Chapter 9

Public Health + Safety

Introduction

The County's public services covered in this chapter are related to the health, safety, and general welfare of its residents. Residents look to these essential services for assistance in times of emergencies and need. These services also influence the quality of life in the community by providing a sense of safety, peace of mind, and improving the community image.

Health + Safety Governmental Services

Community Services

The Jasper County Community Services office offers emergency assistance with rent and utilities, assistance with determining eligibility for funding of mental health services, and information and referral for mental health services.

Emergency Management

The Jasper County Emergency Management agency responsible for coordinating the response to disasters that occur within the county and works to reduce vulnerability to anticipated hazards. The agency maintains the Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Health Department

Under the Jasper County Board of Health, the Jasper County Health Department protects and improves the health of residents in the county. The focus on protecting and improving health through healthy lifestyles and injury prevention. They provide programs including home care aides and Jasper County Safe Kids, an injury-prevention program including child safety car seats and bike helmets.

Sheriff's Office

The Jasper County Sheriff's Office protects the innocent and preserves peace with honor and integrity. They provide 911 and dispatch services for emergencies, distribute weapon permits, and maintain a sex offender registry. There are also five police department offices in Baxter, Colfax, Monroe, Newton, and Prairie City.

Relationship to Relevant Plans

2016 Multijurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Hazard Mitigation Plan discussed issues related to preparing for and responding to emergencies. Several of the recommendations related to minimizing injury and loss of life and property due to natural disasters have been included in this plan. More detail about this plan can be found in the Appendix

Community Health Needs Assessment

The Jasper County Health Department's Community Health Needs assessment showed that mental health, substance abuse, and violent/abusive behaviors were the top three topics that needed to be addressed in the county. Access to health care facilities was noted as a strength.

Public Feedback + Best Practices

In the online public survey, respondents ranked Public Health and Safety as the second most important topic out of eight categories. Support for the Sheriff's Department was the strongest, followed closely by Emergency Management, Communication, Health Services, and Quality of Life. When asked to distribute the County's hypothetical Capital Improvement Program budget, public health and safety was number four out of five options.

Some comments noted a need to fix old water lines, provide support for elderly, homeless, and mentally ill; and combat drug usage and crime. Some requested additional police presence and outreach. For communications, an improved text alert and phone alert system is needed. Radio and social media is needed. For health care, some respondents felt that health services were fine, while others felt that mental health services and trauma-informed care were lacking.

Planning best practices indicate that comprehensive plans should incorporate hazard mitigation, public safety, and community health into their goals and objectives. Further, improving quality of life in a community will also reduce crime, promote community cohesion, and improve overall public health.

Goals + Objectives

Goals

PH: Maintain a high level of service for public health and safety.

Objectives

PH-1: Ensure adequate and effective sheriff patrol and public outreach

PH-2: Minimize injuries and loss of life and property due to impacts of natural hazards (JCMEMP)

PH-3: Maintain a high level of communication with residents

PH-4: Ensure that the health needs, both physical and mental, of all residents are being met