

# DEVELOPING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

## TIP SHEET

Writing useful program objectives is a way to clarify and articulate the program's purpose, provide a framework for program management, and set criteria against which the program will be evaluated for refinement. Well written objectives require several steps which are listed in detail below.

Effective program planning and evaluation require project developers to address five specific areas: the problem, the risks or contributing factors, the goals, the objectives, and indicators of goal achievement. Clearly articulating each of these things in a written statement will be an invaluable guide in planning and evaluation programs.

### The Problem

Research-based program are based upon measurable data about the problem being addressed. The problem statement should be a clear, concise description of the problem including information on the following:

- 1) **Who**  
Who is the most at-risk: age, sex, race/ethnicity, occupation, socio-economic status?
- 2) **What**  
Specify what is wrong. What are origins of the problem?
- 3) **When**  
Is this a longstanding problem or is it new? Does the problem only exist at certain times?
- 4) **Where**  
What is the geographic area where the problem occurs (or is to be addressed)? Why is this area of greatest concern?
- 5) **How much**  
What is the magnitude of the problem? How many or what % of the population is affected?

### Example of a Problem Statement:

Based upon a district-wide survey, 75% of teens of both sexes and all race/ethnic groups claim that they have been able to obtain liquor by using false ID's, "shoulder tapping", or being provided with alcohol by parents or adult siblings of friends.

## Goals

Goal Statements derive from the problem statement. Goals are broad and seek to eliminate or reduce problems. They should specify the condition to be altered and the target population. Most programs will have only one goal. Unlike objective, goals are not time-limited, but are expected to produce results over a long period of time.

### Example of goal statements:

Increase barriers to alcohol purchase by minors.

Decrease ability of teens to purchase illicit drugs.

## Risks/Contributing Factors

These statements provide the links between the broad goal statement and the specific objectives. Identifying risk factors provide a basis for deciding on a set of objectives that identify expected achievements. Risk statement should be clear discussions of the causes and factors contributing to the problem. Each problem generally has several risks or contributing factors.

### Example 1:

Problem: Underage drinking.

Determinant: Teenagers able to purchase alcohol.

Risk: Inadequate age confirmation at retail outlets.

### Example 2:

Problem: Illicit drug use by teens.

Determinant: Teenage population purchasing drugs.

Risk: Access to dealers through pagers

## Indicators

List possible indicators of goal achievement. They reflect changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. Indicators should be specific and observable.

## Examples of Indicators:

Goal: Increase barriers to alcohol purchase by minors.

Possible Indicators:

- › Minors know the ID policy of retailers.
- › Retailers have the ability to recognize fake ID's.
- › Employees of retail outlets conform to ABC regulations regarding ID checking.
- › Increase patrolling of known "shoulder tapping" areas.
- › Adults know the penalties for making alcohol available to minors.

## Objectives

Objectives translate indicators into measurable changes. Ideally, an objective statement should be time-limited and should specifically state the intended outputs of regular program activities. Each objective should state three things: the indicator, the target population, and a time frame. Objectives should be **SMART**:

- S** Specific
- M** Measurable
- A** Attainable
- R** Results-oriented
- T** Time-bound

## Examples of objectives:

Problem: Underage drinking.

Determinant: Increase barriers to alcohol purchase by minors.

Process Objectives:

(Model) By \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_.

By when?      Percent      Who?      Indicator

- a) By July 2000, 75% of liquor store clerks will have taken training in recognizing fake ID's.
- b) By August 2000, 95% of retail liquor outlets will post at checkout ABC rules for checking customer ID's for alcohol purchase.

While objective statements ideally state the number or percent of subjects who will have achieved the indicator, this is often easier to do when measuring process than outcomes. For instance, we can state with a good deal of confidence that 17 training sessions will be presented (process measure). We should be more cautious in stating that use of false ID by teens will decrease by 5%, 10%, 25% as the result of our intervention? If we have no clear and defensible reason for including a particular number of percent, we should consider simply stating that use will decline.