

## Community Assessment 101

### What is a Community Assessment?

A community assessment is a way to gain a snapshot of a community's current assets and needs by examining and recording community strengths, challenges, and resources. A community assessment will help to define and identify potential areas for targeted action, or strategies to be included in a community action plan. Documenting and logging community resources as well as infrastructures, relationships, and operations, depicts a picture of the community and creates a profile of it.

With the community assessment process, a community coalition can strengthen team commitments and efforts at the local-level. Members can learn more about community needs and decision-making, participation and involvement, and role expectations that will be used in coalition activities.

### Why are Community Assessments Important?

Community assessments provide a way for a coalition to get a better understanding of their community's health. By community teams going out into their actual communities, speaking with different members, and comparing what is really happening in different settings and sectors, it gives the community a voice. Learning about community strengths as well as areas for improvements through an assessment completion process, a coalition has a better unified understanding of what the current needs may be and can make better informed decisions about where to focus and prioritize their efforts.

### Definitions:

1. Infrastructure- the framework and technical structure that support a society, such as roads, water supply, sewers, electrical grids, telecommunications, and provide community services essential to enable and/or sustain living conditions
2. Strategy- systematic plan of action
3. Coalition- an organization of people
4. Community strengths- where policies and environmental changes strategies already exist
5. Community improvements- where policies and environmental strategies are missing
6. Systems- a set of rules that governs structure and/or behavior
7. PSE Change- policy, systems and environmental changes