

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Nonprofit hospitals and community health needs assessments

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Background: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 requires all hospitals filing as 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) every three years. Many Georgia hospitals published their first CHNAs in 2012 and 2013. The goals of this research and policy project were to assess compliance with the new CHNA requirements for nonprofit hospitals, provide recommendations to hospital administrators and policymakers, and encourage hospitals to engage in meaningful ways with community-based organizations and local public health departments in the next round of CHNAs.

Methods: With funding from the Healthcare Georgia Foundation, Georgia Watch reviewed the initial CHNAs of 38 nonprofit hospital facilities in Georgia. Georgia Watch developed an evaluation tool to assess hospital compliance with five major components of the new CHNA requirements: 1) defining community; 2) collecting secondary data on community health; 3) gathering community input and primary data; 4) prioritizing community health needs; and 5) implementing strategies to address identified community health needs. To gain a deeper understanding of hospital processes, Georgia Watch supplemented document review with hospital leadership interviews and a survey of community input providers. This research was intended to inform, assist, and encourage citizens, community health stakeholders, public health departments, and hospital administrators. At the end of the session, audience members were better equipped to evaluate the adequacy of nonprofit hospital CHNAs within their own communities and encourage local hospitals to develop effective community benefit programs.

Results: Georgia Watch found that hospitals are still learning how to navigate the CHNA process and that improvements can be made during the next round of CHNAs.

Conclusions: Georgia Watch's research provides insight on how hospitals can best engage their communities, prioritize local health concerns, initiate valuable partnerships, and develop meaningful, evidence-based strategies to address community health needs.