



NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER

Tips for Creating a Successful Community Health Needs Assessment

Congratulations! Through your participation in this Community Health Needs Assessment process, you are building trust and loyalty with your customers and contributing towards the sustainability of your local health care system. Review the following tips generated by other rural hospitals, to help make your community engagement the best it can be.

Assessment Planning Questions

- When was the last time you conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment?
- Why are you conducting an assessment at this time?
- What do you hope to get out of this assessment process?
- What are you hoping to learn about the community through this tool?

Survey Development Tips

- As you select and develop survey questions, always keep in mind *why* you are conducting this assessment and what purpose the assessment serves your organization.
- Review past community health assessments your organization has administered for any baseline data you could compare to or to gather information you would like to seek further clarification on.
- Evaluate partnering with local clinics, public health, or other local health-related organizations to review or add questions to the community health needs assessment. Have any of these organizations recently conducted a community health needs assessment?
- Consider having The Center conduct a secondary data collection to identify local, state, and national health trends to supplement assessment planning.
- Check out County demographic information to help guide service related questions. For example, if there is a high elderly population in your service area, asking questions about senior living or adult day care services may be beneficial for future planning.
- Reference Hospital Compare data if applicable to identify any opportunities for potential assessment questions.
- Link assessment questions to your strategic plan or goals for the future.
- IMPORTANT TIP: Each assessment question should ideally be linked to a measurable action. Consider how you can influence change based on the questions that are being asked.

Assessment Marketing Tips

- Identify and promote why community members should participate in the assessment process.
- Help increase the survey response rate by reminding community members of the importance of the local healthcare system. Is it appropriate to share a recent hospital hero story to demonstrate the importance of sustaining the local health care system? Are residents informed of the hospital's direct and indirect economic impact?
- Remember word of mouth is the most impactful method of marketing. Use this to your advantage.
- Create local buzz about the assessment through the newspaper, radio ads, flyers in the local coffee shop, Rotary or Chamber events, etc.
- Check the local calendar of events: health fair, specific disease awareness month, or wellness event; to evaluate opportunities to promote the assessment as another way the hospital is connecting with the community.
- Consider offering an incentive for completing the survey: raffle ticket, coupon for a discounted local wellness service, etc. Be creative.
- Consider working with The Center in conducting focus groups or key informant interviews to capture the qualitative data a survey lacks.
- MOST IMPORTANT TIP: Communicate the assessment results BACK to the community as soon as possible with a detailed plan of how the assessment impacts the consumer and the community.

Assessment Results are in. Now what?

- Determine how the assessment results will influence future planning and develop goals and an action plan.
- Be sure to document your community health needs assessment processes and results to meet the charitable hospital tax-exempt status requirements, if applicable.
- Evaluate if an outside, neutral facilitator can assist your strategic planning processes.
- Assess the value of framing strategic plans in a balanced scorecard format.
- Consider presenting survey results at a community health education forum that demonstrates the impact health care has on the local economy and quality of life.
- Share assessment results with other local or state health care organizations (clinic, public health, mental health, non-profit, etc) to gather input on how to collectively address the needs identified from the survey. Assess if any non-health related organization could support the health needs of the community. Think outside of the box.
- Promote positive survey results as hospital marketing tools for capturing market share.
- Showcase any “wow” results from the assessment in recruiting and retaining physicians and staff.
- Feature top survey results on your community's tourist or real estate websites.