

CORE PROCESS STEPS IN CREATING A COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Planning Toolkit supports a community-driven process for improving communities' health throughout South Dakota. The core process steps assist community leaders in applying strategic thinking to prioritize their public health issues and create population-based solutions to address them.

The core process steps provide a broad view of community health needs assessment and health improvement planning actions; however, methods used to conduct a community health needs assessment and health improvement plan can vary according to each community's structure, leader and partner capacity, and resources.

The following steps guide you through a challenging, yet highly rewarding community process. The process is challenging because it requires community participation to facilitate decision making about improving the community's health. However, once the data is collected and analyzed, you and your coalition will have data supported tools to guide your community improvement plan.

So join the Good & Healthy Initiative! Follow the roadmap through the steps below, and be a Good & Healthy Community!

CORE PROCESS STEPS

The core steps lead a community coalition through the health improvement process. The steps will guide your coalition through the how-to, what-for, here-we-are, and now-what stages of a community health needs assessment.

Just as all communities are different, so, too, are coalitions. All of the following core process steps are entry points for a community coalition who is ready to join in the Good & Healthy initiative. A community who has already completed a community needs assessment and has identified their health priorities prior to joining the initiative, would be ready to disseminate results and create their community health improvement action plan. Additionally, the steps are cyclical and continuous.



Build the Foundation

Laying the foundation that will support the coalition's efforts during successful assessment and community improvement planning is critical to its success.

Potential community partners include:

- Corporations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Local community organizations
- Foundations who provide grants to your community
- Universities
- Government entities
- Neighborhoods

1. Become familiar with key factors for community change, necessary to build a solid foundation for effective coalitions. See the section on *Key Factors for Community* in the Toolkit for more information.
2. Inform the community about the assessment and planning process and why it is important; engage community support (i.e. business, healthcare, schools). See the section on *Collective Impact and Community Benefit* in the Toolkit for more information.
3. Identify financial and non-financial resources from groups, organizations, or persons whose purposes align with creating a healthy community.

Forging sustainable partnerships will result in the leveraging of existing resources to coordinate initiatives and the avoidance of duplicate efforts.

Understand your Community

Deciding what the 'community' is and the scope of the CHNA are necessary planning steps. The scope means to be clear about the issue(s) to be addressed. Many community issues are related to each other; decide to address several related issues or focus on just one of the issues.

1. Define community.
 - Determine the geographic area and target populations (specific age population, service area, residential area, outlying areas)
 - Determine and document what you want to learn about the community
2. Define the scope of the assessment.
 - Be clear about issues to be addressed
 - Identify desired community impact
 - Clarify the focus or purpose of the assessment
3. Determine community readiness. Successful efforts require community understanding and support. See the section on *Community Readiness* in the Toolkit for more information.
4. Develop a framework for how the community's health will be assessed and addressed. See the section *Framework for Addressing Community Health Needs* in the Toolkit for more information.

Plan and Collaborate

Building a core group of key members to lead a coalition of committed people or organizations is important to keep it effective and sustainable. The Toolkit offers information, resources, tools and templates on all of the following steps.

1. Build a coalition. See the sections on *Community Coalitions, Building a Healthy Community Coalition, Key Stakeholders, and Recruiting Key Members* in the Toolkit for more information.
 - Assemble a core group
 - Build the workgroup, team, or advisory committee
 - Create key partnerships
 - Recruit members
2. Write vision and mission statements. These help the coalition keep focused and motivated. See the section on *Vision and Mission Statements* in the Toolkit for more information.

3. Determine stakeholder roles and responsibilities. See the *South Dakota Good & Healthy Community Checklist Stakeholder Roles & Responsibilities* template and the *Coalition Member Volunteer Description* in the Toolkit for more information.
4. Adopt a planning structure that includes a plan development process and staff/technical support plans.

Gather Information and Collect Data

There are many different types of data available and multiple ways to collect it. Data collection begins with determining what data is available. Once an initial CHNA is conducted, coalition members can determine which methods are necessary to gather a comprehensive dataset to support the CHNA process. Consider the amount of time and resources available prior to selecting any specific methods. Document all data collection efforts throughout this step.

1. Ensure interests of disparate populations (i.e. seniors, racial minorities, persons with disabilities). See the section on *Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Your Community* in the Toolkit for more information.
2. Develop a data management process.
 - Determine and document what you want to learn about the community
3. Conduct asset mapping.
 - Create an inventory map of all community assets
 - Identify community strengths
4. Collect data. Use the *SD Good & Healthy Community Checklist tool* for preliminary data collection to assess local chronic disease prevention and control efforts.
 - Assess what local data is currently available through secondary data
 - Collect primary data if necessary and feasible
5. Interpret and analyze data.
 - Analyze data gathered
 - Interpret data to determine community needs
 - Identify additional data needs

Define Community Health Priorities

The data collection step should result in ample data and information about the community's needs, assets, health behaviors and indicators, and demographics. Key findings serve several purposes: validate anecdotal evidence of community needs and assets, highlight significant trends found in the data collection process, reveal differences across populations of the community, and help clarify answers to the community assessment's key questions.

1. Prioritize identified health needs.
 - Utilize established priority setting methods to establish criteria for identifying priority health issues to address
 - Review assessment data
 - Work with coalition members and stakeholders to determine a consensus on health priorities to address in the community

Disseminate CHNA Results

The community should be able to benefit from the findings and results of the CHNA. Community members will be more likely to support efforts when they have a clear understanding of the work that has been done and of what the community needs are. The next step of the community assessment is to share what was learned with the community and to put the plan into action.

1. Document and communicate key findings.
2. Develop a community health needs assessment (CHNA) summary report.
 - Publicize the report
 - Share the report with stakeholders
3. Evaluate community feedback.

Write a Community Health Action Plan

Now that data has been collected and health priorities to address have been determined, develop a Community Health Action Plan to guide health improvement planning and future strategies to address community health. Analyze the data to identify the assessment's key findings, set priorities based on findings, and create an action plan to guide post-assessment planning.

1. Establish a community health action plan to communicate health needs and goals to the community.
2. Formulate goals, objectives, and strategies.
 - Use SMART format
 - Public and stakeholder input and involvement are critical

Follow the road to a healthy community. The next sections of the Toolkit cover each step in the assessment and improvement process. There are tools, templates, and resources to assist coalitions as they learn, gather, assess, prioritize, plan, and improve the communities that they live in.

The ultimate goal of a community health needs assessment is to recognize and prioritize community health needs and further health improvement planning efforts. Once assessment and planning are complete, communities are then ready to develop strategies to address the needs in a future implementation plan.

Tools and Templates

Core Process Steps Timeline Template. The timeline is a tracking method to assist community coalitions in maintaining a timeline and tracking activities. It aligns with the Core Process Steps in Community Health Needs Assessment and Improvement Planning.

Resources

Additional discussion on the steps in conducting a CHNA and improvement planning in your community may be found in the resources listed below.

Core Process Steps in a CHNA

Assessing & Addressing Community Health Needs. Catholic Health Association

Community Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement Planning. Iowa Department of Public Health

References

1. Rabinowitz, P. & Berkowitz, B. (2013). Chapter 1. Our Model for Community Change and Improvement, Section 6. Core Principles, Assumptions, and Values to Guide the Work. In The Community Toolbox, University of Kansas website. Retrieved from http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1005.aspx
2. Neuber, K. A., et al. (1980). Needs assessment: A model for community planning. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
3. Iowa Department of Public Health. (2013). Community Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement. Retrieved from www.idph.state.ia.us/chnahip
4. Association for Community Health Improvement. (2012). In Association for Community Health Improvement Community Health Assessment Toolkit. A Practical Guide to Planning, Leading, and Using Community Health Assessment. Retrieved from <http://www.assesstoolkit.org>

