

3.

Getting Ready: Preparing Your Organization and Staff for the Self-Assessment

The process of Self-Assessment does not occur in isolation from the ongoing work of your agency, nor is it an end in and of itself. LHDs wishing to implement the instruments in this Toolkit must first prepare the organization and staff in a way that will allow the agency to get the most out of the Self-Assessment. The survey tools are designed to capture the depth and breadth of the LHD's experience, capacities and staff skills addressing health equity in the public health setting. The executive leadership and project team should have in mind a clear goal for implementing the Self Assessment and how results will be used.

Is your organization ready to take the Self-Assessment?

The following checklist is designed to help you judge whether you can benefit from the Self-Assessment and make use of its findings:

- ☐ You have begun to have conversations about health equity and root causes of health inequities across all the strata of your organization. Prior to involving community partners in the Self-Assessment, you should also have developed relationships and begun these conversations. *This Self-Assessment assumes that the participants of each instrument have had at least an introductory exposure to the key concepts and terms related to the social determinants of health. This Self-Assessment process should not be undertaken without first engaging staff and community partners in some preliminary conversations about these concepts.*
- ☐ The leadership of your LHD is committed to engaging in this comprehensive Self-Assessment exercise, is open to feedback from all levels of staff and of collaborating partners, and intends to translate the findings into action.
- ☐ Your LHD is prepared to invest the time required to complete the necessary steps of the Self-Assessment. The time that it takes an LHD to complete the self-assessment will vary depending on the scale of the assessment that the LHD chooses to undertake as well size of the LHD. Berkeley Public Health Department piloted the entire assessment process with its 100 staff and approximately 50 community partners.
- ☐ The self-assessment explores issues of social inequality and can bring to the surface tensions that may exist in an LHD or in a community. Exploring these issues can create expectations that LHD leadership will address the concerns that have been raised. LHD leadership is prepared to address this likelihood and will take the time to plan its response.
- ☐ You should be clear as an organization why you are undertaking this effort, how you plan on using the results, and how it fits in with other organizational initiatives.
- ☐ You have the staff capacity to manage the implementation of the Self-Assessment and the organizational capacity to communicate effectively with staff and community partners.
- ☐ You have the staff capacity and technological resources to administer an online survey and import the results.
- ☐ You have the staff capacity and technological resources to perform quantitative and qualitative data analysis of survey responses, or have the financial resources to engage a consultant/contractor to do so.
- ☐ You have a partner at a colleague organization or neighboring LHD who can facilitate focus groups, adapt focus group questions and conduct interviews with members of your staff, or you have the financial resources to hire a consultant/contractor to do so.

Preparing for the Self-Assessment

Once you have determined you are ready to take on the Self-Assessment, the preparation you do with your staff will further influence the impact of the exercise. The following are recommendations for creating and maintaining a constructive context around the Self-Assessment:

- ☐ Lay the groundwork for the Self-Assessment by communicating clearly to all staff why your LHD is undertaking this effort, what it will entail from staff, and how you intend to use the results.
- ☐ Determine which components (or instruments) of the Self-Assessment you will undertake. A more thorough discussion of this is provided in the next section.
- ☐ The timing of the Self-Assessment should coincide with or follow a staff-wide event, such as screenings and discussions of the film series *Unnatural Causes*,⁵ to garner momentum and help staff make connections between the Self-Assessment effort and other work of the agency. To avoid over-loading participants, be mindful of other large agency efforts such as other surveys in which staff or community partners are being asked to participate.
- ☐ Plan the implementation of the entire Self-Assessment; avoid large time lapses between activities and ensure that the logistics of the process run smoothly.
- ☐ Take advantage of the Self-Assessment's potential for sparking dialogue, and create opportunities for conversations about health equity and the assessment activity and results.
- ☐ Communicate Self-Assessment results and next steps back to staff and collaborating partners in a timely manner, and involve staff from all levels of the agency as well as collaborating partners in any action planning that follows the Self-Assessment.

⁵ California Newsreel, *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*, www.unnaturalcauses.org