



## Stories from the Field: Increasing Disability Inclusion in the MAPP Process Project

### Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, Champaign, Illinois



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#### Background

The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District (CUPHD) is the local public health authority for the Cities of Champaign and Urbana and Champaign County. Champaign County had an estimated 209,689 residents in 2019, an increase of 8,608 residents from 2010, and approximately 12,000 individuals with a disability. The population is 72% White, 14% Black, 11% Asian, and 6% Hispanic. CUPHD, in conjunction with Carle Foundation Hospital, OSF Medical Center, and United Way of Champaign County, used the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP) model, a community-based model that necessitates community engagement at all levels to conduct the Champaign Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). We assessed the current health status of the community, identified needs, and created a comprehensive plan to improve our community's health by acquiring input from community partners, planners, elected officials, and residents. We surveyed 634 community residents representing different community groups to get an in-depth picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the community.

#### Project Goals

The overall goal of the project was to improve the well-being of our diverse community by challenging social injustice, creating responsive services, promoting community involvement, and linking clients to resources that support people in their environments. Our agency focuses on providing direct service, innovative outreach, and capacity building to small community-based organizations, social groups, and places of worship. Additionally, CUPHD has staff that are skilled in micro-marketing to hard-to-reach individuals. With that in mind, a gap among reaching persons with disabilities was identified as it related to the community needs assessment. This detailed assessment and ensuing plan provide the foundation for evidence-based health planning and decision-making. This was an opportunity to broaden our community input into the MAPP to include adults and parents of children with sensory, physical, cognitive, or intellectual disabilities.

#### Project Description

CUPHD has a long history of serving and working with members and employees of People Assuming Control of their Environment (PACE);

Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES); Developmental Services Center; and Division of Specialized Care for Children, but the collaboration was enhanced when we realized that we needed more input about their community health concerns. The information gathered from this population will enhance existing efforts to improve the health of people with disabilities, increase awareness of service gaps, and create initiatives that encourage community living.

By creating a survey that was available in multiple formats, we were able to get a better idea of the challenges faced by those with disabilities in our community and work to put things in place to improve the conditions of daily life by recommending that services be accessible to all. The framework of the MAPP process not only aided in identifying the highest-priority health needs of disabled and non-disabled residents in our community, but also increased collaboration with agencies serving people with disabilities.

#### Challenges

Focus group recruitment from members of the larger community, outside of the [University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign](#) (UIUC) campus, was a challenge. Due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the community health survey data collection efforts were exclusively online. Residents were surveyed from March-July 2020, and 634 total surveys were completed. While the data-collection efforts attempted to stratify by zip code, race, ethnicity, income, and age, due to the pandemic, face-to-face interactions and paper surveys typically collected in underserved areas were not possible.

#### Solutions to challenges

Overall, Zoom worked well for our focus groups. Direct engagement with PACE leaders boosted focus group recruitment efforts. Opportunities for compensation (e.g., gift cards) could potentially boost community engagement efforts.

In addition to online data collection, CUPHD had a dedicated staff member with the appropriate training and experience administering surveys over the phone. This opportunity expanded survey access for those experiencing a digital divide.

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## Results

Our aim was to increase the participation among residents with disabilities in the MAPP/community health improvement process. Prior to this iteration of the MAPP process, we had not intentionally made efforts to reach this segment of our community's population.

We achieved the results because we were able to elicit input from a half-dozen residents with disabilities. However, participation is expected to rise in subsequent years because we will not be constrained by a pandemic.

## Lessons Learned

Collaborative partnerships are absolutely necessary to improve population-level health outcomes. This project strengthened our partnerships with local community-based organizations serving those with disabilities and brought the organization one step closer in achieving its role as community health strategists. CUPHD will continue using the training and resources provided by the National Association of County and City Health Officials in future MAPP processes to address health inequities and social justice issues in Champaign County.

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