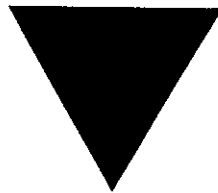


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Community Assessment, Health Care and You



A Handbook for the Concerned Rural Texan

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a cooperative project of

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We extend our warmest appreciation to the people of rural Texas. By welcoming us into their communities they helped us understand the health care challenges they face.
This handbook is dedicated to them.

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INTRODUCTION ▼

This handbook is directed to YOU, THE CONCERNED RURAL RESIDENT, who feels there is a problem with health care in your community and is seeking ways to correct this problem.

You have probably found that your community has problems attracting and keeping physicians, nurses, dentists, and other health professionals. You might also have found that you must travel long distances to receive the health care you need. Simple health care services such as health screening may not be available in your community. Your hospital may be having trouble providing health care, or may be closed.

These and other concerns, such as a lack of emergency medical treatment, poor housing, or a lack of transportation, are not new to rural areas. You and your community might have several concerns or just one or two problem areas. Using the community assessment process can help you and other community members define these concerns and devise a plan of action.

The process of assessing community concerns does not require the skills of a professional organizer or planner. It is possible for you to take an active role in the community assessment process. Who better than you and your neighbors know the needs in your community?

This handbook concentrates on the assessment of your community's health care. By taking a thorough and objective look at the health care in your community, you and other concerned residents will begin the process of community development. Assessment is just the first step of community development. While the assessment process alone will not provide the needed changes, it will provide you with a **basis for a specific, concrete plan of action.**

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The Four Steps of the Community Assessment Process



4. Develop



3. Identify



2. Organize



1. Prepare

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The Four Steps of the Community Assessment Process

Step One: Prepare ▼

Step One allows you time to prepare for the efforts that lie ahead. Before you can gain the support of others, you must first learn more about your community and its health care concerns. With this knowledge you will feel more confident about being involved in community planning and more effective in persuading others to be concerned and involved.

Step Two: Organize ▼▼

Step Two provides you with an opportunity to use the knowledge and confidence you gained in Step One. You actively seek the involvement of others. You request their membership in a Core Action Group of volunteers. The Core Action Group will be responsible for coordinating the assessment process in your community. The Core Action Group will work with all community members to identify the community's health care concerns.

Step Three: Identify Community Problems and Goals ▼▼▼

Step Three is when all members of the community are encouraged to contribute to the community assessment process. Community residents are introduced to the assessment process. They become active participants in identifying and prioritizing problems and goals. The extent of the health care concerns is discovered through talking with people and getting as many people involved as possible.

Step Four: Develop a Community Action Plan ▼▼▼▼

Step Four begins once community members have worked with the Core Action Group to identify and select goals. A plan of action is devised. The plan is presented and discussed at a Town Meeting. All residents are asked what they think of this plan before steps toward putting it into effect are taken.

By completing these steps and the related exercises, you will be able to identify your community's strengths and weaknesses and the way these are affecting your community's access to health care. These steps can help you create a more confident, well-informed, and unified community. The more involved your community becomes in the process, the more likely it is that goals will be achieved and problems solved.

STEP ONE: PREPARE



Preparation is the first step of community assessment. It begins when you start learning more about the health care concerns you have identified in your community. It is quite possible that you, as a concerned citizen, have no background in health care, or about the techniques and tactics behind community organization and planning. While a medical crisis for you or someone you know may have made you aware of the concerns, you will need **information** as well as the emotional investment you may have.

It is for these reasons we feel that preparing yourself is so important. Before you can get your fellow residents interested in assessing the community's health care, you must learn to be objective about your community. You must feel confident about your abilities so you can recruit others to help.

Activity 1: Talk With Others

You begin by casually talking with friends and other members of the community.

- ▼ **Do they see the same problems you do?**
- ▼ **Do they see other problems?**
- ▼ **Do they express a desire for the community to be different?**

If so, then your concern for the community must hold some truth and is worth pursuing.

Activity 2: Compile Your Community's History

Study your community's local history and customs. This provides you with an understanding and general knowledge of the community.

Even though many communities suffer from the same type of problems you're finding, each community has a unique view of these problems.

By knowing more about your community's history and noting how the community addressed problems in the past, you will be able to learn a lot about how your community functions.

- ▼ **Talk to people who have lived in the community a long time.**
- ▼ **Read old newspapers.**
- ▼ **Ask the librarian for historical information.**

This background helps you and others to understand how the community came to be and how it has accepted change throughout the years. By recognizing and understanding this uniqueness, it is easier for your community to solve its health care problems.

Activity 3: Observe Your Community

To further increase your understanding of the community, draw or obtain two maps:

- ▼ a state map
- ▼ a map of your community (including the rural area around the town itself).

On the state map, see where your community fits within the county and the rest of the state.

- ▼ Label the health care resources within the county and state which are most often utilized by members of your community.
- ▼ How far away are hospitals, nursing homes, emergency rooms, specialists, and mental health facilities?

On your community map, look at how the town is laid out.

- ▼ Label all schools, churches, health related facilities and businesses as well as natural boundaries such as highways and rivers.

Activity 4: Develop an Objective Viewpoint

Increase your knowledge of the community by talking with other members of the community. Many of the town's "formal leaders," such as:

- ▼ **the mayor**
- ▼ **school officials**
- ▼ **the sheriff**
- ▼ **county commissioners**
- ▼ **city council members**
- ▼ **and hospital board members**

can provide you with information on how community planning and problem solving are approached. From these people, get names of other people or groups who have expressed an interest or concern about health care in your community.

Next, talk with people in your community who have a specialized knowledge about health care. These people might include a:

- ▼ **nurse**
- ▼ **physician**
- ▼ **hospital administrator**
- ▼ **nursing home administrator**
- ▼ **emergency medical technician**
- ▼ **dentist**
- ▼ **social worker**
- ▼ **pharmacist.**

They can help broaden your view of the concerns you've identified.

People who may have been personally affected by a lack of health care in your community are another source of information. Seek these people out and ask them to write down their stories. These stories help illustrate problems in obtaining health care in your community.

Activity 5: Review and Evaluate Step One

After the following activities have been completed, you will have a much greater knowledge of health care in your community. You will also have a greater understanding of your community and its ability to organize and change.

Review Step One by completing the following check list:

- Talked with friends and neighbors in the community

- Studied the community's history

- Labeled health resources within the county and the state that are utilized by community members

- Labeled schools, churches, health related facilities and businesses on a map of the community

- Talked with community leaders, health professionals, and people who have been affected by a lack of health care about health care in the community

Evaluate Step One by answering the following questions:

Have the state and community maps helped you to identify areas of strength and weakness in your community's present system of health care?

Do the history and values of your community give you a background for what is happening now?

Did interviews with community leaders, health care providers and other people create a sense of what directions your community can take?



If you can answer yes to each of these questions, you have completed Step One: Prepare. Congratulations! You are ready for Step Two: Organize.

If you still feel uncertain about telling others of your concern with the health care in your community, you should turn back and review your information or talk to others in your community until you feel more at ease. At the end of Step One, you should be able to comfortably and clearly discuss the health care concerns of your community with others.

STEP TWO: ORGANIZE



The second step in community assessment is organization. The main goals of this step are to:

- ▼ **recruit and enlist the support of other community members**
- ▼ **organize a Core Action Group.**

Early in this step of the Community Assessment Process you have two tasks:

- ▼ **select and invite members of the community to become members of the Core Action Group**
- ▼ **plan and conduct the first meeting of the Core Action Group.**

At the first meeting of the Core Action Group, your role as a concerned citizen will begin to change. At first you may have been alone in pursuing an interest in your health care concerns. Now you will have the help and support of other interested community members. You will need to become a member of the group and work for the goals and strategies put together by the group.

Activity 1: Recruit Community Participation

Now you are ready to organize interested community members and form a Core Action Group. The purpose of the Core Action Group is to organize community efforts to solve the health care problems. The Core Action Group should be made up of people who will be responsible for this effort.

The group should represent a broad spectrum of the community in areas such as:

- ▼ **business**
- ▼ **civic, religious, and social organizations**
- ▼ **ethnicity**
- ▼ **age**
- ▼ **occupation**
- ▼ **sex**
- ▼ **economic class**
- ▼ **specific areas of town**
- ▼ **areas surrounding the town that are considered part of the community.**

Be sure to include people who have expressed concern about health care in your community. The number of people included will vary according to your individual community's resources and needs.

By involving people with a wide variety of interests, you will generate many ideas for strategies to solve the community's health care problems. Community leaders, health care providers, and other individuals who have had experience with the problems would be good members of the Core Action Group.

You need those who can not only think of solutions, but who can also **work together and stimulate the action of the whole community.**

Important skills to look for are the abilities to:

- ▼ **listen to others**
- ▼ **present ideas**
- ▼ **work in a group**
- ▼ **complete tasks**
- ▼ **resolve conflict**
- ▼ **follow through on decisions.**

You need to:

- ▼ **set a date, time, and place for an organizational meeting**
- ▼ **send a letter or call potential Core Action Group members asking them to come to the meeting**
- ▼ **put a notice of the meeting in the local newspaper.**

You should offer a clear and concise explanation of what you see as being the health care concerns. Appeal to their community interest in requesting that they attend this meeting with you and other interested citizens. Mention the purpose of the Core Action Group. Request that people extend the invitation to others they think would be interested.

Activity 2: Plan The First Meeting

Plan the first meeting, with these goals in mind:

- ▼ **sharing information**
- ▼ **generating ideas from participants in the meeting**
- ▼ **organizing a Core Action Group**
- ▼ **scheduling the next meeting of the Core Action Group.**

Group participation does not just happen. Planning for ways to get people involved will pay off. Establishing the purpose of the meeting and considering ways to conduct the meeting will be helpful.

Plan to start the meeting with some time devoted to acquainting members with one another, even if you think everyone knows everyone.

Activity 3: Hold the First Meeting

Encourage people to share their reasons for coming to the meeting.

Describe the health care concerns. Then identify that the purpose of the meeting is to form a Core Action Group which will organize community efforts.

One way to begin this discussion is to present the state and community maps and share other information gained in Step One. Be prepared to defend your position that a problem does indeed exist. Share your ideas about the gaps that exist in health care in your area. Assure participants that they, as potential Core Action Group members, can do something about the health care problems.

You should lead the discussion so that the ideas of everyone there are considered. Increase participation in the group discussion by encouraging reaction to your ideas and inviting everyone to share their experiences with health care in the community. Answer all questions as fully as possible.

Suggest that the group spend some time brainstorming. This is a good way to stimulate new ideas. Encourage suggestions of any kind, no matter how offbeat or unusual. The point is to generate as many concerns and ideas as possible.

Select a leader and a secretary/recorder. The leader will call, organize and guide future meetings. The secretary should record ideas, topics, and plans that are discussed at meetings. These notes will be the beginning of a group journal, which will be helpful through the assessment process. The journal or notebook helps the group to plan and follow a direct course of action. It also documents progress over time.

Next, **identify those who are willing to work as members of a Core Action Group.** Not everyone who comes to the meeting is going to want to be in the Core Action Group.

Now begin to **list responsibilities and tasks for the group.** The tasks will include the collection of community health information, but the focus should be on ways to involve the **entire community.** Community involvement is the key to a successful solution to your problem.

Finally, **schedule the next Core Action Group meeting.**

Activity 4: Review and Evaluate Step Two

After completing these activities, you will have a Core Action Group which will work with all community members toward solutions to the health care concerns.

Review Step Two by completing this check list:

Recruited others who are concerned about the community's health care to attend an organizational meeting

Planned the first meeting

Held the first meeting

At the first meeting:

Shared information gained through Step One

Encouraged all to express and discuss ideas

Brainstormed with the group

Selected a leader and secretary/recorder

Recorded discussions at the meeting in a notebook

Identified Core Action Group members

Listed responsibilities for the Core Action Group

Set date for the next meeting

Evaluate Step Two by answering these questions:

Were others from the community willing to attend the first meeting and freely discuss health care concerns?

Is the Core Action Group comprised of persons willing to work together and carry out responsibilities?

Is the Core Action Group organized so activities are identified and recorded?

Is each member of the Core Action Group aware of the responsibilities of the Core Action Group?



If you can answer “yes,” congratulations! Proceed to Step Three: Community Identification of Problems and Goals.

If not, continue to work on activities in Step Two until the Core Action Group is ready to work with the community.

STEP THREE: IDENTIFY COMMUNITY PROBLEMS AND GOALS



The purpose of this step is to get as much advice from the community as possible. Core Action Group members should obtain community advice in two areas:

- ▼ collecting information about health care concerns
- ▼ defining goals for the community.

It is important to follow this sequence because goals chosen before the full extent of the problem is realized will not be appropriate or accepted by the community.

This step results in the involvement of the **entire community**. Remember, while some people are optimistic about improving health care in your community, many other community residents gave up long ago on any possibility of improvement. They have closed their eyes to the existence of the problems. Some have sought health care outside the community. Others have ignored how some residents—the elderly, the poor, the very young—are affected by the lack of health care in the community.

Many residents have a great deal of tolerance to the problems. They need to be approached in a logical, practical way and invited to attend and participate in meetings. Kindle their interest in health care concerns. They are then more likely to become participants in the process. This is what community assessment tries to achieve—hearing the voices of **all the people** in the community.

Activity 1: Collect and Review Data

The Core Action Group should now have a second meeting. At this meeting, look at the **Data Outline for Community Health Assessment**. Group members should decide how to collect and how much to collect of the information in the outline.

The Core Action Group members should **go out into the community to collect the data**. Dividing the outline among several group members will make the data collection go much more quickly.

Set a deadline for completing the collection of the data.

Hold another meeting of the Core Action Group to **review the data collected**. Look at the data and talk about what it says about your community. This data is very helpful when group members meet with people in the community. The data provides concrete information about the status of health care in the community, as well as information about community residents and resources.

It is also valuable when Core Action Group Members begin to develop goals and a plan of action.

The Data Outline is located at the end of Step Three, on page 37.

Activity 2: Plan the Involvement of the Entire Community

At another meeting of the Core Action Group, get out the community map. Identify specific neighborhoods and sections of town which suggest that residents there spend a lot of time talking and socializing with each other. There may be sections of town such as east of the water tower or the new section on the west side; perhaps there is a two-block neighborhood in the northern part where residents often visit with each other and generally feel they have a great deal in common.

Use the data collected in the data outline to get an accurate picture of the community.

Look closer at the map, looking now for the more isolated neighborhoods. Are there any physical barriers to these neighborhoods? Is there a highway or river isolating a neighborhood from the rest of the community? Are there distinct boundaries between neighborhoods? Are there neighborhoods where the residents carry on a high level of activity outside the community?

Divide the community map into areas according to the neighborhoods or sections identified. Be sure to include the rural areas surrounding the town itself, since people who live in rural areas are also part of the community.

Now decide the best approach to gather information from the entire community.

Activity 3: Gather Information from the Entire Community

There are two approaches the Core Action Group can take to gather information from the community: one involves literally talking to every person in the community; the other relies on small neighborhood meetings run by Core Action Group members.

Regardless of the approach taken, be sure that people understand what is going on. Begin the discussions with information about health care in the community and why the situation needs to change. Use the facts gathered with the data outline to back up these claims.

▼ Talking to Everyone

Assign one or more Core Action Group members to each area that was identified on the community map. Every family in each area should be contacted by the Core Action Group members assigned to the area. The goal is to talk with **all** citizens in the community and to collect information about health care in the community.

During visits to homes, collect information about the community and health care concerns from individuals and families. Core Action Group members should write down ideas and information obtained.

▼ Area Group Meetings

The Core Action Group members may instead want to hold area group meetings. Small and frequent meetings are likely to get more community members to come forth with questions and problems.

Try attending other group meetings in the community as a part of their programs. Some groups to consider include: Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, community clubs, church groups, Lions Club, Kiwanis, Elks, Chamber of Commerce, Future Farmers of America, Future Homemakers of America, 4-H clubs, volunteer firefighters, City Council, School Board, Rural Development Commission, and the PTA.

Find ways to stimulate interest. Use maps and other visual aids to show that meetings and other efforts are taking place in other parts of the town. List suggestions that community members have made to Core Action Group members. Encourage participation in the meetings, using all the methods identified in Step Two for the initial Core Action Group meeting.

Activity 4: Share Information and List Health Care Concerns

At the next Core Action Group meeting, group members share the results of all of the community discussions. Focus on information and viewpoints obtained. **Discuss and list the health care concerns of the community.**

By getting information and ideas from the **whole** community, the Core Action Group should have a more complete picture of the health care concerns. The problems identified may be of greater consequence than first expected. They may also be of less concern to the community than expected.

If more information is needed or the problems are bigger than expected, the Core Action Group and community area groups may need to have more meetings. It is important to allow enough time so that **all** community members have had the opportunity to offer information and ideas to the Core Action Group. Repeat Activities 3 and 4 until the Core Action Group feels that the information and list of concerns are complete.

Activity 5: Develop Priorities

When the Core Action Group believes that problems and concerns have been fully identified, they should meet to **prioritize** concerns in preparation for developing a plan of action.

Prioritizing is a process of identifying and ranking the community's most important concerns. Everyone needs to have the opportunity to help decide which concerns are most important.

In a **small town**, **each area group should carry out a voting process** so the group's list reflects its own opinions and is arranged in order of the group's preference.

One way to develop this list is to have **each** person at the meeting rank items in order of importance. Scores can be given to each item, according to its place on the list. For instance, first on the list is given 1 point, second 2 points, etc. Tally the scores for each item from all the lists. It may be necessary to repeat the process one or more times because of ties. Items on the final list will be put in order of scores received. The item with the lowest number of points is the most important. The item with the highest number of points is the least important.

When all of the area groups have decided on their priorities, the Core Action Group members should meet, add up the scores, and rank the concerns. Remember, the item with the lowest total score is priority one, second lowest total score is priority two, etc. The result should be a prioritized list of health care concerns that reflects the opinions of the whole community.

In a **larger community**, the Core Action Group members should assemble and rank the list of concerns using the information they have gathered from community members and/or the area group meetings. Share the list of priorities with the community by publishing a ballot in the local newspaper.

The list of priorities should include about five priorities; certainly keep the list to no more than 10.

Activity 6: Designate Goals

After a community list of priorities is complete, then the Core Action Group members should begin to discuss the goals they want to see achieved. Develop at least one goal for each priority.

Approach the process of defining goals with great care. Be aware that the first tendency will be to describe vaguely some future time when health care conditions are improved. Make the goals specific but simple. Goals are what the community wants to happen or what it wants to achieve. To recruit a physician in the next six months who will deliver babies is one goal. To have the hospital re-open for business by the end of the year is another.

In determining appropriate goals, answer the following three questions for each goal:

- ▼ **Is the goal really what the community wants?**
- ▼ **Is it something that is possible to do?**
- ▼ **Can the community afford it?**

The purpose of the next few meetings is to answer the first question. Continue meeting and talking to people in the community so community members can determine whether or not achievement of a certain goal will improve the situation.

People must be creative and thoughtful in this process. They shouldn't be concerned right now with the second question, "Is it possible?" If the prospects of reaching a goal are considered too soon, good ideas and creative thoughts are inhibited. Core Action Group meetings should also continue so the groups can support one another and maintain community involvement.

Activity 7: Review and Evaluate Step Three

After completing these activities, the community will have a prioritized list of health care concerns that was developed through the participation of all community members. There will also be a goal for each priority.

Review Step Three by completing the following check list:

- Completed and reviewed Data Outline for Community Health Assessment
- Identified neighborhoods/areas of town
- One or more Core Action Group members assigned to each neighborhood/area
- Discussed health care concern(s) with every community member (by visits to homes or small group meetings)
- Developed a list of community health care concerns
- Prioritized community health care concerns
- Determined community goals

Evaluate Step Three by answering the following questions:

Have the Core Action Group members continued to stimulate the participation of all community members?

Has the community prioritized health care concerns before identifying goals?

Has the Core Action Group helped the community identify priorities and goals through a series of meetings?



If the answer is yes to each of these questions, congratulations! The Core Action Group is ready to move on to Step Four: Action Plan Development.

If not, the Core Action Group should continue to meet until concerns are prioritized and goals are identified.

Data Outline for Community Health Assessment

▼▼▼ *General and Geographic Information*

- ▼ Name of community
- ▼ Name of county
- ▼ Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)
 - Non-MSA
 - MSA
- ▼ Whether the county/community is a Medically Underserved Area
- ▼ Whether the county/community is a Health Professional Shortage Area
- ▼ Tax rate for
 - City
 - County
 - School District
 - Hospital District
 - Sales Tax
 - Other
- ▼ Breakdown of how the community spends its tax dollar
- ▼ Name of the nearest trading region (shopping area)
- ▼ Distance, in highway miles, to the nearest city
- ▼ Weather
 - Total average annual rainfall
 - Average annual number of days between killing frost
 - Total average annual snowfall
 - Average annual number of days over 90 degrees
 - Average annual number of days under 32 degrees
 - Unusual weather conditions (tornadoes, floods, sandstorms, etc.)
- ▼ Transportation
 - Local
 - Presence/absence
 - Kind (taxis, buses, etc.)
 - Regional/state or national (trains, airlines, etc.)
 - Presence/absence
 - Kind of service
 - Distance to major airport
 - Frequency
 - Personal transportation
 - Number of individuals with their own transportation
 - Kind of transportation
- ▼ Roads
 - Condition
 - Paved
 - Unpaved
 - Access to
 - Paved farm road
 - State highway
 - Interstate highway

- ▼ Terrain
 - Forests
 - Plains
 - Mountains
 - Foothills– hilly
 - Desert (arid, semi-arid)
 - Swamps/wetlands
- ▼ Local government
 - Type
 - Responsibility
 - Elected officials
- ▼ County government
 - Type
 - Responsibility
 - Elected officials

Sources of Information:

Chamber of Commerce, Tax Assessor/Collector, local newspaper, Commissioners Court, County Judge's office, county/city offices, Agricultural Extension Agent, Texas Department of Health Regional Office, Texas Department of Transportation District Office, Texas Association of Counties, Council of Government, Comptroller of Public Accounts

▼▼▼ *Housing*

- ▼ Number of houses
- ▼ Average cost of a house
- ▼ Number of rental units
- ▼ Average monthly rent

Sources of Information:

Tax Assessor/Collector, City Clerk, Real Estate Commission

▼▼▼ *Population*

- ▼ Total population for 1960 1970 1980 1990
Community
County
- ▼ Seasonal population for 1960 1970 1980 1990
Community
County
- ▼ Percent of population change for 1960-1970 1970-1980 1980-1990
Community
County
- ▼ Population projections for 2000
Community
County
- ▼ Distribution by race in percent
Community
County
- ▼ Distribution by age in percent
Community
County
- ▼ Distribution by sex in percent Male Female
Community
County
- ▼ Income
 - Average family income
Community
County
 - Per capita income
Community
County
 - Number and percent below poverty level
Community
County
 - Number and percent on Medicare
Community
County
 - Number and percent on Medicaid
Community
County
 - Rate of unemployment
Community
County

Sources of Information:

Chamber of Commerce, county/city offices, local newspaper, Council of Government, Texas Department of Commerce, Texas State Library, Texas Department of Human Services Regional Office, Texas Employment Commission Office

▼▼▼ *Health characteristics of the community*

- ▼ Infant mortality
 - For total population
 - For each race
- ▼ General mortality– by cause of death
 - For total population
 - For each race
- ▼ Morbidity by disease (usually only available for infectious diseases like VD, TB, AIDS, etc.)
 - For total population
 - For each race
- ▼ Immunization levels for DPT/Td, Polio, Measles and Rubella
 - For children
 - For adults
- ▼ Occupation-related health problems
 - Type
 - Number
 - Deaths per type
- ▼ Accidents
 - Type (car, farm, etc.)
 - Number
 - Deaths per type
- ▼ Pregnancy outcomes (includes live births, abortions, miscarriages, stillbirths)
 - For total female population
 - For each race

Sources of Information:

Local hospital, school nurse, local Public Health Department, Texas Department of Health Regional Office, Texas Department of Health Bureau of State Health Data and Policy Analysis, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Department of Agriculture District Office

▼▼▼ *Education*

- ▼ Level of education
 - Total population
 - By sex
 - By race
- ▼ Name of principal school district serving the community
- ▼ Public schools
 - How many
 - Type
 - Location
- ▼ Is the community served by
 - A private school
 - A parochial school (church affiliation)
- ▼ Average daily attendance for the school(s) in the community by school year for the past three years
 - Grades 1-8
 - Grades 9-12
- ▼ Total enrolled for the school(s) in the community by school year for the past three years
 - Grades 1-8
 - Grades 9-12
- ▼ Health education
 - School nurse
 - Presence/absence
 - Responsibilities
 - Health courses
 - Presence/absence (in schools and in community)
 - Topics
 - Number of teachers teaching health courses
- ▼ Special Education Programs
 - Presence/absence
 - Type

Sources of Information:

Superintendent of Schools, school principals, school nurse, Texas Education Agency-Service Centers

▼▼▼ *Religion*

- ▼ Number of churches
 - Denominations of churches
 - Health activities of churches
 - Counseling available— type
 - Sponsoring of health activities— type

Sources of Information:

Chamber of Commerce, local newspaper, ministers of local churches; church secretaries of local churches; main office of individual denominations; diocese office

▼▼▼ Social and Cultural

- ▼ Library
 - Number of volumes
 - What kind of health books, pamphlets are available
 - If there is no library in the community, how close is the nearest library in highway miles?
- ▼ List of clubs and organizations in the community (Lions Club, garden clubs, etc.)
 - Projects related to health
 - Health Services
- ▼ Community events (picnics, festivals, fairs, etc.)
 - Type
 - When held
 - Numbers attended
- ▼ Parks
 - Number
 - Type
 - Location
 - Size
 - Facilities
- ▼ Historical buildings
- ▼ Recreational facilities other than those located in parks (swimming pool, tennis court, rodeo arena, RV parks, etc.)
- ▼ Entertainment
 - Restaurant(s)
 - Night club or bar
 - Pool hall
 - Movie theater
 - Live theater, museum(s), symphony, dance
 - Other
 - Presence/absence
 - Number
 - Type
 - Location
- ▼ Sports
 - Type-- basketball, bowling, golf, tennis, fishing, hunting, skiing, softball, etc.
 - Community
 - School-related
 - Participants
 - Adults
 - Children
- ▼ Telephone
 - Percent of population that has telephone service
 - Type of service

- ▼ Newspaper
 - Number
 - Daily, weekly or monthly
 - Interest in communicating health/medical information
 - Health column
 - Periodic series of articles addressing health problems
 - Information on health care in the community
 - Interviews with health professionals
- ▼ Radio and Television
 - Available to community from larger communities
 - TV and/or radio stations in community
 - Number
 - Type
 - Interest in communicating health information
 - Health programs
 - Interviews with health professionals
 - Discussion of health topics
- ▼ Post Office
 - Present in the community
 - Nearest post office, in miles, if one is not located in the community
 - Number of rural mail carriers

Sources of Information:

Chamber of Commerce, telephone book, librarian, telephone company, local newspaper, radio and/or television station, Postmaster

▼▼▼ *Environmental Services*

- ▼ Water supply
 - Presence/absence
 - Type (well, river, treated, untreated, percent distribution)
 - Owner— private, community
 - Meets regulations
 - City
 - State
 - Population which has access to water supply
- ▼ Sewage system
 - Presence/absence
 - Type
 - Owner
 - Meets regulations
 - City
 - State
 - Population which has access to sewage system
- ▼ Solid waste disposal system
 - Presence/absence
 - Type (burning, dumping, etc.)
 - Owner
 - Meets regulations
 - City
 - State
 - Population which has access to solid waste disposal system
- ▼ Pollution
 - Presence/absence
 - Type
 - Regulations dealing with smoke, odor, noise
- ▼ Electrical power
 - Presence/absence
 - Owner
 - Population which has access to electricity
- ▼ Natural gas
 - Presence/absence
 - Owner
 - Population which has access to natural gas
- ▼ Pest control
 - Responsibility
 - Effectiveness of control measures

Sources of Information:

Rural Electric Cooperative, City Manager, gas company, river authority, city electric department, water company, Texas Department of Health Regional Office, Public Utility Commission, Texas Department of Agriculture, Air Control Board

▼▼▼ *Law Enforcement, Fire Services*

- ▼ Police protection
 - Type
 - Personnel
 - Location
 - First aid or emergency health course as part of training– type
 - Hours available
- ▼ Fire protection
 - Type
 - Personnel
 - Location
 - First aid or emergency health course as part of training– type
 - Hours available
- ▼ Court services
 - Type– municipal, county, probation, juvenile, etc.
 - Location
- ▼ Correction Facilities
 - Presence/absence
 - Type- county, state, or federal jail; juvenile correction facility
 - Location
 - Health care

Sources of Information:

Fire Department, Police/Sheriff's Department, County Commissioner's Court, Justice of the Peace, County Judge, EMS or ambulance service, Texas Association of Counties

Health Services

- ▼ Hospitals and nursing homes
 - Presence/absence; nearest location
 - Type
 - Number of beds
 - Occupancy rate
 - Services provided
 - Source of financial support
- ▼ Health clinics
 - Presence/absence- nearest location
 - Type
 - Services provided
- ▼ Emergency Medical Services (Ambulance Service)
 - Presence/absence- nearest location
 - Type
 - Personnel
 - Equipment
 - Type of training- EMT, Paramedic
 - Hours available
 - Source of financial support (city, county, Emergency Services District, private, etc.)
 - 911 Service- presence/absence
- ▼ Funeral home
 - Presence/absence- nearest location
 - Other services provided besides burial (ambulance, etc.)
- ▼ List of services provided to the community by
 - Federal programs
 - State programs
 - County programs
 - Voluntary programs (United Fund, Red Cross)
- ▼ Mental health services
 - Presence/absence
 - Type
 - Location of nearest services
- ▼ Other health professionals who are delivering care in the community
 - Type of professional
 - Services provided (general description)
- ▼ Pharmacy
 - Presence/absence- nearest location
 - Services provided besides dispensing of medication by prescription
 - Date pharmacy opened
- ▼ Nearest medical center in highway miles
- ▼ Emergency Room
 - Presence/absence- nearest location in highway miles
 - Kind
 - 24-hour staffing
 - Doctor on call
 - Present but provides no services

Sources of Information:

Hospital administrator, nursing home administrator, community health professionals, Council of Government, Texas Hospital Association, Texas Health Care Association, Texas Department of Health Regional Office, Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, Texas Department of Human Services Regional Office, Council of Government, Area Agency on Aging, Texas Association of Counties

Industry

- ▼ Banks, savings and loan agencies and other credit providers
 - Number
 - Type
 - Deposits for 1980, 1985, 1990
 - Assets for 1980, 1985, 1990
 - Deposits per capita for 1980, 1985, 1990
 - Types of loans offered (farm, auto, personal, mortgage, student, etc.)
- ▼ Retail sales
 - Per capita for 1985, 1990
 - Food
 - General merchandise
 - Furniture and household appliances
 - Automotive
 - Drugs
- ▼ Manufacturing
 - New total manufacturing plants built in 1980, 1985, 1990
 - Total manufacturing plant expansion
 - Name of the largest manufacturing plant
 - In community
 - In immediate area
 - Type of products
 - Number employed in the largest manufacturing plant
 - In community
 - In immediate area
 - Company health plans
 - Presence/absence
 - Type
 - Location(s) and provider(s) of care employee receives
- ▼ Agriculture
 - County agriculture employment for 1980, 1985, 1990
 - Total number of farms and ranches in the county for 1980, 1985, 1990
 - Average size of farms and ranches in the county
 - Major crops and livestock produced
- ▼ Tourism
 - Hotels/Motels/Bed & Breakfasts
 - Presence/absence
 - Number
 - Number of rooms

Sources of Information:

Chamber of Commerce, local bank, local manufacturers, local economic or rural development commission, Texas Department of Commerce, Agricultural Extension Agent, Texas Department of Agriculture District Office, Texas State Library

STEP FOUR: ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT



Developing a plan of action is the final step of the community assessment process. The goals of this step are to:

- ▼ **have a town meeting to discuss the identified goals**
- ▼ **devise a plan of action for the community.**

The Core Action Group can continue to inspire community action by gathering information that will help community members determine whether the goals set in Step Three are realistic. The group will also promote the development and approval of a plan of action and organize a Town Meeting.

Activity 1: Determine Reasonableness of Goals

To determine how reasonable a goal is, the Core Action Group must explore all obstacles to achieving that goal. Discuss the resources available in the community, county and state. Also discuss people who can help and problems which can happen. Use this information to develop a plan of action to carry out the goals.

Activity 2: Devise a Plan of Action

The Core Action Group should meet to develop a plan of action. The plan should include what should take place, when it should take place, and who is responsible for seeing that the goal is achieved. Do this for each goal. The group might get help from various sources across the state. The county's agricultural extension agent, Center for Rural Health Initiatives, Health Care Options for Rural Communities, Texas Rural Health Association, Texas Hospital Association, local Council of Government, and your senator or representative are a few possible resources. A resource list begins on page 55.

Activity 3: Hold a Town Meeting

The Core Action Group should **plan a Town Meeting now** so the entire community can review the goals and vote on the plan of action.

Be sure to **publicize the meeting well**. Include the plan of action when publicizing the meeting. Use the local newspaper and radio station, church bulletins, and flyers placed at local cafes and stores or sent home with students. Try other methods that work well in your community to let people know what is happening.

Schedule the Town Meeting in a large facility such as a church meeting hall or a school gymnasium or auditorium. The number of people who come to the meeting might be surprising, so have plenty of seating available.

At the Town Meeting, the Core Action Group should introduce themselves. Tell what the group has been doing, and why and how the plan of action was developed. Present the recommended plan of action to the community. Help community members understand the plan of action. Explain how the plan addresses the problems.

Community residents will also need answers to questions like:

- ▼ **who will provide and pay for services**
- ▼ **what they should do as community members.**

Answer all the questions that people have about the plan. Have the community vote on the action plan.

Activity 4: Review and Evaluate Step Four

After the community has approved the plan of action, the community will have completed the fourth and final step of community assessment. The concern and determination to organize the community and solve a mutual problem has resulted in a very specific set of goals. These goals should put the community on a straight path to carrying out this plan of action.

Review Step Four by completing the following checklist:

- Determined reasonableness of goals
- Developed a plan of action
- Planned the Town Meeting
- Publicized the meeting, goals, and suggested plan of action
- Held the Town Meeting
- Approved the plan of action

Evaluate Step Four by answering the following questions:

Did the Town Meeting discussions about the plan of action increase the interest and participation of community members?

Do community members feel satisfied that the community can solve its health care problems if it achieves the goals in the plan of action?

Are community members ready to carry out the plan of action?



If the community can answer yes to each of these questions, congratulations! The community has completed the Community Assessment.

If not, review Step Four. Continue the Core Action Group and Town Meetings until a plan of action is approved.

This handbook will have accomplished its purpose if you and members of your community have:

- ▼ *gone through each of the four steps*
- ▼ *outlined goals about health care for the community*
- ▼ *completed a plan of action.*

The next step after community assessment is to carry out the plan of action to achieve the goals set forth for the community. Community members and the Core Action Group should look ahead with unity and pride to a time when the goals are a reality. Then health care will be accessible to everyone in the community.

Congratulations!

Resources

▼ Texas Department of Health Public Health Regional Offices

Public Health Region One Offices

2408 S. 37th St., Temple, TX 76504
(817) 778-6744
1212 E. Anderson Lane, Austin, TX 78752
(512) 834-8673

Public Health Region Two Offices

4709 66th St., Lubbock, TX 79414
(806) 727-4331
P.O. Box 968 WTSU Station, Canyon, TX 79016
(806) 655-7151

Public Health Region Three Offices

6090 Surety Drive, Suite 115, El Paso, TX 79905
(915) 779-7783
619 West Texas #300, Midland, TX 79701
(915) 683-9492
3131 Executive Drive, San Angelo, TX 76901
(915) 944-9545

Public Health Region Four Offices

10500 Forum Place Ste 200, Houston, TX 77036
(713) 995-1112
4605 Concord Rd., Beaumont, TX 77703
(409) 898-3722

Public Health Region Five Offices

2561 Matlock Rd., Arlington, TX 76105
(817) 460-3032
1290 S. Willis Suite 100, Abilene, TX 79608
(915) 695-7170
106 Free-Mar Valley, Wichita Falls, TX 76301
(817) 767-8593

Public Health Region Six Offices

1015 Jackson Keller Rd, San Antonio, TX 78213
(512) 342-3300
P.O. Drawer 630, Uvalde, TX 78802
(512) 278-7173

Public Health Region Seven Offices

1517 W. Front St., Tyler, TX 75702
(903) 595-3585
P.O. Box 876, Sulphur Springs, TX 75482
(903) 885-6573
204 Mims Ave., Nacogdoches, TX 75961
(409) 564-8356

Public Health Region Eight Offices

601 W. Sesame Dr., Harlingen, TX 78550
(512) 423-0130
1233 Agnes St., Corpus Christi, TX 78401
(512) 888-7762

▼ Texas Department of Human Services Regional Offices

Region Two

P.O. Box 10528, Lubbock, TX 79408
(806) 741-0541

Region Three

P.O. Box 10276, El Paso, TX 79994
(915) 599-3742

Region Four

P.O. Box 6635, Abilene, TX 79608
(915) 695-5750

Region Five

P.O. Box 5128, Arlington, TX 76011
(817) 640-5090

Region Six

P.O. Box 15995, Austin, TX 78761
(512) 834-3458

Region Seven

302 East Rieck Road, Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 561-5359

Region Eight

P.O. Box 960, Edinburg, TX 78539
(512) 383-5344

Region Nine

P.O. Box 23990, San Antonio, TX 78223
(512) 337-3271

Region Ten

P.O. Box 4906, Beaumont, TX 77704
(409) 835-3751

Region Eleven

P.O. Box 16017, Houston, TX 77222
(713) 696-7100

Air Control Board
Austin
(512) 908-1000

Center for Rural Health Initiatives
Austin
(512) 479-8891

Comptroller of Public Accounts
Austin
1-800-252-5555

Health Care Options for Rural Communities
Mary Walker or Catherine McGuire
Austin
(512) 465-1000

Office of Rural Health
Odessa
(915) 335-5109

Public Utility Commission
Austin
(512) 458-0227

Real Estate Commission
Austin
(512) 459-6544

State Library
Reference Desk
Austin
(512) 463-5455

Texas A&M
Real Estate Center
Bryan/College Station
(409) 845-2082

Texas Association of Counties
Karen Norris
Austin
(512) 478-8753

Texas Department of Aging
Area Agencies on Aging
Austin
(512) 444-2727

Texas Department of Agriculture
Austin
(512) 463-7476

Texas Department of Banking
Austin
(512) 475-1300

Texas Department of Commerce
Research and Planning Division
Michael West or Mary Reynold
Austin
(512) 320-6667

Texas Department of Commerce
Rural Community Development Office
Joan Crosby
Austin
1-800-888-0511 or (512) 320-9517

Texas Department of Health
Bureau of State Health Data and Policy Analysis
Austin
(512) 458-7261

Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental
Retardation
Austin
(512) 454-3761

Texas Department of Public Safety
Austin
(512) 465-2000

Texas Department of Transportation
Austin
(512) 463-8585

Texas Education Agency
Austin
(512) 463-9014

Texas Employment Commission
Diane Dobe
Austin
(512) 463-2841

Texas Health Care Association
(Nursing Homes)
Austin
(512) 458-1257

Texas Hospital Association
Marvin Cole
Austin
(512) 465-1000

Regional Councils of Governments

West Texas Council of Governments
P.O. Box 3195, Abilene, TX 79604
(915) 672-8544

Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
P.O. Box 9257, Amarillo, TX 79105
(806) 372-3381

North Central Texas Council of Governments
P.O. Drawer COG, Arlington, TX 76005
(817) 640-3300

Capital Area Planning Council
2520 IH 35 South Ste 100, Austin, TX 78704
(512) 443-7653

Central Texas Council of Governments
P.O. Box 729, Belton, TX 76513
(817) 939-1801

Brazos Valley Development Council
P.O. Drawer 4128, Bryan, TX 77805
(409) 776-2277

Middle Rio Grande Development Council
P.O. Box 1199, Carrizo Springs, TX 78834
(512) 876-3533

Coastal Bend Council of Governments
P.O. Box 9909, Corpus Chrisit, TX 78469
(512) 883-5743

Texoma Council of Governments
10000 Grayson Dr., Denison, TX 75020
(214) 786-2955

Rio Grande Council of Governments
1014 N. Stanton, Ste 100, El Paso, TX 79902
(915) 533-0998

Houston-Galveston Area Council of Governments
P.O. Box 22777, Houston, TX 77227
(713) 627-3200

Deep East Texas Council of Governments
274 E. Lamar Street, Jasper, TX 75951
(409) 384-5704

East Texas Council of Governments
3800 Stone Road, Kilgore, TX 75662
(903) 984-8461

South Texas Development Council
P.O. Box 2187, Laredo, TX 78044
(512) 722-3995

South Plains Association of Governments
P.O. Box 3730, Lubbock, TX 79452
(806) 762-8721

Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council
4900 North 23rd St., McAllen, TX 78504
(512) 682-3481

Permian Basin Regional Planning Commission
P.O. Box 60660, Midland, TX 79711
(915) 563-1061

South East Texas Regional Planning Commission
P.O. Drawer 1387, Nederland, TX 77627
(409) 727-2384

Concho Valley Council of Governments
P.O. Box 60050, San Angelo, TX 76906
(915) 944-9666

Alamo Area Council of Governments
118 Broadway, Ste 400, San Antonio, TX 78205
(512) 225-5201

Ark-Tex Council of Government
P.O. Box 5307, Texarkana, TX 75505
(903) 832-8636

Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission
P.O. Box 2028, Victoria, TX 77902
(512) 578-1587

Heart of Texas Council of Governments
320 Franklin Ave., Waco, TX 76701
(817) 756-7822

Nortex Regional Planning Commission
P.O. Box 5144, Wichita Falls, TX 76307
(817) 322-5281

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