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Commentary: A Public Health and Hospital System Collaboration for Conducting Community Health Assessments and Community Health Improvement Plans: Seven Hospital Systems in Oregon and Washington and Four County Public Health Departments in Oregon and One in Washington

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ABSTRACT

The following narrative describes the innovative partnership and approach to create comprehensive, meaningful, and coordinated community health assessments and community health improvement plans that fulfill the specific needs of hospital systems, local public health, and coordinated care organizations (Oregon's version of Accountable Care Organizations).

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A Public Health and Hospital System Collaboration for Conducting Community Health Assessments and Community Health Improvement Plans: Seven Hospital Systems in Oregon and Washington and Four County Public Health Departments in Oregon and One in Washington

The following narrative describes the innovative partnership and approach to create comprehensive, meaningful, and coordinated community health assessments and community health improvement plans that fulfill the specific needs of hospital systems, local public health, and coordinated care organizations (Oregon's version of Accountable Care Organizations).

Our Collaborative Approach

Two years ago, The Director of the Multnomah County Health Department in Oregon and the Executive Director of the Oregon Hospital Association met to discuss the upcoming need for several community health assessments and health improvement plans within our region. These included the new requirements for Hospitals and their IRS filings, the public health departments' requirements for voluntary accreditation and the desire to find a non-competitive, non-duplicative way to understand the needs of our region to achieve healthy communities. They recognized that the most efficient and effective approach would be to create a regional workgroup to address these needs. From that meeting local health care and public health leaders began to meet to identify what each partner would need from a Community Health Assessment and how they understood what such collaboration would mean. With start-up assistance from the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, the Four-County Community Health Needs Assessment Group (FCCHNA) was created. The FCCHNA is a large, self-organized, public-private collaborative comprised of the following organizations: Adventist Health, Kaiser NW, Legacy Health System, OHSU, Providence Health & Services, PeaceHealth, and Tuality Healthcare and the Public Health Administrators from the Oregon Counties of Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington along with Clark County, Washington. Together this group represents fourteen hospitals and four Local Public Health Authorities in Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington Counties (Oregon) and Clark County (Washington)

This public-private partnership reflects what has been recently cited in the March 2012 edition of *Health Progress* as "best practice" for community health needs assessment.¹ According to the Hilltop Institute in the article, these types of collaborations:

- Increase assessment quality;
- Reduce overall costs borne by all partners and the community at large;
- Lead to shared accountability for outcomes; and
- Promote trust and relationship building among hospitals, local health departments and the community at large.

The vision for this group is to align efforts to develop an accessible, real-time assessment of community health across the four county regions. This unified approach will eliminate duplicate efforts; lead to prioritization of needs, and enable joint efforts for implementing and tracking improvement activities.

¹ *Health Progress*. March-April 2012.

To support this vision, the FCCHNA is contracting with the Healthy Communities Institute (HCI)² for their Community Health Needs Assessment web system as a common assessment framework for stakeholders. This web system brings together data from multiple geographies and disparate sources and provides a dashboard of indicators that is constantly updated. The indicators include a combination of county, zip code, and census tract data and can be viewed by ethnicity, age, and gender. In addition, indicators can be compared across locations and disparities by ethnicity, age, gender and location can be identified.

The system aligns with Healthy People 2020 and the Oregon Health Improvement Plan indicators; provides a customizable landing page for each participating entity; links to data sources and best practices; and includes the ability to upload local data and reports. This system will free staff time to focus on the processes related to partnerships, vetting the quantitative data and collecting primary qualitative data from the community; and the programmatic activity necessary for advancing health in the region. This standard survey instrument and dataset has been vetted by representative public health epidemiologists and hospital community benefit leaders to meet the requirements of the four-county region.

The collaborative FCCHNA is also contracting with the Multnomah County Health Department (MCHD) to both manage the HCI contract and facilitate the community assessment project with the skills, support and work time of members of the FCCHNA workgroup. MCHD will facilitate the development of a process to assess, monitor, and improve the health of the people living in the four-county area through a community-driven approach that aims to 1) eliminate duplication of effort; 2) promote joint implementation of health needs assessment and health improvement strategies, and 3) rely on shared responsibility for monitoring progress on the population's health. The FCHNA will also strive to meaningfully engage community members that represent the diverse populations within the four counties served.

The resulting community health assessments and health improvement plans will strive to meet the participating 14 hospitals' ACA 990H IRS reporting requirements as well the assessment and planning requirements for the Local Public Health Authorities. In addition, the public web format for presentation of relevant quality community health statistics will create a unique public asset designed to inform and engage the broader community in the health status of the entire community. This collaborative approach will lead to the creation of an effective, sustainable process; stronger relationships between the hospitals, public health, and the Coordinated Care Organization; and meaningful community health assessments and health improvement plans that will improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

² <http://www.healthycommunitiesinstitute.com/>