

CREATING A DATA MAP

TIP SHEET

What is a data map?

A data map is an inventory of the data sources that inform prevention activities. A data map is a document that tells you where data can be obtained, and how the information is available. For example, a data map will identify specific sources of data, such as the website for the U.S. Census. Further, the data map will identify characteristics of the data related to the usability of the data. Examples of that would be the frequency of updates to data, sample sizes, or subgroup breakdowns (ethnicity, age, gender).

Why a data map?

A data map organizes the resources available for prevention activities in a community. The data sources identified in a data map will represent a vast array of data available for prevention. Some of these data will be useful as indicators or community characteristics, such as risk factors, problem areas, and community demographics related to drug and alcohol abuse. As the ongoing collection of data continues, these data also provide outcome indicators of the impact of prevention programs. Once the data map is complete, measurements can be identified to drive a data system that will feed back into planning and further prevention activities. A data map represents the constellation of data sources available for measuring change in a given community. You may not end up using all the data sources identified.

Some Suggested Steps to Undertake This Process

1. Assemble a work group of interested folks. Be sure to include representatives of technical and planning personnel.
2. Review existing practices to see what kind of data have already been or are routinely collected in your county. This should be included in the data map. Also determine whether the sources of all these data are available and reliable, e.g. is there a source indicated for the data, is the source a primary source, etc.?
3. Develop list of indicators or data elements currently collected by each work group participant, e.g. teen pregnancy rates, alcohol outlet violations, DUI rates, etc.
4. Brainstorm a list of additional indicators work group participants want/need to create funding proposals or complete needs assessments.

5. Determine which elements are "core" indicators and which are "optional indicators". The purpose of developing "core indicators" is to prioritize which indicators are considered most valuable by the group.
6. Gather information for each indicator
 - Data source
 - Name of contact person, phone and email address (or job title)
 - Availability online
 - Year of most recent data
 - Frequency of updates
 - Limitations (cost, expertise, reliability of source)
 - Sampling method
 - Sampling size
 - Geographic scale
 - Breakdowns available (gender, ethnicity, zip code, age)
7. Combine all of the above steps into one document. This is your data map.
8. Develop maintenance system of core indicator data. Instead of relying on outside sources collected by other agencies, county staff might agree to collect and provide the data for those indicators judged to be most important by group members. In either case, the group needs to design a method for updating these data on an ongoing basis, thereby providing current data available for planning and evaluation purposes.
9. Review what kind of data is missing that would be really helpful. For example, often what is missing is neighborhood specific data, which frequently can be obtained from the police department.
10. Strategize to determine if and how you might begin to get access to the data that is not currently available but important to your group in measuring program effectiveness or for strategic planning efforts.
11. Convene work group participants to decide format for data map. You want to make it easy to read, and to find your way through--this means thinking about including various types of indices, using large font size, etc.
12. Disseminate data map. This is the product that group members receive for their participation.
13. Put core indicator data online or make hard copies of data available to folks.
14. Incorporate data map indicators into your planning.