Overview

The Washington State Department of Health’s (DOH) Office of Family and Community Health Improvement is gathering information on the health needs and priorities of people in Washington. This needs assessment is part of the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant (MCHBG) under Title V of the federal Social Security Act. The MCHBG funds programs across Washington State that serve the following population domains: 1) women/maternal health, 2) perinatal/infant health, 3) child health, 4) children and youth with special health care needs, and 5) adolescent health. This work is also inclusive of fathers, kinship and other non-traditional caregivers.

A summary of the needs assessment will be part of the DOH’s application for the 2021 block grant. The needs assessment is conducted every five years and relies on a variety of data sources, including input from partners and stakeholders statewide and local health jurisdictions. These assessments help guide the direction of maternal and child health programs across the state in order to improve health for the people of Washington State.

How It Will Look

There are several parts to the five-year needs assessment process:

- Internally, the office is conducting a series of capacity assessments, analyzing current work, and pulling together the sources of available data.
- Local health jurisdictions are conducting individual needs assessments as part of a statewide review of priorities, population health status, and MCH program capacity. DOH expects to receive this information in May 2019.
- Facilitated discussions focusing on MCH needs, strengths and capacities will take place in a number of MCH stakeholder group meetings throughout the state. Key informant interviews will occur to gain more information and a better understanding of issues raised in the group discussions. The discussions will focus on these primary questions:
  - What are the emerging and on-going health needs of women, children, and families in Washington state?
  - What are the strengths of the work in our state in addressing the health needs of this population?
  - What is the capacity (or what resources are available) statewide to work on improving the health of this population?
- An online survey will be developed to gain wider input on statewide needs and priorities. The survey is anticipated to be released in late spring or early summer 2019.
- After the information is compiled and analyzed, a statewide prioritization process will take place. This phase will include additional outreach to narrow down and establish specific priorities and performance measures for the next five years of the grant cycle. This will lead to development of the grant work plan and partnership projects.

The changing population demographics, emerging health trends, and shifting program capacity make it necessary to regularly assess the state’s MCH program. It’s also an opportunity to review collaborations with other entities that serve the MCH population and identify how partnership projects can best meet emerging needs of our population.

For additional information about the MCHBG five-year needs assessment, contact the Washington State Department of Health at ohc@doh.wa.gov or call 360-236-4501 (local) or 800-525-0127 (toll free).