Assessing structure and process of collaboratives using Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT)

What is collaboration?
Two or more entities (organizations, organizational systems, programs, community groups, or individuals) working together for a common purpose.

Collaborations form the bedrock of public health work to address community needs.

Why collaborate?
To address complex issues, we need stakeholders from multiple sectors and levels of operation to work together toward a common vision and goal.

The Role: Engage with and build consensus among diverse organizations and individuals in a community to address a community-level issue or problem.

The Format: Collaborative partnerships vary by level of commitment, activities undertaken, membership composition, and intensity (e.g., meeting frequency).

What makes community coalitions effective?
CCAT is comprised of 14 major constructs which provide a framework for understanding the processes, structures, and outcomes experienced by effective community coalitions.

Coalition building is cyclical, with three main stages: formation, maintenance, and institutionalization. Common activities over the coalition lifespan include recruiting, mobilizing, organizational establishment, action planning, implementation, evaluating outcomes, and institutionalizing strategies.

Coalition success is impacted by sociopolitical environment, geography, history, and norms of collaboration efforts.

Successful coalitions include a lead agency or convener group that provides resources such as physical space, staff, technical assistance and material or financial support. Community gatekeepers working with the convener help develop credibility and trust within the community.

Coalitions begin with an initial core group of committed members, but effectiveness increases when the core group expands to include a diverse representation of the community.


How might you measure some of the key constructs?

- When starting up a new coalition, you might assess how much coalition members understand the community context and the health and social outcomes the coalition is trying to impact.
- The operations and processes of the coalition lend themselves to process measurement; you might consider asking coalition members at each meeting to do a brief assessment – do coalition members feel there is open, frequent communication?

What is the mechanism for shared decision-making?

- Do coalition members perceive that benefits of participation outweigh the costs and time?
- What would improve their experience?
- Are the right leaders in place to convene the coalition?