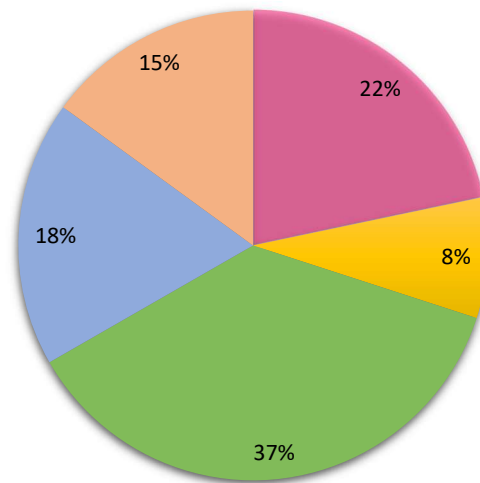


# FOCUS GROUP RESULTS SUMMARY OF THE LORD FAIRFAX HEALTH DISTRICT

## Overview

With a total of 66 participants, 9 focus group sessions were held in the Lord Fairfax Health District to better understand the concerns, goals, and health needs of the community and its members. A variety of topics were discussed including health needs, transportation, cost/insurance, a mobile health unit, mental health, substance use disorder, smoking, maternal, and child health.

Focus groups were conducted in all localities of the Lord Fairfax Health District; Frederick/Winchester, Warren County, Page County, Shenandoah County, and Clarke County. This allowed us to hear the thoughts, opinions, and needs of those across all localities. The results of these focus groups are divided into overall district results and results of each specific locality.



*Percentage of participants by locality*

■ Frederick/Winchester ■ Warren ■ Page ■ Shenandoah ■ Clarke

The information received will allow us to better guide our efforts toward the specific issues that community members view as the 'problem areas' of their specific communities. Each locality has different priorities and needs, and those should be addressed with this in mind to have the most substantial impact on the locality. The grant funding (ARPA Targeted Community Outreach) that allowed us to conduct these focus groups, will continue to be used to address these specific concerns.

**We hear you and we thank you for your participation.**

## Overall District Results

### District-Wide Highlights:

All localities see a need for more supportive resources and face barriers towards accessing services.

**These barriers primarily impact the most vulnerable members of the community.** All localities feel a lack of medical providers, appointments, and mental health resources. Similarly, the cost of health care and insurance is expensive which causes many people delay or avoid going to the doctor if they can't afford the services. Needs regarding public transportation with expansive routes is clearly needed and would significantly improve people's access to available services. Many individuals state a major concern towards vaping among teens with a need for more education to teens and parents.

### Transportation:

There are very few public transportation options in the district. Current bus and trolley routes don't go into rural areas/neighborhoods. If services are available, vehicles may not be ADA compliant or may have long walks to bus stops due to inconvenient placing.

### Cost/Insurance:

The cost of health insurance is high and healthcare costs are high regardless of insurance status. If people can't afford it, people delay seeking care, which can cause a condition to worsen. The lack of providers impacts people's ability to access preventative healthcare.

### Mobile Health Unit:

Participants agree a mobile health unit would benefit the district. They believe that it can address issues like transportation and access to healthcare services. It would also be beneficial to work in collaboration and alongside other organizations to provide services.

### Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

There are very few services available in the area for treatment and medications. The services that are present have very limited scope of practice or have very long wait times. There are few support systems for those in treatment as well. More detox centers, transitional housing, and support for families are needed. Stigma is present in the district which discourages people seeking help.

### Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Tobacco use is common within the district. Vaping is a major issue amongst the youth while cigarettes are more common with older generations. Many see it as a generational habit that they pick up from their parents. Education is needed to combat misinformation about vaping to youth and adults alike.

### Maternal and Child Health:

Few localities have sufficient OBGYN care for its population's need. Many people drive to Winchester or Front Royal for OBGYN care. More robust pediatric healthcare services are needed in the localities.

- Many areas need better access to birth control & family planning resources
- There are few pediatric practitioners and daycare facilities/childcare facilities
- WIC appointments are difficult to get, despite the need for services

## Frederick County/Winchester City

### Highlights:

Though this area has better access to healthcare and community resources, many people have difficulties finding the needed services in a timely fashion. There is a lack of knowledge about the available community resources and how to access them. Additionally, participants agreed that the cost of healthcare and insurance is expensive and oftentimes confusing to navigate. This causes healthcare to not be prioritized if people cannot afford it, or if it becomes too difficult. There is a need for more mental health resources in this area, especially services that are accessible to low-income individuals. There is a lack of knowledge of community resources.

### Transportation:

Winchester Transit is helpful to get around town, but does not extend into Frederick County, creating barriers for many people. Elderly, disabled, low-income, and unaware individuals are more likely to experience barriers to using public transportation.

### Cost/Insurance:

Participants do not go to the doctors if they don't have insurance or if the costs are too high. This results in poor health outcomes that usually affect high-risk populations. Major concerns include, confusing insurance systems, high costs and copays, and lack of transparency on pricing.

### Mobile Health Unit:

Participants think that the mobile unit is a great idea to meet people where they are, especially if they don't have transportation. The many organizations in Winchester provide opportunities for community collaboration to benefit the most vulnerable communities.

### Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders:

Mental health needs more attention. Opioid use is an issue in the community and associated stigma negatively affects the community. The community as a whole needs to have a better understanding of substance use disorders and how support can be beneficial to those in recovery. There is a need for more providers, treatment options, and more affordable care.

### Smoking and Tobacco Use:

Vaping on social media grabs their attention and encourages youth to vape. There is a vape shop on every corner. There is a trend of older people smoking and younger people vaping. 'People know that [vaping] can cause cancer, but think "it won't happen to me, I will deal with it when it happens."'

### Maternal and Child Health:

Community stigma has a large impact on the maternal and child health in the area. Religion influences people's beliefs in this community and may create stigma about accessing birth control. School systems don't educate about sex-ed leading to poor sexual health among youth. Additionally, lack of providers/few taking new patients, affordability of health and childcare, and language barriers all negatively impact the health of women and children in the area.

## Moving Forward

The Lord Fairfax Health District has received so many wonderful ideas and valuable feedback during these sessions. The health district will take this feedback and use it to advocate for our community members. We are dedicated to protecting and promoting your well-being, and to create a healthier Virginia.

This information will be used to know what the most pressing issues in the community are and be used to specifically address these issues. Outreach events encouraging healthy habits in youth and adults alike, creating target marketing towards educating community members, and providing better avenues for accessing opportunities for healthy living are among some plans to engage community members throughout the district with health as a priority. **Our goal is to find solutions that work for each community, because each communities' needs are different.**

The Lord Fairfax Health District has great hopes of obtaining a mobile unit. We hope to be able to use this funding to acquire a mobile health unit this year to address transportation disparities in our more rural areas. Our goal is to provide health department services in areas farther from the health departments, with a focus on those who have difficulty accessing care or experience barriers to transportation and to our more vulnerable populations.

Please reach out to Katherine Schroeder ([Katherine.Schroeder@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Katherine.Schroeder@vdh.virginia.gov) / 540-722-3470) with any questions you may have about these focus groups or the plans to address community health issues. [Find us on Facebook](#) to stay up to date with LFHD! Thank you again for your participation in our focus groups!