

CONCLUSION

Understanding the underlying factors that determine the health of a community is an integral component when providing a community with the information necessary to address and improve its health. The South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Planning Toolkit is a resource available to help communities understand factors that define their health, specifically related to chronic disease prevention and control. The more a community learns about its assets, strengths, and needs, the more it can be empowered into action.

Efforts to determine the health of a community cannot be initiated without establishing and fostering local partnerships, and building community capacity to serve as a catalyst for creating change in a community. Funding to support public health services throughout the nation and state has decreased. At the same time there is growing need for public health services and increased access to quality care. These factors reinforce the significance of strong collaborative partnerships to support a healthy community.

It is essential for a community coalition leading the facilitation of a community health needs assessment (CHNA) to utilize community partners to ensure a comprehensive process. Collecting data and information regarding community health indicators, demographics, social determinants of health, and other essential data is the key component in developing a thorough understanding of a community's health status. Utilizing multiple primary and secondary data collection methods strengthens the type and quality of data collected. Communities can utilize best practices to collect valid and reliable data, as well as enlist the assistance of experts to ensure appropriate data collection, interpretation, and analysis.

While collecting data is integral to the CHNA process that alone is not enough to address and improve the health a community. The data collection process will likely produce a wealth of information about the community's health, including gaps and needs. However, prioritizing what health issues should be addressed can help a community focus on achieving measurable outcomes based on available resources. It is also important to collaborate with partners, community residents, and target populations to determine these health priorities to address. Developing and utilizing a Community Health Action Plan based on identified health priorities, provides a tool to help guide local action.

A comprehensive CHNA enlists a variety of methods to ensure a thorough understanding of a community's health status. In order to ensure successful health improvement planning efforts, it is important to inform and enlist the support of the community, partners, and stakeholders. Strengthened partnerships and community capacity, along with understanding the factors that define community health, are essential to addressing and improving local chronic disease prevention and control.

The purpose of the South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Planning Toolkit is to provide a comprehensive resource to support South Dakota communities who conduct a CHNA. The Toolkit includes a wealth of evidence-based information, tools and templates, and resources ready to assist communities in their assessment and health improvement planning efforts.

With the Good & Healthy Communities' Initiative and the Toolkit resources, South Dakota communities are ready to make a difference and address their health status regarding chronic disease prevention and control.

"Communities create momentum that assists people in making healthy choices where they live, learn, work, and play through sustainable changes that address the major risk factors—tobacco, physical inactivity, and unhealthy eating."

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)¹

"The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not."

*– Mark Twain
Author and Humorist
(1835 - 1910)*

Reference

1. Division of Community Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2010, February 13). Healthy Communities Program. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram>

