

The Governance Institute

Steps for Conducting a CHNA

To conduct a CHNA, a hospital or health system must complete the following steps:¹

1. **Define the community it serves.** This includes the geographic area, target populations, and principal functions, such as a focus on a particular specialty area or targeted disease.
2. **Assess the health needs of that community.** Solicit and consider input received from individuals who represent the broad interests of the community, including those with special knowledge of or expertise in public health. Many methods exist for conducting an assessment, but generally include:²
 - Stakeholder meetings
 - Community focus groups
 - Surveys
 - Interviews with community leaders
 - Population health and other health-related data
3. **Document the CHNA in a written report** that is adopted for the hospital or health system by the board (or other authorized body). The report must include:
 - A definition of the community served and a description of how the community was determined.
 - A description of the process and methods used to conduct the CHNA.
 - A description of how the hospital or health system solicited and considered the input it received.
 - A prioritized description of the significant health needs of the community identified through the CHNA.
 - A description of resources potentially available to address the significant health needs identified through the CHNA.
 - An evaluation of the impact of any actions that were taken to address the significant health needs identified in the immediately preceding CHNA.
4. **Make the CHNA report widely available to the public.**

In addition to documenting its CHNA, a hospital must adopt a written implementation strategy. This strategy should outline how the hospital will address the identified significant health needs over the next few years. The organization will also need to determine measurable objectives for continually tracking its efforts in this area. Also, if the hospital determines that it will not address a particular significant health need, the written strategy must explain why the hospital does not intend to do so.

The CHNA is critical to improving SDOH because it provides the hospital or health system with comprehensive information about the community's current health status and issues that need to

¹ IRS, "Community Health Needs Assessment for Charitable Hospital Organizations—Section 501(r)(3)."

² Center for Rural Health, "Community Health Needs Assessment."

be addressed so the board knows how and where resources should be allocated to best meet community needs and can create a detailed, measurable plan for improvement.

What are the potential consequences of not conducting a proper CHNA or adopting and adhering to an implementation plan?

- Loss of tax-exempt status under IRC Section 501(c)(3)
- Civil penalties under the Internal Revenue Code
- Loss of real estate tax exemption
- Liability of the directors for breach of their fiduciary duties to those they serve

This is an excerpt from The Governance Institute's Elements of Governance®, [The Board's Role in Addressing Social Determinants of Health](#).