

Hazard mitigation vulnerability assessment critical thinking examples

[Environment](#), [Disaster](#)



Hazard Mitigation & Vulnerability Assessment

Introduction

Denver metropolitan regional planning commission is responsible for identifying and putting into place mechanisms that will solve problems facing the region. Hazard identification and planning is one of the functions it is set to achieve for the development and wellbeing of the region. Planning is an important step towards prevention or reducing the effects of such hazards in case of occurrence. Countywide health assessment is an example of measures taken in planning and implementation of regional hazard mitigation policies. This paper will examine how regional health assessment in Denver region contributes to the social vulnerability part of the natural hazard mitigation plans. The relationship between health assessment contribution to hazard mitigation and other emergency management plans will be a part of the paper. The paper will give an insight into the gaps that exist in health assessment, how to fill them, and what Denver's health program offers and what it does not offer.

Purpose and need

Denver ranks among the best cities health wise in the United States. However, this statistic does not consider variations in health that occur due to differences in area of residence, poverty level, political and economic factors. The level of education, infrastructure, & quality of health facilities, environmental conditions and political atmosphere are but some of the factors that define health conditions of Denver citizens. These factors fall outside the traditional scope of health definition that focuses on health

facilities and methods of health financing such as insurance & other health schemes. A comprehensive health assessment in Denver offers an inclusive definition of health that enables health planners to put in place policies that offer better services to the residents in the region. Health assessment provides a framework that ensures long-term improvement of existing health conditions take root in the region. Determination of the existing health conditions and laying out of future health plans is a significant step in identifying the health needs. Health assessment enables regional planners identify and solve the needs while integrating their plans with other developmental plans such as clean environment, transport, and economic developments.

In terms of health hazards mitigation measures, a comprehensive health assessment provides adequate health data on the historical past and present that enables planners predict the future with a high degree of certainty. Adequate information provides a basis on which regional health planners in Denver focus their prevention and hazard mitigation plans. The purpose of the assessment is to help in identifying health risks that plague the region and in devising measures or solutions that will terminate the long-term risks. If the risks are unpreventable, then mitigation measures to reduce the impact and severity of their occurrence are important in health planning. A mitigation and prevention measure ensures that no loss of human life occurs and protects civilians from the economic costs of dealing with such health risks in the first place.

National Context of Health

The United States traditional focus on health is the emphasis on hospitalized care, which is rather expensive, and capital intensive to the state in terms of constructing health facilities. A wider shift of focus is necessary in order to cut down on state costs on health and its infrastructure. Health assessments should consider expanding their horizons to include a broader community view rather than just hospitalized care. The federal government spending on health is high since it only focuses on curing diseases instead of eliminating the social causes that bring about the illnesses in the first place. An example is in combating of heart diseases and stroke. The federal state will save a lot by avoiding costs of establishing treatment centers and purchasing drugs through involving the community. Creating community awareness on the risks of tobacco use and implementing tough policies and taxes on tobacco use will reduce the cases of heart diseases and strokes. In the end, the state will not have to spend on treating the community. This offers an opportunity to channel the funds to other useful projects in the community.

Important Health Trends in Denver

According to the 2010 health reports, cardiovascular disease ranks among the leading cause of death in Denver. It includes heart diseases such as strokes, thrombosis, heart failure, and heart attacks. An important fact is that the rate of death from cardiovascular and heart related diseases are significantly reducing in the region. Efforts to create public awareness on the dangers of tobacco use and smoking are among the major reasons that account for the reduced rate of deaths. The enacting of tax policies by the

county administration and strict regulations also accounts for the decreased rate of tobacco use. Subsequently, diseases associated with tobacco use have reduced sharply. The policies aim at discouraging the use of tobacco or sale to other people. Denver county government has realized that it is not only important to treat diseases but it is even better to curb the social causes that bring about the diseases.

In support of the fight against cardiovascular diseases, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently offered Denver financial aid. The community expects that the health planners will utilize the funds in transforming the region into heart disease-free region. Among the ways in which the funds will help in reducing the heart problem cases is through creation of recreational parks, setting up exercise facilities, treatment, and reduction in tobacco use & exposure.

Statistics show that the number of obese children and adults is on the rise in Denver. This trend threatens to overcome the benefits it has achieved by significantly reducing the rate of cardiovascular diseases. The worrying trend is steadily rising since 2003 with current medical reports now indicating that over half of the adult population is obese. In 2009, 29 percent of the girl child and 33 percent of the boy child were overweight. This is a clear indicator of future health problems for the state and the children. This kind of body weight exposes individuals to many diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and heart problems.

Social factors such as lack of exercise, poor eating habits, ignorance of medical conditions and lack of awareness among the citizens contribute to the rising number of obese individuals. Without proper health assessment

and implementation of measures that address both the clinical and social influences, obesity will continue rising as the number one killer in the region. Socioeconomic analysis should form the core of mitigation measures in order to provide a framework that will address the issue wholly.

Health Disparity

Health Disparity is among the trends in medical health of the citizens in Denver. Health conditions and outcomes are more common in certain races, groups, and economic classes of people in Denver. Identifying the rift or differences in terms of healthcare access, vulnerability, exposure, and statistics is important towards providing specialized care to citizens. The health planners in Denver have introduced strategic efforts that aim at identifying such social and economic disparities in order to offer better healthcare. While the traditional focus of health is on primary access to healthcare (treatment and hospitalization), health providers in Denver drive their efforts in reaching the uninsured population of Hispanics and Native American Indians in Denver. Health disparities may also occur due to economical, educational, and regional differences in Denver. Research associates tobacco use to the young, uneducated, and those with low incomes in Denver. On the other hand, high use of tobacco in the western and northern regions of Denver city is a good indicator of poverty and poor social welfare in the regions. Such an understanding of the differences will ensure good health planning in Denver.

Refugees in Denver

The United States accepts a maximum of 76000 refugees annually. This includes asylum seekers and those who run away from the protection of their original states owing to fear or political instability that threatens their lives. In Denver, the Colorado department of human services is responsible for settling officially assigned refugees into the region. The department ensures that the refugees are well settled and integrated in the region (CDHS, 2012). They also offer help to the refugees in achieving self-sufficiency and independence. The department receives its financial support from the U. S Department Of Health And Human Services In The Office Of Refugee Resettlement.

The settlement of refugees in the region poses some health implications that need assessment and planning for better regional health. The Denver county government should put structures in place that devises and implements refugee health needs and assessments. The main objectives of carrying out the assessment are to determine the health of the refugee population, refugee access to healthcare, and the quality of the health services. Assessment and planning provides a means by which the city can allocate resources and alleviate health disasters due to unpreparedness.

Gaps that exist in the assessment

Even though statistics show that Denver region scores highly in the reduction of cardiovascular disease, its poor performance in reduction of obese cases indicates a gap in integration of prevention policies as well as their maintenance. There should be an integration of successful policies with

other similar goals for success. Health disparity is another identifiable gap in Denver's health systems. Even though clear paths for reducing such disparities exist in its policies, failure to lower the bar or reduce the disparity is an indication of a non-inclusive framework in implementation of the policies. It should consider a wider socioeconomic framework in implementing the policies. Finally, just like the huge national level spending on healthcare, Denver spends a lot on healthcare with little outcome. Apart from few successes such as reduction of heart problems, huge spending with little outcome is an indication of a gap that exists between narrow perspective of the targets in policy framework and the actual broad targets. It should widen its net and capture education, health disparity, economic and social factors in its targets.

In conclusion, health assessment of Denver region is a significant step that contributes towards planning, prevention, and mitigation of hazards. From the above arguments, it is clear that what the state may considers as non-vulnerable, may actually be socially vulnerable to health assessment analysts. Therefore, with proper definition of what is at risk will enable prior planning and implementation of measures that will avoid or reduce the risk. If all stakeholders work together (private and public) in developing and integrating health policies with other development goals, Denver city will achieve meaningful results.

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