

Assessment & Evaluation

Assessment

Assessment is the systematic gathering, review and use of information in order to develop a deeper understanding of a population or of an issue. Assessment allows you to describe a population, both needs and strengths, identify existing resources that can be used to address the needs, identify existing strengths that can be leveraged, and identify both internal and external influences affecting the population. Goals of assessment include: to create a common understanding of community issues, to create an information base for decision-making, and to foster community involvement and support¹. The process involves describing the current state of the community, determining the desired state of the community, and deciding which resources and strategies are needed to achieve the desired change.

Needs Assessment

Identify and define the issue or need. This could be as broad as overall public health or as specific as alcohol-related injury diagnoses involving falls. Identify and define the community or target population. Describe the demographic make-up of the community. Determine who in the community is directly impacted by the issue or need, and who is indirectly impacted. Information gathered might include:

Number of people impacted	Percent of people impacted
Degree to which problem is getting worse	Degree to which problem is improving
Severity of problem	Cost of the problem (social and economic)
Comparison to other population(s)	

Resources Assessment

Infrastructure assessment includes gathering information on a network of people, systems and organizations. 'People' refers not only to number of staff, but also skills and competencies. Systems can include data collection systems and communication systems. Organizational and systems capacity incorporates facilities, plans and protocols, partnerships and funding². Infrastructure components include, but are not limited to:

Surveillance	Evaluation	Technical Assistance
Assessment	Research	Funding
Program Development		

A policy is a formal plan of action. Policy assessment includes gathering information on policies set by governments, schools, worksites or businesses. Policies can include, but are not limited to:

Product Regulation

Compliance Checks

Ordinances

Limiting Access

Economic Disincentives

Restrict Advertising and Promotion

Program assessment involves gathering information on programs implemented by community organizations and by governmental agencies, including: schools, youth-serving organizations, law enforcement, corrections, religious organizations, civic/volunteer groups, businesses, media, healthcare system, public health, human services, and specific cultural groups. Programs can include, but are not limited to:

Awareness Campaigns

Youth-Based Programs

Worksite Programs

Diversion Programs

Coalitions

Web sites

Readiness Assessment

An assessment of community readiness involves community awareness and knowledge of the issue or need, political will and readiness of community leaders, and the community climate, norms and attitudes. A readiness assessment can help identify resources, obstacles, community acceptance, and information on the types of interventions that would be appropriate for the specific target population.

Evaluation

Evaluation involves monitoring and improving programs and strategies. Evaluation findings allow you to describe to stakeholders in the community what you are doing, and how you work is having an impact. Evaluation provides information about program or intervention activities, characteristics and outcomes, and is used to reduce uncertainty, improve effectiveness, and facilitate better decision-making³.

Formative/Process

Process evaluation allows you to look for ways to improve implementation of programs, strategies and interventions by revealing connections between the way implementation is done and the resulting outcomes and/or satisfaction of the target population. Process or formative evaluation can be used for planning purposes. Process evaluation questions can include^{1, 3}, but are not limited to:

Was the program or intervention delivered as it was designed to be?

Are there characteristics that make people more or less likely to benefit from the intervention?

How well does the program or strategy meet the needs of the target population?

What kinds of services are provided to the target population, and how much of them?

What percentage of the target population was successfully reached by the program or strategy?

What was the dropout rate?

To what extent were partnerships utilized and resources leveraged?

Summative/Outcomes

Outcomes evaluation is used to measure the actual impact of a program or strategy by tracking the affects you expect to see after the program is completed or the intervention is implemented. As noted, assessment involves describing the current state of the community, determining the desired state of the community, and deciding which resources and strategies are needed to achieve the desired change. Evaluation helps you determine the extent to which you have achieved the desired changes at the population level.

To what extent was the need or problem reduced?

How many members of the target population demonstrated improved outcomes in the short term?

What percent of the target population demonstrated improved outcomes in the short term?

How many members of the target population demonstrated improved outcomes in the long term?

What percent of the target population demonstrated improved outcomes in the long term?

Were there variations in outcomes within the population? Did different demographic groups achieve greater or lesser outcomes?

Traditional vs. Collaborative Evaluation³

Traditional evaluation is done *to* the program, and decisions are made by the evaluator. Collaborative evaluation is done *with* the program. It builds on the strengths, and values the contributions of everyone involved.

Traditional

Done to the program

Evaluator operates apart from the program

Evaluator decides

Evaluator retrieves information from program staff as needed to plan and carry out the study

Evaluator interacts relatively infrequently through the program director

Collaborative

Done with the program

Evaluator operates in concert with the program

Evaluator advises

Program staff are participants in planning and carrying out the study

Evaluator interacts regularly through the program staff and other stakeholders

References and Resources:

1. Wilder Research. Types of Evaluation. August 2009. Obtained on July 21, 2010 from http://www.evaluatod.org/resources/evaluation-guides/TypesOfEvaluation_8-092.pdf
2. Public Health Improvement Resource Center. Obtained on July 16, 2009 from <http://www.phf.org/improvement/>
3. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) National Center for the Application of Prevention Technology (CAPT) Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist Training (SAPST) Curriculum. 2007