

USING CHNA DATA TO DETERMINE HEALTH PRIORITIES

Once a comprehensive set of data has been collected and analyzed to help identify your community's health needs, strengths, and resources; the next step is to determine and prioritize which community health issues will be addressed in your Community Health Action Plan (CHAP). Setting priorities will ensure that your community's resources focus on significant issues. Priorities established in your CHAP will help your community identify strategies to address and improve its' health status regarding chronic disease prevention and control.

Prioritization

"Prioritizing issues allows the health department and community to direct resources, time, and energy to those issues that are deemed most critical and practical to address."

(APEXPH processes, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)¹

What is Priority Setting?

Prioritization is a process whereby an individual or group places a number of items or health issues in rank order based on their perceived or measured importance or significance. Prioritizing issues is an important process, in that it assists an organization in identifying the issues on which it should focus its limited resources.¹

Why do Priority Setting?

Priority Setting is beneficial to conduct for a community with limited resources (i.e. money, staff, etc.), so that any strategies identified to address the community's health status can be implemented successfully and increase the likelihood of quality health outcomes.

Who Is Doing the Prioritizing?

All members of the community coalition or CHNA team, partners, and community members, where possible, should be involved in determining and prioritizing health issues to address. Including all community stakeholders in the priority setting process that will be affected and/or targeted with the identified priorities, will encourage buy-in and increase the chances of successful implementation.

PRIORITY SETTING PROCESS AND KEY ACTIONS³

Key Actions to Support Priority Setting Process

- *Identify a facilitator* - To facilitate the process, utilizing a neutral facilitator to help determine and prioritize health issues from the CHNA data findings, can provide an unbiased, neutral perspective to help identify the important issues to address. A facilitator can come from the community coalition or CHNA team, or from an outside organization. The key is to identify a person who can remain neutral during the process.
- *Review and share the CHNA data findings* – Review and share the CHNA data findings through a variety of dissemination methods with the community stakeholders involved in determining and selecting priorities to focus on. The stakeholders may not have been involved in all of your data collection processes and informing them about the CHNA data findings can provide them the information necessary to make an informed decision about the determining feasible priorities to address.
- Review and share the *South Dakota Good & Health Community Checklist Summary* to initiate the review of the CHNA data findings, along with other data collected. Reviewing the CHNA data findings with the community coalition, CHNA team, and stakeholders can prompt group discussion and identification of priority health issues that the community supports to address.
- *Identify CHNA project purpose and goals* – Review the purpose and goals of the CHNA project that was established at the inception of the project. Understanding what measurable outcomes are desired for addressing the community's health status can help guide the Priority Setting process.

Priority Setting Process

1. Set criteria for determining and identifying priority issues to focus on. Criteria express the values, standards, and basic ideas your team will consider when making choices and deciding priorities.
2. Determine the process that will be used to identify priority issues. There are established priority setting methods described below that can be utilized to determine your community's priority health issues, including:
 - *Multi-voting Technique* - typically used when a long list of health problems or issues must be narrowed down to a top few.³
 - *Prioritization Matrix* – a commonly used tool when health problems are considered against a large number of criteria or when an agency is restricted to focusing on only one priority health issue.³
 - *Strategy Grids* - provide a mechanism to take a thoughtful approach to achieving maximum results with limited resources. This tool may assist in transitioning from brainstorming with a large number of options to a more focused plan of action.³
 - *The Hanlon Method* – Developed by J.J. Hanlon, the Hanlon Method for Prioritizing Health Problems is a well-respected technique which objectively takes into consideration explicitly defined criteria and feasibility factors. Though a complex method, the Hanlon Method is advantageous when the desired outcome is an objective list of health priorities based on baseline data and numerical values.³
 - A *“Quick and Colorful Approach”* - This technique uses a means whereby individual group members vote to prioritize each health problem. A secret ballot method or open method can be used.¹
 - *Criteria Weighting Method* - is a mathematical process whereby participants establish a relevant set of criteria and assign a priority ranking to issues based on how they measure against the criteria.¹
 - *Nominal Group Planning/Technique* - was developed for situations where individual judgments must be tapped and combined to arrive at decisions which cannot be determined by one person. This strategy is best used for problem exploration, knowledge exploration, priority development program development, and program evaluation. This method is useful in the early phases of prioritization when a need exists to generate a lot of ideas in a short amount of time and when input from multiple individuals must be taken into consideration.^{1,3}
 - *Simplex Method* - group perceptions are obtained by the use of questionnaires. The method assists a decision-making group to analyze problems more efficiently.¹
3. Identify priority health issues to address in the CHAP. Once your community workgroup, CHNA team, and community stakeholders have gone through the priority setting process, identify health issues that stand out as priorities to address and are feasible to see measurable outcomes.

Key Considerations when identifying priority health issues⁵:

- Determine health priorities with community collaboration and input.
- Determine the community capacity to address health priorities.
- Consider if the desired outcomes from the health priority are achievable to address.
- Assess the community support for addressing health priorities.
- Identify community programs that may already be addressing the health priorities you are interested in to avoid duplication of efforts.

Once the community health priorities have been determined, refer to the following section, *Writing a Community Health Action Plan*, to develop a Community Health Action Plan using S.M.A.R.T. objectives to determine how the priorities will be addressed.

Tools & Templates

Community Health Needs Assessment Priority Setting Templates

Resources

Refer to the following resources for additional information on priority setting methods and how to determine your community's health priorities.

Priority Setting

Healthy Carolinians Community Assessment Guide Book. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.
• Phase 5: Determine Health Priorities

Guide to Prioritization Techniques. National Association of City and County Health Officials.

First Things First: Prioritizing Health Problems. National Association of City and County Health Officials.

Focus on What's Important. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.

Prioritization. APEX PH (Assessment of Protocol for Excellence in Public Health). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Analyzing Community Problems and Solutions. The Community Toolbox, University of Kansas.

References

1. National Association of City and County Health Officials, Centers for Disease Control and Prevent. (1991). Prioritization. In the *Assessment Protocol for Excellence in Public Health workbook*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/nphsp/documents/Prioritization%20section%20from%20APEXPH%20in%20Practice.pdf>
2. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2013). Focus on What's Important, Guidance and tools. In the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. Retrieved from <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/actions/Focus%20on%20Whats%20Important.pdf>
3. National Association of City and County Health Officials. (2013). *Guide to Prioritization Techniques*. Retrieved from <http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/accreditation/upload/Prioritization-Summaries-and-Examples-2.pdf>
4. North Carolina Division of Health and Human Services. North Carolina Division of Public Health. (2011). Phase 5: Determine Health Priorities. In the *Community Health Assessment Guide Book*. Retrieved from <http://publichealth.nc.gov/lhd/cha/docs/2012GuideBook/12gb-phase5.pdf>

