

STEP 6: Review Factors Important for Health and Well-Being (Setting Priorities)

Determining health priorities helps direct resources to the areas that matter most to community partners and that will have the greatest impact on community health status. With so many competing needs, selecting priorities and establishing goals and strategies may seem like an arduous task. When well publicized, documented, and endorsed by communities, a sound priority-setting process helps achieve widespread support for the plan.

Understanding the Dimensions of the Problem

Use the following questions to open the discussion of the problem:

- What are the compelling reasons for people to be concerned about the problem?
- How can the problem be documented with supporting data?
- What interventions are effective in solving the problem?
- Why is common action important?
- Who needs to be involved in the action?
- What system do we have in place now to prevent the problem and promote health?
- What stages within the health system need to be mobilized? (For example, health promotion, disease prevention, acute treatment, aftercare)
- What health disparity and quality of life issues need to be considered?
- What will happen if the problem is not addressed? What are the societal costs?

Assessing Needs to Set Priorities

When assessing needs, consider the following:

- Prevalence (the number or proportion of cases or events or conditions in a given population)
- Frequency (the number of times an event occurs within a stated period of time)
- Incidence rate (a measure of the frequency with which an event, such as a new case of illness, occurs in a population over a period of time)
- Seriousness
- High-risk exposure or environmental conditions
- Urgency
- Survival rate after exposure
- Case fatality rate
- Direct impact on others (likely or not and to what degree)
- Comparative risk information
- Any other information to demonstrate the importance of the problem
- Severity of disability/disease