



## Healthcare and State Health Agency Collaboration Around Community Health Needs Assessments

### Florida Department of Health Encourages Partnerships with Hospitals to Benefit Communities

The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) has a long history of supporting local community health assessment and health improvement planning work. Using its leadership in the 67 Florida counties, FDOH has encouraged collaboration with local tax-exempt hospitals to meet the new community benefit requirement of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Additionally, by building on coordinated local efforts to identify, evaluate, prioritize, and address community health issues, the state has motivated state-level stakeholders and partners to do the same. Subsequently, a diverse group of partners with an interest in improving the health of the state's residents and visitors came together to develop Florida's [State Health Improvement Plan](#) (SHIP). Released in April 2012, SHIP lays out a community health improvement plan for the entire state public health system.

#### Steps Taken

In 2002, FDOH identified the community health assessment (CHA) process as one of six statewide public health priorities. Around the same time, FDOH launched its Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) initiative, supported in part by a CDC cooperative agreement, to support state assessment initiatives. Florida MAPP provided services (e.g., workshops, self-paced learning, web conferencing, technical assistance) to FDOH leaders in the state's 67 counties and their community partners (e.g., healthcare service providers, county or city commissioners, school boards, and state or local government), thereby building the infrastructure to support a comprehensive, systematic, and integrated approach to CHAs and community health improvement planning (CHIP).

The National Association of County and City Health Officials' (NACCHO) MAPP strategic planning process serves as the foundation for CHA practice and CHIP. A successful MAPP process includes active participation from a number of sectors. In Florida, local public health leaders have been encouraged to use the established MAPP process, which should engage local partners, including nonprofit hospitals. Through this collaboration, nonprofit hospitals can meet their IRS requirements for community health needs assessments (CHNA) while actively contributing to a broad, community-focused assessment of needs and assets, identification of shared priorities, and implementation of health improvement strategies.

In November 2011, the FDOH surgeon general convened a SHIP team with staff from the Florida Office of Health Statistics and Assessment and the Office of Performance Improvement. This team was responsible for facilitating a state-level adaptation of the NACCHO MAPP strategic planning process that local public health leaders use to develop their CHAs and CHIPs. By using the MAPP process, the state was able to develop a comprehensive SHIP that linked existing local-level assessments and improvement plans to highlight shared priorities across the state.

The Florida Department of Health, with its leadership in the all 67 Florida counties, encouraged collaboration with local nonprofit hospitals in the MAPP strategic planning process, thereby better enabling hospitals to meet the new IRS community benefit requirement while actively participating in a broad community health improvement process.

Findings from the state MAPP assessments, which incorporated key findings from local MAPP processes, were presented to the SHIP steering committee, a group with cross-sector representation, including government, university, community-based, and nongovernment entities. The five cross-cutting, strategic issue areas that were identified included: health protection, chronic disease prevention, community redevelopment and partnerships, access to healthcare, and health finance and infrastructure. Subject matter experts identified stakeholders in each strategic area to develop goal statements, strategies, and measurable objectives, which were aligned with national objectives in these areas.

### Results

FDOH has encouraged its local public health leaders to work with their community hospitals to engage in collaborative, strategic community improvement planning. This was a natural fit because the MAPP-based strategic planning process, which includes conducting local assessments, was already in use and established as a robust framework for health improvement planning. Guidance for how to engage hospitals in the community MAPP process was provided through NACCHO's [MAPP and Non-Profit Hospitals: Leveraging Community Benefit for Community Health Improvement](#) fact sheet and webinars on CHNAs. As described in the example below, communities have also leveraged the state's local health councils as conveners to assist in their CHNAs. Local health councils are comprised of healthcare providers, purchasers, and nongovernmental consumers. They are responsible for developing district health plans with recommendations related to improving access to healthcare, reducing disparities in health status, assisting state and local governments in developing healthcare policies, and advocating on behalf of the underserved.

At the state level, SHIP identified high-impact strategic issues and desired health and public health system outcomes to be achieved through the collaborative activities of many of the states' stakeholders and partners. Although the state is less than one year into SHIP's implementation, the process of developing the plan enabled a network of partners, including the Florida Hospital Association, Florida Association of Community Health Centers, the Association of Health Planning Agencies, the Departments of Education and Children and Families, the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Florida Public Health Institute, to coordinate and become more efficient, targeted, and integrated in their efforts to improve health in Florida.

#### *Successful Multi-Sector Community Benefit Partnership*

In July 2011, the Jackson Metropolitan Community Benefit Partnership, comprised of five healthcare systems, nine nonprofit hospitals, and four county public health departments, conducted the first-ever multi-hospital system and public health sector collaborative CHNA. The partnership aims to improve the region's population health by eliminating gaps that prevent access to quality, integrated healthcare and improving access to resources that support healthier lifestyles.

The Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida served as an unbiased community convener to assist the partnership in the community driven process. In February 2013, the partnership released its 2012 CHNA for the Jackson metropolitan area. It identified infant mortality as a top priority. As a result, six of the participating nonprofit hospitals have selected this as their focus area and are working to improve the health of moms, babies, and families in their region.



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### Lessons Learned

*Policy implementation and monitoring allow for regular tracking of progress toward health goals.* In the absence of a statutory mandate for conducting CHAs, the Florida MAPP advisory group advocated for performance measures for local health officers in the areas of assessment and CHIP. In addition, related county level indicators are included on the annual agency-wide quality management and monitoring tool. FDOH's nascent performance management system that monitors SHIP objectives and progress will incorporate related local CHIP objectives to link and track progress toward achieving shared strategic goals. The performance management system is being built as a portal for several collections of objectives, starting with the SHIP and agency strategic plan goals, strategies, and objectives.

*Access to necessary population health data is key to comprehensive community health assessment practice and planning.* Local capacity and resources to interpret and apply data for planning vary across Florida. The Florida [Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set](#) (CHARTS) web-based system was launched in 2005 by the Bureau of Community Health Assessment, the same bureau that facilitates the CHA process statewide. This system provides access to more than 1,200 county- and state-level health indicators, which are organized by health topic to make it easier to use them for assessment and planning. The web-based system supports and reduces the amount of primary data collection necessary for the county health departments to complete the assessment and planning process and to track progress on the statewide strategic issues.

*SHIP served as a catalyst to move toward a common statewide health agenda.* The SHIP development process brought together diverse groups of partners, stakeholders, and sectors with one goal in mind: improving the health of Floridians. With the new community benefit requirement, county health departments and local nonprofit hospitals can capitalize on existing local health councils' ability to not only address needs in their communities, but also to see how local-level priorities align with state-level strategic health priorities.

### Long-Term Goals and Sustainability

Although FDOH has historically supported local public health leadership in completing community-level health assessments and developing improvement plans, there is still a need to develop strategies to nurture and maintain community partnerships, as well as tools for continuous monitoring to document impact and outcomes. Proposed future options include: web-based training and technical assistance, facilitating peer and regional support networks, and building the necessary resources that would enable evidence-based interventions to be implemented statewide. The ongoing process of implementing SHIP will also continue to bring together this newly established network of partners to review progress on the goals, strategies, and objectives related to the five identified strategic health issues and improve the health of Florida residents.

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