10/2024 6:35 AM
41	We need free health services in USA like other countries.	2/9/2024 11:26 PM
42	I would like to see more programs for teens with aspergers. Many programs are geared towards lower functioning disabilities	2/9/2024 9:37 PM
43	Youth mental health programs in a schools, rec programs, general town programs, etc.	2/9/2024 5:48 PM

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44	No expansion needed	2/9/2024 2:33 PM
45	None	2/9/2024 2:02 PM
46	Not sure	2/9/2024 1:59 PM
47	Counseling services back in the schools	2/9/2024 1:08 PM
48	More accessible staffing within the departments. Always has been severely short staffed.	2/9/2024 1:05 PM
49	A newsletter every other month perhaps. I feel uninformed when trying to answer these questions.	2/9/2024 12:58 PM
50	Elderly isolation	2/9/2024 12:49 PM
51	Affordable housing seminars and a housing expert	2/9/2024 12:35 PM
52	More therapist	2/9/2024 12:34 PM
53	Free exercise groups for young people. After school activities, therapy groups, classes. Support groups for kids/teens.	2/9/2024 12:18 PM
54	LMHC or LICSW to provide services while securing therapy. Case manager or resource person who can triage and direct clients to local, regional and state resources and help them complete forms to access assistance. Collaboration with civic and town organizations to create a unified presence promoting health and wellness ( a lot of great things happen in our town, but not everyone knows about them)	2/9/2024 12:04 PM
55	Prevention/education programs, outreach, full time social worker, full time department head. Do not rely on the schools to reach all children and families.	2/9/2024 12:03 PM
56	More accessible counseling for residents.	2/9/2024 11:58 AM
57	Encourage outside activities and healthy food choices.	2/9/2024 11:35 AM
58	I've really enjoyed meditation via zoom VERY MUCH w past instructor!	2/9/2024 11:33 AM
59	I remember when I was unable to get my 4 year old vaccinated for Covid because the Covid vaccine programs were not for that age. The other clinics were run extremely well.	2/9/2024 11:19 AM
60	That Family and Youth gets more staffing, from social workers. Not a health take.	2/9/2024 11:15 AM
61	Elderly housing is very low in numbers and many people that are approved are not from Northborough. The structures on village drive are not updated and are in poor condition.	2/9/2024 11:13 AM
62	Public Community meetings to address various topics and issues. Let the people share their concerns in a public forum with supports. Much like past forums held in Northborough on drinking and driving, etc. perhaps offering group Information sessions about a host of community resources and how to utilize them. Informational Talks about public transportation, getting more bang for your buck at grocery stores, affordable recreational opportunities for adults and children. Employment forums for both job seekers and employers. Maybe bring a lot of our current wonderful organizations together to explain their roles in the community. Many people just don't know what they do.	2/9/2024 11:10 AM
63	More full-time staff, more proactive outreach	2/9/2024 11:10 AM
64	Programs geared to teens (middle and high school students) in conjunction with the schools. So many great programs are offered to parents but they are not attended as well as they should be. Maybe offering them to students at a convenient time or through TikTok and YouTube (where they spend a lot of time) will reach them with a message.	2/9/2024 11:03 AM
65	No suggestions	2/9/2024 11:01 AM
66	Support for pre-teen and teens having stressful family situations such as parental separations and divorce	2/9/2024 10:54 AM
67	Mental health/counseling groups	2/9/2024 10:43 AM
68	Outreach via monthly sessions for information \ referral at Northborough food pantry, Senior Center , pop up at town common and 135 park	2/9/2024 10:42 AM
69	Northboro needs a full-time social worker and more counselors in our schools. Getting services	2/9/2024 10:39 AM

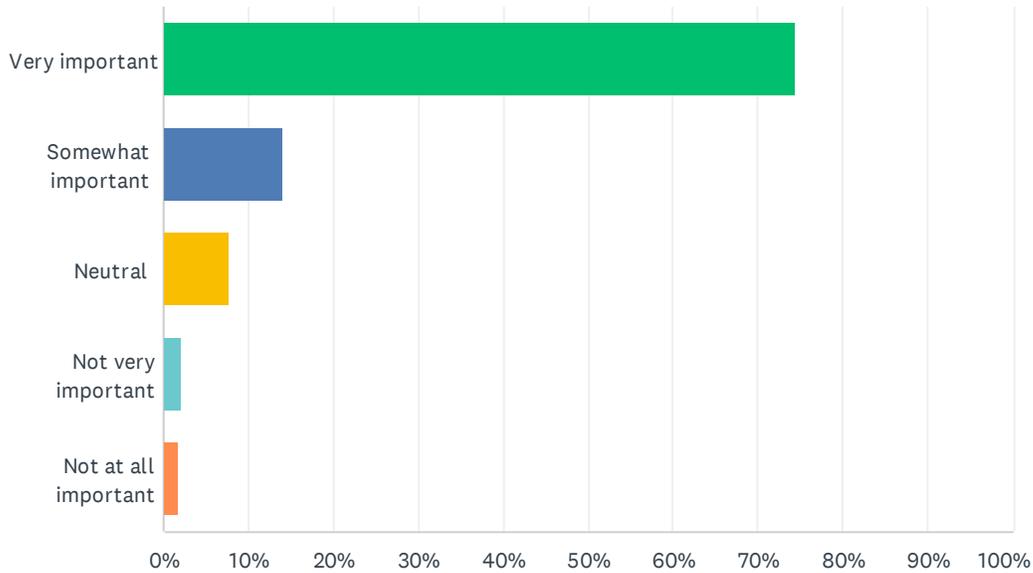
## Northborough Health and Human Services Public Survey

for our children is way too difficult and takes way too long.

70	Improve public buildings and spaces	2/9/2024 10:31 AM
71	Add another person as a coordinator at the Senior Center to support the overworked staff	2/9/2024 10:25 AM
72	Public transportation to meet the needs of the community to get to medical appointments and to other places like the local YMCA to prevent health problems	2/9/2024 10:19 AM
73	The senior center needs to start up and foster support groups such as a Parkinson's Support Group that meets at the senior center and/or remotely.	2/9/2024 10:16 AM
74	More programs at the Senior center that center around helping the elderly population ie, home checks from the fire department to check for safety	2/9/2024 10:14 AM
75	Meet with your neighbor's Day. Emails that can be sent to all residents. Knock on your neighbor's door day and share a plate of cookies or goodies. Free screenings, blood donation days and earn a gift, and more.	2/9/2024 10:11 AM
76	We need someone who can direct residents to information. For example if I need help finding fuel assistance, but I am not a senior who do I call?	2/9/2024 10:11 AM
77	Better education around what services are available and how to access them particularly for adults.	2/9/2024 10:06 AM
78	not sure	2/9/2024 10:05 AM
79	No new programs. Taxes are too high as it is	2/9/2024 9:59 AM
80	Need an active youth and family services	2/8/2024 3:20 PM

## Q6 How important is it that Northborough offers services for mental health support and substance use prevention?

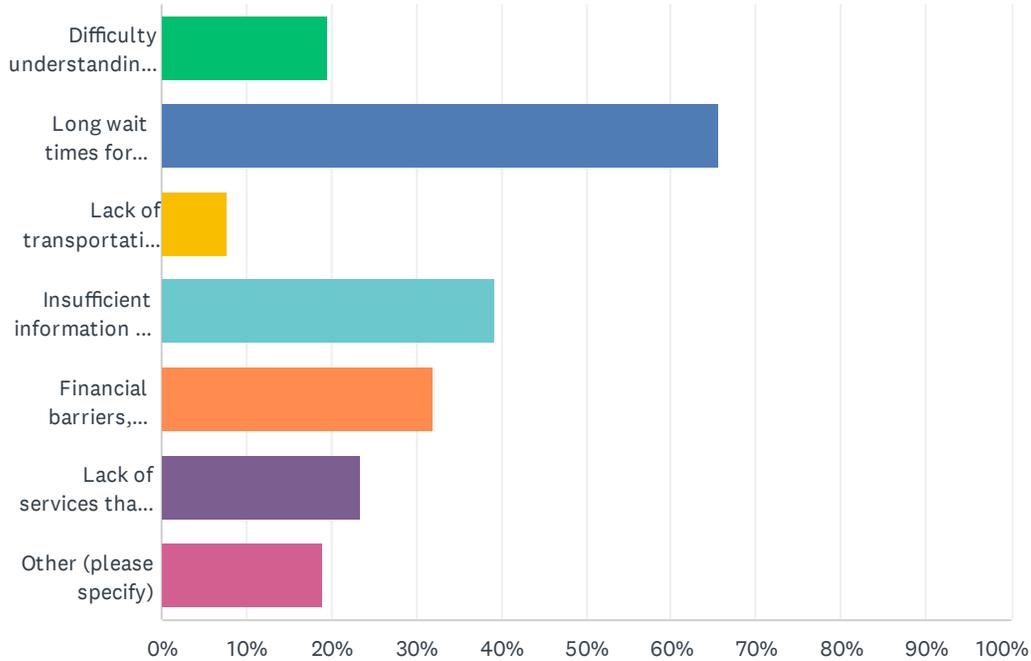
Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very important	74.46%	137
Somewhat important	14.13%	26
Neutral	7.61%	14
Not very important	2.17%	4
Not at all important	1.63%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>184</b>

## Q7 What barriers have you encountered When trying to access health services in the private sector or social services from other organizations? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Difficulty understanding or navigating the available services	19.57%	36
Long wait times for appointments or services	65.76%	121
Lack of transportation to services	7.61%	14
Insufficient information or awareness about available services	39.13%	72
Financial barriers, including high costs or lack of insurance coverage	32.07%	59
Lack of services that meet my specific needs	23.37%	43
Other (please specify)	19.02%	35
Total Respondents: 184		

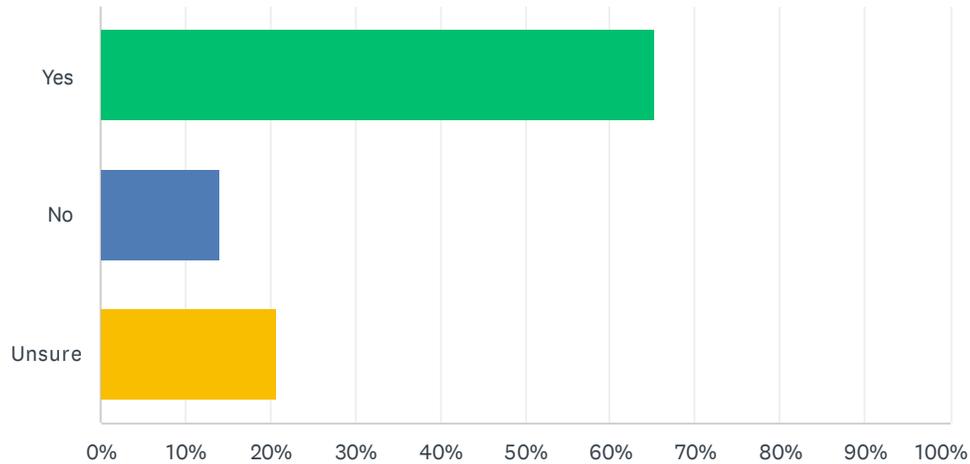
#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Lack of support for all the individuals who deal with the individual with health issues.	2/17/2024 8:42 AM
2	N/a	2/15/2024 6:34 PM
3	All of the above	2/14/2024 2:00 PM
4	Poor quality clinicians	2/13/2024 7:28 PM
5	Housing for those that legitimately need it.	2/11/2024 10:46 AM

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6	N/A	2/11/2024 9:11 AM
7	None of the above	2/10/2024 8:09 PM
8	lack of availability of mental health services in general	2/10/2024 4:35 PM
9	None	2/10/2024 8:33 AM
10	interactions with seniors - getting to them	2/10/2024 8:32 AM
11	Finding a provider that will accept new patients	2/10/2024 7:40 AM
12	none	2/10/2024 7:18 AM
13	I haven't personally tried or needed them but lack of awareness is a start	2/10/2024 6:59 AM
14	no issues.	2/10/2024 6:35 AM
15	None	2/9/2024 5:26 PM
16	N/A	2/9/2024 2:33 PM
17	No issues	2/9/2024 2:25 PM
18	Finding a PCP! Too many are not accepting new patients	2/9/2024 2:21 PM
19	None	2/9/2024 2:02 PM
20	N/A	2/9/2024 12:58 PM
21	I have not used them.	2/9/2024 11:58 AM
22	Distance to providers	2/9/2024 11:33 AM
23	None	2/9/2024 11:19 AM
24	None yet	2/9/2024 11:17 AM
25	Too many illegal immigrants are receiving benefits that well outweigh the benefits of our own citizens and Northborough residents!	2/9/2024 11:13 AM
26	None	2/9/2024 11:01 AM
27	Have not used services in decades	2/9/2024 10:54 AM
28	N/A	2/9/2024 10:24 AM
29	Support groups needed for caregivers	2/9/2024 10:16 AM
30	Child therapists	2/9/2024 10:10 AM
31	lack of providers	2/9/2024 10:08 AM
32	None	2/9/2024 10:04 AM
33	None	2/9/2024 10:01 AM
34	none	2/9/2024 10:00 AM
35	Not applicable.	2/9/2024 9:59 AM

### Q8 Should the town employ a social worker to help residents navigate these barriers and connect with appropriate health and social services?

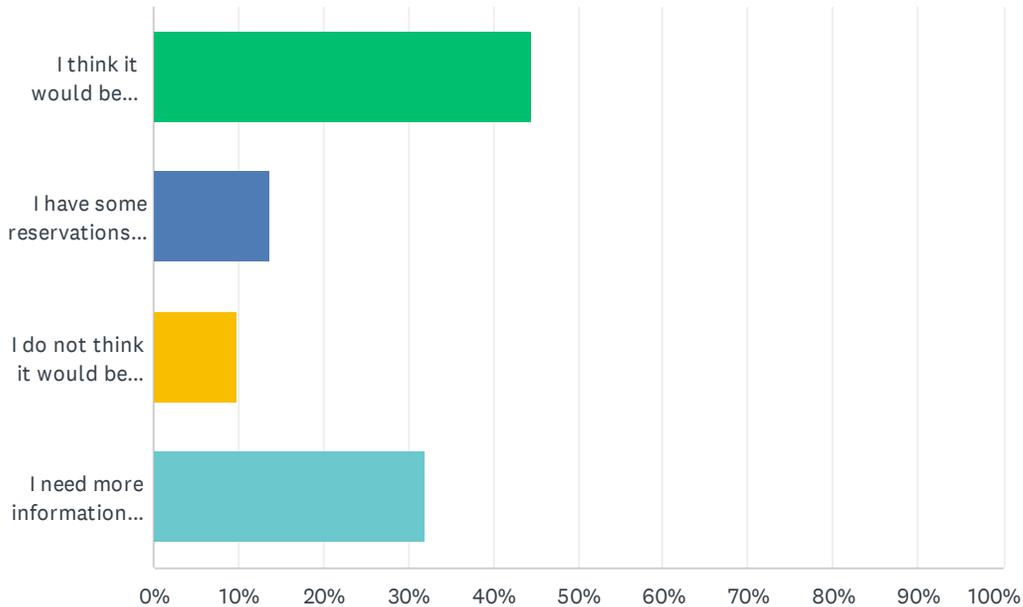
Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	65.22%	120
No	14.13%	26
Unsure	20.65%	38
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>184</b>

## Q9 How do you feel about integrating the Health Department and Family Youth Services to offer services more comprehensively?

Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I think it would be beneficial for the community.	44.57%	82
I have some reservations but am open to considering it.	13.59%	25
I do not think it would be beneficial.	9.78%	18
I need more information before forming an opinion.	32.07%	59
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>184</b>

#	OTHER THOUGHTS OR CONCERNS (PLEASE SPECIFY).	DATE
1	FYS services are not only health related but address housing, unpaid bills etc. People with those needs need a clear path to finding needed services.	2/20/2024 4:17 PM
2	The health group has been excellent and active in the community and I think that great work ethic will carry over to family and youth services	2/18/2024 2:35 PM
3	What are you asking here?	2/17/2024 8:42 AM
4	Family and Youth services could be a very busy department and incorporating into the Health Department could diminish their importance	2/16/2024 10:56 AM
5	While related they do focus on different things. Let's be careful about going down the path of "jack of all trades, master of none." Our taxes are also very high, so I'd like to keep things as cost neutral as possible so if combining departments does that so much the better.	2/13/2024 7:17 PM
6	The Health Department should focus on disease prevention via food services inspections, monitoring pandemic and outbreaks of disease while incorporating lessons learned from the pandemic, working with state and federal health agencies, and educating the public about	2/11/2024 2:43 PM

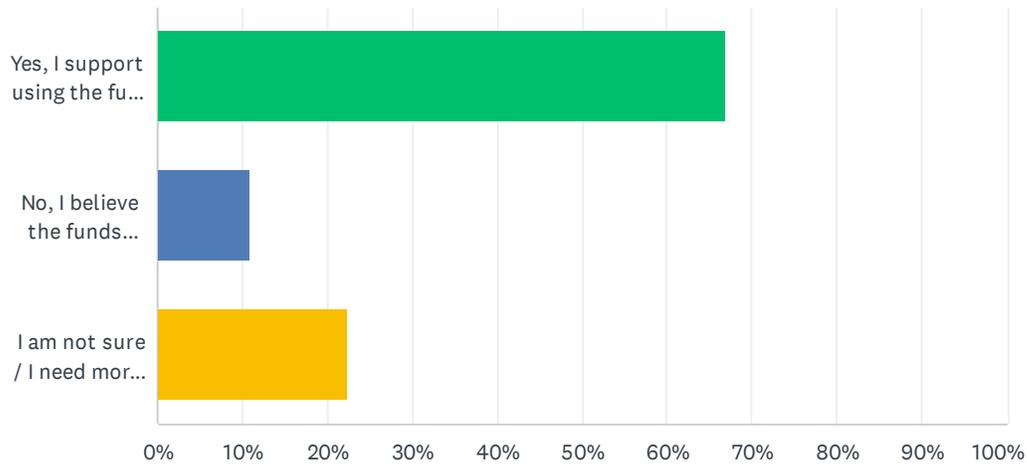
## Northborough Health and Human Services Public Survey

health issues. Agricultural inspections also need to be addressed to ensure state and federal regulations are enforced..

7	If your talking about integration with Commonwealth ran departments the corruption and lack of sincerity scares me.	2/10/2024 4:35 PM
8	Have come across many that have struggled with this in the community and have done their best to navigate alone.	2/10/2024 10:40 AM
9	As long as combined keeps the staffing levels without cuts	2/10/2024 8:49 AM
10	Cut costs, it benefits all in town	2/9/2024 2:33 PM
11	But if this is an attempt to cut back on staffing, I am strongly against it. An expanded, comprehensive department would be good.	2/9/2024 1:05 PM
12	Please don't lose track of the needs of our senior citizens if you integrate health with youth & family services	2/9/2024 12:18 PM
13	The financial benefit of combining 2 small and related town departments is factored into my answer.	2/9/2024 12:04 PM
14	Bottom line is staffing, whether combining departments or not. Available staff & hours are key	2/9/2024 11:33 AM
15	I view the health dept as addressing the town as a whole with concerns - restaurant permits, Flu, CPR, COVID, Narcam training. Family Youth Services meet the needs of specific part of the town's population (senior citizens, families in need, mental health supports, etc.) My question would be what are the benefits of combining the departments - if it is that more grant funding would be available, then great.	2/9/2024 11:03 AM
16	I think the town needs dedicated social services professionals on staff.	2/9/2024 10:54 AM
17	It is critical to offer support for families with children.	2/9/2024 10:43 AM
18	They do different things and it would strain the health department into a role it currently can't handle with its limited staffing. DFYS already is suffering from not having enough staffing issues due to finding and is why I get services out of town	2/9/2024 10:19 AM
19	have youth and adult services seperate	2/9/2024 10:11 AM
20	Perhaps services to seniors could also be included in a more comprehensive Health/Mental Health department.	2/9/2024 10:06 AM

## Q10 Northborough will receive approximately \$55,000 annually in the coming years as part of the opioid abatement funds settlement with opioid manufacturers and distributors. Do you support using a portion of these funds each year to subsidize a position focused on social services or community health?

Answered: 184 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes, I support using the funds in this way.	66.85% 123
No, I believe the funds should be allocated differently (Please specify below)	10.87% 20
I am not sure / I need more information to decide.	22.28% 41
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>184</b>

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	We don't need another middleman	2/19/2024 4:02 PM
2	All of the funds should be used for that.	2/17/2024 8:42 AM
3	I hope Northborough can develop some programs for opioid crisis like the JCOH.	2/14/2024 8:53 PM
4	I want specifics on what you're using them for. In detail.	2/13/2024 7:17 PM
5	Feed and help the poor residents of Northborough	2/12/2024 9:49 AM
6	work on community health by providing more opportunities for recreation or a recreation center or pool	2/11/2024 9:22 AM
7	WE should consider the ROI of hiring a person vs using the funds for setting up routing functions or starting some sort of community ran service.	2/10/2024 4:35 PM
8	frustrating when access is within only a weekly 9-5 time frame	2/10/2024 8:32 AM
9	Awareness campaigns	2/10/2024 6:35 AM
10	Simply we need to safe our next generation from any kind of evil addiction. We say NO to spending money in war rather invest at home and save our youth and next generation	2/9/2024 11:26 PM

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11	Police officer	2/9/2024 2:33 PM
12	Yes, if substance abuse services and mental health services fall under that social services/ community health umbrella	2/9/2024 1:07 PM
13	This is looking upstream toward prevention.	2/9/2024 12:04 PM
14	I think the Veterans should be taken care of.	2/9/2024 11:35 AM
15	Only on substance use disorders	2/9/2024 11:01 AM
16	Allocated to the senior center for another full time outreach person, they are understaffed in this area	2/9/2024 10:14 AM
17	Support addiction awareness /prevention	2/9/2024 10:12 AM
18	we don't need more taxes to spend on more positions	2/9/2024 10:11 AM
19	These funds should be used to prevent and educate people on adiction and OPIOD use.	2/9/2024 10:01 AM
20	Taxes already too high in Northborough. Put the \$ to the schools	2/9/2024 9:59 AM