



Recommended Practices for Engaging Patients and Communities in the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) Process

The following are recommended practices. Each of these items should be considered within the context of hospital resources, infrastructure to complete the CHNA and implementation plan, geography served, and other internal factors. These are not meant to be minimal thresholds.



Step 1: Identify and Engage Stakeholders

- Write collaborative CHNAs with other hospitals and local health departments.
 - Hospitals should consider collaborating with other hospitals and organizations in conducting their CHNAs, when possible, to the extent they serve the same communities.
- Consider other community sectors for partnership in the CHNA process: agriculture/food suppliers; employers; culture/arts; education; environment; government; health care; housing and economic development; human services; law enforcement; media; philanthropic organizations; religion;

service/fraternal organizations; sports and recreation; volunteers and activists; vulnerable populations; and youth.

- Engage stakeholders inside the hospital and health system. Increasing engagement in this way can encourage integration of prioritized community health needs into operations.
 - Consider engaging clinicians, particularly from the primary care setting, or specialty clinicians whose focus aligns with community health needs (e.g., behavioral health professionals, nutritionists).
 - Consider patients and their family members as key stakeholders in the CHNA process. Though they may be considered community members, their experiences in the health care system give them a different perspective on the community's health needs. Individuals involved in patient and family advisory councils (PFACs) may be enthusiastic about contributing to the CHNA process.
- Collect community input using one or more of the following methods: community forums, focus groups, interviews, and/or surveys
 - Consider opportunities to engage existing community groups by using their data, reports, recommendations to inform the CHNA. Participation on community boards, workgroups, and commissions will facilitate a stronger understanding of their perspectives.

Step 2: Define the Community to be Assessed

- Determine the scope of your “community.”
- Consider how other organizations, such as the local health department, define the community.
 - While the geographic hospital service area that includes the greatest percentage of discharges may be one way to define “community” for purposes of the CHNA, it may be a *starting point* for assessing health needs. The community examined may differ from the general patient care population. Consider all of the relevant facts and circumstances, including the geographic area served by the hospital.
 - Potential ways to examine include target population served and whether there are populations within the service area with specific unmet health needs.

Step 3: Collect and Analyze Data

- To the extent practicable, collect and analyze data on race, ethnicity, language preference, income, disability status, veteran status, sexual orientation, and gender or gender identification to better understand the community in which the hospital serves.
- Aim to collect opinions and priorities from diverse segments of the population.
- Collect data on social determinants of health, including subpopulation disparities. Aggregate data can tell a story about the community without accounting for elevated rates of a health issue among one particular population or geographic area.
 - Identifying health disparities is a critical component of assessing community health needs. Wherever possible, include data stratified by vulnerable groups or populations in its CHNA to identify and monitor health disparities.
- Recognize some segments of the population may not be well represented in existing data; use targeted efforts to engage individuals from those populations and organizations serving those populations in the CHNA process.
- Use qualitative, and quantitative, data to capture a broader, nuanced understanding of issues.

Step 4: Select Priority Community Health Issues

- Document the prioritization process, including what factors were considered most important and how the decisions were made.
 - A set of criteria should be determined to guide the prioritization process.
 - Priorities can be selected as part of an established process informed by contributing partners.

Step 5: Document and Communicate Results

- Share the CHNA and corresponding implementation strategy with all partners and contributors to the extent practicable.
 - Consider opportunities to engage community members and patients who were involved in the CHNA process to serve as community ambassadors to talk about the assessment outcomes.
 - To the extent practicable, post the report before it is final and solicit comments. Once finalized, continue to solicit comments to inform future implementation strategies.

Step 6: Plan Implementation Strategies

- Implementation strategy should be reviewed annually and updated as needed to include the specific programs or activities the hospital intends to undertake, including any planned collaborations with other organizations.
- The updated implementation strategy should be made publicly available by posting on hospital website and in other ways.

Step 7: Implement Improvement Plans

- Determine a strategy to engage the community on an ongoing basis.
 - Over the course of CHNA development, it is likely that many committees and work groups were convened to address components of the process. Consider opportunities to engage those internal and external stakeholders throughout implementation to support ongoing community buy-in.

Step 8: Evaluate Progress

- Plan for evaluation from the start of the CHNA process.
- To the extent practicable, determine measurable goals and metrics for implementation strategies. Periodically evaluate measure and metrics and update as appropriate.

These recommendations are informed by:

American Hospital Association Health Research & Educational Trust. [Engaging Patients and Families in the Community Health Needs Assessment Process](#). (2016)

Association for Community Health Improvement. [Community Health Assessment Toolkit](#). (2017)

Catholic Health Association of the United States. [Assessing and Addressing Community Health Needs](#). (2015)