Community Health Needs Assessment Data Analysis Tool

The Challenge

Develop a data tool that would allow health care providers and other organizations to quickly assess the demographics and health status of a service area to inform decision making.

The Approach

Recognizing a need among safety net providers and other organizations (including counties, foundations and community-based organizations) to quickly evaluate health care access and health status in small units of geography, HMA developed the Community Health Needs Assessment Data Analysis Tool. The tool compiles and regularly updates data from multiple publicly available data sources, including US Census data, BRFSS, CDC, Dartmouth Atlas, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health and other sources.

HMA's tool offers several valuable features not available in other proprietary or publicly available needs assessment tools, including the ability to instantly "drill down" on small units of geography (e.g., one or a few zip codes) and benchmark key indicators against state and national data to inform service area designation and service and product development. This dynamic function allows organizations to see variations in health status across a larger region to inform service area decisions as well as specific interventions. In addition, HMA utilizes sophisticated geo-mapping software to prepare detailed maps that communicate key needs assessment findings at a glance. This includes the statistically significant geographic variation of demographic and health status prevalence or rate data compared to benchmark indicators, as well as identification of service gaps.

The Results

A wide range of healthcare providers and other organizations have used the CHNA tool to inform short-term actions and long-term strategic decision making, prioritize and target investments, and assess the impact of their organization on healthcare access and health status. For example, the tool has been used to:

- Assess the feasibility of attaining federal FQHC designation based on HRSA's community need scoring criteria;
- Analyze the service area of primary care providers, including free clinics and FQHCs, to inform the location of service delivery sites based on community need;
- Provide key input into market assessments for reproductive health providers, primary care health centers, and other types of service providers to help inform long-term planning;
- Assess the impact of philanthropic grants on community health over time within a geographic region; and

- Provide highly targeted community needs data to support grant applications for primary care providers, health systems, and community-based organizations.

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