

Poverty & Obesity Trends for Florence County

Florence County Health Department | 2016 Report

Introduction

Studies have shown that over the past several decades, obesity has soared to levels high enough to be deemed a “Public Health crisis” globally and in the United States (Hammond & Levine, 2010). Wisconsin and Florence County reflect these same trends of increasing obesity. Research shows the economic costs of obesity can be seen on three levels: individual, workplace, and government (Runge, 2007).

Individual opportunities may be limited because obese individuals suffer more diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart failure, stroke, and mental health issues. At the workplace level, obesity can hinder employment opportunities through missed work due to obesity-related diseases; low productivity resulting from physical and/or mental health conditions common among obese individuals; disability due to obesity-related diseases; and higher insurance premiums (Hammond & Levine, 2010). Finally, government expenditures are affected by high obesity rates. Local, state, and federal levels alike employ programming to compensate for some of the private and workforce costs of illness and unemployment (Runge, 2007).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has suggested that obesity could be caused by genetic factors, environmental factors and some diseases or drugs.² Of the environmental factors, quantity and the quality of the food consumed as well as physical activity are the major factors for controlling obesity.

According to the CDC’s *Guide to Community Preventive Services*, evidence-based strategies to increase physical activity levels include: community-wide campaigns; individual behavioral change; social support in community settings; the creation or enhancement of access to places for physical activity; and point-of-decision prompts.

After review of available data and supporting research, staff completed a tree diagram to identify potential corrective actions for the upward trend of obesity within Florence County. Florence County staff used upstream thinking to determine preventative programming (see chart page 4). Four programs identified were Strengthening Families, Choosing the Best, and Strong Bones, Walk with Ease. Each of these programs addresses specific populations found in Florence County. The corrective actions will require annual evaluation and monitoring over a 5-year period to ascertain the impact of these programs.

References:

Hammond, R.A. & Levine, R. (2010). The economic impact of obesity in the United States. *Diabetes Metabolic Syndrome and Obesity: Targets and Therapy* 3, 285-295. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3047996/>

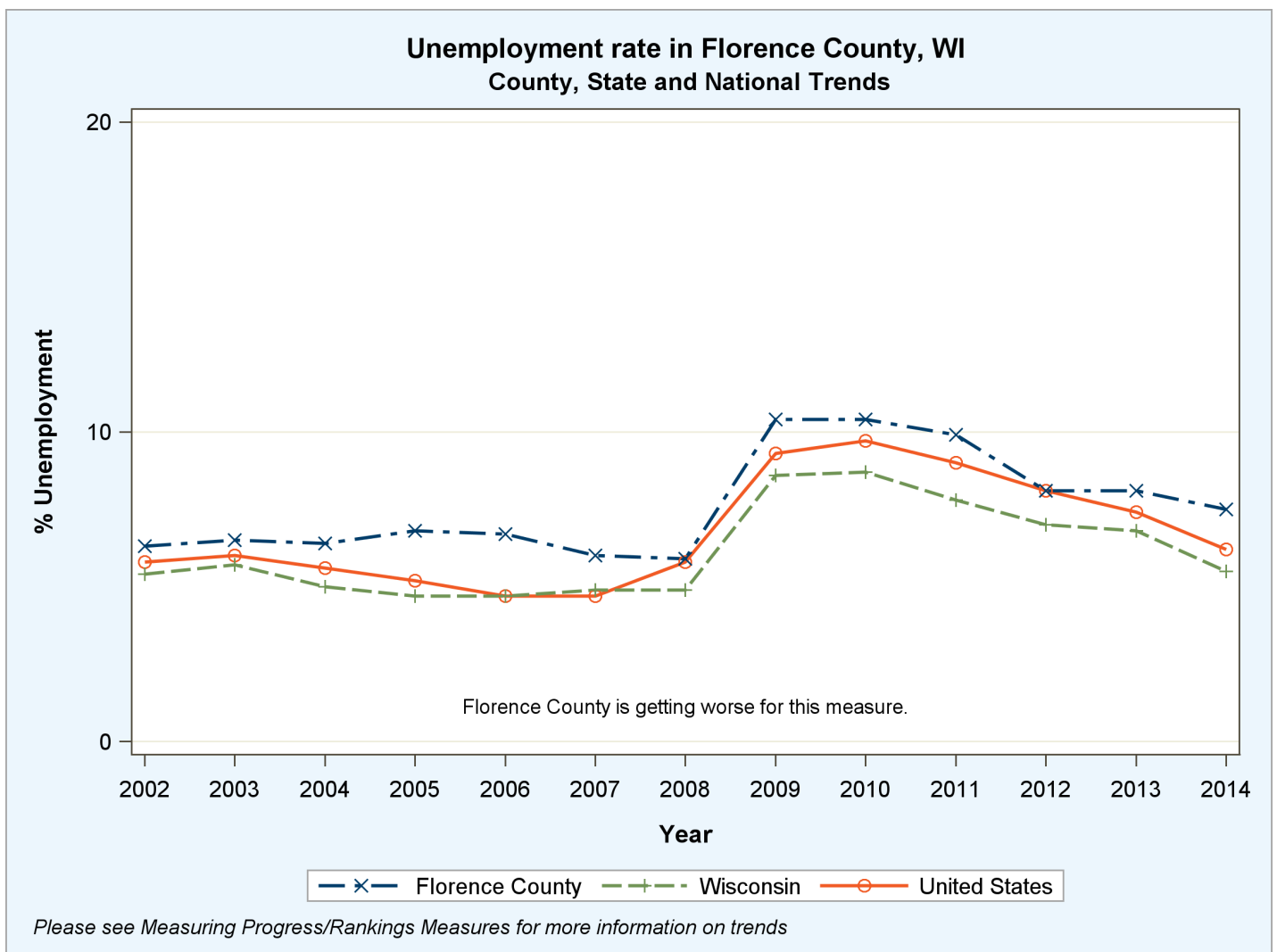
Runge, C.F. (2007). Economic consequences of the obese. *Diabetes* 56(11), 2668-2672. Retrieved from <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/565632>

Analysis

The chart below indicates that Florence County is consistent with both the State and National trends in unemployment rates, resulting in an increasing number of residents with income at or below poverty level. Studies show a strong association between obesity and low socio-economic status (Akil & Ahmad, 2011). Poverty has been linked to the consumption of low-quality food in part because nutritious foods can be significantly more expensive than calorie-dense, less nutritious foods, leading to (Akil & Ahmad, 2011). Factors found to be closely related to obesity are unemployment, general income level, the receipt of food stamps, and/or below or at poverty level (Akil & Ahmad, 2011).

Reference:

Akil, L., & Ahmad, H.A. (2011). Effects of socioeconomic factors on obesity rates in four southern states and Colorado. National Institutes of Health Public Access. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3101796/>

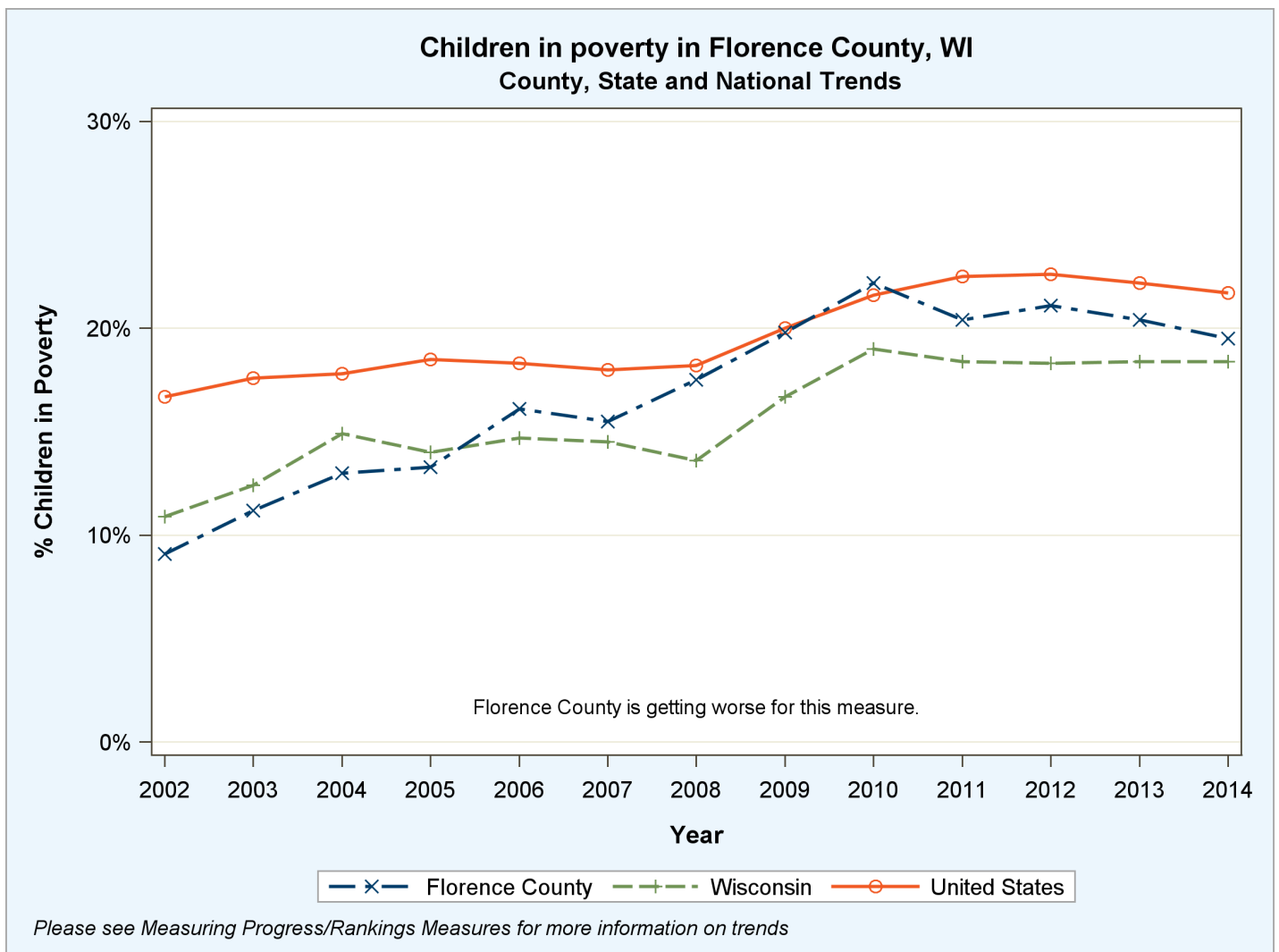


Source: County Health Rankings 2016

Conclusions

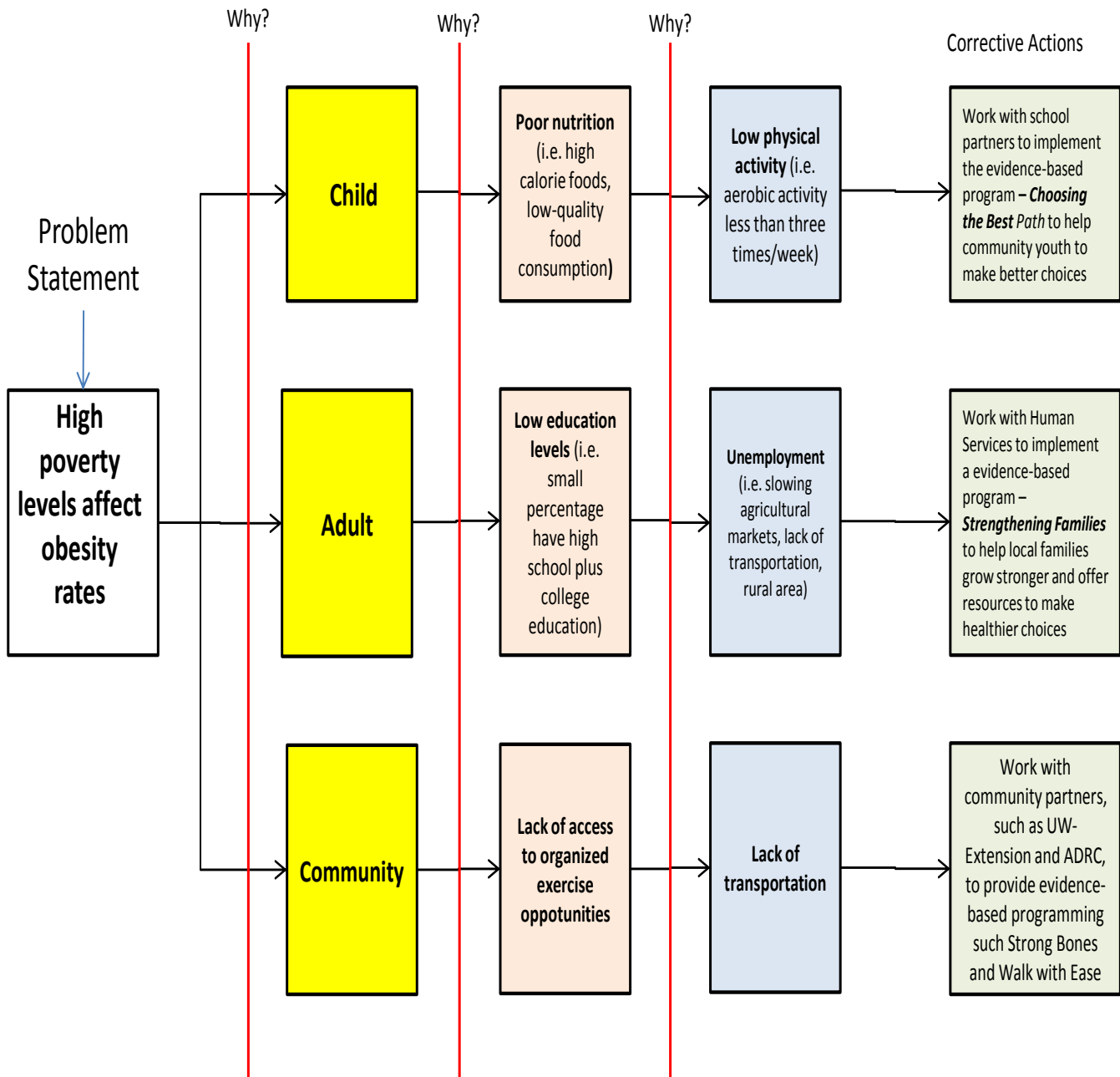
The chart below indicates that childhood poverty rates have steadily increased across counties, states, as well as nationwide over the last several years. Even though Florence County is currently below the nationwide trend, it is still higher than the state trend. The increasing trend among youth in poverty is important because obesity is a major risk factor associated with high poverty levels - among adults and children alike. Obesity is related to a variety of serious health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers (www.ncsl.org). These health conditions, along with other childhood obesity health expenses exceed \$14 billion dollars annually (www.ncsl.org). Access to good nutrition and regular physical activity can decrease the negative impact that poverty and its associated obesity has on the youth of Florence County. Further assessment and analysis is needed to determine corrective actions.

Reference: National Conference of State Legislatures. (2014). *Childhood Overweight and Obesity Trends*. Retrieved from www.ncsl.org/research/health/childhood-obesity-trends-states-rates.aspx



Source: County Health Rankings 2016

Florence County Health Department Tree Diagram Created 2016



Qualitative Data:

- 2 out of 6 seniors at a meal site stated that they would be interested in preventative programming such as *Strong Bones* or *Walk with Ease*.
- 31% of 5th & 6th grade parents reported in a survey that they would be interested in a *Strengthening Families* workshop.
- School administration and staff were positive towards the implementation of the *Choosing the Best Path* programming.