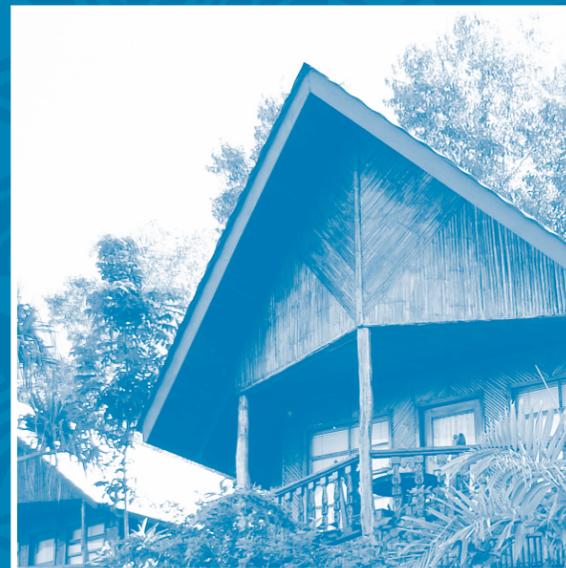


MODULE 1:

ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY



MODULE 1: ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVES

AFTER COMPLETING THIS SECTION, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

1. Identify ways to involve the community in the community assessment.
2. Identify community strengths and weaknesses.
3. Identify community resources.

INTRODUCTION

A community assessment is the first and most important step in planning diabetes awareness and education activities, but it is the most overlooked step and is often skipped. It involves the gathering and organizing of accurate information (both community opinions and data) to understand a community and its needs, conditions, and situation. Knowing your community will help you to plan a course of action for your community.

Remember the time when our ancestors used canoes to make long voyages across the sea? Doing a community assessment is like finding out how the conditions are for a canoe voyage. Before you even map out your voyage, you have to find out if there are trees and tools available to make a canoe; if there is someone who knows how to build a canoe; if there are people available to go on the voyage; and if the wind and sea conditions will allow the voyage to be made. Finding out about these conditions will affect the way you map out your voyage.

In the same way, your planning will depend on the conditions and situation of your community. This is why gathering information about your community (description, resources, strengths, weaknesses, programs, and diabetes data) before you begin your planning is important. People,

by nature, are action oriented, but it is important not to neglect this assessment step in the rush to get your activities up and running.

WHY DO A COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT?

- To make sure that the activities you are planning are the ones that the community wants and needs;
- To gain guidance and acceptance from the community;
- To base your activities on accurate information, data, and facts and not on assumptions or guesses;
- To provide justification for the activities; and
- To involve the community early in the planning process.

SECTION 1: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

WHY AND HOW DO WE GET OUR COMMUNITY INVOLVED?

It is important to get the community involved from the very first step in planning. This means that community members need to play an active role in assessing their own community.

Community involvement is important for many reasons. Community involvement and participation will result in:

- Culturally appropriate solutions to problems;
- Greater community ownership;
- Improved community organization;
- Greater skill in solving other problems;
- Self-confidence and pride leading to increased self-reliance; and
- Support and acceptance from the community.

Develop a list of key individuals and organizations and contact them by phone or in person. When involving the community, it is important to let the people know:

1. WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO:

EXAMPLE

- Find out why current diabetes education programs are not working; and
- Find out what types of diabetes education and awareness activities people want.

2. WHY YOU PLAN TO DO IT:

EXAMPLE

- You want to help people learn more about diabetes;
- You want to start a community awareness and education program to help control diabetes; and
- You want to start a diabetes awareness and education program that people want.

3. WHAT ROLE THEY CAN PLAY:

EXAMPLE

- They can help by explaining how diabetes is affecting their community; and
- They can explain what types of diabetes education and awareness activities they would like in the community.

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

WHAT STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES DO WE HAVE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

Knowing your community’s strengths will allow you to maximize the impact of your diabetes awareness and education activities. By identifying the community’s strengths, you and your team will be able to use them and focus your efforts toward meaningful activities.

It is also important to identify factors that get in the way of diabetes awareness and education efforts in the community.

Take into account the following factors that might contribute to your community’s strengths and weaknesses:

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS: Individual strengths/weaknesses in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, personality, and behavior.

EXAMPLE

Strength: Generosity

Weakness: Low awareness of diabetes

GROUP/COMMUNITY FACTORS: Strengths/weaknesses of groups such as family, friends, and peers; social or cultural norms and standards.

EXAMPLE

Strength: Many women’s groups

Weakness: Few women’s groups that focus on health

PUBLIC POLICY FACTORS: Local, state, and national regulations, policies, and laws that promote/hinder good health.

EXAMPLE

Strength: Free health care

Weakness: Not enough money and resources for health education activities

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS: Environmental conditions that promote/hinder health education.

EXAMPLE

Strength: Good weather for outdoor fairs and activities

Weakness: Limited infrastructure material for printing and storage

ECONOMIC FACTORS: Economic conditions that promote/hinder good health.

EXAMPLE

Strength: Low cost of advertisements (newspaper, radio, etc.)

Weakness: Few media outlets

Example 1.1

Community Strengths	Community Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational support from government, churches, and community organizations. • Faa Samoa. • Good educational system. • Year-round walking climate. • Year-round planting climate. • Reasonable accessibility to health care services. • Reasonable costs for health care programs and services. • Good transportation system. • High potential for agriculture. • Cultural values related to care: sick people are well looked after by family and friends. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of “experts.” • “Brain Drain”—educated and qualified people moving out of the country. • People don’t farm because it’s a cash economy. • Physical isolation of American Samoa. • People think being overweight is “normal.” • Low awareness of and education in diabetes. • Health problems are not discussed because of shame. • Too much “junk” food and very few healthy eating choices.

* Information from the Pacific Diabetes Training in American Samoa.

Exercise 1.1 (form available in Appendix D, pg. 83)

Community Strengths	Community Weaknesses

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY RESOURCES

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RESOURCES IN OUR COMMUNITY?

Knowing your community’s resources will aid you in designing effective diabetes awareness and education activities. Some examples of community resources are:

HUMAN RESOURCES

People are a community’s most valuable asset. It is important to identify community members and leaders who have participated in past community-based activities. Can you also identify people with potential

(key individuals who can assist in future activities)? Who can you count on for volunteer time? Who can provide capital (financial) assistance? Who can provide technical assistance (training, skills, or expertise)?

Work with your group to identify people in the community whose support will assist with the planning and implementation of your educational activities. Some suggestions are listed below:

- People with diabetes from the community;
- People with specific skills or knowledge about diabetes, such as doctors, nurses, nutritionists, Diabetes Control Program staff, traditional healers;
- Community leaders (elected officials, civic group leaders) who make key decisions, are respected, or have influence over community resources;
- People who are active in volunteer organizations; and
- Spokespersons for special interest groups, such as women’s groups, church groups, or senior citizen groups.

AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND ASSOCIATIONS

Identify all organizations that can potentially assist in addressing diabetes in your community. Which organizations can provide financial assistance? Which organizations can provide technical assistance (training, skills, or expertise)? Below are some organizations to consider:

- Citizens/neighborhood associations;
- Cultural organizations;
- Financial institutions (banks and credit unions);
- Government organizations (state diabetes control programs and women, infant, and children’s programs);
- Local businesses;
- Media agencies (newspapers, newsletters, TV stations, radio stations);

- Private and nonprofit organizations (colleges, universities, hospitals);
- Professional organizations (physicians' or nurses' associations);
- Public institutions (schools, community health centers, libraries);
- Religious organizations (churches, YMCA/YWCA);
- Village councils; and
- Women's groups.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Does your community have health promotion activities and intervention programs? Find out which programs are available in your community to support your diabetes awareness and education activities. Which health care services are available for people with diabetes?

- Annual physical exams;
- Diabetes screening;
- Foot and eye exams;
- Diabetes support groups;
- Diabetes education;
- Physical activity (exercise) programs;
- Nutrition/diet programs;
- Prenatal care for pregnant women with diabetes;
- Blood tests, including A1C;
- Pneumonia and flu vaccinations.

Example 1.2

COMMUNITY RESOURCES ¹

INDIVIDUALS:

- **Dr. Dan Perin**, Office of the Governor, Pohnpei State (policy research and analysis and grant-writing)
- **Dr. Richard Womack**, College of Micronesia (grant-writing)
- **Ron Maroni** (regional planning and development)

ORGANIZATIONS:

- **Micronesia Human Resource Development Center** (grant-writing and program development)
- **Micronesian Seminar** (community development, video production, public awareness, and education)

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

- **Hospital** (90 beds)
- **Diabetes Control Program**

¹Community resources in Pohnpei, FSM

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

INDIVIDUALS:

ORGANIZATIONS:

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

SUMMARY OF MODULE 1: ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY

HAS YOUR GROUP COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING?

- Identified ways to involve the community in the community assessment.
- Identified community strengths and weaknesses.
- Identified community resources.