



Health Care and State Health Agency Collaboration Around Community Health Needs Assessments

Indiana State Department of Health and Hospital Association Partner to Develop a Health Data and Assessment Tool

Community health needs assessments (CHNA) and implementation strategies are newly required of tax-exempt hospitals as a result of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. These assessments and strategies create an important opportunity to improve the health of communities by ensuring that hospitals have the information they need to provide the benefits that meet the needs of their communities. These assessments also provide an opportunity to improve coordination of hospital community benefits with other efforts to improve community health. In light of these new requirements, the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) partnered with the Indiana Hospital Association (IHA) and others to create an online central hub for state and population level data.

Steps Taken:

1. *Bring Partners Together*

Staff from the ISDH Epidemiology Resource Center, Chronic Disease Division, Office of Primary Care, and Office of Public Health Performance Management came together to discuss creating a central data hub that would allow local health departments, nonprofit hospitals, and other community partners to access state and county data. ISDH also partnered with the Indiana Hospital Association to determine the indicators nonprofit hospitals would need to meet the CHNA requirements.

2. *Bring Data Together in One Place*

ISDH and IHA decided the best option was to develop a website where data could be collected and housed. The Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC), a unit of the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University already maintained databases on numerous topics such as income, employment, taxes, sectors of the economy, education, demographics, and a host of other economic indicators for the nation, the state, and local areas. IBRC seemed the logical choice to compile this data into one place.ⁱ

3. *Promote Availability of Website and Centralized Data*

Partners promoted the new website through a variety of ways:

- Press release after the initial launch
- Communication by the ISDH Local Health Department Outreach Division to their constituents
- Communication by IHA with their hospital stakeholders
- Webinars by IHA that demonstrated how hospitals can leverage site content for planning and reporting
- IBRC highlighted it in their newsletter, *InContext*.ⁱⁱ
- ISDH is developing a Healthy Communities Guide, which, in addition to highlighting use of the site, will aid hospitals and local public health professionals in the creation of needs assessments and health improvement plans.

“The website is driving greater use of data for reports and grant writing. Indiana residents are becoming better consumers of health information and now know ISDH is a resource for data.”

*- William C. VanNess, MD
Indiana State Department of Health*

Results:



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The website, called Indiana INdicators (www.indianaINdicators.org) was launched in December of 2012. Preliminary data are being collected via a feedback button on the website that allows users to provide feedback any time. Staff use Google Analytics to assess use of the site. In the contract for the website, a more extensive evaluation plan is included and is scheduled to be completed once the website is fully up and running.

Funding for the website initially came out of CDC's Public Health and Health Services (PHHS) block grant dollars while also leveraging the work of the National Public Health Improvement Initiative (NPHII), which has a focus on state and community health assessments and improvement plans. Several factors supported building the Indiana website and maximizing limited resources, including:

- 1) Staff time efficiency—State health department staff can now direct inquiries to the website first, which reduced time responding to data requests and increased time available to provide technical assistance to community stakeholders.
- 2) Choosing an in-state vendor—As the Indiana census representative, the IBRC was already collecting and managing a vast amount of data and indicators; thus, it was a logical choice to continue the overall work of a system infrastructure.
- 3) Data sharing—Other state agencies had committed resources to collecting economic and community data, which, when incorporated into Indiana INdicators, enhanced the content of the site.

Lessons Learned:

An Opportune Time to Collaborate

With the new IRS-CHNA requirements for nonprofit hospitals and public health accreditation, this is an opportune time for collaboration between state health agencies and hospitals. Hospitals need guidance to conduct their CHNAs, and state health departments can help meet this need since collecting public health data and addressing health from a population perspective are core public health functions. According to Chief Medical Officer Joan Duwve, "this is an area where public health really needs to take the lead."

Partnership with the Indiana Hospital Association was Essential

IHA was a key partner in the development of this tool. Prior to website development, ISDH worked with IHA to house and manage hospital discharge data. With the advent of the new CHNA requirements for nonprofit hospitals, IHA explored the idea of creating a tool for their membership. Initially, IHA planned to develop a secure platform specific to the hospitals that would be password protected so only hospitals would have access to it. However, since ISDH and IHA had a successful collaborative relationship, and ISDH already managed additional data that hospitals could use to create a CHNA, IHA was receptive to working with ISDH to develop an open-access site. In addition, IHA supported this project by purchasing a website domain name that ensured neutrality, providing feedback to ISDH as the website was built, and working to ensure that the website was publicly available to all communities.

Benefits of the Web Platform

The website platform that was chosen has been efficient and cost effective. When new information becomes available, staff from ISDH send vetted health information datasets to IBRC, who updates the site while maintaining data integrity. This allows new information to be accessed quickly by hospital staff



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and community stakeholders. Since the website highlights Indiana public health information, the open access format facilitates the ability of ISDH staff to disseminate information while reducing duplication in reporting. It also decreases the burden on hospitals to gather the relevant information needed to drive public health action.

Long-Term Goals and Sustainability:

The long-term goal for ISDH and IHA is to use the data in the site to develop best practices and encourage local communities to use those practices to improve the health and wellness in their areas. One idea is that local communities can have their own site with their own improvement plans, making information alive at the local level. Additionally, they hope to address health equity in phase two by including geographic equity in the mapping component and enabling users to compare counties and stratify the data by SES indicators.

IHA was a strong advocate for sustainability of the site, which is why they offered to support components of the site financially for the long term. Hospitals were already tapping into national resources to gather the data, but the data is not only useful to local health departments and hospitals, it can help inform practices at community outlets such as critical-access hospitals, community health centers, and federally qualified health centers. They even see the potential for more collaboration with other nonprofit agencies, such as the United Way. IHA and ISDH continue to look for ways to pull in additional partners and sustain this effort.

For more information:

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ⁱ Indiana Business Research Center. "Who Are We." Kelly School of Business. Indiana University. Available at: http://www.ibrc.indiana.edu/who_we_are/index.html. Accessed 03-25-13.

ⁱⁱ Molly Manns. "Indiana INdicators: A New Community Health Dashboard." *InContext*. March-April 2013. Available at: <http://www.incontext.indiana.edu/2013/mar-apr/article1.asp>. Accessed 05-02-13.