

Kansas Health Matters

Collaborate with Others: Who should be part of a Community Health (Needs) Assessment?

Community members and organizations to consider when forming a collaborative group to work on Community Health (Needs) Assessment

Conducting a community health needs assessment and developing an implementation strategy are good opportunities to initiate or strengthen relationships within the communities you serve. Engaging the community will not only improve your assessment and implementation strategies, it can lead to successful collaborations for addressing community health needs.

Productive and meaningful community engagement throughout the process can also lead others in the community to take ownership of needs that cannot be addressed by the hospital or health department. Federal law regarding community health needs assessment requires hospitals to take into account input from persons who represent the broad interests of the community served by the organization, including experts in public health.

Keep in mind, some of your best and most interesting information may come from community members with no particular credentials except that they're part of the community. It's especially important to get the perspective of those who often don't have a voice in community decisions and politics -- low-income people, immigrants, and others who are often kept out of the community discussion. In addition, however, there are some specific people that it might be important to talk to. They're the individuals in key positions, or those who are trusted by a large part of the community or by a particular population.

Here is a suggested list to consider inviting to take part in your Community Health Needs Assessment:

Consumers

- Uninsured/underinsured people.
- Members of at-risk populations.
- Parents, caregivers and other consumers of health care in the community.
- Consumer advocates.

Community leaders and groups

- The hospital organization's board members.
- Local clergy and congregational leaders.
- Presidents or chairs of civic or service clubs -- Chamber of Commerce, veterans' organizations, Lions, Rotary, etc.
- Representatives from businesses -- owners/CEO's of large businesses (local or large corporations with local branches.)
- Business people and merchants (e.g., who sell tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs).
- Representatives from organized labor.
- Political, appointed and elected officials.
- Foundations.
- United Way organizations.
- People without titles, but identified by others as "community leaders."

Public and other organizations

- Public health officials.
- Directors or staff of health and human service organizations.
- City/Community planners and development officials.
- Individuals with business and economic development experience.
- Welfare and social service agency staff.
- Housing advocates - administrators of housing programs: homeless shelters, low-income-family housing and senior housing.
- Education officials and staff - school superintendents, principals and teachers.
- Public safety officials.
- Staff from state and area agencies on aging.
- Law enforcement agencies - Chiefs of police.
- Local colleges and universities
- Coalitions working on health or other issues.

Other providers

- Physicians.
- Leaders in other not-for-profit health care organizations, such as hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and home-based and community-based services.
- Leaders from Catholic Charities and other faith-based service providers.
- Mental health providers.
- Oral health providers.
- Health insurers.
- Parish and congregational nursing programs.
- Other health professionals.

Most of the people and groups listed above can, in combination, represent the broad interests of the community, as required by federal law (PPACA requirement for hospitals).

Sources:

The University of Kansas *Community Tool Box* – a service of the *Work Group for Community Health and Development* at www.ctb.ku.edu

Assessing and Addressing Community Health Needs – from the Catholic Health Association - Developed in Collaboration with VHA Inc. and the *Healthy Communities Institute*

The vision for Kansas Health Matters: A partnership for Improving Community Health is actionable Information for Community Health Improvement in Kansas. Founding organizations include: Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved, Kansas Hospital Association, Kansas Association of Local Health Departments, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Health Foundation and the Kansas Health Institute.