

## Community Health Status Assessment

The Community Health Status Assessment (CHSA) answers the questions, “How healthy are our residents?” and “What does the health status of our community look like?” The results of the Community Health Status Assessment provide the MAPP Committee with an understanding of the community’s health status and ensure that the community’s priorities include specific health status issues (e.g., high lung cancer rates or low immunization rates).

The Florida Department of Health’s public health statistics website, Community Health Assessment Resource Tool System (CHARTS; [www.floridacharts.com](http://www.floridacharts.com)), provides the data elements for broad-based categories of health status and quality of life indicators. The categories include Population Characteristics, Chronic Diseases, Communicable Diseases, Maternal and Child Health, Environmental Health, Injury and Violence, Social and Mental Health and Health Resources Availability. Numerous reports are also available on CHARTS including county health profiles, major causes of death, county health status comparison, county birth data comparison and state county Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance (BRFSS) results. For many indicators, trend lines, maps and bar graphs are available. CHARTS offers features such as exportability to Microsoft Excel and data sorting for custom comparisons. Data reports and graphics are readily exportable to Microsoft Word, a desirable feature for community partners preparing their community health status profile reports.

By reviewing the data for each of the categories on CHARTS and comparing county data to trend information, peer county and state data, local health issues can be identified and prioritized.

### Recommended Participants and Roles:

- **Subcommittee** — designs and prepares for the Community Health Status process, oversees the review and analysis of data, and compiles results.
- **MAPP Committee** — oversees subcommittee activities, provides recommendations for collecting additional community level data and community input.
- **Broad Community Involvement** —should already be incorporated into the committee membership; however, if additional participants are desired for this process they should be recruited.

### A Step-by-Step Overview of the Community Health Status Assessment Phase:

1. **Establish a subcommittee** and plan how the Community Health Status Assessment steps will be undertaken.
2. **Access health status data** and begin the review of county and state level data. Review previous assessment efforts and build from these, as needed. Health status data are available at [www.FloridaCharts.com](http://www.FloridaCharts.com)
3. **Organize and present the data** in understandable narrative, charts and graphs in a community health profile report. Widely disseminate the community health profile report.
4. **Establish a system to monitor the indicators over time.** Modify or add to the indicators periodically, as new information arises from other phases of MAPP.
5. **Identify challenges and opportunities** related to health status that should be considered during the next phase of MAPP, Identifying Strategic Issues.

## Introduction

### The Community Health Status Assessment

The Community Health Status Assessment answers questions such as, “How healthy are our residents?” “What are the leading causes of death and illness among residents? How do the lifestyle behaviors of our residents contribute to the community’s overall health status? “What are the socio-demographic and economic factors impacting the health and quality of life of our community? How does the health status of our community compare to that of ten years ago; to that of other communities; to that of the state and the nation?”

A Community Health Status Assessment is the process or work of collecting, analyzing, and reviewing public health data to describe population health status, develop priorities, and plan actions to improve public health outcomes. During the community health assessment process, community partners and local public health leaders review health and quality of life data to identify the health conditions, strengths, resources and health care needs of their community.

The results of the Community Health Status Assessment provide the MAPP Committee with an understanding of the community’s health status and ensure that the community’s priorities consider specific health status issues, such as high lung cancer rates or low immunization rates. The Community Health Status Assessment provides a list of core indicators in several broad-based categories. Communities may also select additional indicators.

A community health status assists public health and emergency management personnel with their readiness and preparedness plans, providing pertinent information about the population at risk. By gathering data for each of the categories and assessing changes over time or differences among population subgroups or with peer, state, or national data, health issues are identified.

### The Community Health Profile Report

The findings of a Community Health Status Assessment should be described in a written report, often referred to as a community health profile report. The community health profile report commonly includes information about the health of the community as it is today and about the community’s capacity to improve health status for the future.

The community health profile report includes indicators and narrative about the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, health status, health risk factors, health resource availability, quality of life, and perceptions of health that are relevant to the community. The profile should contain a combination of narrative, data tables, comparison graphs, and trend lines. Finally, the priority issues identified by community partners should be listed and described.

The community health profile report should be distributed throughout the community to serve as the basis for discussion, strategizing and action planning. The report can help a community maintain a strategic view of its population’s health status and factors that influence health in the community.

Health profile reports can motivate community leaders to address specific health issues. For example, if a community has a higher than average rate of alcohol related motor vehicle injuries and deaths as well as evidence of binge drinking among younger men, this evidence may signal that community action may be needed by law enforcement, establishments that sell alcohol, and the school system. Or another indicator may be a low rate of influenza vaccination among a large population of persons over age 65. Local public health system leaders, senior centers and care providers may want to work together to improve the vaccination rate among those over age 65.

Community health profile reports serve as reference documents that can be used by community partner coalitions as they present their priority issues to the public at large. Community health profile reports can also be used to complete grant applications for funding of identified priorities.

## How to Conduct the Community Health Status Assessment

### ***Step 1- Establish the Community Health Status Assessment Subcommittee***

A subcommittee should be designated to oversee the Community Health Status Assessment. Members should include individuals who can assist with access to data as well as data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Community representatives also provide an important perspective. In addition, since it is critically important that data be monitored over the long term, select some members who can participate in future years. This is not just an ad hoc, one-time effort. Once the subcommittee is assembled, members should review the Community Health Status Assessment steps and identify the skills and resources needed to conduct the activities.

### **Recommended Participants and Roles for the Community Health Status Assessment and Community Profile Report**

- **MAPP Committee** — oversees subcommittee activities, provides recommendations for collecting data and gathering community input.
- **Community Health Status Assessment Subcommittee** — designs and prepares for the Community Health Status Assessment process, oversees the collection and analysis of data, and compiles results.
- **Broad Community Involvement** —should already be incorporated into the committee membership; however, if additional participants are desired for this process they should be recruited.

### ***Step 2 - Access [www.floridacharts.com](http://www.floridacharts.com) and Begin the Review of County and State Level Data***

Review previous assessment efforts and build from these, as needed.

- a. **Open the County Profile Report.** This report, found on [www.floridacharts.com](http://www.floridacharts.com), provides the basic set of indicators from which a community can begin its health status assessment. Reviewing the data in this report should be a starting point for the process. Printing this report and disseminating it among the MAPP subcommittee for the Community Health Status Assessment is a good starting activity. Once all committee members have had an opportunity to review the report, discussions on each of the health areas can begin.
- b. **Review each of the domains of CHARTS.** CHARTS is structured by the health topics rather than by specific health data sets. The topics were adopted from the health areas recommended by NACCHO for the MAPP process. CHARTS' domain categories are listed below. In the future, additional health topics may be added as they emerge as priority issues:
  - Population Characteristics
  - Communicable Diseases
  - Chronic Diseases
  - Maternal and Child Health
  - Environmental Health
  - Injury and Violence
  - Social and Mental Health
  - Health Resources Availability

- c. Conduct an analysis of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the county including age structure, gender, race, population density, overall population growth trends, poverty levels and median income data.** Compare the county indicators with those of peer counties and the state. Note any differences and similarities.

Analysis of socio-economic and demographic data offers crucial insight into characteristics of the community that are important for understanding current or potential health concerns. Additionally, review of this data provides insightful information about factors such as economic resources, health care access, and education that contribute to health disparities among special population groups.

- d. Continue the data analysis by reviewing the other domains on CHARTS.**  
**e. Review trend and comparison data.** The CHARTS website contains trend data and cartographic maps for most indicators. Florida CHARTS provides trend data over three- and ten-year periods. Some indicators have twenty- year trend lines available. Attempt to collect a minimum of five years of data to analyze trends over time. Comparison data — state, national, and peer community data — should also be reviewed during this phase.

Various county comparison reports are available on CHARTS. Look for connections between indicators in different categories. For example, smoking-related behavioral risk factors might correlate with high smoking- related cancer rates. Alcohol-related behaviors may be related to injury rates, motor vehicle accidents, crime rates or liver disease death rates

- f. Select additional data indicators to explore issues important to the community. Identify additional data indicators by developing locally relevant indicators.** Collect data for the additional indicators.

Local level indicators might be selected related to community interest in a specific topic, demographics in the area (e.g., an aging population) or findings highlighted by the committee from the review of CHARTS. Some suggested activities include:

- Accessing previously conducted health assessments or reports that include data.
- Identifying committee members who may have access to community level data through their organizations.

Consider whether steps are needed to ensure that data are valid and usable. Sparsely populated communities and neighborhoods have the unique challenge of interpreting "low numbers or incidence" into usable information. For suggestions on how to address this issue, see the section on [Data Issues in Jurisdictions with Small Populations](#).

### ***Step 3 - Organize the Data and Present it in Understandable Narrative, Charts and Graphs in a Community Health Profile Report***

The findings of a Community Health Status Assessment should be described in a written report, the community health profile report. The community health profile report commonly includes information about the health status of the community as it is today and about the community's capacity to improve health status for the future.

The profile should contain a combination of narrative, data tables, comparison graphs, and trend lines. Finally, a list of the most compelling issues associated with the data findings from this assessment should be included. The most prominent findings should be organized and captured in a brief summary. Consolidating the findings from this assessment will help to organize and

identify key challenges and opportunities related to health status as well as assist in recognizing crosscutting issues from the other three assessments.

The community health profile report should be disseminated and shared with the community as the basis for discussion, strategizing and action planning. The health profile report can help a community maintain a strategic view of its population's health status and factors that influence health in the community.

If possible, also publish an executive summary report. If this is not feasible, a series of fact sheets or a central website may be equally useful. What is important is that the information is compiled, is easily understood by the general public and made available through one central location.

Develop a proactive dissemination strategy, including promoting the information through the media (newspapers, local television, or radio stations). This helps to reach a broad audience. See the Tip Sheet – [Engaging the Media](#) for more information.

### **Benefits of Having a Community Health Profile Report**

Health profile reports can:

- Highlight relationships between health status and determinants of health (social, environmental, behavioral and health care resources).
- Define comparisons with other communities, the state or nation
- Motivate community leaders to address specific health issues.
- Serve as reference documents that can be used by community coalitions as they present their priority issues to the public at-large.
- Assist community partnerships with decisions on how to allocate resources.
- Provide data driven information to assist individual community agencies with the development of their agency specific strategic plans.
- Assist community partners with grant applications for funding for desired interventions
- Bring community members together around issues of interest to build coalitions and collaboration.

### ***Step 4 - Establish a Process to Monitor the Indicators Over Time***

During this step, the subcommittee establishes a procedure for monitoring the selected indicators. This helps to ensure that continuous health status monitoring occurs and establishes baseline data upon which future trends can be identified. This process will also be instrumental in identifying the results of the MAPP process and evaluating the success of activities.

Sustainable monitoring systems require a clear definition of roles, including leadership, coordination, and communication. Data on CHARTS will be available on an annual basis in an easily downloadable format. The monitoring system should be responsive to new information that results from the other three MAPP assessments and from the selection of strategic issues. The monitoring system is especially important to the evaluation component of the MAPP Action Cycle.

### ***Step 5 - Identify Challenges and Opportunities Related to Health Status***

The Community Health Status Assessment should result in a list of challenges and opportunities related to the community's health status. Data findings should be reviewed to identify challenges, such as major health problems or high-risk behaviors and opportunities, such as improving health trends. Ideally, the final list will include 10-15 community health status issues that will be more closely examined in the next phase of MAPP, Identifying Strategic Issues.