Community Health Indicators: A Users’ Guide

Measuring Achievement of Better Health in Communities
What is an Indicator?

What Makes a Good Indicator?

• Valid
  – Clearly understood connection to the change you want

• Accessible
  – Easy to obtain, use and communicate

• Meaningful
  – Geographically specific
  – Repeatedly measured

• Useful and usable in some way
  – Used across sectors/partners/projects
  – Benchmarks or comparisons
Commonly Used Health Indicators & Examples of Data Sources

• **Health status**— Morbidity (sickness) and mortality (death) data.

• **Health behavior**— Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS.)

• **Health care**— MHDO Insurance claims, hospital discharge data.

• **Health care resources**— Area Resource Files, quality scorecards.

• **Health policy environment**— Community factors and policies

• **Other community factors**— Census data on income, education and employment.

• **Environment**— Public Health Tracking Network.
Data Types

• Quantitative or Qualitative
• Administrative data
  – Operating data
  – Routinely collected program data
  – Innovative use of proxies: Ca stage, ruptured appendix
• Vital statistics and disease reporting
• Biometrics
• Surveys
  – National or statewide
  – Ad hoc
Where Does the Indicator Fit?

Planning phase
- What can be achieved? What needs to be changed to achieve it?
  - Identify the administrative & financial policies needed
    - Policies
    - Resources
    - Organisation
  - Identify education, skills & ecology required
    - Predisposing factors
    - Enabling factors
    - Reinforcing factors
  - Identify desirable outcomes:
    - Behavioural
    - Environmental
    - Epidemiological
    - Social

Evaluation phase
- What can be learned? What can be adjusted?
  - Process:
    - Why are there gaps between what was planned and what is occurring?
    - What are the relations between the components of the programme?
  - Impact:
    - What are the programme's intended and unintended consequences?
    - What are its positive and negative effects?
  - Outcome:
    - Did the programme achieve its targets?

From Data to Action

• Where are we starting?
• What can be done to create change?
• What outside factors might confuse the result?
• How much improvement is possible?
  – How can it be measured?
• What steps will it take?
  – Can the steps be measured too?
• Will partners share data?
Some Strategies

• Lucky you: an indicator exists
  – Find and use existing source

• No one measures it
  – Find a proxy that changes when it changes
  – Are you sure? Check with your partners for other data

• It isn’t measured regularly/consistently/at our level
  – Find a baseline to identify/compare and measure the size of your own problem
  – Supplement with baseline and follow-up using THEIR method/survey
Using the Guide 1: Access to Care

• 4.1 Get to know the basics
  – County Health Rankings (7.1)
  – SHNAPP (7.3)

• BRFSS (always check it) (7.12)

• 4.4 Payment and Finance
  – Information about coverage and usual source of care

• 4.5 Delivery system
  – Health centers in Maine
Using the Guide II:
Substance Abuse Prevention/Treatment

• 4.3 Specific Health Conditions
  – BRFSS (7.12)
  – SEOW/ substance Abuse Trends (7.9)

• 4.2 Specific populations
  – Youth (MIYHS 7.14)

• 4.4 Social Determinants
  – Uniform Crime Report
Using the Guide III: Social Isolation/Integration

• Identify possible proxy measures
  – Specific health indicators
  – Employment, education, transportation
  – Community-level disparities or deficits
• If you are doing your own data collection, use existing tools
• What do partners track?
Using the Guide: Etc.

• Mental health
  – Collections –SAMHS sources (4.1)
  – Specific Health Conditions (4.3)

• Healthy Food
  – BRFSS (7.12)
  – Social Determinants (4.4)
    • USDA products
Questions?

• FMI contact
  Kala Ladenheim via Charles Dwyer

kala@mainehealthpolicy.info,
include MeHAF /ABHC in subject line
Is this source right for you?
What to ask

• Who collects it?
• Who is it about?
• Where is it collected?
• When (how often) is it collected?
• Why is it collected?
• How easy will it be to use for your purpose?