

WRITING A COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTION PLAN

After conducting a CHNA the next step is to write a community health action plan (CHAP) to address the local health priorities that were identified from the CHNA. The CHAP, developed at the end of the CHNA process, can take what was learned through the community assessment process and turn it into a written health improvement plan for the community.



The CHAP becomes a detailed blueprint that maps a clear course of action to support community change. In other words, the plan describes:

- What your community wants to accomplish
- What needs to be done, by whom, how it will be done, and by when
- What resources (i.e. money, people) are needed to be successful
- Who will be most affected

Following a plan makes reaching far-off goals and changes possible. It may take time to achieve the goals the coalition has determined, but setting them with clear-cut objectives and activities that support them is an essential piece for ensuring sustainable change.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTION PLAN?

A CHAP is a written document that lists plans for achieving health improvements in the community. This is developed in response to needs and gaps identified from data collection. The plan is written by the community coalition and typically includes establishing and clarifying desired outcomes, goals, objectives, activities, assignments, and deadlines for coalition members supporting the action plan. A CHAP offers built-in deliverables and focuses on doing work in the community to support priority health needs.

Having an action plan:

- Lends credibility to your organization. An action plan shows members of the community (including grant makers) that your organization is well ordered and dedicated to getting things done.
- Prevents the possibility of overlooking details.
- Helps understand what is and isn't possible for your organization to do.
- Helps your community be more efficient by saving time, energy, and resources.
- Increase the chances that people will do what needs to be done by making them more accountable.

An action plan may take one, three, or even up to 10 years to complete. The number of years it may take is determined by 1) the coalition - content of the CHAP, 2) how long it might take to reach the desired outcomes and goals, and 3) community support or resistance. The action plan is constantly progressing. It is not something to write, lock in a file drawer, and forget about. Keep it visible. Display it prominently. As the organization changes and grows, continually (usually monthly) revise and update the action plan to fit the changing needs of the community.

CHAP COMPONENTS

Developing the components of a CHAP that support the work of the community coalition may seem like a lot of busy work; but if done properly, it saves money, time, and increases the odds that the coalition's initiative will succeed. Documenting these plans will help keep the coalition focused on "where it is going" and "how and when it will get there" and "what to expect when it does."

Community Health Action Plan Terms	
Vision	Where the coalition is headed, what it is trying to do, what is important and why
Mission	The coalition's principles and purpose, determines the focus and sets the direction
Goals	What is expected to be achieved in the long run
Objectives	The process steps to meet the goals and how the coalition plans to achieve them
Activities	The work of the community coalition that drives and supports the objectives and goals
Outcomes	The desired effect on the community, what the measure of success would be

PLANNING STEPS

The following steps are meant to be a guide for developing a comprehensive CHAP. The plan is to be shared with community coalition members and partners once the CHNA phase has been completed. What things are necessary to carry out the goals and objectives determined by the coalition? By breaking it into defined steps, developing a plan will be more manageable. The CHAP should be complete, clear, and current.

The following steps are integral components to developing a CHAP. It is important to complete each step at some point, to ensure a comprehensive community health action plan to address local chronic disease prevention and control.

- **Review and analyze results of community assessment.** By the time an action plan is ready to be developed, there has been a substantial amount of information collected from data, and also information collected in the CHNA. Review and analyze the feedback and information gathered from the community; it is very significant and can provide some clues and priorities for what needs to be addressed in the plan.
- **Choose a group of people to work together on developing the CHAP.** The writing of the plan can be limited to one or two main people. The process of developing the CHAP should be a collaborative/partnership effort; the writer(s) can translate the planning notes into a CHAP. Too many writers can result in a fragmented plan.
- **Identify outcomes that would address the issues.** Outcomes are focused at producing a healthy change in the community. It is important to think through what would be most appropriate and achievable for those who will be carrying out the plan. After the parameters of the overall project are determined, the next step is to set a goal for each outcome to be addressed and add objectives and activities that support the work.
 - Choose a goal(s) that supports the outcomes and priority areas.
 - Determine short-term, intermediate, and long-term objectives for each goal; these are the action steps that drive the work of the goals.
 - Decide activities that support the objectives.
 - Identify what sector(s) of the community will be affected.
 - Establish lead responsibility and planning team participants for each goal.
 - Keep in mind that the goals and objectives should be S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-based). See *Setting S.M.A.R.T. Objectives* in the Toolkit for more information.
- **Identify challenges, obstacles, or potential barriers to successfully implementing interventions.** Part of deciding what would be most effective and achievable is to examine potential barriers that may exist to deter successfully implementing interventions to address and improve the community's health status.

SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES ARE GENERALLY EXPECTED IMMEDIATELY AND OCCUR SOON AFTER THE PROGRAM IS IMPLEMENTED, VERY OFTEN WITHIN A YEAR. (1-3 YEARS)

INTERMEDIATE OBJECTIVES RESULT FROM AND FOLLOW SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES. (3-5 YEARS)

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES STATE THE ULTIMATE EXPECTED IMPACT OF A PROGRAM. (5-10 YEARS)

- **Identify necessary resources and where you will obtain them.** A key task is to identify the abilities, capacity, skill sets, duties, and responsibilities of all people that will be asked to do the work of the CHAP. The plan requires many people and organizations to contribute their unique assets and resources.
- **Choose individuals and community partners who will support, identify with, and implement goals and objectives.** It is important for people to identify with the outcomes, goals, and objectives of the action plan to participate in the activities that will drive it.
- **Consider a timeline for conducting activities.** Time is a valuable resource so it is important to state clearly and realistically community member's contributions to the various parts of the plan. Creating a timeline provides everyone working on the CHAP with a clear idea of what activities should be done and when to expect activities to be accomplished.
- **Include monitoring and evaluation activities.** It is essential to know how the plan is progressing as you carry out the objectives and activities—this is where evaluation fits in. Address these questions informally (ask yourself, discuss with friends and other people), as well as formally (i.e. surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other evaluation methods):
 - Are we doing what we said we'd do?
 - Are we doing it well?
 - Is what we are doing advancing the mission?
- **Review the completed action plan.** Carefully check for completeness, make sure you are not leaving anything out that will affect the intended outcome(s) of the initiative.

SAMPLE - COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTION PLAN

COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTION PLAN		Current Year: 2013	Sector: <i>Community but may affect others</i>			
Goal: <i>Logan County will explore and develop opportunities that support residents in achieving increased physical activity.</i>		Priority area: <i>Physical activity behaviors of local residents</i>				Target audience: <i>over 18 years old</i>
Lead responsibility: <i>Jane Doe, Logan County Economic Development Coordinator</i>		Justification: <i>70.7% of respondents very concerned/concerned about - Lack of Physical Activity and Access to fitness facilities</i>				Target reach: <i>743 people</i>
Barriers: <i>community buy-in of necessity, financial management</i>		Resources: <i>fundraisers, donations</i>		Source of justification: <i>Logan County Community Health Needs Assessment</i>		
S: Short term I: Intermediate L: Long term	Objectives	Activity	Responsible person(s)	Timeline	Costs	Other
S	<i>Increase the coordination of efforts to establish a fitness facility in Logan County</i>	<i>Survey community member support for fitness facility</i>		<i>3 months-4/1/13</i>	<i>\$50</i>	
S	<i>Identify funding prospects /sources for fitness facility</i>	<i>Schedule meeting with USDA to explore grant funding opportunities</i>	<i>Logan County Economic Development Coordinator</i>	<i>By 3/1/13</i>		
S	<i>Determine location of fitness facility</i>			<i>By 7/1/13</i>		
I	<i>Develop business plan for fitness facility</i>			<i>By 12/31/13</i>		
I	<i>Establish a fitness center</i>			<i>By 12/31/14</i>		
L	<i>Increase the number of adults who state they are physically active by 25% since the Fitness Center became available.</i>			<i>By 12/31/17</i>		
Desired outcomes: <i>Increase the percentage of adults who engage in leisure-time physical activity</i>						

Here is an example of a CHAP.

And some additional considerations for completing a CHAP.

- **Partnerships among people.** In order to accomplish the goals and objectives in the plan, many people will have to be engaged in doing the work.
- **Budget.** Financial resources are usually necessary to carry out a community a health action plan. Thus, it is important to develop a budget that details the expenses that support the action plan. What you include in the budget should match the proposed objectives and activities.
- **Close alignment with the community's mission and vision.** During the writing of the CHAP, the writers work from the vision and the mission to identify either priority or strategic goals.
- **Find out what has already and is currently being done toward the initiative.** Build off of what has already been started, no need to reinvent the wheel!
- **Include justification of the goal and/or need.** What is the find or data that justifies the need for this intervention?
- **Measure of success.** What are the desired outcomes or milestones for the intervention?

- **Creating a marketing and PR plan.** Make a plan to get media involved and the word out about your project.
- **Communicate progress.** Keep the stakeholders, coalition members, and entire community informed and involved; share how their input was incorporated.
- **Follow through.** Take the plan and run with it! Remember the 80-20 rule: successful efforts are 80% follow through on planned actions and 20% planning for success.
- **Keep track of what (and how well it was) has have done.** Always keep track of what the group has actually done. If the community change (a new program or policy) took significant time or resources, it is also a good idea to evaluate it, either formally or informally. Record all progress (keep all your papers, flyers, and letters), to help write a summary or success story at the end of the event.

CONCLUSION

A CHAP is a necessary tool to keep the work of a community on task, outcomes obtainable, and support health improvements in the community, but it does not have to be perfect. More important than a perfect plan is one that is supported and feasible for the community coalition to complete within a reasonable period of time. The CHAP is a working document that can be reviewed and modified as it is implemented. It is a starting point that the coalition can continue to update and revise as community coalitions learn over time how to accomplish their goals. The well-written and community utilized CHAP will be the vehicle that drives a coalition down the road to a Good & Healthy Community.

Tools and Templates

Sample Community Health Action Plan - includes an example to reference when writing a community health action plan.

Community Health Action Plan Template - includes a template to use when writing a community health action plan.

The section, **Setting S.M.A.R.T. Objectives**, includes information and discussion on writing sound objectives. There are templates to follow as well as language hints that might be helpful to a coalition when writing objectives.

Resources

Writing a Community Health Action Plan

Developing an LHD Strategic Plan. National Association of County & City Health Officials.

Accreditation and Performance. Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Develop Community Health Action Plans. North Carolina Division of Public Health.

Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Domains. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

References

1. University of Kansas. (2013). Chapter 8. Developing a Strategic Plan. In *The Community Toolbox, University of Kansas*. Retrieved from http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1007.aspx
2. Nagy, J., Fawcett, S., Berkowitz, B, & Schultz, J. (2013). Chapter 8. Developing a Strategic plan, Section 5. Developing an Action Plan. In *The Community Toolbox, University of Kansas*. Retrieved from http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1089.aspx

