



Community Health Assessment 101

Project Summary and Talking Points

What is a “community health assessment”?



Everyone wants to be healthy. Some of us aren't. This project will **measure how healthy we are**, what health conditions we suffer from, and the **root causes** of those health problems.

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Where will the information come from? We will use a variety of data sources, including surveys, vital records, program and facility data, as well as interviews and focus groups.

Why should community members be involved?

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Community involvement is vital for an effective health assessment and improvement project. Community members are needed to **prioritize the health needs**. There will be several opportunities for community members to share their views and experiences and suggest strategies for action.

How will this improve health?

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Once we know what the priority health needs are (and what the root causes of those problems are) we will **develop a plan to fix the problems**.

- Hospitals, health departments, and other community organizations will use the plan to target *their*
- efforts based on **what the community decides** are the most important health problems. **By all of us**
- **moving in the same direction, we will maximize our impact on important health problems.**

Why are we doing this *now*?

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Hospitals have a **new mandate under the health reform law** to conduct a ‘community health needs assessment’ every three years, starting in 2012. Local health departments have a long tradition of health assessment and improvement activities, and those who are seeking national accreditation must conduct assessments and develop improvement plans, so **partnering together just makes sense** in these times of scarce resources.

What geographic area does this cover?

- * Community health assessments are typically conducted on the **county level** or occasionally multiple counties under the jurisdiction of **one health department**. This may include one or more hospitals, urban areas, towns and social service agencies.

How long will the project take?

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Following national best practices, **our project will take about a year** from starting the assessment to completion of the improvement plan. However, effective community health improvement is part of a **continuous cycle** of measurement, planning, action, and evaluation...constantly refining efforts to respond to community conditions.