A Prevention 101 Series Publication

Sustainability

Building Program and Coalition Support

The Higher Education Center for
Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education

This publication was funded by the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools at the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-04-CO-0137 with Education Development Center, Inc. The contracting officer's representatives were Tara Hill and Phyllis Scattergood. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. This publication also contains hyperlinks and URLs for information created and maintained by private organizations. This information is provided for the reader's convenience. The U.S. Department of Education is not responsible for controlling or guaranteeing the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. Further, the inclusion of information or a hyperlink or URL does not reflect the importance of the organization, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered.

U.S. Department of Education
Arne Duncan
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Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
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April 2010

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This publication and other resources are available on the Web site for the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention: http://www.higheredcenter.org.

Sustainability

Building Program and Coalition Support

by Peggy Glider, Ph.D.

Given the prevalence of alcohol and other drug abuse and violence on our campuses and in our communities, programs and coalitions developed to prevent or intervene in these problems are faced with a challenging and long-term task. While the development of coalitions or campus-based prevention programs is a healthy start, these efforts must be sustained over time to have a truly lasting effect. Sustainability can seem a daunting task in the midst of implementing programs or mobilizing a coalition; however, by incorporating sustainability into all aspects of prevention efforts (assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation), it becomes an achievable goal. This emphasis on sustainability will actually strengthen prevention efforts from the beginning.

This publication is organized into two basic sections. The first emphasizes the need to include sustainability in assessment, planning, and evaluation. The final section focuses on mechanisms for developing and promoting sustainable programs and coalitions. Each aspect plays a role in overall sustainability. The following suggestions for program and coalition sustainability have been synthesized from publications, Web sites, and personal experiences shared by colleagues across the country.

1. Incorporating Sustainability Into Assessment, Planning, And Evaluation

Problem Analysis or Needs Assessment

The first, critical step in planning a program or building a coalition is to determine the scope and nature of the issues to be addressed, examining existing and needed resources and identifying barriers to implementation and sustainability. The May 2009 publication *Problem Analysis: The First Step in Prevention Planning*[1] provides excellent guidelines for how to conduct a problem analysis within a campus or a community. Problem analysis is a key part of building sustainability.

> Conducting a problem analysis involves (1) gathering objective data on the nature and scope of the problem at both national (for purposes of comparison) and local levels; (2) examining available resources and assets in the campus community; and (3) analyzing and summarizing this information to clarify needs and opportunities. Note that the process outlined here is suitable for both two- and four-year institutions, including both residential and commuter campuses.[2]

Ongoing problem analysis allows campuses to tailor programming or coalition goals to meet changing needs, to secure appropriate resources, and to identify key individuals who are supportive of prevention efforts and can help integrate existing programming or coalition efforts into the larger prevention efforts of the community. Depending on the nature of the programming or the goals of the coalition, planners may find that an initial problem has been resolved (e.g., new policies are in place and consistently enforced); however, new issues may have emerged or some initial problems may remain that need more sustained efforts. Without solid and ongoing problem analysis, it is difficult to build a strong argument for sustainability.

Strategic Planning

Effective programming and collaboration require planning. A strategic planning process is extremely useful in designing, implementing, and modifying prevention efforts to meet the needs of the campus and community, as identified through the problem analysis. *Strategic Planning for Prevention Professionals on Campus,*[3] an earlier publication in the *Prevention 101 Series,* describes in detail the strategic planning process that can be applied by prevention professionals.

While strategic planning is often utilized during the program development phase, this process is also useful when planning

Those involved in strategic planning must (1) conduct a problem analysis; (2) establish long-term goals and objectives—that is, the *changes* in people or the environment that are needed to reduce the magnitude of the problem; (3) examine research, historical program experience, and theory to identify potential strategies that will address the campus's problems and achieve its long-term goals and objectives; (4) create a strategic plan; and (5) execute an iterative evaluation plan.[4]

for sustainability.[5] Ways to achieve sustainability should be built into the strategic plan. An example would be the early inclusion of stakeholders who will be helpful in sustaining prevention efforts. Laying the groundwork for sustainability goes hand-in-hand with implementation.[6] Thinking about and discussing sustainability throughout the strategic planning process will highlight those areas in which small changes in the plan can result in having the necessary data, partners, and visibility needed to support the long-term viability of the program or coalition. By including sustainability strategies from the beginning, planners are more likely to employ them in a timely and purposeful fashion.

It is also helpful to integrate program goals and priorities into the university strategic plan or plans of collaborating agencies, for instance, by tying prevention goals to the mission of the institution. Showing this relationship and the integral part the program plays strengthen sustainability efforts.[7]

"Start on the first day of programming or external funding to discover any future barriers to sustaining efforts."

—Betty Straub, Ed.D.,
Senior Program Director/
Research Evaluator-Scientist
Pacific Institute for
Research and Evaluation

Selecting Programs or Policies That Are Evidence Based or Theoretically Sound

It is much easier to sustain programs that are shown to be effective. The *Prevention 101 Series* publication *Setting Goals and Choosing Effective Strategies*[8] addresses the importance of working with programs that have evidence of effectiveness with similar populations or that address similar issues. In 2002, the Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism published an extensive review of existing programming, identifying four tiers of effectiveness: evidence of effectiveness among college students, evidence of success with general populations, evidence of promise, and evidence of ineffectiveness.[9] More in-depth reviews of specific recommendations have also been published. Toomey and her colleagues[10] updated the research findings regarding environmental strategies, while Larimer and Cronce[11] reviewed the literature supporting the effectiveness of individual-based strategies. Together, these three documents can serve as guidelines for selecting programs or strategies to address identified needs.

It is important to note that not all strategies, no matter how effective they have been, are appropriate for all campuses or situations. For instance, a program needs to consider the costs and resources involved prior to selecting a strategy, even if it is considered the most effective program to employ. Selecting the appropriate strategy should be based on in-depth assessment of needs and existing resources (as described above under Problem Analysis), including staffing and institutional support, to ensure that the program or strategy is a good fit and thus more likely to be effective and sustainable. Selecting evidence-based strategies that fit the campus's situation and conducting a sound evaluation (see below) to demonstrate the effectiveness of these strategies (e.g., our program or strategy works and is making a difference) lay a strong foundation for garnering long-term commitment and sustainability.

Evaluation

Even if evidence-based strategies are implemented, ongoing process and outcome evaluation are needed to provide data to strengthen programming. Solid evaluation data are also necessary to build the argument for sustainability by providing evidence of effectiveness. As part of the strategic planning process and ongoing program implementation, evaluation is critical.[12] Process evaluation documents what was done while outcome evaluation documents the changes that occurred due to the program or coalition efforts. Evaluation needs to be part of the strategic plan to ensure that the appropriate data are collected and utilized to monitor program or strategy implementation, make improvements, as needed, and to determine level of impact.

Sound program evaluation should assist in identifying the key components of the program that need to be sustained, at a minimum, to continue having the desired outcomes.[13] Evaluation should also look at cost-effectiveness. When seeking resources for sustainability, evaluation data help to build the argument for why current efforts should be continued and the potential costs (e.g., medical,

property damage, liability insurance premiums) if they go away.[14] It is also important to understand what the data indicate and how to present the data to avoid overgeneralizing (e.g., contributing desired changes to the program when no direct links exist or assuming that the findings for a specific program mean the same program would work on all campuses) or misusing the data (e.g., only reporting desired outcomes without acknowledging negative outcomes).

Engaging an evaluator from the beginning of program development is important. The publication *How to Select a Program Evaluator*[15] outlines questions to ask and skills to look for when hiring an evaluator and gives guidance on how to find the right person and then build a strong working relationship with him or her. Given limited funding for most programs, paying for evaluation can be a challenge. One suggestion would be to contact a local college to identify professors or students who are interested in the topic and may be willing to become involved. Most professors and graduate students need data for publications so this can be a win-win situation. The Higher Education Center's Web site also provides a wide range of resources on program evaluation that can be useful in planning for evaluation and assuring that appropriate data are collected to build support for sustainability.

2. Mechanisms for Developing and Promoting Sustainable Programs

Collaboration

Given the immensity of the task of preventing or reducing alcohol and other drug abuse and violence, collaboration is essential. Strong programs identify key stakeholders on and off campus who can share the same vision and work collaboratively to develop, implement, evaluate, and sustain efforts through identifying how each can be helpful in mobilizing long-term support and resources. The stronger these relationships, the more likely key stakeholders will contribute to sustaining efforts. *Experiences in Effective Prevention: The U.S. Department of Education's Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Models on College Campuses Grants*[16] indicates that across model programs, collaboration created a "critical mass" of strong support. Collaboration also allows for sharing of resources and demonstrates strong commitment to the issue(s).

Collaboration requires ongoing communication and nurturing of relationships. Partners need to be empowered to use their strengths.[17] Not all collaborators will be involved in all aspects of the program or coalition; administrators should utilize partner strengths, interests, and resources strategically. Programs and coalitions also need individuals who will advocate for them and assist in identifying ongoing support.[18] Building collaborative partnerships is an ongoing process that can involve some common barriers, such as varying priorities among members, conflicts of interest, and lack of or shifting funding. To overcome these barriers, coalition leaders need to continually assess what is happening, communicate concerns, and work with all members to overcome any issues. As programs are implemented and refined, more collaboration may be needed.

> "Support and assist the community members who share common concerns. . . . Invite members to join your coalition with caution and purposeful intent. Avoid the trap of one person from this department and one from that organization just to fill the roster."
>
> —Sally A. Linowski, Ph.D., Associate Director, University Health Services, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Networking

It may be helpful to network with other groups across the state and country who share the program's or coalition's mission. These can include state or local prevention agencies, MADD chapters, state liquor control offices, county treatment and prevention programs, and so forth. Such networking efforts can increase the program's visibility. In *Experiences in Effective Prevention,*[19] model program recipients reported that networking increased the likelihood of sustainability; that is, it is more difficult for an institution to discontinue a program that has gained local, state, or national recognition. Broader networking can also help to modify and improve efforts through the exchange of ideas and techniques with colleagues. Attending state and national professional meetings can provide program staff and coalition leadership with the latest effective strategies. Networking can also provide insight into sustainability strategies and resources that might not have been identified locally but have been successful for similar programs or groups.

Promoting the Program

Every publication, Web site, and colleague queried about sustainability indicated the importance of promoting the program. For a program or coalition to

"Brag about your program. Submit information on your program success to the campus media for articles, TV, radio spots, and other media opportunities. Capitalize on opportunities to talk about your program when alcohol use or other behaviors gain national attention. Share your results widely. Submit proposals for conference presentations and prepare publications highlighting successes, challenges, and lessons learned."

—M. Dolores Cimini, Ph.D.,
Assistant Director for Prevention and
Program Evaluation, University at Albany,
State University of New York

be sustained, potential sources of funding or other support need to be aware of the program, the individuals involved, the program's successes, and its contributions to the organizational mission.

One way of promoting the program and strengthening collaborations is to celebrate successes publicly.[20] Giving public recognition to collaborators and administration can assist in sustaining ongoing efforts. Individuals are much more likely to continue to support and advocate for a program if they feel their efforts are recognized and appreciated.

"Make a place for yourself at the university, city, county, and state level. Offer expertise and make a case for the worthiness of your population. Many believe college students are already overprivileged and don't want to share resources to protect or to prevent harm in this population. Show why an investment in the college population is good for everyone."

—Koreen Johannessen, M.S.W.,
Former Director of
Health Promotion and
Preventive Services,
University of Arizona

Promoting the program also means presenting program goals and data in a format that makes them easy to understand, communicate, and utilize. Presentations of program successes need to be tailored to the audience.[21] It can be helpful to present both quantitative data (numbers showing changes in desired behaviors) and qualitative data (anecdotes or testimonials from program recipients or stakeholders). By combining these types of data, the presentation can engage the audience and present measurable evidence of success.

One helpful way to raise awareness of the issues and promote existing programming is through the biennial review process. All institutions of higher education that receive any type of federal funding are required by law to conduct a biennial review of their prevention program to determine its effectiveness and implement changes to the program if they are needed, and to ensure that disciplinary sanctions are consistently enforced.[22] Engaging stakeholders from across campus, including senior administration, in this review process provides the opportunity to highlight program effectiveness, identify gaps in services or programming that need to be filled, and discuss potential negative effects on the campus and community should the existing programs no longer be available. One note of caution is to make sure that the process is a true assessment and reporting of what is happening, not an opportunity to make the campus "look good" to promote the institution.

Building Organizational Capacity

To sustain programs and coalitions, an infrastructure must be in place to support them. Developing or strengthening infrastructure is part of building organizational capacity. The model programs reviewed in *Experiences in Effective Prevention*[23] stressed the importance of planning ahead for changes in staffing, leadership, and resources. One way to ensure the sustainability of programs and coalitions is to ensure that multiple program staff or coalition leaders and members are trained in the essential program elements or strategies. By training individuals at multiple levels, programming is likely to be sustained even if there is turnover in key staff or leadership positions. Development of written resources, such as manuals and ongoing documentation of program processes, also ensures that programs are sustained with fidelity. It is also helpful to keep a written record of collaborators and the roles that they have played. If transitions are needed from one collaborator (individual or organization) to another, this position can be filled more appropriately and seamlessly.

Building a Diversified Funding or Support Plan

Regardless of which types of funding sources are pursued, it is important to include sustainiblity funding options and support within the strategic plan. This plan should include the types of funding sources to be pursued for particular program elements, the

manner in which the approach will be made, and the person responsible for the approach. It is also important to establish a timeline.[24] As already stated, program sustainability is an ongoing process that begins as early as possible. Once initial seed money or grant funding is ending, it is difficult to gather enough resources to sustain programming with quality and fidelity.

Incorporating sustainability into the strategic planning process involves identifying a range of funding opportunities and resources. In order to develop a comprehensive and diversified plan, it is important to begin by determining the costs and resources needed for each component as well as for the entire program or project. As mentioned in the evaluation section, it may be necessary to determine which components are most critical and seek funding for those first, rather than only thinking of sustainability in the global, all or nothing sense. It is also important to assess existing resources that will be sustained beyond the initial funding source. These may include staff, facilities, equipment, program materials, volunteers, and so forth. The funding plan for sustainability should be designed to fill the gaps between existing and ongoing resources and those that are critical for program sustainability that will be lost when current funding ends.[25]

Creating a diversified sustainability plan involves thinking creatively and being flexible. There are various potential sources of funding and resources, some of which are more obvious than others (e.g., donations, volunteers, endowments, city, county, and state budget support, and partnerships with other agencies to share expenses). Many projects and coalitions are started under grant funding. While such funding provides an opportunity to establish a program or coalition and determine effectiveness, at least in the short term, grants are not intended for long-term support. If grants are the only source of funding that is sought, programs risk lack of stability and sustainability over the long term. Programs and coalitions can lose sight of their mission, vision, and strategic plan if all of their sustainability efforts focus primarily on obtaining grants, some of which may provide funding but not be a good fit, that is, the funder's goals may not be the goals of the program.

There are alternatives or additions to grant funding, many of which are described by Nagy in "Strategies for Sustaining the Initiative."[26] A favorable sustainability outcome for most programs would be to become a line item in an existing departmental or organizational budget. This can be achieved through working closely with senior administrators or advocating for the program with legislators. While this may be the ideal, many programs will never attain this status. This process can also be lengthy and there are other measures program directors can explore while working on securing a budget line item. In times of fiscal problems, budget line items may even be withdrawn so it is important not to rely solely on this source of funding.

As mentioned earlier, collaborators can share resources and thus decrease the external resources needed for sustainability. In-kind donations, such as equipment, materials, and meeting space, can be sought from local businesses and organizations. Publicly acknowledging these donations can help to generate other donations.

Corporate and private giving can also be sought to sustain the entire program or certain elements. In *Building Long-Term Support for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs,*[27] the authors point out that foundations are generally interested in projects and programs that have evidence of effectiveness in producing change and can be replicated to achieve a broader effect or "reach." Approaching foundations requires research into their interests and past funding history. Working with the campus development office (grant administration personnel) can be critical when approaching foundations or individuals for donations.[28] The development office can help to identify potential funders, develop applications, and assist in building relationships or serving as advocates for the program.

Some program elements may also have the potential for charging a fee-for-service.[29] This could mean charging for a specific class that has been developed and evaluated or selling manuals or materials. In general, while this type of funding will support finite program elements, rather than comprehensive programming or coalition work, it can constitute an important part of a larger sustainability plan.

Final Note

The suggestions described in this publication may be helpful in sustaining program efforts and building program support. Some of the most important factors include being purposeful, creative, flexible, and visible. Additional resources that can help with sustainability are provided at the end of this document.

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Resources

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS)
U.S. Department of Education
http://www.ed.gov/osdfs;
202-245-7896

OSDFS supports efforts to create safe schools, respond to crises, prevent alcohol and other drug abuse, ensure the health and well-being of students, and teach students good character and citizenship. The agency provides financial assistance for drug abuse and violence prevention programs and activities that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention
http://www.higheredcenter.org;
1-800-676-1730;
TDD Relay-friendly, Dial 711

The Higher Education Center considers strategic planning and evaluation to be important components of a comprehensive prevention approach. The Higher Education Center has several publications and other materials to help campus administrators develop and evaluate prevention programs. These materials can be accessed for free from its Web site. The Higher Education Center also provides training and technical assistance services related to strategic planning.

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues
http://www.thenetwork.ws; see Web site for e-mail and telephone contacts by region

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues (Network) is a national consortium of colleges and universities formed to promote healthy campus environments by addressing issues related to alcohol and other drugs. Developed in 1987 by the U.S. Department of Education, the Network comprises member institutions that voluntarily agree to work toward a set of standards aimed at reducing alcohol and other drug abuse problems at colleges and universities. It has more than 1,600 members nationwide.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the individuals listed below for reviewing this publication. We appreciate the comments they provided to help us assure that this publication has a solid scientific foundation and contains clear messages. To the extent that we achieved that goal, the credit is theirs. To the extent we did not, the fault is ours.

- M. Dolores Cimini, University at Albany, State University of New York
- Jenny Haubenreiser, Montana State University

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1. *Environmental Management: A Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Use on College Campuses*
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5. *Sustainability: Building Program and Coalition Support*
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10. *Alcohol and Other Drug Policies for Colleges and Universities: A Guide for Administrators* [In review]

Higher Education Center
for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Our Mission

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention is to assist institutions of higher education in developing, implementing, and evaluating alcohol, other drug, and violence prevention policies and programs that will foster students' academic and social development and promote campus and community safety.

How We Can Help

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center offers an integrated array of services to help people at colleges and universities adopt effective prevention strategies:

- Resources, referrals, and consultations
- Training and professional development activities
- Publication and dissemination of prevention materials
- Assessment, evaluation, and analysis activities
- Web site featuring online resources, news, and information
- Support for the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

Get in Touch

Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

The Higher Education Center for
Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention
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Funded by the U.S. Department of Education