

Health is a result of our behaviors, our individual genetic predisposition to disease, the environment and the community in which we live, the clinical care we receive and the policies and practices of our health care and prevention systems. Each of us — individually, as a community, and as a society — strives to optimize these health determinants, so that all of us can have a long, disease-free and robust life regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status.¹

Welcome to the South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Planning Toolkit. The South Dakota Department of Health (SDDOH) is pleased to provide this dynamic and evolving online (at your fingertips) resource. With chronic diseases as the leading preventable public health issues throughout South Dakota, communities have a unique opportunity to converge to address these taxing afflictions and their long-term impact.

Through the Good & Healthy Communities' initiative, you, your organization, and your community partners all have a unique opportunity to understand the factors that determine your community's health status and will experience the benefits of collaborative health improvement planning.

A genuine, community-driven Good & Healthy Communities Initiative process will:

- Establish the credibility of your coalition's health needs assessment process, as well as health improvement planning process.
- Ensure coalition and community partners' buy-in to support long-term community health.
- Create sustainability.
- Generate interest in community advocacy.
- Identify key public health systems partners, such as hospitals, businesses, educational institutions, law enforcement, tribal and civic agencies, faith organizations, and community-based organizations; and determine their role in supporting the assessment and improvement planning processes.
- Garner comprehensive data to support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of local improvement strategies.

To tackle public health issues, the SDDOH is offering resources and technical assistance to communities who are ready to launch their community health needs assessment and improvement planning process. In correlation with the South Dakota Chronic Disease State Plan objective to increase the number of communities in South Dakota (SD) conducting a community health needs assessment (CHNA), the SDDOH recognized a need for tools and resources to assist and support SD communities in their efforts.

With the vision of the Good & Healthy Communities Initiative, the *South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Planning Toolkit* (the Toolkit) was developed to offer communities a reliable resource that would support a broader understanding of their health related to chronic disease and associated risk factors, as well as assist with health improvement planning.

The Toolkit is organized in the following sections:

- **The Introduction.** Why it was written.
- **Foundation for Community Health.** Preliminary information that provides the base for a community health needs assessment.

- **The Core Process Steps in a Community Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Planning.** Determining community readiness, coalition management tools, partnership building, data collection methods, using the data to assess local health needs and support decision-making, prioritizing public health issues, disseminating assessment results, and developing a community health action plan.
- **The Conclusion.** The Toolkit and the community.

The Toolkit includes a cadre of resources, as well as tools and templates (developed to support the Toolkit) available to communities for assistance when conducting a comprehensive community health needs assessment and improvement planning process. The Toolkit includes an assessment tool designed with South Dakota communities in mind, in addition to meeting the priorities of the SDDOH. The South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Checklist (Checklist) is a tool which offers a step-by-step guide on how to conduct a preliminary assessment of a community's health status and create a "snapshot" view of local chronic disease prevention and control. The Checklist is a valid and tested tool, which provides communities the opportunity to assess local policy, regulations, and environment, as well as education and awareness regarding the following health indicators: physical activity, nutrition, tobacco use, chronic disease management, and school health.

The Toolkit is a resource for any community to use to help identify, prioritize, and address its community health issues. The Good & Healthy Communities Initiative represents a collaborative and comprehensive process, embracing the skills and capabilities of individuals and communities. It supports the CHNA process and community health improvement planning directed toward sustainable policy, system, and environmental change.

The SDDOH looks forward to assisting communities as they endeavor to improve the health where they live, learn, work, and play.



References

1. United Health Foundation. (2011). *A Call to Action for Individuals & Their Communities*. Retrieved from <http://www.resourcelibrary.gcyf.org/node/3903>