



# Developing strategies for child maltreatment prevention

*A guide to community needs assessments*

June 2015

# Overview

Prevention programs assume there is a need in a community to prevent something. A community needs assessment is a tool that can be used to identify that need and develop a plan to meet the need. Oftentimes community members may have ideas and feel pressure to implement those ideas quickly. However, sustainable and impactful programs require planning to build a solid foundation. That is not to say that an assessment will slow momentum. Rather, a needs assessment can be used to foster conversation and collaboration necessary for coalition building and planning.

This guide is intended to assist communities applying for funding through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to prevent child maltreatment. The guide is organized by steps communities can take to complete a needs assessment. While we present specific strategies to conduct a needs assessment, we recognize that there are multiple ways to conduct needs assessments. Communities are encouraged to use and adapt components of this guide to meet their needs.

Step 1: Identify and define

Step 2: Collect information

Step 3: Compile findings

Step 4: Plan your intervention

# Step 1: Identify and define

To begin your community's needs assessment, identify an agency, person or team responsible for conducting the assessment. Generally, the lead agency who will be responding to the request for proposals is the best agency to take the lead on an assessment because they can easily incorporate the information obtained into their response to the RFP. A team approach to the needs assessment may involve multiple agencies coming together either through an established coalition or a new workgroup. If a team approach is used, ensure that one person is responsible for coordinating meetings, disseminating information and finalizing the report.

After a person, team or agency accepts the task of conducting the needs assessment, you need to clearly define the community you are assessing. For DFPS funding opportunities, counties are usually the geographic communities of interest. From a social service perspective, one or two major cities in a county are likely hubs for social services. Be sure to expand your thinking beyond the traditional cities where major non-profits are located and identify rural communities located within your community.

Often, social service providers can describe their communities very well in terms of population characteristics such as family composition, race/ethnicity and income. However, it is important to actually look at the demographics in your county. You want to demonstrate that you understand who lives in your community. To find basic demographics about your county, go to <http://quickfacts.census.gov/> . Once on the webpage, you can select Texas and your county. The demographics table on the following page is an example that you can use to illustrate the demographics in your community. You can easily recreate with your county's information so that you can compare your county to Texas as a whole.

Note that the table includes the total population and the child population information. Household income, poverty rates and homeownership are generally good indicators of the economic status of families. Because poverty rates are set so low, many families operating above



the poverty rate struggle. Thus, including household income is a good indicator of the resources available to families. Race and ethnicity are often confusing. Most people break down categories as White, Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American. However, the Census breaks out race and ethnicity resulting in overlapping categories. As you pull information for your county, look at categories “White alone, not Hispanic” for White. The chart below only includes three categories for race/ethnicity. If there are specific subpopulations that are important for your community, you should include those. If your community has a large foreign born population or military families, you can include that information as well. The key is to highlight the unique characteristics of your community which might impact how you address child maltreatment.

#### County X Demographics

	Texas	X County
Total population	26,956,958	
Percent of population under 5 years old	7.3%	
Percent of population under 18 years old	26.6%	
Homeownership rate	63.3%	
Median household income	\$51,900	
Percent of persons below poverty level	17.6%	
Percent of persons identifying as White, non-Hispanic	44%	
Percent of persons identifying as Hispanic	36.3%	
Percent of persons identifying as Black or African American	12.4%	

After you have identified the needs for your community, you should gather data about child maltreatment in your area. DFPS releases an annual report that contains an overview of child welfare issues. The key pieces of information that should be included in your needs assessment are the numbers of confirmed victims of abuse/neglect for your county. These reports can be found at: [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About\\_DFPS/Data\\_Books\\_and\\_Annual\\_Reports](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Data_Books_and_Annual_Reports)

Although there are multiple types of information in these reports, it is important to recognize indicators that reflect child abuse in your county. For instance, numbers of foster youth is not necessarily representative of child abuse as children may or may not enter foster care as a result of abuse.

#### County X Child abuse statistics

	Texas	X County
Confirmed victims of child abuse/neglect	66,572	
Total investigations completed	168,164	
Child abuse/neglect related fatalities	151	

## Identify Existing Agencies and Services

A final step in defining your community is identifying what agencies, programs and services exist that work on issues related to child maltreatment either directly or indirectly. Start broadly and think about who in your community interacts with families. The questions below can be used as a guide as you begin to develop a list of agencies and programs.

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What agencies in your community directly provide child maltreatment prevention services?	Do any non-profits have programs that directly address child maltreatment?
	Who runs these programs?
	What populations are served?

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What agencies in your community serve victims of child maltreatment?	Are there agencies in your community such as a children's advocacy center? Victims services through the police departments? Foster care agencies?
	Do any of these programs offer prevention trainings?

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Who comes into contact with families in need of help?	What agencies or programs exist to serve families experiencing domestic violence, in need of parent education, in need of financial help, etc?
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Who comes into contact with children?	What schools exist in your community? What child care centers, after school programs or other child centered programs exist?
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### **Additional questions to consider when researching existing services and resources:**

*Availability: What is being offered?*

*Accessibility: Who can actually receive services?*

*Quantity: How many programs are offered and how many people can be served?*

*Quality: How good is the available programming?*

*Legitimacy: Does the community believe in the providers and services?*

Some communities already have sophisticated referral systems and compilations of agencies and program. Other communities may not have these resources. The key with this needs assessment is to begin to develop a table that highlights gaps in child maltreatment prevention. The table provided below is an example of how you can structure a list. This list can be used throughout the needs assessment process to gather information from entities on the list and confirm that you have not left any entities off the list. Note that prevention services are any service that seeks to prevent child maltreatment. These may include services such as parent education, professional training, youth education, public awareness campaigns and community events. Prevention services might also include services that seek to stabilize families through substance use and mental health treatment. Oftentimes, screening or training to detect maltreatment are included as prevention services, when in fact, they are part of the response to maltreatment that has already occurred.

Agency/Program Name	Agency contact	Brief description of services provided	Prevention services provided
<i>Example program</i>	<i>Jane Doe Email, phone</i>	<i>Domestic violence shelter</i>	<i>Offers a protective parenting class for shelter residents</i>
<i>Example program 2</i>	<i>Jane Doe Email, phone</i>	<i>Early childhood education</i>	<i>None</i>

**REMINDER: A community needs assessment is identifying gaps so it is okay to note that no services are provided or that no services exist**

## Step 2: Collect information

There are many different methods for collecting information for a needs assessment. The methods suggested in this section are designed for easy implementation that requires no research training. To collect data quickly and thoroughly, communities should: 1) complete interviews with key stakeholders and 2) complete a survey with contacts at the agencies you identified in Step 1.

### Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders are individuals in your community who have unique knowledge or perspectives about child maltreatment. Stakeholders should represent a variety of different sectors, positions and skill levels. Identify between 5-10 stakeholders from the list you developed in Step 1. A sample list of stakeholders is provided below. This list is not exhaustive, but you want to make sure to have a representative from each group.

Contact stakeholders and see if they would be available for an in-person or phone interview. As a general rule, in-person interviews allow you to develop greater rapport and build relationships. However, they are not always practical with travel and time constraints. When interviewing stakeholders, you can record conversations or take notes. If you are recording conversations, you must disclose and get permission from the person. If you are taking notes, have another person with you who can take notes. As soon as possible after the interview, you should debrief with your note taker and compile one document containing your notes. Below is an interview guide you can modify. It may be that the people you are interviewing need slightly different interview guides. You might also find as you are nearing the finish of your interviews that you want to narrow your questions and you can absolutely do that.



## Examples of key stakeholders

Education professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• school social worker/ counselors</li><li>• Principal</li><li>• Superintendent</li><li>• Parent liaison</li><li>• Child care agencies (home and center based)</li></ul>
Child welfare professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local non-profits working with kids</li><li>• DFPS supervisor or liaison in your area</li><li>• Worker from the Children's Advocacy Center</li><li>• Judge or attorney ad litem</li><li>• CASA volunteers</li></ul>
Social service professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Casemanagers at non-profits serving families, children</li><li>• Counselors</li><li>• Non-profit directors</li></ul>
Law enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Victims services</li><li>• Officers assigned to child abuse units</li></ul>
Medical professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pediatricians</li><li>• Community clinic social workers</li><li>• Emergency room doctors, nurses</li></ul>
Community leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faith communities</li><li>• City/ County public health officials</li><li>• City/County government officials</li></ul>
Caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents</li><li>• Grandparents</li><li>• Community groups</li><li>• Mentors</li></ul>

### Stakeholder interview guide

Thank you for agreeing to an interview. As I have explained, the purpose of this needs assessment is to understand the strengths of our community as well as the gaps in child maltreatment prevention. We will be using this information to help respond to a Request for Proposals from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Our hope is that we can obtain funds to strengthen child maltreatment efforts in our community.

To help me remember everything, I have X with me to take notes (or I am audio-taping).

To start, I want to ask you about your experience in this community.

1. How long have you lived and worked in this community?
  - a. If someone were to ask you why our community was special or unique, what would you tell them?
2. Tell me a little about the work you do. What type of work do you currently do with families?
  - a. What barriers or challenges to you see families facing?
3. Child maltreatment is an issue in every community. What are the factors that impact child maltreatment in our community?
  - a. What risk factors are present in our community?
  - b. What unique challenges do our families face that might increase child maltreatment?
  - c. What cultural factors are impacting child maltreatment?
4. In thinking about our community, how can child maltreatment be prevented?
  - a. What resources do we already have in place to help?
  - b. What resources are currently missing from our community?
  - c. Which resources would you rate as the top three things that we need?
5. Are you aware of any child maltreatment prevention programs in are community that are in
  - a. Schools
  - b. Medical providers (doctors, hospitals)
  - c. Non-profits
  - d. Daycare centers
  - e. Other entities
6. Is there anything that we did not ask that we should have asked?
  - a. Is there anything you would like to add as we move forward with this needs assessment?

Thank you so much for your time. After we are done interviewing community stakeholders, we will be sending out a survey. Would you be willing to distribute our survey to your network? Would you be available to participate in a community forum at the end of this process?

## Community survey

Surveys are an efficient tool for collecting information from large numbers of people. Unlike your interview guide, your survey should contain primarily closed ended questions. Otherwise, you might end up with too much data to sort through. Spending time to create a survey that is effective and efficient is crucial if you want people to actually complete the survey. Surveys that ask the same question multiple times or do not allow participants to respond in ways that accurately reflect their views are generally not completed. Below are some general tips in survey creation. A sample survey is available on the following pages. This survey can be used as a paper survey or be programmed as an online survey.

- Make sure questions that have more than one answer have an option to click more than one answer. (Sometimes you don't want people to select more than one answer?)
- Make sure that questions have an answer. Sometimes people limit the responses to statements and the participant does not agree with any statement. Always include a "none of the above" in these cases.
- Skip patterns in surveys can be complicated. If you have a survey where a person is only asked a question based on their previous response, make sure that the survey is programmed or designed so that the participant will skip the question if needed. Testing surveys multiple times by simply taking them helps to identify if there are problems in the skip patterns.
- Decide on online surveys or paper surveys or both. Online surveys are generally easier because they compile data for you and produce graphs. For simple surveys, surveymonkey is a great tool. The challenge with online surveys is making sure you have emails or access to listserves where people can help you distribute the survey. Paper surveys are generally used when you need to mail or collect surveys directly from participants. For instance, if there was a conference in your community and multiple professionals would be attending, a paper survey could be distributed.
- Always have a due date. Let people know that the survey will only be open for two weeks. After two weeks, you are unlikely to get follow up. Use as much resources as possible to advertise your survey (listserves, social media, community meetings). Send out the survey and then send reminders every three days as you count down to the deadline.
- If it is possible to have a community business donate a gift card or meal, use that as a raffle prize for whoever completes the survey.

## Community Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. This survey is part of a larger needs assessment that will help our community understand the strengths of our community as well as the gaps in child maltreatment prevention. We will be using this information to help respond to a Request for Proposals from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Our hope is that we can obtain funds to strengthen child maltreatment efforts in our community. Your responses are anonymous. All information will be reported in aggregate form.

### **Part 1: Your background**

Please tell us about yourself by checking the box that most applies.

<b>Which best describes the professional sector you currently work in? Check all that apply.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Day care <input type="checkbox"/> Private, non-profit <input type="checkbox"/> Public, non-profit <input type="checkbox"/> Medical <input type="checkbox"/> Legal <input type="checkbox"/> Law enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer
<b>What is your highest level of education or degree obtained? Check all that apply.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Some high school <input type="checkbox"/> High school, GED <input type="checkbox"/> Some college <input type="checkbox"/> Associate degree <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master degree <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer
<b>In what capacity do you work with children and families? Check all that apply.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Teach <input type="checkbox"/> Provide case management services <input type="checkbox"/> Provide counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Provide medical care <input type="checkbox"/> Provide early childhood education <input type="checkbox"/> Provide emergency assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Supervise staff who provide any of the above services <input type="checkbox"/> Manage an entity that provides any of the above services <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer
<b>How long have you worked in this community?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than a year <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 11+ years
<b>How long have you lived in this community?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not live in this community <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 11+ years

## Part 2: Parenting behaviors

Please tell us about how often you witness the following behaviors in our community. We are not asking about your own parenting, but rather, what you see in the families you work with.

	Never	Once in a while	About half the time	Very often	Always
1. Parents are responsive to my child's feelings or needs.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Parents use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Parents take their child's desires into account before asking the child to do something.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When a child asks why he/she has to conform, Parents state: "because I said so", or "I am your parent and I want you to."	1	2	3	4	5
5. Parents explain to their child how the parent feels about the child's good and bad behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Parents spank when their child is disobedient.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Parents encourage their child to talk about his or her troubles.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Parents encourage their child to freely express himself/herself even when disagreeing with parents.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Parents punish by taking privileges away from their child with little if any explanations.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Parents emphasize the reasons for rules.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Parents give comfort and understanding when their child is upset.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Parents yell or shout when their child misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Parents give praise when their child is good.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Parents explode in anger towards their child.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Parents take into account their child's preferences in making plans for the family.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Parents grab their child when he/she is being disobedient.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Parents show respect for their child's opinions by encouraging him or her to express them.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Parents allow their child to give input into family rules.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Parents scold and criticize to make their child improve.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Parents give their child reasons why rules should be obeyed.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Parents use threats as punishment with little or no justification.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Parents have warm and intimate times together with their child.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Parents punish by putting their child off somewhere alone with little if any explanations.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Parents help their child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Parents scold or criticize when child's behavior doesn't meet my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Parents explain the consequences child's behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Parents slap their child when child misbehaves.	1	2	3	4	5

### **Part 3: Issues impacting families**

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about families in your community.

	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree
1. A large portion of parents in our community drink too much alcohol.	1	2	3	4	5
2. A large portion of parents in our community use illegal drugs.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Most parents in our community do not take their children for regular well-child exams.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Most parents in our community do not have regular health insurance for their children.	1	2	3	4	5
5. A large portion of the parents in our community have a mental illness.	1	2	3	4	5
6. A large portion of the parents in our community do not receive mental healthcare.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Our neighborhoods are generally safe.	1	2	3	4	5
8. A large portion of children in our community witness family violence.	1	2	3	4	5
9. A large portion of children in our community witness neighborhood violence.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Families in our community are afraid of the police.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Most of the children in our community are being raised by one parent.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Parents in our community can almost always provide food for their children.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Parents in our community have stable housing.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Parents in our community are employed at jobs that provide a living wage.	1	2	3	4	5
15. There are employment opportunities for parents in our community.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Affordable, quality childcare is available to most families in our community.	1	2	3	4	5

### **Part 4: Community resources**

In this section, you need to customize items for your community. Through your stakeholder interviews, you should have identified a couple different ideas about where to intervene. For instance, if you think starting a workgroup on sexual abuse prevention is important, ask participants how likely they are to support that intervention, refer people to it and if they think it will make a difference.

### **Part 5: Closing**

Is there any other insight you want to share on the best way to prevent child maltreatment in our community?

# Step 3: Compile findings

Now that you have your information collected, you need to analyze, compile and prioritize your findings. The key in presenting your information is to avoid using a lot of graphs or text. Challenge yourself to be concise. Conciseness is difficult with a lot of information to sort through.

## Stakeholder interviews

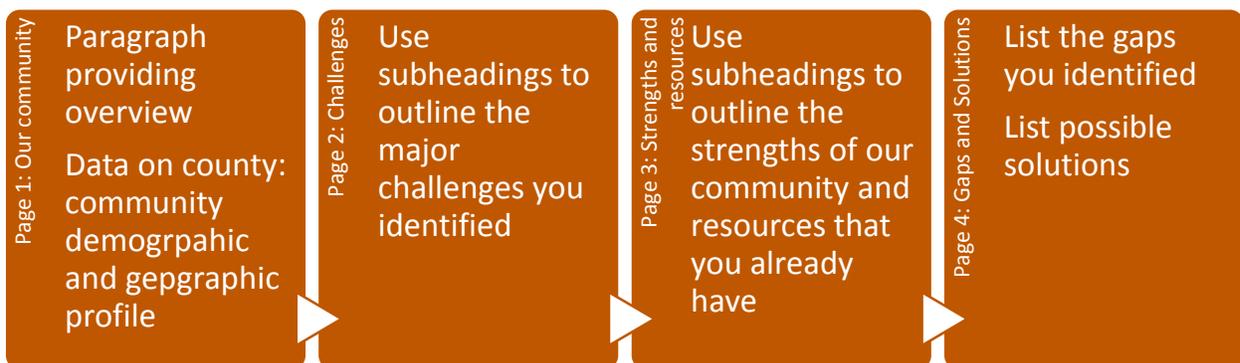
To analyze data from your interviews, you need to go back into your notes. Qualitative researchers use a variety of methods to analyze interviews. Given your resources, the best option would be to keep things simple. Take your electronic notes and compile them all into one word document. Organize the document by questions and paste answers below each question. Read through the responses under each question and write 1-5 sentences to summarize. Have another person go through the same process and compare your findings. Talk through any places you disagree and come to a consensus.

## Community Survey

Analyzing data from the community survey is a little easier. If you have done the survey online, most programs will provide you with options to generate a report. If you did the survey on paper or just have some paper copies of the survey, enter those surveys into an online program. The alternative would be to use a spreadsheet program like Excel which would not generate reports automatically.

## Putting it all together

After you have results from both components, you need a final product to share. Do not produce a lengthy 10 page report full of graphs. Rather, pick specific pieces of information (graphs, quotes) and use those to fill in a brief document. Below is an example of how to organize a report. If you must include additional information, provide it in an appendix.



## Step 4: Plan your intervention

With your needs assessment findings compiled and prepared in a document, you can now plan an intervention guided by what you found. Look at the gaps and the possible solutions. However, do not make decisions in isolation. A community intervention needs to be rooted in community input and feedback. Distribute your findings to everyone who participated in interviews and any listserves, social media or other entities who helped distribute the survey link.

Ask for feedback either by email, hold a town hall meeting or present your findings at an existing meeting. Ask participants what you missed in your findings, what surprised them and what they think the next steps should be. Use that feedback and everything you have done with the needs assessment to guide your intervention planning.

