



COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROFILE

Understanding the needs of each district's preschool population is a central part of creating optimal early childhood programs. Districts should periodically conduct district-wide assessment of needs and resources {N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.4(d)}. The assessment can include an analysis of census data, surveys and focus groups.

5 steps for completing a community needs assessment

1. Describe the context for the preschool program by demographics.
 - a. Describe the community's residents including population, race and ethnicities, languages spoken, concerns, assets, relevant historical or political context
 - b. Describe the sources of information used (e.g., public records, local people, internet, maps, phone book, library, newspaper)
 - c. Describe any public forums, listening sessions, focus groups, interviews, surveys, observations used to collect descriptive information
2. Describe what matters to the preschool population
 - a. Describe the methods chosen and why (e.g., listening sessions, public forums, interviews, concerns surveys, focus groups) you used to listen to the preschool community
 - b. Describe the issues identified within the preschool community (e.g., safety, education, housing, access to health care)
 - c. Prioritize concerns, listing them from high to low importance
 - d. Describe possible solutions and alternatives as recommended by the preschool community
3. Describe what matters to community stakeholders (e.g., Early Childhood Advisory Council)
 - a. Identify the stakeholders

- b. Describe what they want to know (e.g., who is affected, how many, what factors contribute to the problem)
 - c. Indicate the target populations and subgroups stakeholders deem as particularly benefiting from the effort
 - d. List the questions you asked and of whom
 - e. Describe the methods (e.g., surveys, interviews) used to gather information
 - f. If you used a survey, describe the sampling method used to select participants
4. Compile and describe the evidence suggested by prioritizing from high to low importance and high to low satisfaction
- a. Describe new cases and existing cases of behavior or outcomes related to the identified concerns (e.g., if joblessness is an issue in the community, you may want to collect information on the unemployment rate and the rate of job opportunities in the community)
 - b. Describe the frequency that the problem (or related behavior) occurs
 - c. Describe the number of people affected by the problem and the severity of its effects
 - d. Discuss how feasible it is to address the issue
 - e. Discuss the possible impact and/or consequences of solving the issue
5. Describe the barriers and resources for addressing the identified issue(s)
- a. Describe barriers or resistance to solving the problem or achieving the goal (e.g., denial, discounting the problem). Describe how they can be minimized (e.g., reframing the issue).
 - b. Indicate what resources and assets are available and where. Describe how we identify and tap into those resources that could help with the issue.
 - c. Identify all community leaders and organizations who might support (or oppose) efforts to address issue(s).
 - d. Describe how the networks of influential people and organizations are organized. Discuss how you can tap into already existing networks and foster new ones to address the issue.

- e. Describe the community projects currently in progress. Explain what this may tell us about focusing community attention and resources on relevant issue(s).
- f. Describe the threats that could affect progress on the identified issues, and how they can be countered.
- g. Describe existing or emerging opportunities to address the identified issue(s), and how they can be assessed.

Other sources for additional information:

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory provides suggestions and detailed information on what should be included within the “community scan,” as they call it.

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/css/ppt/chap2.htm>

Iowa State University has compiled information on how to conduct a community assessment.

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/CRD334.pdf>