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What is community health need assessment

A community health improvement plan is a long-term effort to address public health problems based on community assessments and planning processes. The Public Health Accreditation Board defines this type of plan as not limited to traditional public health categories, but also considering environmental, economic, housing, and other community issues that affect public health. This process involves identifying, analyzing, and addressing health problems; assessing data; developing measurable objectives and indicators; inventorying community assets; and cultivating community ownership. The Importance of Evaluating Health Disparities Research highlights the importance of evaluating health disparities in community assessments. The purpose of performing a community assessment is to identify community needs, examine environmental elements where patients live and work, and provide data necessary for developing an effective intervention or health promotion plan. Community assessments can be conducted using various frameworks, including windshield surveys, walking surveys, quantitative data, and qualitative data. Community and public health nurses collaborate with communities to design and implement strategies to alleviate problems experienced by community members. Community health frameworks evaluate programs and identify critical health needs and issues through systematic data collection and analysis. This assessment provides comprehensive information about the community's current health status, needs, and issues, which can inform the development of a community health improvement plan. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) framework for community planning emphasizes aligning with community needs, as noted in their 2018 report. The CDC's "Community Planning for Health Assessment" guide, updated in 2024, outlines the steps of assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation, mirroring the nursing process known as ADPIE: assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation. These steps correspond to organize and plan, engage, develop, and conduct in community health frameworks - prioritizing health issues is diagnosis, developing a community health plan is planning, and then implementing and evaluating (Table 6.1). Table 6.1 details the comparison of community health assessment with the nursing process. One widely used framework for assessing communities is the CHANGE tool (community health assessment and group evaluation), developed by the CDC for gathering data on community health. The Healthy Communities Program designed it to aid in creating environments that promote healthy living. The primary purpose of CHANGE is identifying areas for improvement through community-gathered data (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2010). A social-ecological model (Figure 6.1) illustrates the various influences on community health and barriers to improvement. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective strategies. The social-ecological model breaks down into individual knowledge, attitudes, skills; interpersonal - family, friends, social networks; organizational - organizations, institutions; community - relationships among organizations; public policy - national, state, local laws (Content adapted from the Public Health Professionals Gateway: Assessment & Planning Models, Frameworks & Tools from the CDC, 2015). The MAPP model focuses on community engagement and collaboration for system-level planning after identifying assets and needs. Its six phases include organizing partnership development, visioning, performing four assessments, identifying strategic issues, formulating goals and strategies, and moving into action (Figure 6.2 visualizes this process). The road to successful community health starts at the local level where partnerships are formed and values are established (Marion County, 2015). It then leads to a thorough assessment using the 4 M A P P approach which includes evaluating the public health system, understanding the community's overall health status, identifying key drivers of change, and recognizing strengths within the community. The next step is to identify strategic challenges and develop actionable goals and strategies that get implemented and evaluated over time. There are six types of assessments used: comprehensive, rapid needs, problem-specific, health impact, population-focused, and setting-specific. A comprehensive assessment looks at a community's assets, such as its local health department's capacity, identifies problems, and highlights opportunities for improvement. Rapid needs assessments quickly address emerging public health concerns, while problem or health issue-based assessments focus on specific issues like an HIV outbreak. Population-focused assessments target particular populations, like children with high lead levels, while setting-specific assessments take place in specific environments, such as workplaces or schools. A health impact assessment evaluates the effects of policies (WHO, 2022; Savage, 2019). Community health assessments can also be known as community needs assessments and are used to identify a population's key health issues. These assessments are conducted at various levels, from states down to local communities, using systematic methods that collect and analyze data. Key principles guiding these assessments include multisector collaborations from shared ownership of improvement phases, proactive community engagement for broad results, maximum transparency, evidence-based interventions, innovative practices with thorough evaluation, continuous improvement processes, and pooled high-quality data (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Community statements should be collaborative, involving all stakeholders, including members. Windshield and walking surveys are methods used to assess community needs and resources by observing and taking note of its characteristics. One way to get a sense of a community is to drive or walk around it, either systematically from a moving vehicle or on foot. Windshield surveys involve making systematic observations while driving, while walking surveys involve making observations on foot. Both types can provide valuable insights into the community's general condition or specific aspects such as poverty levels, housing conditions, and traffic patterns. Windshield surveys are suitable for larger areas with visible features from the road, while walking surveys are better suited for observing harder-to-see aspects like public spaces and infrastructure needs. These surveys can be structured to provide an objective view of the community, making them adaptable to collaborative initiatives involving stakeholders and community members. Windshield and walking surveys allow for easy comparisons among different parts of the community and can help identify areas where focus is needed. They are beneficial in understanding specific aspects such as the community's relationship with the environment, street life, traffic patterns, and access to food. Conducting multiple surveys at different times of day, week, or year can provide a comprehensive view of the community. The choice of surveyor depends on factors like area size, number of surveys, and participation level. These surveys are flexible and can be conducted whenever needed, making them a valuable tool in community assessment and participatory initiatives. Given text rewritten by IB: Conducting a survey can be a complex process, especially when it comes to deciding whether to conduct it in teams or as individuals. The size of the neighborhood or rural village being surveyed will play a significant role in determining this. For example, a small neighborhood may only require one person to complete the survey in a day, while a large city would likely need several days and multiple teams of observers. Additionally, if the survey includes participatory research, it's essential to organize diverse observers into teams with representatives from diverse backgrounds, such as different ages, cultures, ethnicities, and income levels. This ensures that the survey captures a wide range of perspectives and avoids any potential safety issues related to hostility between groups. However, one challenge with conducting a windshield or walking survey is that community members may already have preconceived notions about the questions being asked, which can affect the accuracy and completeness of the data. Nevertheless, these surveys can also serve as an opportunity for community members to gain new insights into their environment. To ensure the success of a windshield or walking survey, it's crucial to determine who will conduct the survey, involve them in the planning process, and utilize teams or multiple observers with diverse perspectives. The ideal approach is to use a team that can focus on specific tasks, such as observation, recording, and data analysis, making the survey more efficient. It's also essential to decide on the questions being asked, considering their scope and structure, and develop a checklist to ensure all necessary areas are observed. Conducting the survey with an open mind and trying not to be too obtrusive can help reduce anxiety among community members and increase the accuracy of the data. To capture the data effectively, it's recommended to carry identification, take notes, and record observations using cameras or cell phones. Working in teams and assigning roles, such as one observer and one recorder, is also vital for a successful survey. Additionally, discussing findings as the survey is conducted can help identify potential issues and improve the overall quality of the data. Finally, it's essential to pay attention to safety concerns, being aware of the neighborhood and situation, especially while walking or conducting interviews. If the situation does not feel safe, it's crucial to leave and reassess the situation before proceeding. Public spaces, industry mix, and infrastructure define the character of a community. Parks are hubs for various people to gather and enjoy sports facilities. Museums, theaters, and restaurants offer diverse entertainment options. The streetscape is critical, with trees, sidewalks, and clean buildings contributing to its charm. Pedestrian and bicycle safety are paramount, with well-designed roads and adequate lighting ensuring safe passage. Commercial activity includes a mix of businesses, including grocery stores and pharmacies. Signage must be clear and accessible to all languages. Industry diversity affects pollution levels and land use distribution. Infrastructure services like electricity and water treatment are evenly distributed across the community. Public transportation is vital, with easy navigation and affordable fares. Traffic patterns vary, but bike lanes and racks promote eco-friendliness. Environmental quality is crucial, with ample green spaces and clean air. Community dynamics, including race/ethnicity, faith communities, health services, community and public services, community safety, public schools, higher education, political activity, community organizations, media, food access, and neighborhood differences. Observe community "feel" using a map and team-based approach. Conducting a thorough community assessment is crucial for understanding and addressing its specific health concerns. Start by engaging with local residents through casual conversations, observing their interactions, and gathering insights on how they connect with one another. Explore public spaces like libraries, museums, or parks to gain a deeper understanding of the community's dynamics. To gather more information, combine walking and driving surveys to get a comprehensive view of the area. Consider asking some fundamental questions: What are the community's notable strengths? What appear to be its most significant challenges? What stands out as particularly striking or unexpected about this community? Are there any distinct aesthetic qualities that make it either beautiful or unappealing? Whether your goal is to launch a broad initiative addressing local poverty or simply find suitable locations for park projects, windshield and walking surveys are effective starting points. This approach can help you identify the community's overall health status, pinpoint its most pressing needs, and recognize potential areas for quality improvement. Health Department Tasks for Community Wellbeing Their main goal is to provide healthcare services in the following areas: - Emergency planning - Securing resources for emergencies, like medical equipment and vaccines - Administering vaccinations - Managing disease outbreaks - Inspecting local food establishments, schools, and other community facilities - Implementing interventions to manage drug overdoses These organizations work closely with their communities to ensure they have a solid foundation of health. The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) process involves collecting and analyzing data to identify community needs and assets. This systematic approach helps prompt targeted, effective community-change work by considering local conditions. CHNAs can be broad, examining a community at large, or focus on specific issues. Public health departments and nonprofit hospitals are required to complete regular CHNAs. The practice is widely accepted in public health and healthcare sectors, with potential to improve the healthcare landscape and advance community well-being. By incorporating non-health data, such as housing and transportation information, into CHNA, the interconnectedness of physical health and community conditions can be acknowledged. The seven vital conditions for well-being framework can also guide efforts to advance community well-being beyond traditional clinical spheres. CHNA has been criticized for its potential to further marginalize communities of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ groups, and others if not approached equitably. Other underserved populations require a reimagined approach to advance equity through CHNA processes. By implementing best practices outlined below, including community-driven engagement with individuals having lived experience, we can identify root causes of inequity and drive efforts to reverse trends. Vulnerable populations face disparate healthcare access and outcomes due to economic, cultural, racial, or health characteristics. For instance, historically, communities of color have borne a larger burden of negative health outcomes than their white counterparts. Throughout the CHNA process, examining data across different populations is crucial to recognize diverse lived experiences and needs. To tailor health improvement efforts and minimize disparities, it's essential to know specific health needs a population faces. Ideally, CHNAs are developed through collaborative processes involving stakeholders from various sectors, incorporating present-day and historical data to examine change over time. Community engagement makes the community an active participant in the CHNA process, increasing the likelihood of achieving desired impacts. Those closest to problems often possess valuable knowledge about root causes—often learning from those most affected leads to more effective implementation strategies. Without community engagement, we fail to integrate wisdom and experience. Our team has researched best practices, outlined below, for a co-design approach to equitable outcomes. Shared ownership of community well-being sets the stage for effective assessment, emphasizing a shared definition of well-being in each community. This culture promotes community involvement and leadership in design, data, processes, investments, and results. Shared stewardship, governance, and investment foster accountability and efficiency by engaging people who feel invested enough to work together for system health. Reflective leadership prioritizes collaboration and invokes shared ownership, emphasizing assets and strengths to reinforce resilience. Equity, justice, and accessibility are operationalized throughout the assessment process, ensuring equal opportunities and outcomes. Multi-solving solutions address complex challenges across multiple issues, making them investment priorities. Narrative change is a powerful tool for creating public support and driving policy changes that promote health, well-being, and equity. This approach taps into shared values, beliefs, and norms to create a collective narrative that guides behavior and decision-making. By leveraging the power of storytelling, we can shift harmful values and assumptions to those that foster unity, cooperation, and positive change. Building strong community connections through civic muscle and belonging can also drive momentum for positive change. When community members feel valued, cared for, and connected, they become more confident and willing to participate in community efforts, leading to a virtuous cycle of growth and improvement. The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) process should not just be a box-checking exercise, but rather a catalyst for meaningful community change. By identifying key assets and needs, we can create a plan that addresses the most pressing issues and drives progress towards a healthier, more equitable community. Data frameworks provide a valuable tool for translating data into actionable solutions, helping us to focus on the levers that matter most in improving community conditions. Stewardship – particularly shared stewardship that engages people and organizations in collaborative work – is also a promising mechanism for driving transformative change by shifting investments and systems towards thriving communities.