Community Needs Assessment for Winnebago County
Improvement of Nursing Practice Project
Susan Tews & LaDonna Zanin
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
College of Nursing
Introduction

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) has defined community assessment as “a broad-based, documented, and collaborative process conducted with community participation that produces a list of community health priorities and resources.” The Institute of Medicine in a 1988 public health report pronounced assessment as one of the three core functions of public health practice. In their landmark report, assessment was defined as, “the regular, systematic collection, assembly, analysis, and dissemination of information on the health of the community. This function is needed to identify trends in illness, injury, and death and the factors which may cause these events. Furthermore, it is needed to identify available health resources and their application, unmet needs, and community perceptions about health issues” (NACCHO, 2001).

Chapter 251.05 of the Wisconsin State Statutes requires local health departments to “…regularly and systematically collect, assemble, analyze and make available information on the health of the community...including health needs.” The Winnebago Public Health Department initiated this process in January 2001. The previous need assessment, performed in 1994, focused on the Fox Cities and did not include information from the individual townships. Sue Huelsbeck, Director of the Winnebago Public Health Department, wanted to include their input to insure a more accurate evaluation of outlying areas of the county (personal communication, Mar.6, 2001). Our nursing project involved helping her to identify how these township officials (clerks and administrators) from Winnebago County perceive and prioritize their community’s needs.

Literature Review

Online sources were particularly helpful in our search for how community assessments are performed. Valuable information on conducting needs assessment surveys was found on a web site of the University of Kansas entitled “Community Toolbox.” A Tools and Checklist section summarized the characteristics of a needs assessment, reasons for performing them, and how to carry out a needs assessment survey. Recommendations for preserving objectivity, avoiding leading questions and tips on drawing out personal perceptions are covered. Information on
designing and implementing a telephone survey was gleaned from three separate books. Most of these authors agreed on a basic set of principles, namely: keep questions short, be prepared to repeat yourself, build in some redundancy so that respondents can hear the main points more than once, and use a combination of open and closed-ended questions (Weiss, 1994; Thomas, 1999; Dillman, 1978).

Goals and Criteria

The purpose of our project was to assess the health needs and concerns of selected communities as perceived by the officials in those communities. The focal areas were those identified as requirements in State Statute 251.05. These areas are maternal and child health, chronic diseases, communicable diseases, environmental health and injury prevention. We also added a sixth category, access to health care. We felt that this is a growing concern in the United States and should be included in our inquiry. We also wanted the information gathered to reflect the areas targeted as leading health indicators by the Healthy People 2010 project. Those indicators are:

1. Tobacco Use
2. Substance Abuse
3. Responsible Sexual Behavior
4. Mental Health
5. Injury and Violence
6. Environmental Quality
7. Immunization

The questions guiding our project were:

- What are the health needs/concerns as perceived by community leaders in each of their respective locales?
- How do community leaders rank the priority of the needs in their communities?
- What suggestions do the leaders have to respond to the identified needs/concerns?

The following criteria were used to evaluate our project:
Each of the general areas of assessment will identify specific needs that will provide a thorough examination of that area.

Both positive and negative factors that have an impact on the health of the population of the various locales will be explored.

Data will be analyzed and clustered to show the ranking of needs on a 1-5 rating scale, and will identify the most seriously unmet needs, most adequately met needs, and areas with the most awareness deficit.

Methods

Seeking to promote a healthier citizenry, the United States Public Health Services has developed national disease prevention and health promotion objectives that assist states and localities to pinpoint priorities and develop programs. Some problems have diminished: death rates for all ages have decreased for instance (www.health.gov, Mar. 2001) and others have become areas of concern. It is these areas of concern that were utilized to develop our needs assessment telephone survey. Using Health People 2010 goals along with areas designated by the Winnebago County Public Health Department, we developed a telephone survey addressing the six areas of concern: maternal/child needs, chronic conditions, communicable diseases, environmental health, safety and injury, and access to health care.

Data Collection Tool

To initiate contact with key informants from eighteen townships in Winnebago County, an introductory letter was mailed to each informing them of our intent to gather information regarding the target areas. Phone calls were placed approximately one week after the letter was mailed. Utilizing framework based on the MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships) program which is the basis for similar key informant surveys used throughout the state by public health nurses (www.nacchoweb.org, Mar. 2001), a needs survey was developed using a Likert-type 1-5 rating scale. Fifteen of the eighteen key informants were available to complete the survey (72% response rate). Each informant was asked questions regarding the focus areas and their answers were documented on the needs survey. They were then tabulated using a test, re-
Hello, My name is _______________. I’m a Registered Nurse from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh nursing program. I’m assisting Sue Huelsbeck of the Winnebago County Public Health Department with a community needs assessment. Recently you received a letter explaining our telephone survey. As mentioned in the letter, I would like to ask you some questions today about your perceptions of needs in your community. Is this a convenient time? Before we start, do you have any questions about our survey?

In this survey we are attempting to address areas that are also leading health indicators proposed in the Healthy People 2010 project. In this survey, I will be asking you to rate the needs in your community on a scale from 1 to 5. Please make any suggestions for improvements or any other comments on your community’s needs at any time during the interview. I realize it may be difficult in a telephone interview to remember the scale. You may make a note of the rating scale to help you.

Need is:

1. Seriously unmet
2. Somewhat unmet
3. Don’t know
4. Somewhat met
5. Adequately met

Our first area to rate is MATERNAL/CHILD NEEDS.

How do you rate your community’s need for:

1. Family planning services
   1  2  3  4  5
   COMMENT_____________________________________________________

2. Teenage pregnancy services
   1  2  3  4  5
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<td>3. Prenatal care and nutrition</td>
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<td>4. Home visits for mothers &amp; babies</td>
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<td>5. Dental care for mothers &amp; children</td>
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<td>COMMENT</td>
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<td>6. Immunization programs for children</td>
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<td>7. Child care facilities</td>
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<td>8. Subsidized child care</td>
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<td>COMMENT</td>
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<td>9. Before &amp; after school care</td>
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<td>COMMENT</td>
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</table>
Our next area concerns programs that address CHRONIC CONDITIONS.

How would you rate your community’s need for:

1. Support groups  
   1  2  3  4  5  
   COMMENT______________________________________________________

2. Home care services  
   1  2  3  4  5  
   COMMENT______________________________________________________

3. Long-term care/nursing homes  
   1  2  3  4  5  
   COMMENT______________________________________________________

4. Respite care  
   1  2  3  4  5  
   COMMENT______________________________________________________

5. Hospice care  
   1  2  3  4  5  
   COMMENT______________________________________________________

6. Transportation for the elderly/disabled  
   1  2  3  4  5  
   COMMENT______________________________________________________
7. Delivered meal program 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENT____________________________________________________

8. Recreational activities for elderly/disabled 1 2 3 4 5
COMMENT____________________________________________________

The next area I will ask you to rate is related to COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.

Please tell me how you rate your community’s need for:

1. Screening and treatment of sexually transmitted Diseases
   1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT____________________________________________________

2. Education about sexually-responsible Behavior
   1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT____________________________________________________

3. Counseling for STD/HIV/AIDS
   1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT____________________________________________________

4. Immunizations for adults
   1 2 3 4 5
The next area I will ask you to rate concerns ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.

How do you rate your community’s need for:

1. Improved water quality
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT

2. Improved air quality
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT

3. Sewage & waste disposal
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT

4. Repair & maintenance of sidewalks, ramps
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT

5. Affordable housing
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT

6. Shelters for homeless
   - 1 2 3 4 5
   COMMENT
The next area I would like to ask you about is SAFETY AND INJURY PREVENTION.

How do you rate your community’s need for:

1. Fire & ambulance service
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

2. Substance abuse/tobacco prevention programs
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

3. Suicide/crisis hot lines
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

4. Teen recreational activities
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

5. Teen Alcohol/drug counseling
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

6. Domestic Abuse shelters
   
   1  2  3  4  5
   COMMENT_______________________________________________________
The next few questions you do not have to rate on the 1 to 5 scale. I would just like your personal perception.

Do you feel your community is a safe one to live in?  YES  NO

Please explain ___________________________________________________

Regarding violence in schools. Do you feel your schools are taking adequate precautions to maintain a safe environment?

YES  NO

What type of precautions?

______________________________________________________________

What could they do differently?

______________________________________________________________

The last area of our survey deals with ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

In your community how do you rate:

1. Availability of primary care physicians  1  2  3  4  5

   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________

2. Availability of preventive services (screening)  1  2  3  4  5

   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________

3. Availability of specialists  1  2  3  4  5

   COMMENT_______________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________

4. Health care for uninsured persons  1  2  3  4  5
5. Transportation to doctor offices/clinic for persons other than the elderly/disabled

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Is there a specific area I have not mentioned that you would like to discuss?

This concludes the survey. We would be happy to send you a copy of the survey results when completed. Thank you for participating, your input is very valuable.

Results of Needs Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternal Child needs</th>
<th>Seriously unmet</th>
<th>Somewhat unmet</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Somewhat met</th>
<th>Adequately met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family planning</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teenage pregnancy services</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Prenatal care and nutrition</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Home visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Dental care for mothers &amp; children</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Immunizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Child care facilities</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Subsidized</td>
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### Chronic Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Seriously unmet</th>
<th>Somewhat unmet</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Somewhat met</th>
<th>Adequately met</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Support groups</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Home-care services</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Long-term nursing homes</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>4. Respite care</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Hospice care</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Transportation elderly/disabled</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Delivered meals</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Recreational elderly/disabled</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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### Communicable Diseases

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Screening/trmt Sexually transmitted</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<th>Service</th>
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<td>2. Home care</td>
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<td>3. Long term nursing home</td>
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<td>4. Respite care</td>
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<td>5. Hospice care</td>
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<td>7. Delivered meals</td>
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<td>8. Recreational elderly/disabled</td>
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- child care 23% 62% 15%

- 9. Before & after school care 23% 15% 8% 31% 23%

- 10. Day care for disabled 31% 8% 31% 23% 8%
2. Education about sexually-responsible behavior

46% 31% 23%

3. Counseling for STD/HIV/AIDS

9% 45% 27% 18%

4. Immunizations Adults

8% 8% 25% 25% 33%

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<tr>
<th>Seriously unmet</th>
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<th>Don't know</th>
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<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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Environmental

Health

1. Water quality

15% 15% 8% 62%

2. Air quality

8% 15% 77%

3. Sewage & waste disposal

38% 62%

4. Maintenance of sidewalks/ramps

8% 31% 23% 38%

38% report having no sidewalks and/or ramps

5. Affordable housing

15% 23% 15% 31% 15%

6. Homeless shelters

23% 23% 38% 15%

31% report none available in township, but nearby

Safety and Injury

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seriously Unmet</th>
<th>Somewhat Unmet</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Somewhat met</th>
<th>Adequately met</th>
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</table>
| 1. Fire & ambulance

8% 92%

2. Substance abuse tobacco prevention

23% 8% 23% 38% 8%

3. Crisis hot lines

15% 8% 38% 15% 23%
4. Teen recreation  15%  8%  23%  15%  38%
5. Teen alcohol/drug counseling  8%  8%  38%  15%  31%
6. Domestic abuse shelters  23%  15%  15%  31%  15%

100% reported feeling their community was safe
85% reported their schools were safe and 15% felt a school liaison would help with school safety issues.

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<tr>
<th>Seriously unmet</th>
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**Access to Healthcare**

1. Availability to primary care physicians  8%  8%  8%  77%
2. Preventive services  15%  23%  62%
3. Availability to Specialists  8%  17%  8%  67%
4. Services for uninsured  8%  25%  25%  17%  25%
5. Transportation to clinics, etc  17%  33%  8%  25%  17%

72% of townships responding
Analysis of Data

The most seriously unmet needs relating to the health of the community which were revealed in the survey were:

- Daycare for the Disabled (31%)
- Recreational Activities for the Elderly & Disabled (31%)
- Before & After School Care (23%)
- Nursing Homes (23%)
- Substance Abuse & Tobacco Prevention programs (23%)
- Lack of Abuse & Homeless Shelters (23%)

The most frequently identified barrier to obtaining health care was lack of transportation.

31% reported that although homeless shelters were not located in their communities, they were available nearby. 100% of respondents felt their communities were safe places in which to live. 15% suggested that their schools could benefit from a police liaison officer.

Key respondents answered “don’t know” 50% of the time. The areas reflecting the most knowledge deficit were:

- Dental Care for Mothers & Children (62%)
- Subsidized Child Care (62%)
- Support Groups (46%)
- Home Care Services (46%)
- Education About Sexually-Responsible Behavior (46%)
- Counseling for STD/HIV/AIDS (45%)
- Family Planning Services, Teen Pregnancy Services, Prenatal Care & Nutrition, Home Visits for Mothers & Babies, Crisis Hotlines and Teen Alcohol/Drug Counseling (38%)
- Access to Health Care for Uninsured (25%)

Areas that were considered to be adequately met were:

- Fire & Ambulance Service (92%)
- Availability of Primary Care Physicians (77%)
- Air Quality (77%)
- Water Quality (62%)
- Sewage & Waste Disposal (62%)
- Availability of Specialists (67%)
- Preventive Health Services (62%)
- Delivered Meal Programs (62%)

Although this sample size is limited, the data serve as a stepping stone to a comprehensive community assessment in the Winnebago County area. Health Statistics are an important tool for public health practice. They form the basis for designing community nursing interventions, planning and evaluating community health programs and for analyzing and developing health policy and legislation.

Recommendations

We would like to make two recommendations for expanding this project in the future. The first involves surveying additional key informant groups. Valuable perceptions may be obtained from such groups as the staff members of the reduced-fee clinics in the county, the Winnebago County Public Health Nursing Department, and the Winnebago County Sheriff’s Department, to name a few. These groups work closely with the residents of Winnebago County and could give revealing perspectives on their needs.

Our second recommendation is to perform a household or citizen survey of township residents. The results could be used as a comparison to the key informant study. By surveying these various groups of respondents, a broad base of information can be gathered. The results of these surveys could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the scope of needs present in Winnebago County.

Learning Outcomes

This project gave a deeper appreciation of the wide differences in people’s perceptions. We were amazed at the amount of diversity revealed by just this preliminary survey. The needs of neighboring communities sometimes differed significantly even though they shared borders. The economic level of the community, its’ proximity to cities, and the average age of its’ residents had great impact on how needs were ranked. The trend toward the rapid growth of affluent
subdivisions in areas previously populated with farms is resulting in a very diverse spectrum of residents. Providing for the varied needs of these populations will be an ongoing challenge for the county and state.
References


