



Description: The Arkansas Assessment Initiative will strive to improve the processes and outcomes of community health assessments to enable us to complete community health assessments that yield the most comprehensive, valid, and reliable picture of the health in all of our communities.

The **Arkansas Assessment Initiative**, funded by a Center for Disease Control (CDC) grant, is a cooperative effort that joins people and organizations in the search of the best possible information concerning community health assessments. Assessment is a core function of public health and refers to the systematic collection, assembly, analysis, and dissemination of information about the health of a community.

ADH's Hometown Health Initiative (HHI) has accomplished the important task over the past ten years of collecting and sharing information about the health of our communities on the local county level. Although a large variety of current national and state data is easily obtained through web channels, this information may not be appropriate for multiple county level uses and more specific information may be required to meet that community's specific needs.

HHI combines the traditionally gathered census demographic information and information gathered through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) and the Youth Risk Factor Survey (YRBS) to produce a useful data set for each county. These county level surveys are based on English language proficiency and traditional (land-line) telephone access. This creates a challenge as throughout Arkansas (and nationally) cell phone usage has increased, while fewer people have land lines at home. Additionally the survey is typically completed in English, which may exclude information from our many migrant and immigrant residents that may not speak English. Beginning this year the survey research center did have Spanish language interviewers available.

A basic or baseline understanding of the community's health is vitally important before any new policies or interventions are implemented. Without accurate information on the health status of a community and a clear understanding of the available resources, we cannot make informed decisions about which areas should have priority, which policies might be effective, or which interventions might be possible to implement. Cost and effectiveness must be evaluated to determine how and which programs are supported and continued.

To assist in improving our understanding of health status and disease burden in all components of our diverse population, community health assessments must be adapted to address the culture and language of each community being surveyed. Arkansas' unique challenges lie in our poor rural areas and with the growing Hispanic and Marshallese populations. The Arkansas Assessment Initiative will strive to improve the processes and outcomes of community health assessments to enable us to complete community health assessments that yield the most comprehensive, valid, and reliable picture of the health in all of our communities. This five year CDC grant funding not only enables ADH and HHI to create the Arkansas Assessment Initiative, but also to provide the mechanism with which to share the information gained concerning improved community health assessments processes with other states and organizations so that they may be assisted in successfully meeting this challenging aspect of Public Health.