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. 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

What is a “community health assessment”?

Why should community members be involved?

Why are we doing this now?

What geographic area does this cover?

How long will the project take?