Community Health Assessment Overview

March 29, 2011
Community Health Assessment

- Regular and systematic process for collecting and analyzing health data about your community.
- Improves understanding of community health needs and strengths.
- Informs priorities and decision-making.
- Involves community members.
- Foundation of health improvement planning.
Key Action Steps

1. Describe the community.
2. Collect and analyze data and community perspectives.
3. Identify community strengths and challenges.
4. Identify community health priorities.
5. Develop health improvement plans.
Describe the community

- Demographics – age, sex, race, ethnicity, income.
- Culture – history, traditions, beliefs, values.
- Setting – geography, environment (natural and built), political boundaries, housing.
- Systems – health care, education, economic, social.
Collect additional data on identified priorities

- Qualitative or descriptive data
  - Perspectives and stories
  - Opinions and beliefs
  - Support for healthy living
  - Barriers to healthy living

- Sources: key informant interviews, surveys, focus groups, mass media
Collect the data (continued)

- Quantitative data
  - Incidence and prevalence of health conditions
  - Incidence and prevalence of health behaviors
  - Service utilization
  - Vital statistics

- Sources: surveys (BRFSS, NHIS, NHANES), chart audits, state and national data sets, census
Analyze the data

- Organize and sort the data.
- Identify leading causes of injury and death.
- Explore trends in health or factors that impact health.
- Identify emerging issues.
- Compare data from different sources.
- Explain limitations.
Identify strengths and challenges

- Community characteristics that support or inhibit health and healthy living
  - Knowledge, skills, and abilities
  - Community organizations and systems
  - Cultural traditions and beliefs
  - Built environment
  - Political climate
Community engagement

The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. (CDC Principles of Community Engagement)
Why engage the community?

- Research has shown that in programs that involve high levels of community participation and control, there is greater participation in health improvement activities.
- Community engagement builds “social capital” -- social ties, networks, and support -- which is associated with better community health and well-being.
- Participatory decision-making can uncover and mobilize community assets, strengths, and resources that would have been otherwise overlooked.

*http://www.socrates.berkeley.edu/~pbd/.../Community_Engagement_Strategies.pdf*
Benefits of Community Engagement

- Focuses on social justice
- Helps shape services
- Helps build trust
- Helps with outreach
- Connects people and resources
- Develops new leaders
- Creates an opportunity for critical reflection
Key Action Steps

1. Define your purpose.
2. Know your community.
3. Identify key partners and stakeholders.
5. Be an active listener.
6. Share the results.
Set priorities

- Decide on the process.
- Select the criteria.
- Begin the process.
- Consider strategies and capacity.
- Consider community and health department priorities.
- Create the prioritized list.
Develop improvement plans

- Define the problem/issue to be addressed.
- Develop goals and objectives.
- Identify resources to be committed.
- Describe strategy/key action steps.
- Develop performance measures.
- Describe expected outcomes.
Accreditation

The goal of public health accreditation is to improve and protect the health of the public by advancing the quality and performance of all health departments in the country.
Three specific documents are needed for accreditation:

- A community health assessment, in which a health department assesses the health status and the public health needs in the community.

- A community health improvement plan, which maps out exactly what the health department is going to do as it works with partners to improve the health status of its jurisdiction.

- A strategic plan for the health department, which sets forth a health department’s priorities and how it plans to accomplish its strategic goals.