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 for women, infants, children, children and youth with special health care needs, and adolescents. The work is also inclusive of fathers and other caregivers in order to support the health of families.

A summary of the needs assessment will be part of 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. The assessment helps 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 available data.
- Local health jurisdictions conducted individual needs assessments as part of a statewide review of priorities, health issues certain populations face, and workloads within their MCH programs. These local assessments will inform DOH’s statewide assessment.
- Facilitated discussions with stakeholder groups and key informant interviews are occurring to gain information and a better understanding of current issues related to maternal and child health. The discussions focus on these primary questions:
  - What are the emerging and ongoing health needs of women, children, and families in Washington State?
  - Statewide, what are our strengths in responding to these needs?
  - Statewide, what are the gaps or improvements needed?
- An online survey conducted in July and August 2019 provided wider input on statewide needs and priorities. The survey had 1,113 responses from across the state.
- After the information is compiled and analyzed, a statewide prioritization process will take place. This will include additional outreach to narrow down and establish specific priority needs for focused statewide effort, and performance measures for the next five years of the grant cycle. This will lead to development of the grant work plan.

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