

# Missouri 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.

## Missouri — Data Dissemination Systems

Missouri is one of the nine states currently receiving 5-year federal funding since 2007. Missouri's AI project aims to strengthen assessment capability through the following goals:

***Goal 1: Maintain, update, and expand the Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA) Web-based data dissemination system and static Community Data Profiles.***

The state health department created Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA), an interactive system that allows users to generate ad hoc data tables, graphs, and maps for various health conditions and to query by an assortment of geographic and demographic factors. MICA currently hosts 28 static Community Data Profiles and 23 interactive MICA datasets as well as applications for setting priorities and selecting intervention strategies. Local health departments rely on MICA when conducting health assessments and determining health priorities. MICA is a top source of local health statistics for Missourians. The AI project goals for MICA include updating existing data, expanding the number of topics and indicators, and developing and enhancing functionalities such as downloading and mapping.

***Goal 2: Evaluate, integrate, promote, and sustain MICA and the Community Data Profiles, for use by health practitioners and community health members within and outside Missouri.***

An evaluation survey on the MICA system was distributed to local public health departments in 2009 to measure the utility of the system and identify training needs. Based on the evaluation results, introductory and advanced MICA training courses for local public health department staff were developed. The statewide trainings also included staff from non-profit organizations and universities as space allowed. Additional trainings have been geared towards state health department employees. A total of six training sessions were conducted in 2009 and 11 sessions in 2010. Courses are currently being scheduled for summer 2011.

Training opportunities have been well received. Over 200 persons have attended at least one of the training sessions, with many attending both classes. Evaluation surveys were conducted following each session. One participant commented it was "the most helpful training I have gone to in a long time... [and] will be helpful when I do my county assessment."

The introductory MICA training handbook is available for download from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website and is easily adaptable for training on state data query systems other than MICA.

***Goal 3: Support assessment practice-related education at the Prevention Research Center in St Louis.***

The Missouri AI supports an Evidence-Based Decision Making course developed and taught by faculty with the Prevention and Research Center in St Louis. This course will continue to be offered once or twice annually if demand remains strong.

## **On the Horizon**

Missouri's AI project is focused on enhancing the current system so that it can be readily adapted by other state or local entities. The MICA tools were redesigned under the Missouri AI using open source technology which enhances the possibilities for its adoption.

Missouri also will focus on making the data tools more accessible to the public. A third training class is being developed for summer 2011. This class will utilize a workshop format where instructors and participants work together to develop and improve reports and presentations, incorporating the skills learned in all three courses.

In addition to the in-person trainings, staff plan to develop new on-line training modules that will be compartmentalized into small lessons. Persons needing assistance on a specific component of the MICA/Profile tools will be able to choose the appropriate module.

## **Web Resources**

Missouri's interactive data system MICA: <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/data/mica/MICA>

MICA online tutorial: <http://www.dhss.mo.gov/MICA/MICATutorialDemo.html>

MICA Community Health Assessment Training Handbook:  
<http://www.dhss.mo.gov/data/mica/MICA/CHAIPTraining.html>