



## *Post-Event Summary and Next Steps*

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**Pensacola, Fla.** – Two weeks ago today, Achieve Healthy EscaRosa’s kickoff event on February 20<sup>th</sup> brought more than 200 community members together for a two-hour journey toward building a healthier community where all can live well and thrive.

The event, hosted by the UWF Usha Kundu, MD College of Health, was the culmination of nearly a year of planning by a 30-member committee whose members span the Escambia and Santa Rosa counties and intersect in some way with the “social determinants of health.”

“The social determinants of health can impact between 40 and 90 percent of patient outcomes,” said Shawn Salamida, vice president of Baptist Health Care and president of behavioral health services at Lakeview Center, Inc.

Closing gaps in healthcare and reducing disparities among different racial and ethnic groups is a big part of adequately addressing individuals’ social determinants, and the central purpose of what Achieve Healthy EscaRosa is driving toward using feedback from the community convening.

These social determinants of health were showcased during a lively [presentation](#) and [Data Walk](#) that was the core purpose of the community convening. The interactive walk featured nearly 45 posters displaying a broad range of indicators, each of which is known to have a major impact on health outcomes, health care quality, and medical costs.

The Data Walk revealed that an individual’s race, ethnicity, income level, or geographic location often has more influence on physical and mental health than clinical factors, raising the question of what the community can do to concentrate efforts on the many non-clinical elements that impact wellness. These factors include challenges such as affordable housing and utilities, food insecurity, adult education, life expectancy, transportation, and childcare.

“We need meaningful solutions to turn the tide,” said Pastor Lonnie Wesley III of Greater Little Rock Baptist Church in his opening remarks. “This is the genesis of a better, fairer, more equitable community for all of our children, not just white children or black children, but all of our children.”

In her welcome address, UWF President Dr. Martha Saunders acknowledge that a fundamental building block of a healthy life is education. Aligning educational attainment and health under the social determinants umbrella makes sense. “The solutions are not easy, but they are before us.”

To set the tone for the event, emcee Dr. Denise Seabert, dean of the Usha Kundu, MD College of Health, noted that the convening was “not an answer session. This is a commitment to each other

and our community. The goal is to get folks to the end zone with as few barriers as possible.”

During the Data Walk, community members had an opportunity to log their impressions about the social determinants of health [through live polling technology](#). In all, participants wrote [279 individual comments before heading back to their tables for a small, focus group discussion on key takeaways](#). Tables submitted 40 additional comments, which were clustered into six themes: (1) adult diabetes; (2) mental health; (3) infant mortality; (4) teen births; (5) navigating existing resources; and (6) prenatal care.

During the last round of polling, community members ranked mental health, navigating existing resources and access to prenatal care as their top three priority areas to move forward with.

In his closing remarks, Pastor Tyler Burns of New Dimensions Christian Center encouraged the crowd to keep the energy and intensity of the conversation going. Burns noted that many problems go unsolved due to a lack of imagination, not resources or desire. He asked the audience to close their eyes and dream of a more equitable future for all. “Now wake up,” said Burns, “and bring your imagination into reality.”

Immediate next steps for the Achieve Healthy EscaRosa initiative will involve dedicating time and resources over the coming weeks to draw meaningful, actionable conclusions from today’s community convening.

Over the next three months, the planning team will take the Data Walk on the road, hosting Town Hall events in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties as well as targeted outreach to specific groups.

Findings from both the February 20<sup>th</sup> convening and the Achieve Healthy EscaRosa roadshow will be part of a forthcoming analysis aimed at achieving alignment around priority areas to focus on as part of an overall effort to better coordinate care across social needs in the two-county area.