

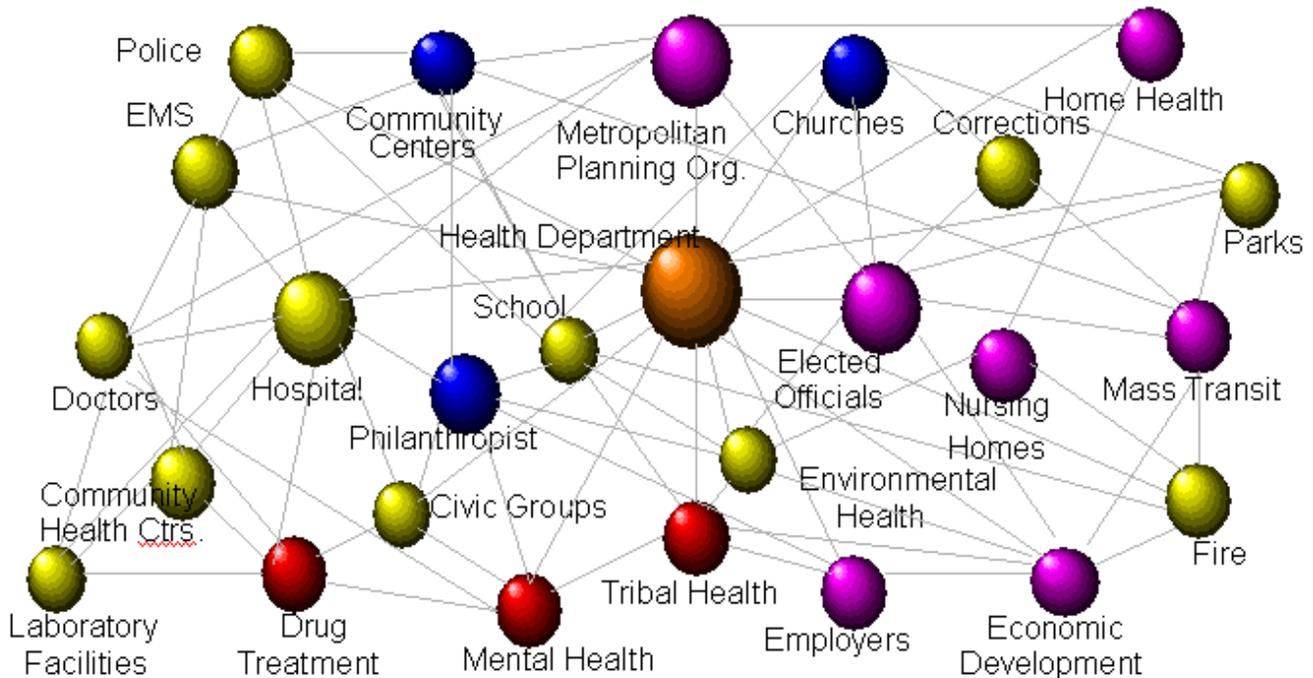
Local Public Health System Assessment

The Local Public Health System Assessment is a broad assessment, involving all of the organizations and entities that contribute to public health in the community. The Local Public Health System Assessment answers the questions, “What are the components, activities, competencies, and capacities of our local public health system?” and “How are the Essential Services being provided to our community?”

The local public health system includes all public, private and voluntary entities, as well as individuals and informal associations that contribute to the delivery of public health services. MAPP brings all of these diverse interests together to determine the most effective way to conduct public health activities.

County health departments (CHD’s) are the natural leaders in the development of a cohesive local public health system. CHD’s have unique responsibilities to enable, assure and enforce the provision of these essential services within the local public health system. They advocate with system partners for changes to improve health and assure that critical public health needs of their communities are met. CHD’s provide important leadership in maintaining and improving the performance and capacity of the local public health system to provide appropriate services. No organization singularly provides public health services in a community. MAPP recognizes the important contributions of all entities involved in the local public health system and provides a process for coming together and planning how to provide better public health services.

Local Public Health System



Recommended Participants and Roles

Subcommittee — designs and prepares for the local public health system assessment process and ensures that the process is implemented effectively.

MAPP Committee — participates in all discussions.

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 Local Public Health System Assessment:

1. **Establish a subcommittee** and plan how the activities will be undertaken.
2. **Orient the MAPP Committee** (and other participants) to the Essential Services. Begin by discussing the Essential Services — what they are and how they are being provided within the community. Using flip charts, each participant should identify the Essential Services provided by their organizations. Discuss the results by identifying where various organizations' activities fit together and where gaps exist.
3. **Complete the performance measures instrument.** Discuss each model standard and come to consensus on responses for all objectives and Likert scale questions.
4. **Discuss the results of the performance measures instrument by reviewing each indicator.** Through dialogue, identify areas that need improvement, activities that should be maintained at current levels and areas where efforts can be decreased to free up resources. The results of this discussion should be a list of challenges and opportunities that will, later, be used in the identification of strategic issues.

Introduction

What is a Local Public Health System Assessment?

The Local Public Health System Assessment (LPHSA) answers the questions, “What are the components, activities, competencies, and capacities of our local public health system?” and “How are the Essential Services being provided to our community?” The information gathered in the local public health system assessment, along with results from the other three MAPP Assessments, will comprise the four sources of information to be considered during the Identify Strategic Issues phase. The inclusion of local public health system assessment results may lead to strategies that help strengthen and improve the local public health system and provision of public health services.

County health departments that have conducted the *APEXPH* Organizational Capacity Assessment will note some similarities with the local public health system assessment. However, in the *APEXPH* Organizational Capacity Assessment, the focus is entirely on the local health department, while the MAPP local public health system assessment focuses on the local public health system — that is, all organizations and entities within the community that contribute to the public's health. The Essential Public Health Services provide the fundamental framework for local public health system assessment activities. The Essential Services describe the public health

activities that should be undertaken in all communities. Conducted by any component of the local public health system, the Essential Services are as follows:

1. Monitor health status to identify community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
8. Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

The MAPP Local Public Health System Assessment includes two primary activities. First, the MAPP Committee discusses the Essential Services and generates a broad understanding of where participants are active. This discussion provides a crucial orientation to the Essential Services. Second, participants complete a performance measurement instrument. The MAPP Local Public Health System Assessment uses the local instrument of the National Public Health Performance Standards Program (NPHPSP); version 2.0 was released in 2007. The NPHPSP is also based on the Essential Services. By using a nationally developed performance measurement instrument, the following benefits are gained:

- By promoting the use of the same performance measurement instrument within all communities, comparisons can be made and analysis and interpretation activities are more straightforward.
- Responses to the instrument can be tracked over time to identify improvements or changes.
- Linkages between MAPP and NPHPSP benefit both programs. In conducting the Local Public Health System Assessment, MAPP users automatically respond to the NPHPSP instrument, thus eliminating duplicative work. Likewise, NPHPSP respondents can use MAPP as a tool for addressing performance measures results.

How to Conduct the Local Public Health System Assessment

Step 1 — Prepare for the Local Public Health System Assessment

Begin by establishing a subcommittee to oversee the local public health system assessment process. This subcommittee will be responsible for determining how the process will be implemented. Subcommittee members should include representation from diverse segments of the local public health system. If possible, at least one individual familiar with the Essential

Services should be recruited. Once the subcommittee is convened, members should review Local Public Health System Assessment steps and tools and plan how the activities will be implemented. Consider questions such as:

How will we conduct each activity during MAPP Committee meetings? MAPP provides tips for implementing activities. Evaluate whether these tips need to be customized to fit the needs of your community. The majority of Local Public Health System Assessment efforts will be devoted to responding to the performance measures instrument. Pilot and field test sites have found that 8-10 hours are required to complete the assessment for groups that include 12-20 participants. Most participants have preferred to hold two or more shorter sessions, rather than one long session.

What resources are necessary for conducting these activities? One vital resource is a facilitator.

Do we have adequate representation from all segments of the local public health system? Ideally, the MAPP Committee will include representation from throughout the local public health system. It may be useful, however, to consider whether important yet easily recognized organizations that contribute to the Essential Services within the community are missing. Substantial representation from community residents should also be sought. It may not be feasible for some larger communities to convene a committee representative of every possible organization; in such cases, it is important to decide early on exactly who needs to be at the table for the process to be effective.

How can we assure that results are accurately recorded and utilized? Local Public Health System Assessment discussions will be rich in content. In addition to the facilitator, consider identifying at least two recorders to be responsible for capturing the details of each meeting. When important points are made, write them on flip charts so participants can clarify their meaning and express their agreement. Also, because this process will span multiple meetings, briefly recap prior discussions at the beginning of each meeting. By doing this, participants recall the results of previous discussions and start off on the same foot.

Step 2 — Discuss the Essential Services and Identify Where Each Organization is Active

The first meeting of the Local Public Health System Assessment team orients participants — the entire MAPP Committee as well as any other participants — to the Essential Services and identifies where each organization is active. The facilitator should begin the meeting with a brief overview of the Essential Services and discuss example activities for each service. Participants, then, discuss the list of Essential Services until everybody understands what they entail. Once participants are oriented, gather information about each organization's activities related to the Essential Services. One way to do this is to hang pieces of flip chart paper around the room — one for each of the Essential Services. Give each participant a marker and ask participants to spend 15 minutes walking around the room recording where his/her organization is active. Participants should write the name of the organization and a very brief description (3-4 words) of its activity in that area. For example, flip chart notations might include:

Essential Service #3 (Inform, educate, and empower the public about health issues)

- American Lung Association Midwest Chapter – tobacco health education
- County Health Department – health education/promotion in several areas
- County Business Association – worksite health promotion

- St. Michael's Catholic Church – health and well-being classes for parishioners
- Health insurance Cooperative for Businesses – tobacco cessation directory
- Local Health Center collaborating with local health department, Planned Parenthood, and local library – health newsletter

At the end of the allotted time, the flip charts will offer a good overview of where each community organization is active in the Essential Services categories. The last part of the meeting should be devoted to a dialogue about the information recorded on the flip charts. Participants should discuss the Essential Services and how each organization contributes. Discussion questions might include:

1. What are we each doing? Are there any stories or anecdotes that illustrate how the Essential Services have been provided in a successful way? Are there any trends (increasing or decreasing involvement) among the Essential Services?
2. How do our activities fit together?
3. In which Essential Services categories are there many or few organizations involved? Is this a problem, an asset, or the nature of the activity? (For example, only a few organizations may be involved in Essential Service #6, Enforce Laws and Regulations that Protect Health and Ensure Safety.) The information on partner activities will facilitate the completion of the performance measurement tool. This process is also useful for identifying opportunities for collaboration, gaps in service provision and overlapping activities. The flow of the meeting might occur as described.

MAPP Committee Meeting – Local Public Health System Assessment Meeting One

Timeframe: approximately 1 hour

5 minutes: Welcome and opening announcements.

10 minutes: Overview of the Essential Services and general discussion of what they are.

15 minutes: Flip Chart Exercise – each participant notes where his/her organization is active and how.

25 minutes: Open discussion of the information on the flip charts. Arrive at a general understanding of where activities are occurring and where gaps exist.

5 minutes: Brief recap and discussion of the next activity – the performance measures instrument. Disseminate materials (the full instrument or just the model standards) for participants to review prior to the next discussion.

Step 3 – Discuss and Complete the Performance Measurement Instrument

The next step is for the MAPP Committee to discuss and complete the performance measures instrument. This will probably require two to three meetings. The facilitator should keep the discussion moving along to ensure that it does not get bogged down on any single indicator. The performance measurement instrument can be found at the CDC website www.cdc.gov/od/ocphp/nphpsp/. As mentioned previously, the instrument is based on the framework of the Essential Services. Definitions for Essential Services and other terminology are supplied throughout the tool. For each of the Essential Services there are two to five indicators —

broad issue areas within that Essential Service. Each indicator is further described by a “model standard,” a paragraph detailing the ideal capacity and activities of a local public health system for that indicator. Measures and sub-measures ask specific questions directly related to achieving the model standard. Likert scale questions are also included. For each indicator, the following two questions are included:

1. To what extent does the local public health agency achieve the model standard?
2. To what extent does the local public health system (including the local public health agency) achieve the model standard?

To respond to the instrument, the MAPP Committee should discuss the information in the tool. This discussion should address the perspectives of organizations conducting public health activities as well as community residents. Because the performance measurement instrument is fairly lengthy and may appear daunting at first blush, the MAPP Committee should carefully consider whether they would like all respondents to receive the entire document. Regardless of whether the entire document or only the model standards are shared, information should be distributed to the participants prior to the discussions. Ideally, participants will review the materials prior to the meeting and thus limit the amount of reading that occurs during the discussion.

Consider using one of the following two possible methods:

Share the full document with all participants – All participants receive the entire instrument and discuss the model standards, measures, and Likert questions. A facilitator moderates the discussion. To keep the discussion moving, the facilitator should limit the amount of time devoted to each model standard. The recorder(s) tracks all responses. The challenge with this method is that participants may spend time paging through the document, instead of engaging in an interactive discussion. Because the group is striving for consensus on all measures and questions, participants should be cautious of getting caught up in small details found in the wording of the measures. Using this method, all participants are fully aware of the questions and the discussion can stay on target more easily. Additionally the burden of assuring the responses is not entirely on the facilitator and recorders.

Share only the model standards with participants – All participants receive a document that includes only the model standards for each indicator. Only the facilitator and recorder(s) see the full text of the instrument, with all measures, sub-measures and Likert scale questions. This assists in ensuring that participants engage in the discussion, rather than flipping through the pages of a lengthy document. The facilitator leads participants through a discussion of each model standard. Through the discussion, responses to the measures and Likert scale questions emerge. The challenge in using this approach is that the discussion will need to be very detailed and the facilitator needs to be well prepared. The facilitator and recorder(s) will bear the burden of ensuring that the discussion hits upon the various aspects covered within the performance measures instrument. Ideally, the facilitator and recorder(s) should be from different organizations to achieve an unbiased balance in recording the responses.

Regardless of the method used, several sessions (two to three) may be needed to work through the entire tool. The facilitator, however, should keep the discussion moving along so that the discussion does not get bogged down and the instrument is worked through in a timely fashion.

After each discussion (or after the series of discussions), the recorder(s) and the facilitator should return to the computerized performance measurement instrument on the CDC website and input responses to the measures using the results of the discussion. By doing this, the community will automatically be submitting its responses to the National Public Health Performance Standards

Program. Tallied scores can be retrieved from the CDC website within the week and used to inform the community’s discussions. Scores also can be tracked over time to identify changes and trends.

Step 4 — Review the Results and Determine Challenges and Opportunities

The fourth step in the Local Public Health System Assessment is, perhaps, the most important, because it is at this stage that participants discuss the results and identify challenges and opportunities. Discuss the results of each indicator within the performance measurement instrument. Also consider the results of the flip chart exercise; these results should highlight activity levels and coordination among partners. Through consensus discussions, categorize each indicator into one of the following groups:

1. This activity is being well done. We should maintain our current level of effort in this area. (Success – maintain effort)
2. This activity is being done well, but can be cut back (i.e., has reached maintenance level, decreasing demand). We can withdraw some resources from this activity to devote to some of the higher priority activities. (Success – cut back resources.)
3. This activity requires improvement. More attention is needed in this area. (Challenge – requires increased activity)
4. This activity requires improvement. Better coordination among partners should occur. (Challenge – requires increased coordination). Put each category on a flip chart. Briefly revisit each indicator and determine where they should be categorized. Be careful not to include too many indicators under the two “challenges” categories. Consider where indicators or areas of activity can be lumped or consolidated. An example of results for several indicator may be as follows:

Success-Maintain Effort	Success – Cut Back Resources	Challenge – Requires Increased Coordination	Challenge – Requires Increased Activity
1.1 Population-based community health profile 2.3 Lab support	3.1 – health education- many organizations’ activities are overlapping – can be cut back in areas.	1.3– need to coordinate registries 3.2 – health promotion activities are disjointed	2.1 – more/better surveillance of health threats needed 2.2 and 2.4 need emergency response plan/ protocol for investigation of emergencies

Throughout this discussion, the recorder should capture specific comments related to each challenge and opportunity. These details will be useful in further fleshing out ideas when the challenges and opportunities are discussed in the Identify Strategic Issues phase. Using the results of the assessment and analysis, create a list of challenges and opportunities according to the four recommended categories. The list should be comprehensive enough to include the issues identified in the assessment, but small enough (i.e., 10-15 items) for the local public health system to address many of them. Use the Local Public Health System Assessment: Challenges and Opportunities Worksheet to record the findings. Include relevant details that emerged through the discussions. These may inform the identification of solutions or barriers.

Local Public Health System Assessment Challenges and Opportunities

Review the results of the Local Public Health System Assessment. Identify challenges and opportunities that have emerged. Record the information on the worksheet below. For each category, be sure to list relevant indicator numbers as well as a brief summary of the issue area.

This activity is being done well. We need to maintain our current level of effort in this area. (Success – maintain effort)	
<u>Indicator Numbers</u>	<u>Summary of Opportunity</u> - - - - -
This activity is being done well. We can withdraw some resources from this activity to devote to some of the higher priority activities. (Success – cut back resources.)	
<u>Indicator Numbers</u>	<u>Summary of Opportunity</u> - - - - -

This activity requires improvement. More activity needs to be done in this area. (Challenge – requires increased activity)	
<u>Indicator Numbers</u>	<u>Summary of Challenge</u>
	- - - -

This activity requires improvement. Better coordination needs to occur among partners. (Challenge – requires increased coordination).	
<u>Indicator Numbers</u>	<u>Summary of Challenge</u>
	- - - -