

# HEP-C ALERT COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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November 30, 2005

## OVERVIEW

### Examining Community Needs

Program planning is a structured and systematic approach for making the move from ideas to actions (Needs Assessment 1995). The steps involved in the program planning process include: a) identifying issues, b) determining needs, c) setting goals and objectives, d) assessing resources, e) forming a plan, f) implementing the plan, and g) evaluating results. As widely recognized in the literature, an important part in social and health program planning is a needs assessment (Witkin, 1984). Traditional approaches to needs assessment focus on community gaps and deficiencies. People providing needs assessment information see themselves as individuals with special needs that can only be met by outsiders (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The community needs assessment conducted in this study intends to identify the emerging issues and concerns in the community rather than focusing entirely on community deficiencies and gaps. Community members at all levels need to be involved in decisions that have an effect on them; they should help plan programs where they are expected to be seek services (Needs Assessment, 1995).

### Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this proposed study is to determine the emerging health issues and concerns among North Miami and North Miami Beach community citizens. The city of North Miami and North Miami Beach has numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals that provide services for people in general service areas: a) health and emergency, b) education, c) family, and d) community. Collaborative efforts appeared to be lacking among local agencies and organizations in identifying issues and concerns of North Miami/North Miami Beach residents. Hep-C Alert Inc. is the only local organization that provides free walk-in HIV and Hepatitis counseling and testing in the area. A need to conduct a comprehensive and integrated assessment of the cities' capacities and emerging health issues was identified. Hep-C Alert Inc. has designed this study as an effort to produce a more accurate description of community health issues and concerns.

The specific objectives of the community needs assessment are to: a) identify the emerging issues and concerns of community members in the service areas of health, access to local health services, and disease prevention education; b) assess the level of knowledge of existing local disease prevention agencies/organizations by community members; c) determine reasons preventing residents from using local disease prevention services, and d) describe community members participating in the study on selected demographic characteristics.

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## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Descriptive research was the design for this needs assessment. The project was designed to determine the perceived emerging health issues and concerns of community citizens that need to be addressed by local agencies and organizations.

### Population and Sample

Located in North Dade county, with the N. Miami population consisting of 40,345 residents and N. Miami Beach consisting of 59,310 (Census, 2003). Both cities are very culturally and ethnically diverse, with a wide range of socio-economic levels. These areas represented compact, well-defined neighborhoods.

The study will utilize a convenience sample. Five high traffic shopping plazas and one laundry mat in N. Miami/N. Miami Beach will be used for areas to locate study participants. Of prime consideration are the people, places and time (i.e., individuals, locations, sampling period or conditions) from which samples are to be collected. Before completing the survey, participants will be asked to produce proof of residency in the local area. Assistance in completing the survey will be provided by one of 3 Hep-C Alert staff members or one of 2 Masters in Public Health students from Florida International University. Individuals who identify themselves as living outside of the N. Miami/N. Miami Beach area are excluded from the study. The only criterion for participation in the study is being a resident of the area and being 18 years of age or over. Participants who complete the study will be given a \$5 Target gift card.

### Instrumentation

A steering committee, consisting of 10 people was established. The steering committee provided direction and support for the community needs assessment. Committee membership consisted of community partners, community members in the health promotion field and Hep-C Alert Inc. staff members. In terms of group dynamics, the investigators believed that a group between 10 and 12 individuals would provide a setting for effective communication and decision making (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). In addition, the steering committee assisted the principal investigators with: a) identifying emerging issues and concerns among community groups, b) locating resources and support for the study, and c) aid in developing a system of collecting data.

A questionnaire consisting of 22 questions was developed by the researchers. The steering committee members assisted in designing, refining, and sequencing community needs assessment questions. The community needs assessment questions were field tested with the staff and steering committee members. Additionally, the field test was used as part of the community needs assessment training for study assistants.

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Findings from the study will be used in the identification of community issues; including knowledge of free health services being offered by Hep-C Alert, and barriers to community members seeking local disease prevention services. The steering committee members played an important role in reducing the number of issues in the final version of the instrument.

The questionnaire consists of four parts: a) Part I - Demographic Information - consisted of 9 questions (i.e., age, sex, race, education level, children, language, married, income and access to health care). b) Part II - Level of Concern - in regards to 5 different health issues; cancer, diabetes, heart disease, hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Responses to this section were rated using a four- point Likert scale, from low (1) not concerned (2) somewhat concerned 3) very concerned 4) no opinion. c) Part III – Knowledge of Diseases and Risk-Reduction Behaviors – participants in the study were asked to respond to 3 questions developed to identify study participants perceived knowledge of HIV and Hepatitis prevention. Responses for this section were rated by the use of 3 possible responses; 1) yes, 2) no, and 3) somewhat. d) Part IV – Knowledge of Community health services and Hep-C Alert – By responding to 4 questions, participants were asked to identify whether they were aware of agencies in the local North Miami/North Miami beach area where they can access free HIV and Hepatitis prevention services, including Hep-C Alert. The 3 possible responses were; 1) yes, 2) no, and 3) somewhat.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the survey's demographic questions will be analyzed with SPSS for Windows XP. Descriptive statistics will be used to organize and summarize the data (i.e., frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, and correlation coefficients). T-test and Chi Square will be used to determine if significant differences exist between responses from the survey.

Perceived priority issues will be calculated through the use of the indirect approach to measure people's perceptions recommended by Borich (1980). Survey data will be analyzed using a qualitative data analysis technique. First, the data will be divided into manageable portions for analysis. Then, the researchers will arrange the data for regularities and patterns. Two questions will be kept in mind by the researchers when reading and reviewing the data: a) Which comments were occurring on a regular basis? and b) Which comments were similar to each other?

A community needs assessment is not often designed to create hypothesis testing, but rather for the detection of the relationships and for hypothesis generation. However, we anticipate that the data collected through this study will answer the following research questions. 1) Are community members aware of any locations locally where they can receive free HIV and Hepatitis prevention services? 2) Do community members consider themselves knowledgeable in HIV and Hepatitis prevention?

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## DISCUSSION

### Conclusions

The population make up of the city of North Miami by race consists of; 34.8% White, 54.9% Black, 23.2% Hispanic, and 10.3 identifying themselves as a other race or biracial (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Respondents from the sample identified their race as follows; 7.7% were White, 15.4% were Hispanic, 40.4% were African American, 32.7% were Black of Caribbean or West Indian descent, and 3.8% of the respondents identified themselves as other.

The results show that a large portion of the sample population consider themselves knowledgeable in HIV prevention, with 78.8% of the respondents indicating (yes) to whether they consider themselves knowledgeable in HIV prevention. Only 53.8% of the respondents considered themselves knowledgeable in Hepatitis prevention. For Disease Concern Level, 55.8% of the respondents indicated that they are very concerned about HIV and 36.5% indicated they were very concerned about Hepatitis. Community members seem to be concerned with health issues related to HIV and hepatitis.

Findings from this study revealed that the majority of community members sampled are not aware of the existing any local agencies that provide free HIV and Hepatitis prevention services. 78.9% of this study's participants responded that they were not aware of anyplace in the local North Miami area where they can receive free Hepatitis testing. 71.2% of those who completed the survey stated that they were not aware of anyplace in the local North Miami area where they can receive free HIV testing. This means people in the community do not regularly use the free services HIV and Hepatitis prevention services offered by local agencies and organizations. These findings correspond with lack of information about services available in the community which can be seen as the cause or the main reason preventing local residents from accessing Hep-C Alert's services.

Some unintended outcomes of this project included: 1) education and awareness - not only did community leaders participating in the steering committee learn about evaluation and research application from the needs assessment process, but also steering committee participants became aware of community issues and concerns; 2) networking - steering committee members participants learned from each other and built professional and personal relationships that could develop into future collaborative local programming efforts.

One of the major concerns addressed by steering committee members is doing outreach in North Miami's Haitian Community. Haitians represent a large portion of the North Miami population. The major identified reason is distrusting of health agencies among the Haitian Community. Past health promotion/disease preventions directed toward this group has been hard to implement because of language and cultural barriers. Many

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Haitians Americans have very conservative views on the issue of HIV/AIDS. In addition, many Haitians feel stigmatized by initial reports by CDC during the start of the HIV epidemic. Early reports told citizens to beware of the four H's, homosexuals, heroin addicts, hemophiliacs, and Haitians. This report not only affected tourism to the country of Haiti, but also caused distrust among a large portion of Haitian-Americans of HIV prevention activities within the United States. Distrust of disease prevention activities can also be due to the immigration status of many Haitians living in the area. For this study most Haitian's identified them selves as Black with Caribbean or West Indian descent. They also stated that they spoke Creole on the language question of the survey.

## Recommendations

This needs assessment was an example of participatory evaluation where community members were actively involved in the providing their concerns. The goal of participatory evaluation is to provide information for program improvement or organizational development. Participatory evaluation seeks to be practical, useful, formative, and empowering. Programs focused on specific target populations are most effective. Initiatives aimed in reducing disease risks among certain target populations have an even more positive impact on behavior when provided with adequate resources, determination, and cultural awareness (Lee, 1993).

The major finding of this study is that a majority of local residents are not aware of the free disease prevention services provided by Hep-C Alert Inc. Additional funding should go into further promotion of the agency's services directed toward the local community. Messages aimed at community members that do not take cultural influences into consideration are less likely to be effective within certain groups (Yep, 1997). Any promotional campaign must be culturally relevant to its target audience.

Networking with other agencies, organizations, and individuals in the community should be considered. Determining if similar issues and concerns are being confronted by surrounding agencies and businesses would be helpful in planning and implementing programming efforts. For instance, if businesses are already addressing some of the identified top priority issues, Hep-C Alert might learn and benefit from their experiences.

Communicating project results to people via community forums is suggested by the investigators. Holding community forums will assist investigators and the steering committee in confirming the needs assessment data. In other words, the major issues and concerns of the community reflected through the community needs assessment need to be validated. Moreover, the needs assessment information could be used to justify grants, design local programs, hire staff, promote collaboration among agencies, and assist the organization funders in decision making when allocating monies.

The identification of issues, concerns, needs, and assets in the community should be an on-going process. This notion of continual assessment was expressed by the steering

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committee members throughout the planning and implementation of this project and is clearly depicted in the organizations mission.

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## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY INSTRUMENT

### PART 1: INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

“Before you get started, we would like to know a little about you. These questions are of a personal nature, but are important and will be kept strictly Confidential. We do not ask your name on this survey.”

Please check the box next to the answer.

**1) What is your age?**

1. Under 18
2. 18-24
3. 25-34
4. 35-44
5. 45-64
6. Over 65

**2) Are you?**

1. Male
2. Female

**3) What is your race?**

1. White/Caucasian
2. Black/African American
3. Black/Caribbean/West Indian
4. Hispanic/Latino
5. Native American
6. Asian/Pacific Islander
7. Other Race

**4) What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

1. 12th grade or less, no diploma or equivalent
2. High school graduate or equivalent (e.g., GED)
3. Some college, but no degree (includes vocational training)
4. College degree

**5) Do you have any children?**

1. Yes
2. No

**6) -Only speaks English?**

1. Yes
2. No

**-Bilingual?**

3. Yes
4. No

**-If yes, which other language?**

5. Spanish
6. Creole
7. Other

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7) If you were sick and had to go to the doctor tomorrow, could you afford to go?

1. Yes
2. No

8) Annual Income?

1. Less than \$24,999
2. 25,000 to 44,999
3. 45,000 or more

9) Marital Status?

1. Single
2. Married
3. Divorced/Widowed
4. Living w/Someone

## PART 2: PROBLEM AREAS

### HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU WITH ANY OF THESE DISEASES?

10. Cancer-

1. Not concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. Very concerned
4. No opinion

11. Diabetes-

1. Not concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. Very concerned
4. No opinion

12. Heart disease-

1. Not concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. Very concerned
4. No opinion

13. Hepatitis-

1. Not concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. Very concerned
4. No opinion

14. HIV/AIDS-

1. Not concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. Very concerned
4. No opinion

15. Other sexually transmitted infections-

1. Not concerned
2. Somewhat concerned
3. Very concerned
4. No opinion

## PART 3: KNOWLEDGE OF DISEASES AND RISK-REDUCTION BEHAVIORS

16. Do you consider yourself knowledgeable of HIV and HIV prevention?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Somewhat

17. Do you consider yourself knowledgeable of Hepatitis and Hepatitis prevention?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Somewhat

18. Do you use condoms?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Sometimes

-If No, Why?

4. Abstinent
5. Monogamous
6. Other

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## **PART 4: KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**19. Are you aware of anywhere in the North Miami and North Miami Beach area where you can get free Hepatitis A, B, and C testing?**

1. Yes                      2. No                      3. Somewhat

**20. Are you aware of anywhere in the North Miami and North Miami Beach area where you can get free HIV testing?**

1. Yes                      2. No                      3. Somewhat

**21. Are you aware of anywhere in the North Miami and North Miami Beach area where you can get free condoms?**

1. Yes                      2. No                      3. Somewhat

**22. Before today, have you ever heard of Hep-C Alert and/or Project Alert?**

1. Yes                      2. No                      3. Somewhat

**-If yes, what is your impression?**

4. Positive impression      5. No impression      6. Negative impression

**THANK YOU!**