Applying Community Health Assessments for Rural Hospital Strategy

By Patricia Wangler
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First Care Medical Services, d.b.a. Essentia Health Fosston
Objectives

1. Why community health needs assessment in rural areas – the Bread Basket of America.
   
   Value of improving the health of the community toward retaining a quality and viable ag industry that is attractive and desirable in order to retain highly productive Bread Basket of America.

2. How we engaged with the community:
   
   • Survey
   • Focus groups
   • Secondary data
   • Health care coalition

3. Addressing the results: what is in progress and what are we called to do by the results.
Why Community Health Needs Assessment in Rural Areas

To help create an environment with high quality health care in order to ensure agriculture and rural areas remain attractive as a place to live, work, and raise a family that has the same opportunities as urban counterparts.

Personal background, belief and commitment to rural health care:
1. Born and raised on a farm.
2. Entire career has been in health care from nursing to quality oversight to administration.
Background of Community

- The agriculture communities of the 13 towns served by Essentia Health Fosston.
- Total population 19,000 per consultant market study.
- Total population of Fosston: 1,575.
- Total population of Fosston Zip Code: 5,000.
- Fosston is known as the “little town that could”.
History of Essentia Health Fosston

- 1897 opened as hospital devoted to lumberjacks for a per member per month arrangement that provided all inclusive care for injury and illness of the lumbermen.
- 1947 converted to Community Hospital new construction opened.
- 1961 a new hospital was built on the current site under municipal ownership.
- 1993 First Care Medical Services became a 501(c)(3) free standing not for profit corporation.
- 2004 converted to a CAH.
- 2005 installed an electronic health record in the hospital.
- 2009 joined Essentia Health System.
- 2010 completed merger with the local physician clinic.
- 2012 preparing to replace current electronic health record to unite with system.
Why community health needs assessment is important to our rural community

• In the absence of critical mass of people which is the case in rural areas where the only critical mass is in the heads of grain, numbers of cattle and trees in the forest; every entity must contribute at miniscule margin to create a desirable, viable and high quality community.

• Gather credible information to move forward in securing health care needed by the community.
  ▪ Most recent community health needs assessment was done about 11 years ago.
  ▪ Most recent strategic plan five years ago with annual updating
  ▪ Implementation of strategic plan: nearly 100%.
  ▪ As a result our organization has gone from a $7 million organization to a $20 million organization.
Process of engaging the community: Engaging WITH the community

• Mailed 800 stratified randomly sampled surveys.
• Conducted 4 focus groups:
  - business/community leaders
  - ministerial/health providers (public health)
  - seniors
  - special populations (Amish/Russian Orthodox)
• Administered secondary data analysis.
• Assembled a community health coalition; engaged public health.
And the survey says....

Perception of Community Health (Question 1)

Respondents were asked how they would rate their community as a healthy place to live. Thirty-six percent of respondents (n=78) rated their community as “Healthy” while 50% (n=109) felt their community was “Somewhat healthy.” This indicates an opportunity to improve Fosston residents’ perception of their community’s health. (N=216)
Awareness of Services Available at Essentia Health Fosston (Question 4)

Respondents were asked to rate their knowledge of health services available at Essentia Health Fosston. Slightly more than half of the respondents rate their knowledge of local health services available at Essentia Health Fosston as good (53%, n=115). This is an opportunity for Essentia Health Fosston to educate community members and staff about services available locally. (N=216)
Economic Importance of Local Health Care Services (Question 9)

The majority of respondents (76%, n=165) indicated that local health care services are very important to the economic well-being of the area while 19% (n=42) indicated they are important. (N=216)
Perception of Personal Health (Question 27)

Respondents were asked how they would rate their own level of health. Fifty-one percent (n=111) perceived their personal level of health to be “Unhealthy” and only 1% (n=2) indicated their level of health as “Very healthy.” This is atypical compared to other community health needs assessments conducted by The Center where generally 50% of respondent indicate their health as “Somewhat healthy”. In question number one, 5% (n=10) of respondents perceive the level of community health to be “Unhealthy”. This indicates an opportunity to improve Fosston residents’ perception of their personal health. (N=216)
Community Health Concerns

Respondents could select 3 that applied, so percentages do not equal 100% (n=213)
# Behavioral Risk Factors of Adults

**Adult Obesity:** BMI index greater than or equal to 30

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*Range in Minnesota:* 21-32%

**Adult Smokers:** has smoked 100 cigarettes and now smokes every day

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*Range in Minnesota:* 4-33%

**Excessive Drinking:** respondents who report they have consumed 5 or more drinks on an occasion, one or more times in the month prior to the survey

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*Range in Minnesota:* 9-26%

**Teen Birth Rate:** per 1,000 population ages 15-19

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*Range in Minnesota:* 8-97

Source: County Health Rankings (2011), State Health Facts (2010)*
Criteria for a Healthy Community

Respondents could select 3 that applied, so percentages do not equal 100% (n=213)
Barriers of Health Services in Fosston

- Community unaware of EHF’s variety of comprehensive services
- Difficult to access dental care locally with Medicaid
- Be mindful of special populations’ unique needs
What has changed from the survey completed 10 years ago

• Ten years ago viewed as a triage center; place to go to be sent elsewhere.
• Intense strategy to achieve excellence resulted as a major initiative following that assessment
• Studer Model of Hardwiring Excellence
• Today at 95th percentile quality in hospital core measures.
• Customer satisfaction increased to ≥ 75th percentile.
• Use Balanced Scorecard method to share results.
Process of establishing health priorities and goal development with the board/senior leadership and the community health coalition:

- Initial meeting for review of survey.
- Initiatives prioritized.
- Initiatives sent to all participants to test and prioritize.
- Action plan for the top 2 initiatives developed.
Initiatives prioritized for strategy development:

1. Increase access to health education, specialists, primary care providers and specialty services of mental and dental health.

2. Improve the perception rating of personal health through disease prevention and lifestyle strategies.
Build on those initiatives that will make a difference in addressing current needs:

• Hardwiring excellence: goals for quality and service: 95\textsuperscript{th} percentile.

• FIT Trail (a non-motorized vehicle walking and moving trail) development in partnership with the community.

• Community Garden partnership with Heritage Center and Sun Opta.

• Fitness centers for chronic disease operated by EHF.

• Development of an accountable care organization.
The bottom line:

• We take availability of great quality food for granted because we have not entered a grocery store without it
• We must recognize that someone has to want to produce food
• Producing food takes space but few people and is a hazardous occupation
• Services located within reasonable distance improve the safety, quality of life and opportunity
• Without available services we stand to risk losing cheap and plentiful food
What we commit to:

“We are called to make a healthy difference in people’s lives.”

Critical access hospitals play a major role in enhancing safety and quality of life in rural areas.

Community health needs assessment assists in leveraging resources effectively.

We aim to leverage resources to achieve priority initiatives and do our part in retaining a vital ag industry and health community.
Questions