



Local Health Department-Community Health Center Collaboration Toolkit



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Purpose of the Tools

LHDs and CHCs serve similar populations and play vital roles in their communities. Working together, they can better serve their communities as efficiently as possible through better coordination and an increased focus on wellness and prevention.

This set of tools is designed to support collaborations between local health departments (LHDs) and community health centers (CHCs) to increase access to and quality of critical services for underserved populations. From providing diabetes and cancer screenings to mental health promotion and drug treatment services and much more, LHDs and CHCs are critical safety-net providers who serve the needs of populations that are subject to health disparities and health challenges. By working together, LHDs and CHCs can make more effective use of limited resources and help make healthcare work better for everyone by improving healthcare delivery through better coordination and an increased focus on wellness and prevention (see “List of Resources” for a link to the CDC’s Community Health Improvement Navigator). This will enable LHD and CHCs to achieve the Triple Aim of limiting healthcare costs, improving quality, and effectively serving populations in need, and to play a lead role in health care delivery system reform. A NACCHO Research Brief (see “List of Resources”) found that LHDs and CHCs that collaborate are better able to serve their local populations and demonstrate to funders that their work deserves support.

How to Use This Toolkit

- Tool 1 is designed to assess potential opportunities for new or expanded LHD-CHC collaborations in your community. If the LHD and CHC already have a relationship, you may want to work together to complete the worksheet. If there is a limited or no relationship, you may want to complete the column covering community needs and assess what your organization is doing before engaging your potential partner. That way, you will have some information for starting the conversation.
- Tool 2 is for planning activities that help build or enhance a partnership between LHDs and CHCs. If the relationship is limited, consider focusing on building the relationship before moving to collaborative action. In communities with multiple CHCs, the LHD may want to use this tool to reach out to CHCs they have yet to engage to explore areas in which they can work on together. If there is already a strong relationship between LHDs and CHCs in your community, you may not need this tool at all. However, if you have a developing relationship, you may want to use this simultaneously with Tool 3 and develop strategies to learn more about each other’s work and look for additional opportunities for collaboration.
- Tool 3 is for planning joint activities to address the opportunities and health challenges you identified in Tool 1.

Tool 1: Collaborative Opportunities Assessment Tool

Identify areas where there are opportunities for collaboration between LHDs and CHCs

This tool uses existing community health assessments and improvement plans, and reviews LHD and CHC activities to help identify areas of potential collaboration.

The Collaborative Opportunities Assessment Tool (Tool 1) is designed to help you explore possible areas of LHD-CHC collaboration.

The areas listed on the tool were selected because they are areas in which LHDs and CHCs have collaborated in different parts of the country. There is also space to add other areas you may be interested in exploring. In some cases, partners might decide not to focus on one of the areas listed, and leave a row blank.

The starting point is listing the community needs around particular services or community challenges. In most communities, there is likely to be a community health needs assessment and/or community health improvement plan developed by the LHD, CHC, or a local nonprofit hospital and/or other assessments that describe the key needs or areas of opportunity (see “List of Resources” for a link to the CDC’s Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Planning webpage, which has a wide variety of resources related to community health assessment and planning). Those assessments/plans should be reviewed and some of the key findings briefly summarized in the appropriate row.

Each organization may want to develop a summary of the activities it is carrying out under each service or

challenge, or this could be done as a group activity. It is up to you to decide what you think is most useful. If collaboration is already taking place, it can be listed in each column or just noted in one. As indicated above, you may not want to include every service or challenge area, though doing so may lead you to collaborations you had not previously considered.

Once the community priorities and opportunities have been identified and summaries of each organization’s activities have been incorporated into the grid, the next step is for CHC and LHD representatives to discuss what the organizations could do together to improve healthcare delivery in the community. In some communities, one cross-agency group might do this for all the identified services or community challenges; in other communities, particularly with larger health departments or CHCs, there may be programs or divisions focused on some of the service areas or community challenges. Different groups or subcommittees might tackle different areas. In any case, it is always good to have individuals in different positions in the organization represented in order to get different perspectives from executive leaders, managers, and front-line workers.



Tool 1: Collaborative Opportunities Assessment Tool

Community/communities:

LHD name(s):

CHC name(s):

Services/Community Challenges	What are some key community priorities and opportunities in this area?	What is the LHD doing in this area?	What is the CHC doing in this area?	What (else) could the LHD and CHC do together to more effectively use limited resources and improve healthcare delivery through better coordination and greater focus on wellness and prevention?
Healthy heart promotion, activities in support of the Million Hearts® campaign to prevent heart attacks and strokes				
Diabetes prevention and control (interventions for those with diabetes and pre-diabetes)				
Cancer screening and support (e.g., activities in support of American Cancer Society goal of 80% colorectal screening by 2018)				
Healthy weight/healthy living initiatives to prevent obesity				

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Community/communities:

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Services/Community Challenges	What are some key community priorities and opportunities in this area?	What is the LHD doing in this area?	What is the CHC doing in this area?	What (else) could the LHD and CHC do together to more effectively use limited resources and improve healthcare delivery through better coordination and greater focus on wellness and prevention?
Family planning; teen pregnancy prevention initiatives				
HIV/AIDs prevention, testing, and treatment				
Environmental health (e.g., lead exposure; asthma)				
Preventive dental health care, including application of dental sealants				

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Services/Community Challenges	What are some key community priorities and opportunities in this area?	What is the LHD doing in this area?	What is the CHC doing in this area?	What (else) could the LHD and CHC do together to more effectively use limited resources and improve healthcare delivery through better coordination and greater focus on wellness and prevention?
Mental health promotion, including depression screening and follow-up				
Substance use including alcohol, tobacco, and illegal and prescription drugs				
Immunizations for children, youth, and adults				
Healthy births and infant mortality prevention				

Tool 1: Collaborative Opportunities Assessment Tool

Community/communities:

LHD name(s):

CHC name(s):

Services/Community Challenges	What are some key community priorities and opportunities in this area?	What is the LHD doing in this area?	What is the CHC doing in this area?	What (else) could the LHD and CHC do together to more effectively use limited resources and improve healthcare delivery through better coordination and greater focus on wellness and prevention?
Emergency preparedness				
Interpretation and translation services				
Social determinants of health				
Other area(s) (specify):				

Tool 2: Partnership Development Action Plan

Create an action plan to build or enhance a partnership between LHDs and CHCs

This tool is for listing actions that will be taken to build or strengthen a partnership between LHDs and CHC.

LHD and CHC partnerships must be nurtured.

Building an effective partnership requires that people in each organization have some understanding of what the other does and what the possibilities are for working together. Even in cases where LHDs and CHCs have worked together, there may be an opportunity or need to conduct some partnership-building activities if the partnership is to reach its full potential to most effectively serve community health needs.

Some of the partnership-building activities that LHD and CHC partners have engaged in include: instituting regular meetings between executive leadership in each organization; having representatives from the other organization serve on the board or advisory group of the LHD or CHC; holding an open house in which managers and staff from each organization have an opportunity to learn about the programs covered by their partner or potential partner; and having representatives from an organization or state association present an overview of what CHCs or LHDs do and the regulatory framework under which that they operate.

Whether you are trying to form a new partnership or looking for new or different opportunities for an existing partnership, you may want to create a plan for activities that focus on partnership development. Activities in this plan may serve to complement your collaborative action plan that you can develop using Tool 3. For example, as part of your partnership development, you may want to set up a process for reviewing funding opportunities to assess whether a joint application could be used to support collaborative work to improve community health. In some communities, the LHD and CHC have joined with the leading local hospital to assess funding opportunities and to determine who is best suited to take the lead for an opportunity, or whether it is more effective to collaborate as a team. Since funders often encourage collaboration, combining efforts (whether

LHD or CHC, or including a hospital or other partner) might enhance the communities' opportunity to obtain funding.

The template for this tool allows you to list actions; cite resources you need to carry out the activity; identify the responsible party at each organization; create a timeline for completion; and a column for reporting progress. You should select one or two activities to work on at a time, and hold regular check-ins to assess progress toward completing the activity or goal. Some communities may find it useful to just list one broad activity with a timeline (e.g., hold an open house at the CHC for LHD staff) while others may want to break things down into a series of tasks (e.g., plan an agenda, schedule an open house, hold a debriefing).



Tool 2: Partnership Development Action Plan

Goal: Partnership formation or enhancement

Actions What actions do you plan to undertake to strengthen the partnership between your LHD and CHC?	Resources Needed What kind of funding, facilities, and expertise is needed to carry out the action?	Responsible Parties Who will take the lead or provide key support (should include someone from each organization)	Timeline When should the action be completed?	Progress Report What is the current status of this activity?
Example Institute quarterly meetings between LHD medical director and CHC medical director	Organizations will alternate as host of the meeting	Each organization will designate a staff person to accompany the director to the meeting and who will be responsible for ensuring that there is follow-up on action items	First meeting will be held the Tuesday after Labor Day	Meeting has been agreed to, staff have been identified, and a room has been secured at the LHD for the first meeting

Tool 3: Collaborative Action Planning Tool

Create an action plan for collaborative activity designed to improve healthcare delivery in the community

This tool is for developing an action plan to address areas of community health that could benefit from collaboration between LHDs and CHCs.

Once available opportunities have been assessed and a partnership is developed, it is time to start making plans to improve community health.

CHCs and LHDs that have identified areas where collaboration could benefit their community should select a goal that benefits the community, and then identify the steps needed to achieve this goal. Potential activities range from improving referral protocols to developing a funding proposal to implementing a new collaborative program. It is useful to start with a limited number of strategies based on the capacity of the organizations to successfully carry them out. Collaborative activities that succeed are likely to lead to more collaboration in the future.

It is useful when developing strategies to create a goal that focuses on what you want to change in the community; for example, reducing the incidence of



diabetes. You can then develop SMART objectives (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) for the goal, such as reduce the incidence of diabetes by 20 percent over the next three years, or increase the number of pre-diabetics enrolled in evidence-based programs by 120 people over the next year. Your community may already have a community health improvement plan (CHIP) that has goals that you might want to incorporate into your collaboration action plan. CHCs have a variety of measures they are required to report on annually, and your collaboration plan might include efforts to address them (see “List of Resources” for CHC Clinical and Financial Performance Measures).

Once you have goals, objectives, and strategies, you can list actions that need to be taken to carry out the strategy, the resources you need, the responsible party from each organization, when the action will be completed, and an indicator that the action has been completed (e.g., meeting held, proposal submitted). You may want to engage community representatives in the process to help define and execute the activities. The planning grid includes a column for you to report on the status of the activity. Action plans should be reviewed whenever a collaborative group gets together to assess what progress has been made and, sometimes, to decide that they need to be revised because new actions are required or a change in circumstances requires a change in strategy.

The tool includes room for two strategies designed to pursue a common goal; for example, implementing a diabetes prevention program for pre-diabetics in the community and improving health education for communities at high-risk of diabetes. These can be addressed in both places in the tool, in case you have the capacity to address multiple goals. Even if you focus on one goal in the short-term, you can begin planning for additional goals as opportunities develop and collaboration strengthens and succeeds.

Tool 3: Collaborative Action to Promote Community Health Action Plan

Goal:

SMART Objective:

Strategy:

Actions What steps do you need to take to achieve the objective and goal for this strategy?	Resources Needed What kind of funding, facilities, and expertise is needed to carry out the action and where will it come from?	Responsible Parties Who from each organization will take the lead or provide key support?	Timeline By when should the action be completed?	Activity Outcome/Output Measures How will you know the action succeeded or is complete?	Progress Report What is the current status of this activity?

Strategy 2:

Actions What steps do you need to take to achieve the objective and goal for this strategy?	Resources Needed What kind of funding, facilities, and expertise is needed to carry out the action and where will it come from?	Responsible Parties Who from each organization will take the lead or provide key support?	Timeline By when should the action be completed?	Activity Outcome/Output Measures How will you know the action succeeded or is complete?	Progress Report What is the current status of this activity?

List of Resources

Resources that can help support collaboration between LHDs and CHCs

Resources mentioned at various points in the toolkit that can be helpful in supporting collaborative efforts between LHDs and CHCs.

CDC Community Health Improvement Navigator

This website is a resource for people or organizations that lead or participate in community health improvement efforts. There are links to a variety of resources related to collaboration as well as a database of interventions for a variety of risk factors related to the most common causes of death in the U.S. Link: <http://www.cdc.gov/chinav/index.html>.

NACCHO Research Brief

Partnerships between Local Health Departments and Community Health Centers in Pursuit of the Triple Aim. This research brief developed by NACCHO and Altarum Institute summarizes the findings of a study of collaboration between LHDs and CHCs. The brief describes the extent of collaboration and some examples of successful collaborations. The brief is available for free download at <http://eweb.naccho.org/prd/?na703pdf>.

CDC Community Health Assessment & Health Improvement Planning Resource Page

This page provides links to a variety of resources explaining the different kinds of assessments that are typically conducted in communities, along with a variety of tools and resources related to assessment and planning. Link: <http://www.cdc.gov/stltpublichealth/cha/>.

CHC Clinical and Financial Performance Measures

CHCs are evaluated on a set of performance measures emphasizing health outcomes and the value of care delivered. These measures can be addressed by collaborative action with LHDs. The measures are described here: <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/qualityimprovement/performance/index.html>.



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About NACCHO

The National Association of County and City Health Officials is the voice of nearly 3,000 local health departments across the country. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to ensure the safety of the water we drink, the food we eat, and the air we breathe.

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1100 17th Street NW, Seventh Floor, Washington, DC 20036

202-783-5550

<http://www.naccho.org>

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Mary Kate Allee, MPH

Senior Director, Transformation and Workforce

202-507-4190

mallee@naccho.org

Peter L. Holtgrave, MPH, MA

Senior Director, Performance Improvement

202-507-4234

pholtgrave@naccho.org



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