

Florida Assessment Initiative



Background

Assessment is the systematic collection, assembly, analysis, and dissemination of information about the health of a community, and is one of the core functions of public health. To strengthen the nation's assessment capabilities, CDC began the **Assessment Initiative (AI)** in 1992 in partnership with various state health departments. The AI supported the development of innovative systems and methods that improve access to health data and the way data are used to inform and guide leaders involved in planning, developing, and evaluating policies and interventions to improve the health of communities. The AI supports two focus areas:

Community health assessment practices: States develop and implement tools, strategies, and approaches to improve assessment practices at local public health agencies.

Data dissemination systems: States implement interactive Web-based data query systems for user-friendly analysis and dissemination of public health data.

Florida — Community Health Assessment Practices

Florida is one of the nine states currently receiving 5-year federal funding since 2007. Florida's AI project, or the COMPASS (Comprehensive Assessment, Strategic Success) initiative, aims to help communities "achieve health and quality of life by mobilizing partnerships and taking strategic action" through the following goals:

Goal 1: Provide access to tools and resources for comprehensive, systematic community health assessment and health improvement planning practice in Florida's 67 county health departments.

The COMPASS initiative provides training, technical assistance, and resources for local community health assessment practices. Florida's tools for practice are based mainly on the National Association of County and City Health Officials' (NACCHO) Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) framework, a community-driven strategic planning process for improving community health. Facilitated by public health leaders, MAPP helps communities apply strategic thinking to prioritize public health issues and identify resources to address them.

To meet workforce training needs on MAPP-based practice, the COMPASS initiative provides Web-accessible, self-paced learning tools, resource manuals, and practice examples. Online training modules have also been developed on how to use MAPP and the Community Health Assessment Resource Tool Set (CHARTS), a web-based data query system for accessing and interpreting community health data.

COMPASS initiative staff have actively presented their work at national conferences and also organized regional trainings on MAPP-related technical assistance and building and sustaining community partnerships. The Florida MAPP-based process has also been shared with the broader public health community, including 17 states. COMPASS initiative staff have provided consultation to state health departments in New Jersey, Colorado, and Nebraska, and to the U.S. Army Public Health Command (USAPHC). The USAPHC is currently field testing a replicated version of the Florida MAPP-based process on several bases across the country. COMPASS initiative staff also provided training at the U.S. Army's Annual Force Health Protection Conference in August 2010.

Goal 2: Community health assessment and health improvement planning practices are institutionalized and sustained in Florida's 67 county health departments.

The Florida MAPP-based process has been in place in Florida's 67 county health departments (CHDs) since 2004. CHD staff have participated in trainings to ensure competency in the process. Across the state, a total of 62 full-time equivalent staff positions at CHDs are engaged in some aspect of community health assessment and health improvement planning. In addition, all CHDs and the state health department have completed public health system assessments using the National Public Health Performance Standards.

To ensure practice institutionalization across the CHDs, the COMPASS initiative has worked to establish performance indicators for community health assessment and health improvement planning practice as part of the state agency's annual performance assessment of CHDs. Related measures are included in the regular performance evaluations of CHD directors and administrators.

On the Horizon

The COMPASS program continues to align Florida's community health assessment and health improvement planning practices with national initiatives including the implementation of public health performance standards for system assessment, development of a performance management system, collaboration with public health preparedness, and readiness for voluntary accreditation for state and local public health agencies. Project goals include efforts towards institutionalization and sustainability.

With community health assessment set to become a prerequisite and cornerstone in accreditation standards, the COMPASS initiative staff have contributed to and participated in the movement towards national voluntary accreditation of public health agencies.

Web Resources

The Florida MAPP Field Guide is a compendium of resources for community health assessment and improvement planning:

<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/COMPASS/Resources/FieldGuide/contentsFguide.htm>

CHARTS is a web-based data query system for accessing and interpreting community health data: www.floridacharts.com

Online training modules:

<http://www.floridacharts.com/charts/statguide.aspx> (CHARTS)

<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/COMPASS/Training/schedule-LM.htm> (Florida MAPP)