

Children's National Health System Washington, D.C.

Located in Washington D.C., [Children's National Health System](#) has seven regional outpatient centers, an ambulatory surgery center, two emergency rooms and an acute care hospital. Children's National leads many community-based initiatives and collaborations to advance community health.

Children's National was the lead organization in conducting a 2016 community health assessment (CHA) on behalf of the DC Healthy Communities Collaborative (DCHCC), a coalition of eight hospitals and community health centers that have partnered to improve health and well-being in Washington, D.C. For the 2016 CHA, Children's National shifted the focus from disease-specific conditions to root causes and determinants of health. The CHA process revealed nine broad, community-defined health needs. For its **prioritization** process, the team adopted the Hanlon Method, a framework to select priority needs. Various stakeholders and collaborators developed a modified version of the Hanlon Method, which included a criteria and weighting system that was aligned with organizational mission, capacity to address change and existing resources. A new weighting system was created based on DCHCC's capabilities, resources and funding to address the health needs. The criteria and weighting system used to prioritize needs was:

- Importance to community—40%
- Capacity to address change—25%
- Alignment with mission/vision—25%
- Existing collaborations or interventions—10%

Four priority needs were selected through this process: mental health, place-based care, care coordination and health literacy.

According to Chaya Merrill, director, Child Health Data Lab at Children's National, "It's important to be transparent when prioritizing health needs. A barrier in this process is subjectivity. We want the prioritization process to be as objective as possible. However, there will undoubtedly always be a subjective element. Using a structured prioritization method helps minimize the subjective elements and offers a more structured process at arriving at priorities."

Recommendations to make this process more effective are:

- Be transparent in your approach.
- Know your hospital's capacity and resources when selecting priority needs.
- Be aware of the community organizations that are already addressing the needs your hospital identified to avoid overlap and form potential partnerships.

View Children's National Health System's community health assessment [here](#).

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