
Facilitating Communities in Designing
and Using Their Own Community
Health Impact
Assessment Tool

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People Assessing Their Health

- Health promotion/community development process
- Facilitates communities in developing their own community health impact assessment tool (CHIAT)
- Assess the potential impact of any policy, program or project on the health of a community.

PATH History

- Designed and used in three communities in Northeastern Nova Scotia, Canada, 1996.
- Decentralization of the Canadian and Nova Scotian health care system.
- Communities becoming involved in decision making at the local level.
- Has since been used by groups in Canada and India

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

- Health impact assessment may be highly technical and require sophisticated technology and expertise. But it can also be a simple, highly practical process, accessible to ordinary people, and one that helps a community come to grips with local circumstances that need changing for better health. (Mittlelmark, 2001, pg 1)

Community Health Impact Assessment (CHIA)

- A way to bring the health concerns of the community forward in discussions about public policy.
- Useful in examining any policy, program, project or service that will affect the population as a whole as well as specific groups within the community.

CHIA Allows the community to:

- Estimate the effect that a particular activity will have on the health and well-being of the community.
- Identify things to do that will maximize the benefits and minimize the harm of that activity.

The PATH Process

- Step 1: Answers the question “What does it take to make and keep our community healthy?”
- Uses a structured dialogue, story-telling technique.
- Facilitator guides the group through a series of questions to delve deeper into the stories.
- What happened in the story?
- Why did it happen?
- So what does this mean?
- Now what do we do about it?

The PATH Process con't

- Step 2: develop a vision of a healthy community
- Step 3; Design the community health impact assessment tool.
- Step 4 Test the tool.
- Step 5 Make a plan to use the tool.

Lessons Learned: PATH Process

- Process of discussion and analysis is rooted in people's lived experience.
- Results in community members increasing their understanding of the SDOH.
- People able to identify priorities for the development of their communities.
- Builds the capacity to do health planning and engage in decision making at the community level.

Lessons Learned: PATH Process

- Development of CHIAT must be based on a broad vision of health.
- Needs to involve people from many sectors of society.
- Fosters networking within and between communities.
- The tool is as representative of the community as those sectors that inform its development.

Lessons Learned: PATH Process

- The process of developing and using the tool are important health promotion processes.
- Need to balance these two activities.
- May be possible to adapt a tool for use in another context.
- An adapted tool may not have the same relevance to the community since they have not shared in sharing stories and developing their own tool.

Lessons Learned: PATH Process

- A group involved in using the tool that has not been involved in developing the tool requires a facilitated process to raise awareness of the broad concept of health.
- Development and use of the tool must respect community timelines.
- Process requires funding, facilitation and administrative support.
- Having a clear goal motivates people to stay involved in the process.

Lessons Learned: Using a CHIAT

- Using a CHIAT results in local knowledge being validated.
- This is very empowering for community members.
- A broader system of decision-making must also value local knowledge.
- Access to other quantitative data may be required for informed decision making.
- CHIA allows for different perspectives to be brought forward in a respectful manner.

Lessons Learned

- Not all communities that have developed tools have continued to use them.
- However, the communities have used the techniques and knowledge for community development endeavors.
- In addition to identifying the benefits and harmful effects of a project, program or policy the tool can be used for advocacy purposes.

Conclusion

- CHIA provides a systematic process for raising important questions and raising the concerns of different sectors of the community.
- The PATH Process is an empowering process for community members.
- The PATH process provides a tool that helps communities to achieve and maintain their health and well-being.