A Guide to Making CHANGE!

This guide will help you identify how you can take what you are passionate about advocating for and prevent it in your specific community based on the community characteristics and what you are wanting to advocate for! It will give you strategies that will lead to long term and systemic change in your community!

This guide will use five elements:

1. Assessment: Collect data to define problems, resources, and readiness within a community area to address needs and gaps.
2. Capacity: Address needs by gathering those also passionate or willing to help and put into action.
3. Planning: Develop a thought out, complete approach that includes policies, programs, and practices creating a logical, data-driven plan to address problems identified in the assessment.
4. Implementation: Implement evidence-based prevention strategies, programs, policies and practices.
5. Evaluation: Measure the impact of the implementation strategies, programs, policies and practices.

By knowing your community and creating a plan, you will be able to create a plan that will make an enormous long-term impact!

Step 1: Assessment

The purpose of this step is to understand local needs and the culture of the community by completing research. This will help to ensure that the efforts you make are appropriate and on target!

Collect data about:

- The nature of the problem in the community and the related harmful behaviors
- Risk and protective factors that influence the problem
- Analyze the community readiness to prevent the problem and the available resources in the community
- Ask, what, how often, where, and who about the problem in your community!

Then, examine your collected data and discard what is no useful. Where there are gaps in information, collect more data

After you collect your data, assess it for the problems, magnitude, severity, trend, changeability, risk factors, and protective factors. This will give you a balanced view of the problem at hand, the significance in the community, and its potential for change. Use this data to gain more supporters!

Step 2: Capacity

The purpose of this step is for local resources to be built and compelled to take action while also analyzing the community's readiness to take action in addressing the problem. Human and structural resources are needed for long term change!

Three strategies:

- Engage diverse community stakeholders
- Develop and strengthen a prevention team
- Raise community awareness about the issue

Involve community members from all areas of the community!

The following list includes some of the ways to approach people and organizations in the community with information about, and invitations to participate in, prevention efforts:

- Call known contacts, particularly those with overlapping interests
- Attend and speak up at community meetings and events
- Ask partners to contact their partners

Raising community awareness can help increase readiness in the community! The following are some strategies for raising community awareness:

- Meet one-on-one with public opinion leaders
- Submit articles to local newspapers, church bulletins, neighborhood newsletters, etc.
- Share information on relevant websites and social media outlets
- Host community events to share information about and discuss the problem

Step 3: Planning

The purpose of this step is the increase the effectiveness of the prevention efforts and it is the most appropriate strategy for the community

Developing a solid plan should include:

- Prioritize the risk and protective factors associated with the problem
- Select appropriate programs and practices to address each priority factor
- Combine programs and practices to ensure a comprehensive approach
- Build and share a logic model with stakeholders

The first step in developing a prevention plan is to figure out which risk and protective factors are the "key drivers" of a community's priority problems. To prioritize factors, it is helpful to consider a

factor's importance and changeability. When developing a prevention plan, it is best to prioritize risk and protective factors that are high for both importance and changeability.

Three important criteria for choosing an appropriate prevention program: Evidence –based foundation, conceptual fit, and practical fit.

Your plan should reach all levels of risk, multiple social contexts, and have cultural relevance. You should also be sure to look at the short and long – term outcomes in the community as a result of the prevention program.

Step 4: Implementation

The purpose of this step is to put the plan into action!

Be sure when implementing to consider the degree to which the program is implemented and how you can change the implementation or the program slightly to meet local circumstances, while still remaining faithful to the original design

Things to think about during the adaptation process:

- Build capacity before changing the program
- Add rather than subtract
- Adapt with care
- If adapting, get help

Step 5: Evaluation

The purpose of this step is enhance the prevention practice through analysis and discussing how to improve the effectiveness. This will help document the prevention activities done already, improve the prevention program and practices, collect information for stakeholders, demonstrate the impact the program has had, identify which aspects of the program are working well, build credibility and support for the prevention programming and advance the field of prevention by increasing the knowledge base about what does and doesn't work.

Evaluation involves examining both the process and outcomes of prevention programs and practices. This means asking questions at three levels:

- Since a comprehensive prevention plan includes multiple programs and practices, examine separately how each was delivered and the degree to which it produced positive outcomes.
- Determine how well these different programs and practices work together as part of the community's comprehensive plan to address priority substance misuse problems.
- Evaluate the implementation of the SPF process itself (e.g., "Were all step-specific tasks completed? Were cultural competence and sustainability principles and activities integrated along the way?")