

Community health assessment: Key messages for public health and health care providers

Under health transformation, public health and healthcare providers have a unique opportunity to work together to assess the health needs of their communities, which includes health status indicators (including leading causes of death, disability and associated risk factors) for the population, access to clinical health services, and health equity and disparities.

What is community health assessment?

Collecting, analyzing, and using data to educate and mobilize communities, develop priorities, garner resources, and plan actions to improve the public's health. It should be conducted in partnership with other organizations in the community.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that public health entities, including local public health authorities, carry out a variety of community health assessment related activities. Examples of methods include:

- ▶ Community Health Assessment and Group Evaluation (CHANGE) model^[1]
- ▶ Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP)^[2]

State and local public health authorities applying for accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) are required to complete a community health assessment and community health improvement plan. These assessments are intended to demonstrate that health departments use community health status data to inform policy and program development.

What is public health accreditation?

National public health department accreditation was launched in 2011 to improve and protect the health of every community by advancing the quality and performance within public health departments.

The Public Health Accreditation Board, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and national public health organizations, developed standards to document the capacity of state, local, tribal and territorial public health departments to deliver the three core functions of public health and the Ten Essential Public Health Services (see Figure 1). Thus, accreditation gives reasonable assurance of the range and quality of public health services a department should provide. Demonstration of achievement results in formal recognition in a similar way to The Joint Commission accreditation of hospitals.

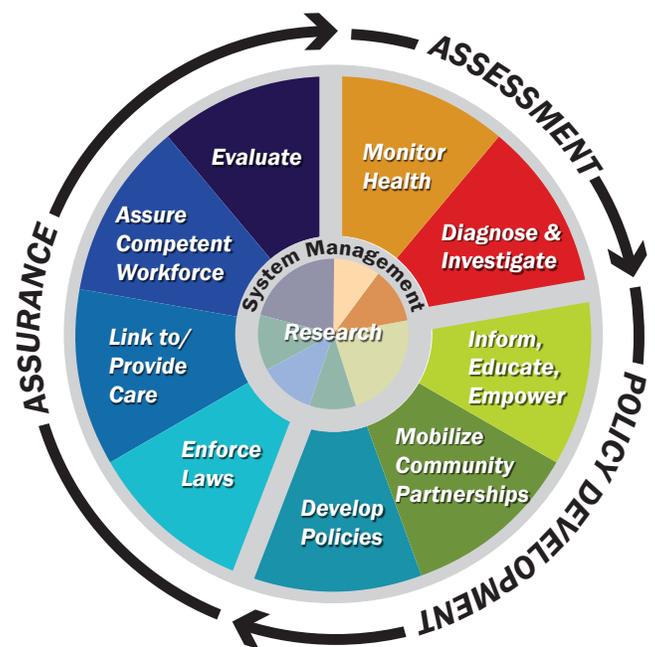


Figure 1

More than 13 local public health authorities in Oregon are preparing to apply for accreditation.

What is a community needs assessment?

Soliciting input from the broader community, including public health experts, to describe how the hospital is addressing community needs, identifying gaps and planning actions to address.

Draft IRS regulations propose that a community needs assessment contains descriptions of the:

- ▶ community served;
- ▶ process and methods used to conduct the assessment, including information gaps that impact the ability to assess the health needs of the community;
- ▶ how the hospital took into account input from stakeholders;
- ▶ prioritized health needs of the community; and the
- ▶ existing health care facilities and other resources to meet the needs of the community.

Under new national health reform laws, some hospitals are required to conduct community needs assessments (see Internal Revenue Bulletin 2011-52).

Partnerships for Community Health

Both community health assessments and community needs assessments require engaging the voice of the community served, and demonstrating partnerships with organizations within this community. Hospitals and local public health authorities, especially those working together to apply to be a Coordinated Care Organization under health system transformation, should work together to conduct community health assessments and community needs assessments. These assessments are required by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and recommended by federal funders and national partners.

For more information

Health system transformation, www.health.oregon.gov

Public health accreditation, www.healthoregon.org/accreditation

[1] <http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/change.htm>

[2] <http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/mapp/framework/mappbasics.cfm>