



## Community Health Needs Assessment Approach

This document outlines the major issues and challenges in community needs assessment to be conducted for non-profit hospitals to meet the compliance requirements for the new Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. It also outlines the primary approach, a sample five month project timeline, tasks and contract deliverables. The proposed work outlined within this approach can be contracted for \$8,500 with the GVSU Center for Health Analytics (CHA). Modifications to this work plan are certainly acceptable, but may result in additional costs. Health systems contracting for more than one hospital facility may negotiate a discounted rate.

### Community Health Needs Assessment: Challenges & Major Issues

A community health needs assessment is a systematic method for reviewing the health issues facing a population, leading to agreed priorities and resource allocation that will improve health and reduce inequalities. Needs assessments are critical to developing relevant and effective health care services and programs. By assessing community needs, health care organizations can determine the appropriate focus and direction of their investments and services. Under the recently passed Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, nonprofit hospitals are required to conduct a needs assessment every three years as of 2011 in order to align hospital community benefit activities with the findings of needs assessment. Further, the assessment needs to include *“input from persons who represent the broad interests of the community served by the hospital facility, including those with special knowledge of or expertise in public health,”* and *“made widely available to the public.”*

The Act provides little guidance other than that *hospital community benefits will need to align with assessment findings, community input is required and the results must be shared widely within the community.* Given the collaborative nature of the effort mentioned in the Act, hospital/health system representatives and community stakeholders will need to come to a consensus on the parameters in the assessment, and the definitions for their hospital’s common services, community benefit, service area, etc. Key, also, will be outlining a data usage agreement between the hospital and the CHA. All the studies conducted by the CHA and associated protocols are reviewed and approved for research ethics and compliance by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at GVSU for human subjects’ involvement.

## **Intended Needs Assessment Goals**

Community health needs assessments serve as an opportunity for the hospital or health system and community stakeholders to reach a common understanding of community health needs. The assessment will allow them to work together to address the issues by sharing community resources, asset and knowledge. Thus, the assessment is intended to help to the hospital or health system systematically understand the health status and needs of the local population, any gaps in services, and to work collaboratively with community members, key informants and stakeholders from other agencies to determine which health issues cause greatest concern for their service area. Additionally, assessments are designed to create an open process for stakeholder input to build a healthier community while ensuring that scarce hospital resources can be allocated where maximum benefits can be derived. Finally, the assessment is designed to enable the hospital to plan and deliver the most effective care for those in need while ensuring and prioritizing an effective business strategy and hospital improvement plan.

## **Study Approach, Task Components & Timeline**

The proposed activities were designed as a systematic approach to assessing community needs while building upon existing community assets and promoting greater collaboration to improve community health. The following are the key steps or task components:

### **Month 1 – End of Month 2 (60 days)**

- Form an assessment and planning workgroup with members suggested by hospital or health system and CHA researchers.
- Define the hospital or health system service area (community) and the scope of the community health needs assessment and develop the assessment plan by aligning it with the hospital's mission and vision.
- Develop and submit Institutional Review Board paperwork. Obtain approval from GVSU IRB.
- Review available literature and existing health databases to extract and assess the community health status indicators for the hospital service area.
- Assess existing data sources and determine the level of geography that data can be examined within the service area. Ascertain if additional data need to be collected based on gaps in existing data. Existing data sources will include: hospital inpatient and outpatient data, census data, vital records, public health data, Medicaid and Medicare data.

- Conduct a comparative analysis of measurable indicators where state and national baseline values exist.
- Make a preliminary list of the community health status indicators focusing on both established and developmental indicators and consult over phone or Internet with the planning workgroup.
- Obtain any existing patient satisfaction survey data (in-patient, out-patient and ER patients) or develop and administer satisfaction surveys if no data exist. Integrate the data findings with the overarching needs assessment.
- Develop maps of service area and develop maps of initial and proposed health indicators.
- Deliverables for this phase: Progress Report, maps of service area including initial health indicators based on publicly available data, and IRB Approval.

### **Month 3 – End of Month 4 (60 days)**

- Identify gaps in existing community health status indicators data and develop recommendations for the set of developmental indicators for service area. These developmental measures will most likely have no state or national baseline data, but might be of particular interest to local stakeholders because they address issues of sufficient local importance where investments should be made over the next three years from the hospital's informed perspective. Share the list with the planning group.
- Check for reliability, validity and representativeness of data for the indicator measures identified and collected.
- Based on collected data and analysis, assess and analyze community strengths and weaknesses for the hospital service area.
- In conducting the analysis, make sure that each proposed measure will have: 1) a data source or potential data source identified, 2) baseline data (if applicable) and 3) description and reason for the measure's inclusion in the community health needs assessment.
- Develop final maps of all health status indicators. Maps will be posted to CAH web for community review and comment.
- Finalize a date convenient for hospital and the CHA to conduct a community listening session. Travel to hospital facility to conduct the community listening session with the planning group members, community stakeholders and patients, key informants and other local

health agency members. Hospital will provide or arrange for the space for this meeting (2 – 3 hours). The meeting will be facilitated by a 2-member team from CHA. The attendees will be presented with the list of indicators, localized maps and a strength-weakness scenario for the hospital's service area. Participant input will be captured and analyzed by the CHA research team. Prior to the session, a listening session facilitation guide will be shared with the planning group. The hospital will assist with recruiting members for the community listening session.

- Process data from the listening session and integrate into draft needs assessment report.
- Develop a short follow-up web-based survey instrument for confirmation and validation of health indicators. The survey will be completed by the listening session participants and a larger repertoire of community representatives who missed the session. Hospital will assist with the recruitment of additional survey respondents.
- Deliverables: Progress report, finalized health indicators and localized maps, listening session facilitation guide.

#### **Month 5 (30 days)**

- Develop draft of the detailed health needs assessment report based on the findings from the steps above. Share with the planning group to capture input for revisions where appropriate.
- Finalize and prepare report for duplication.
- Deliverables: Two bound, full color, professionally bound copies and an electronic version of the Final Community Health Needs Assessment Report. The report will detail the needs assessment process, findings from all assessment components (community health indicators, community listening session and follow-up confirmation/validation survey) and a set of recommendations. CHA and hospital will reach mutually agreeable time for WebEx (webinar) presentation to hospital executive staff and board.