

CAST-5 and the Title V 5-Year Needs Assessment

A collaborative project of the Johns Hopkins Women's and Children's Health Policy Center and the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs

Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant programs are required to conduct a statewide needs assessment every five years to identify the need for preventive and primary care services for children and families, including children with special health care needs. This needs assessment forms the basis for program planning and monitoring. Capacity Assessment for State Title V (CAST-5), a process for identifying capacity needs and specifying plans for meeting them, is a natural complement to the 5-year needs assessment process.

Using CAST-5 as an integral component of the 5-year needs assessment

A comprehensive needs assessment identifies not only population health concerns but also the service system factors that contribute to population health status. The organizational capacity of the maternal and child health agency—the focus of CAST-5—is therefore a critical component of the 5-year needs assessment.

Example:

A Title V program used all of the CAST-5 tools sequentially for a broad assessment of its capacity to carry out the 10 MCH Essential Services. The resulting list of priority capacity needs and action steps were incorporated into the Block Grant report as important contributors to the program's ability to reach population health goals.

Using CAST-5 as a follow up to the 5-year needs assessment

After population health needs are identified through the needs assessment process, CAST-5 can be used to assess the program's capacity to address those needs. *Approaches to carrying out a CAST-5 assessment focused on a specific health issue (or set of issues) are described in more detail in the companion document "Using CAST-5 to Address Title V Performance Measures."*

Example:

After a Title V program identified childhood obesity as an emerging population health concern, CAST-5 was used to assess the program's performance in carrying out health promotion activities in community settings and through health and educational professionals. The program chose to assess their performance of Essential Services #3 (educate and inform) and #4 (mobilize community partnerships) with the Process Indicators tool. The Capacity Needs portion of CAST-5 focused on the organizational resources needed for health communication and education functions and on partnerships through which to promote healthy eating and fitness habits among families with children. Additionally, they convened a broad range of stakeholders to create consensus on a vision, goals, and strategies for addressing childhood obesity, using the CAST-5 Core Questions as a framework for that process.

Using the CAST-5 tools as a modular toolset

CAST-5 is a set of tools that can be used separately or in various combinations. Together, the tools provide an in-depth assessment of cross-cutting performance and capacity needs. Each tool also can function as a stand-alone module with unique contributions to the needs assessment and program planning process.

The CAST-5 **Core Questions** provide a structure for articulating the program's mission, goals, and activities in relation to identified population health needs. Used alone, the Core Questions provide a summary of the program's organizational environment and broader state context, desired population health outcomes, and organizational and programmatic strategies undertaken to reach those goals. Used with other CAST-5 tools, the answers to the Core Questions also provide a backdrop and context for subsequent steps in the assessment process. For example, they help set the internal benchmarks against which programs rate their performance and capacity by answering the question "Where do we want to go?"

The **Process Indicators** assess the Title V program's performance of the 10 MCH Essential Services. Used alone or with other CAST-5 tools, the *Process Indicators* help determine broad areas of Title V program performance needing improvement and provide a gauge for the program's contribution to the public health system. CAST-5 contains a set of Process Indicators for each of the 10 MCH Essential Services; programs can assess performance for all 10 MCH Essential Services or for a subset of the Essential Services that are most relevant to the population health needs identified in the 5-year needs assessment. Used with the Capacity Needs tool, the Process Indicators provide the rationale for resource needs; they indicate which areas of program performance would benefit from improved program capacity.

The **Capacity Needs** tool provides a structured way to identify organizational resources needed to implement the MCH Essential Services and achieve desired levels of performance. As a stand-alone tool, the Capacity Needs can be used as a targeted checklist of resources that support efforts to meet identified needs. Used in conjunction with the Process Indicators, this tool can be used to describe program/agency capacity for a wider range of program functions.

CAST-5 also includes a set of **Planning Tools**—sample templates to assist in prioritizing capacity needs and drafting action steps for capacity development. The prioritization process is a key step toward the development and implementation of an action plan, providing a basis for allocating staff and resources within state resource constraints. As such, the CAST-5 Planning Tools provide a vehicle for moving from an assessment of needs toward strategic efforts to meet those needs through the development of organizational capacity.

For more information on using CAST-5 as a modular toolset and designing an assessment process, see the section on "Planning for CAST-5" at www.amchp.org/policy/data-CAST-5.htm.

The CAST-5 Tools:

Core Questions

Process Indicators

Capacity Needs

SWOT Analysis

Planning Tools



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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CAST-5, VISIT WWW.
AMCHP.ORG/POLICY/DATA-CAST5.HTM OR CALL THE
WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH POLICY CENTER
AT (410) 502-5443.

