

# Illinois 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.

## Illinois — Data Dissemination Systems

Illinois is one of the nine states currently receiving 5-year federal funding since 2007. Illinois' AI project, the Illinois Health Data Dissemination Initiative (IHDDI), aims to strengthen the state's assessment capability through the following goals:

***Goal 1: Re-engineer the Illinois data dissemination system through an expanded and improved Web-based data query system.***

IHDDI staff have been working on developing and implementing a timely, flexible, and reliable Web-based data query system (WDQS) that measures, analyzes, and reports on the health status of Illinois residents using data from a variety of participating public and private data collectors and holders. This IQuery website was released to local health departments in Illinois in February 2011. The Illinois Public Health Institute facilitates the IHDDI as the agent of the Illinois Department of Public Health, and in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, and the Illinois Department of Human Services. IHDDI staff have consulted with other AI funded states for the purposes of sharing database design ideas, software code, and best practices for data display and user training.

***Goal 2: Assure that a broad range of users (i.e., state and local health departments and community-based organizations) understands and utilizes the WDQS for assessment purposes.***

IHDDI staff have built a feedback loop into the system to track and analyze initial usage and number of query runs, target bottlenecks, survey users, and report and facilitate use. IHDDI staff have developed online training and presentations, and conduct outreach events to target user events and meetings (e.g., regional and national conferences, coalition meetings, and professional groups).

## On the Horizon

IHDDI hopes to establish a software system that would be easily ported to and used by other state and local jurisdictions. The hallmark of the design will be an easy-to-use front-end query engine and customizable back-end process for data loading that will reduce the time and complexity of

loading data and reduce the barriers between data stewards and data users. As more datasets are added to the system and more health indicators are available for query, IHDDI anticipates that IQuery will help increase the number of users and the quality of public health information to improve population health outcomes in Illinois. It is a priority of the initiative to use assessment data to address racial, ethnic, and other health disparities within the state.

## Web Resources

The IQuery web-based data query system: [IQuery.Illinois.gov](http://IQuery.Illinois.gov)

More information about the IHDDI a state-wide effort and contact information:  
<http://www.iphionline.org/index.asp>

The Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs (IDPLAN) Data System continues to provide access to public health data for assessment and planning purposes:  
<http://app.idph.state.il.us/IPLANDataSystem.asp?menu=1>