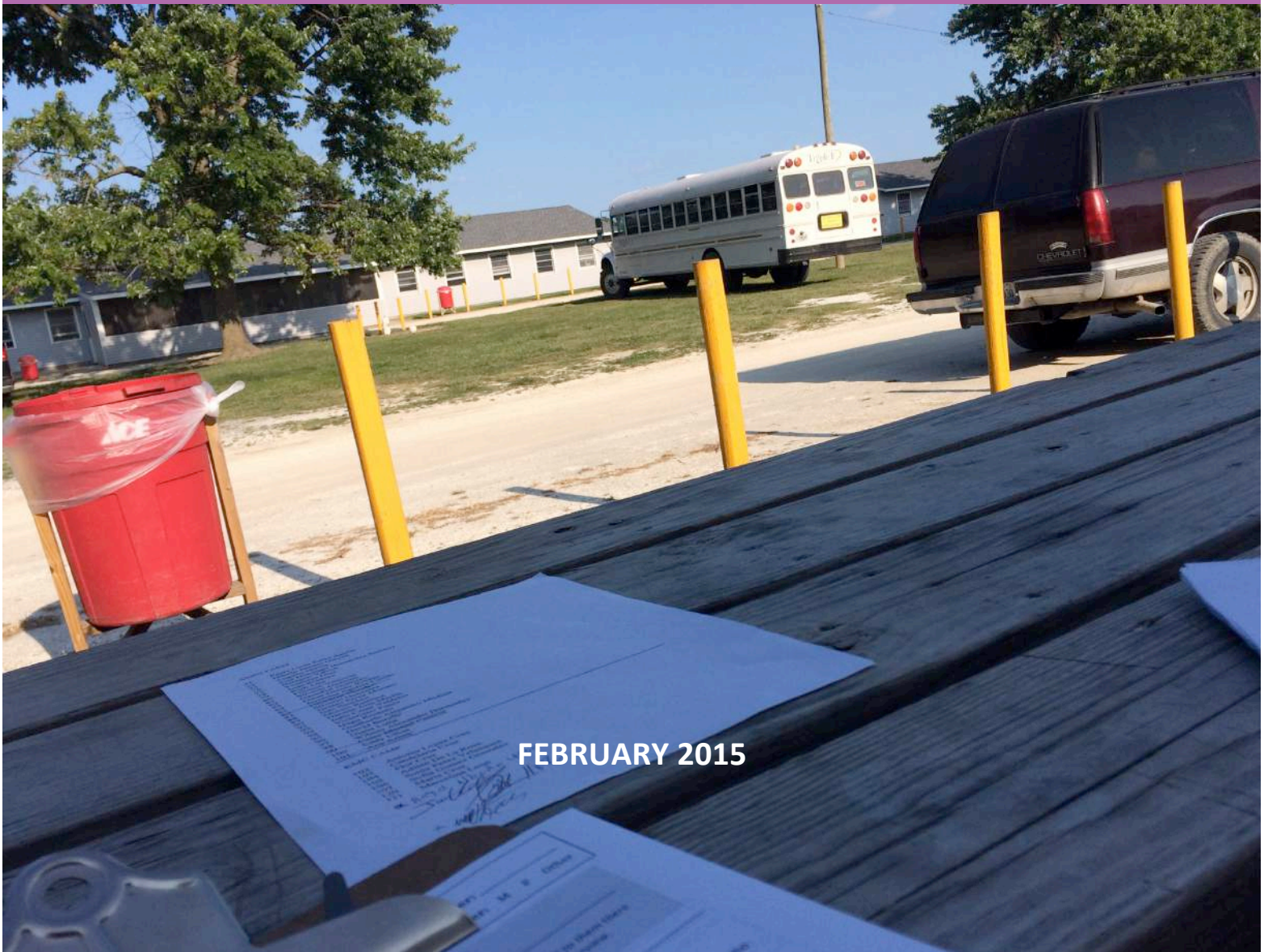


HEALTH OUTREACH PARTNERS

# COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND  
RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF YOUR COMMUNITY



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### Health Outreach Partners 2015

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# INTRODUCTION

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Health centers, hospitals, and other community-based health organizations continually strive to improve the health of communities by providing quality care and supportive services that address the health needs of underserved populations. A community health needs assessment (CHNA) enables organizations to gain insight into the communities they serve through a process that identifies health needs, risk factors, and barriers to care, as well as possible actions to address their communities' needs. Further, it is a critical component of effective program planning and ensuring that resources are directed appropriately to the services that are most needed. A community health needs assessment can also help identify the key strengths and unique assets of communities.

The purpose of this Community Health Needs Assessment Toolkit is to support your organization's efforts in meeting the health needs of underserved populations by providing guidance and practical tools to undertake the needs assessment process. This toolkit is grounded in the idea that health services can most effectively address the needs of the community when they are informed and designed with their input. Thus, a needs assessment is a process that involves those who are concerned for the health and well-being of the community, including underserved populations and the organizations that serve them.

## ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit guides you through each step of the needs assessment process. The toolkit is organized into five sections. The first section, "Understanding a Community Health Needs Assessment," is intended to provide a foundation by defining a needs assessment, delineating the benefits of conducting one, and outlining the key steps in the process. The next three sections are organized by the specific steps for implementing a needs assessment: 1) Planning Your Needs Assessment, 2) Developing Your Data Collection Tools, and 3) Collecting and Analyzing Your Data. The final section covers the different ways to share and use the needs assessment findings. Each section provides detailed information about the topic area, along with tools and resources. Additionally, real life examples of health centers and their needs assessment efforts are highlighted throughout the toolkit. These examples are taken from HOP's Innovative Outreach Practices (IOP) Database.<sup>1</sup>

### TOOLKIT SECTIONS

1. Understanding a Community Health Needs Assessment
2. Planning Your Needs Assessment
3. Developing Your Data Collection Tools
4. Collecting and Analyzing Your Data
5. What's Next: Sharing and Using Your Findings

Whether you are starting from scratch in conducting a needs assessment, or are looking for ways to improve your existing needs assessment process, this toolkit serves as a comprehensive resource for your organization. Any section can also be used on its own, according to your specific needs. Although the sections of the toolkit are presented in a linear fashion, please note that the needs assessment process is more fluid. Each section of this toolkit contains information that can help to supplement or expand details in other sections.

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<sup>1</sup> The Innovative Outreach Practices Database is a resource to showcase the outreach efforts of health centers, and share practical ways to implement strategies, programs, and activities that have been proven effective in the field. <http://web.outreach-partners.org/resources/iop>

## WHO THE TOOLKIT IS INTENDED FOR

This toolkit is intended for organizations and agencies that are striving to improve the health of underserved populations. The concepts, methods, and tools presented in this toolkit can be used by your organization to better understand and respond to the health needs of your communities.

The toolkit can be used by:

- Health Centers<sup>2</sup>
- Non-profit hospital organizations
- Free clinics and other safety net providers
- Head Start programs
- Local and state agencies
- Other community-based organizations

## KEY TERMS

**Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA):** Community health needs assessment is a broad term used to describe the process of collecting relevant information about the health needs of communities or specific sub-groups. CHNA directly involves communities and the organizations serving them to provide input and ideas for actions to address the health needs of the community.

**Needs Assessment:** In this toolkit, the term “needs assessment” is used to refer to a community health needs assessment, as it relates to health centers, hospitals, and other community-based health organizations that serve underserved populations.

**Underserved Populations:** Underserved populations is a broad term to describe populations that face social, economic, and cultural barriers to accessing health and social services. They include, but are not limited to, low-income populations, the uninsured, immigrants, those with limited English proficiency (LEP), migratory and seasonal agricultural workers<sup>3</sup> and dependents, individuals and families experiencing homelessness, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community, those living in public housing, Asian and Pacific Islanders (API), veterans, seniors, children in schools, and people with disabilities. In this toolkit, the term ‘underserved populations’ is used generally to refer to the group of people being assessed by health centers, hospitals, and other community-based health organizations.

**Special Populations<sup>4</sup>:** Health centers are community-based and patient-directed organizations that serve populations with limited access to health care. Some health centers also receive specific funding to focus on certain special populations: individuals and families experiencing homelessness, agricultural workers and dependents, those living in public housing, and Native Hawaiians.



**HOP Tip:** “HOP Tips” are a key feature of the toolkit. They are indicated by a light bulb and are brief tips that provide suggestions or point out additional resources.

<sup>2</sup> The term “health center” refers to a Health Center Program grantee, Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Look-Alike, or an FQHC.

<sup>3</sup> The term “agricultural worker” is used throughout this document to refer to migratory and seasonal agricultural workers.

<sup>4</sup> Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Special Populations. Accessed on 01.27.15.  
<http://bphc.hrsa.gov/about/specialpopulations/index.html>.