

USING DATA TO ASSESS COMMUNITY HEALTH

Once partnership and community coalitions have been developed, data and information gathering of the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) process can begin. While this phase is likely the most time-consuming step in the CHNA process, it is also one of the most important steps. Collecting data and information about your community will provide an opportunity to learn about residents' perceived health status, as well as local strengths and needs regarding resources available to support a healthy community. Collaborating with community members, partner agencies, and stakeholders interested in participating in the data collection process also increases community capacity to garner a wealth of information regarding the community and an increased understanding of the community health status.

Health Data & Information

"Health Information is the most useful when it is available at the community level."

(Health Affairs)¹

In order to create a profile of the community's health status, data should be collected from multiple sources in efforts to garner a thorough understanding of the community health status. Depending on the sources, data may be available for the local, county, state, and/or national level. Currently, most valid data sources have information available at the county, state, and/or national level. Local data is not always readily available from existing data sources and often needs to be collected by community coalitions, partners, or stakeholders vested in the CHNA process. Local needs may be concealed when many existing valid data sources accumulate data only to a regional, state, or national level. Local health information "describes the health status, resources, and challenges of a community" and can be an influential tool for addressing and improving the health of a community.¹

There are various uses for local health data and information including policy development and legislation for resource allocation; activity planning and evaluation; identification of health disparate populations, development, implementation, and evaluation of local public health programs and initiatives to support the argument for necessary local policy change; and assess worksite health status.

SOUTH DAKOTA SPECIFIC DATA TO ASSESS COMMUNITY HEALTH

The South Dakota Department of Health Office of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion recognizes the importance of data collection in understanding a community's health status. The following section discusses tools and resources available to support qualitative and quantitative data collection by communities, including the *South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Checklist*, health indicators specific to the South Dakota communities, as well as other detailed data collection methods. South Dakota communities are encouraged to utilize the Checklist and health indicator data to garner a broad and preliminary understanding of their community's health. Engaging additional data collection methods provides communities an opportunity to dig deeper and develop a thorough comprehension of community strengths, needs, and health status.

Resources

Data to Assess Community Health

The Community Health Assessment Guide Book. North Carolina Division of Health and Human Services. North Carolina Division of Public Health.

Assessing Community Need and Resources. The Community Toolbox, University of Kansas

Assess Needs and Resources. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

References

1. Luck, J., Chang, C., Richard Brown, E., & Lumpkin, J. (2006). Using Local Health Information To Promote Public Health. *Health Affairs* 25, no. 5: 979-991. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.25.4.979
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Community Health Assessment and Group Evaluation (CHANGE) Action Guide: Building a Foundation of Knowledge to Prioritize Community Needs*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010.
3. North Carolina Division of Health and Human Services. North Carolina Division of Public Health. (2011). Phase 2, Collect Primary Data. In *The Community Health Assessment Guide Book*. Retrieved from <http://publichealth.nc.gov/lhd/cha/docs/2012GuideBook/12gb-phase2.pdf>

