



Community Health Needs and Resources

Community Belonging in the Western Region
Learning from our Strengths
Focus Group Results

Lorna Bursey, Community Health Manager

1/26/2017



Community Belonging in the Western Region Focus Group

Introduction

Background

The purpose of the Community Health Needs and Resources Assessment (CHNRA) focus groups is to provide further insight into the challenges and the strengths identified through the CHNRA surveys. As for strengths identified, survey outcomes indicated respondents feel they live in supportive communities in terms of variety, quality, number, accessibility and availability of community services. Respondents described feeling satisfied and content living in their respective communities. They also said they are satisfied with the number of volunteers in their communities such as in schools and community organizations. They describe volunteers as well trained and committed, especially in the local volunteer fire departments, search and rescue, and other emergency services.

Respondents feel there is a strong sense of community and that there are numerous and a variety of community group/ organizations/ services that help deal with community problems. Some examples given of supportive community groups include volunteer community groups, supportive groups, schools, not for profit organizations, and churches. Based on these survey outcomes, Community Belonging was identified as a topic for further exploration. This report provides a summary of the Community Belonging focus group findings.

Methodology

A regional focus group was conducted to explore Community Belonging. A discussion guide (Appendix A) was developed to identify the process and content for the focus group. Key stakeholders including Community Health Managers and Manager of Research and Evaluation were involved with the development of the discussion guide. Potential focus group participants were identified through Community Advisory Committees (CAC), indigenous and francophone groups and other community groups based on their involvement or knowledge of the focus group topics. The Community Health Manager organized the focus group and potential participants were contacted by written invitation or phone call to request their participation in the focus group and to ensure that the times and locations proposed were convenient. The focus group was led by the Community Health Manager, with support from an identified note taker (Community Health Manager, Bay St. George). The discussion guide was used to assist with facilitation of the group. Following the focus group, the Community Health Manager summarized the discussion of each question. A summary report was compiled and sent to participants to ensure that the summary accurately reflected the discussion and that no issues were misinterpreted or missed. The following sections provide a summary of the discussion from these focus groups and a discussion of the themes that emerged.

Results

The focus group for Community Belonging was held on January 26, 2017 by conference call. There were 6 participants with representation from Humber Valley Development Association, Kids Eat Smart Foundation, Francophone and Qalipu group members, Improving Health My Way, and Vine Place Community Centre. A planned face to face meeting was changed to a conference call due to poor weather which resulted in hazardous driving conditions.

Question 1: What does Community Belonging mean to you?

Summary of Responses:

Responders identified that a sense of community belonging comes from knowing and preserving your history and where you come from. They felt that being connected to communities through participation in community groups gave a sense of purpose, belonging and acceptance. It provides connection with the community so that community members do not feel isolated. Being part of a supportive community that helps members during times of need is an important aspect of community belonging. The importance of having services available to minority populations that is sensitive to unique culture makes people feel important and accepted was also highlighted.

Question 2: How does community belonging contribute to your wellbeing, the wellbeing of your family, and others in the community?

Summary of Responses:

All Participants agree that community belonging contributes to wellbeing in many ways. Participants suggested the community belonging enables socialization, networking, and sharing of experiences, gives a sense of making a difference, and provides feeling of acceptance and connection with other like-minded individuals. Taken together or separately these experiences give a sense of belonging that helps deal with stress and feelings of loneliness and contributes positively on mental and physical health.

Question 3: How can Western Health, individuals and communities build on this sense of community belonging to improve the services we deliver and the health of the people who live in western Newfoundland?

Summary of Responses:

Participants suggest that within Western region there is a need to promote community based initiatives. People need to be brought together to share ideas about how to build partnerships. Gnd information on how to improve communication about services. Respondents felt that Community groups could do more to help if they had knowledge and awareness of what was needed. Participants highlighted that improving connections and communications between Western Health and community groups would be helpful, in particular to identify ways to partner to address identified gaps would be worthwhile.

Respondents also indicated that more community services are needed for those that have accessed Western Health services and now live in the community or are between visits with a service provider. Individuals need to be linked with community services to reduce the risk of setbacks that result when gaps in service provision occurs.

Information about Western Health services should be more available, what services and when and how to access them, especially Mental Health Services that is often not discussed.

Question 4: Of all the things we have discussed, what is most important to remember?

Summary of Responses:

Participants all agreed that the most important thing to remember was that we are not alone. They felt that there is a bigger community and that networking with community groups is an important aspect of community belonging.

Question 5: Have we missed anything?

Summary of Responses:

When asked if participants had anything additional to add one participant reiterated the need for increased communication about services as being very important especially those for Mental Health and Addiction services saying that drug use is a concern in our communities.

Discussion

The information collected in the community belonging focus group was reviewed to identify themes that may be present. This information can be used by community groups and PHC teams to promote awareness of community resources and services and to encourage communities to use these resources to support Community Belonging and Wellness.

Outlined below are the themes that emerged through the focus group discussion:

Theme #1: The Importance of Partnership

Participants recognized of the importance of communication and awareness of community services provided by Western Health, community groups and NGOs. Everyone needs to do more to ensure people are aware of available community services. Build partnerships in the community to help bring more awareness about services, to spread the message about the connection between feelings of belonging and wellness especially to those who are experiencing illness or isolation.

Theme #2: Connection to Community Groups Foster Community Belonging

The sense of being part of a community or a community group is extremely important for people's physical and mental wellbeing. Community belonging promotes wellness by giving people a sense of purpose and reducing isolation.

Participants felt that belonging is important and it in and of itself contributes to wellbeing.

Theme #3: Awareness of Programs and Resources

Everyone needs to do more to ensure people have access to community services and programs. Work should focus on determining where there are gaps in community services, identifying strategies to bridge gaps and include community groups as partners. Being mindful of cultural needs is very important to groups who identify as unique populations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear from the responses and themes identified above that people living with in the western region have a strong sense of community belonging and recognize its important connection to wellbeing.

The information collected will be used to help guide responses to issues identified in the Community Health Needs and Resources assessment.

Appendix 1

Focus Group Introduction

DURATION: 1-1.5 hours max

WELCOME

- Welcome participants
- Thank participants for agreeing to be part of the focus group; appreciate willingness to participate
- Obtain verbal or written consent to participate
- Collect record of attendance

INTRODUCTIONS

- Introduce moderator and note taker
- Round room introductions

PURPOSE OF FOCUS GROUP

- Explain the purpose of the focus group
- Provide some background information regarding Community Health Needs and Resources Assessment and survey findings.

GROUND RULES (Can be placed on Flip Chart)

- **Helpful tips for the focus group to run smoothly and respectfully for all participants:**
- We would like everyone to participate.
- Only one person talks at a time. It is important that there are no side bar discussions and that everyone is listening as one person speaks.
- Confidentiality is very important so that everyone is comfortable in expressing their true opinions. We will be taking notes, however we will not identify anyone by name. You will remain anonymous.
- There are no right or wrong answers to questions – just ideas, experiences and opinions, which are all valuable.
- It is important to hear all sides of the issue – both the positive and negative.
- Aim to start and end on time.
- Does anyone else have any ‘ground rules’ they would like to add?

CONCLUSION

- Summarize answers to the questions that are recorded. Ask: Is this an adequate summary? Have we missed anything?
- When the focus group is complete, thank participants for their participation and the note taker for taking notes.

Focus Group – Community Belonging

Background

Recently WH has completed a needs assessment survey with residents of the western region. Over 700 people responded to the survey and expressed their opinions on a variety of questions about satisfaction with health services and community services, identification of strength and issues within the community for example. Western Health uses this information to help plan for service delivery. After WH reviewed the information from the surveys, we identified areas that we want to know more about, therefore, we conduct focus groups.

While we need to learn more about our challenges and weaknesses, it is also important that we recognize the strengths our region has to offer. The purpose of the focus group is to explore survey results which indicate that people throughout the region have a strong sense of community belonging. We would like to explore this concept so that we can have a better understanding of what that means, and to use it to help build stronger and healthier communities and high quality services.

Survey Results:

- Respondent's comments indicated they feel they live in supportive communities in terms of variety, quality, number, accessibility and availability of community services. Respondents described feeling satisfied and content living in their respective communities.
- Respondents indicated they are satisfied with the number of volunteers in their communities such as in schools and community organizations. They describe volunteers as well trained and committed, especially in the local volunteer fire departments, search and rescue, and other emergency services.
- Respondents feel there is a strong sense of community. There are numerous and a variety of community group/ organizations/ services that help deal with community problems.
- Examples of supportive community groups include volunteer community groups, supportive groups, schools, not for profit organizations, and churches.

Focus Group Questions

1. What does Community Belonging mean to you?
2. How does community belonging contribute to your wellbeing, the wellbeing of your family, and others in the community?
3. How can Western Health build on this sense of community belonging to improve the services we deliver and the health of the people who live in western Newfoundland?
4. Of all the things we have discussed, what is most important to remember?
5. Have we missed anything?

Focus Group Target Audience:

- Community Members from each PHC Area of varying ages , demographic, French, aboriginal

Additional sources of information to be considered:

- nil