

Linking and Leveraging Prevention Efforts in Delaware
Focused on Youth Substance Abuse and its Consequences

Delaware Drug and Alcohol Tracking Alliance (DDATA)

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The SPF-PFS program “is designed to build upon the experience and established SPF-based prevention infrastructures of states/tribes to address national substance abuse priorities in communities of high need. Grantees and their recipient communities must use the SPF to identify and select comprehensive, data-driven substance abuse prevention strategies to continue to accomplish the following goals:

1. Prevent the onset and reduce the progression of substance abuse;
2. Reduce substance abuse-related problems;
3. Strengthen prevention capacity/infrastructure at the state, tribal and community levels; and
4. Leverage, redirect and align state/tribal-wide funding streams and resources for prevention.” (RFP page 12)

While the ultimate focus is on the reduction of substance abuse priorities—underage drinking and prescription drug abuse—the PFS recognizes that without the development of supportive structural networks and the streamlining and institutionalization of funding streams, what reductions in substance abuse are achieved will not be sustainable. Therefore, increasing the prevention support system at the federal, state and community levels is of equal importance as the reduction of abuse and its consequences. Supports are equally important at each step of the SPF.

Needs Assessment

In Delaware’s SPF-SIG program, the Delaware Drug and Alcohol Tracking Alliance (DDATA) is responsible for the collection of data pertaining to alcohol and drug abuse and related risk-taking and consequences which constitutes the Needs Assessment. DDATA’s evolution has broadened the reach of data collection to include analysis of a variety of sub-populations which may constitute communities of high need. DDATA has built alliances with other state and community level agencies and organizations providing prevention services who have need of data to plan and track their progress toward their prevention goals, to raise awareness of the prevalence levels they are working to reduce, and to apply for State, Federal and private funding to support their efforts. This work spans diverse areas, all prevention-related, all focused on reducing risk behaviors in high need populations with a limited number of resources. These alliances include the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Families Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (PBHS) programs targeting suicide and substance abuse, the Delaware Department of Education’s programs for sexual minority students and HIV/AIDS prevention, the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCADV), the Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies, the Delaware Council on Disabilities, Kids Count, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Board (affiliated with the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services Division of

Public Health (DPH)), Nemours Health and Prevention Services (affiliated with the Nemours Foundation), Planned Parenthood, the Criminal Justice Council, the Delaware Homeless Council, the Lieutenant Governor's Office, the Kids Caucus of the Delaware State Legislature among others. Providing information specifically linking risk behaviors supports leveraging of resources, such as providing interdisciplinary trainings and supporting policy change around mediating factors.

DDATA has provided analyses from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the School Health Profiles to support applications by the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Families Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (PBHS) to support successful applications for two Garrett Lee Smith awards, addressing youth suicide. Data on youth suicide ideation and attempts and related risk behaviors—including alcohol and drug use—has been provided for national conference presentations and local presentations to raise community awareness. DDATA also worked with the CDC, providing data for the investigation of a cluster of youth suicides in the lower two counties.

DDATA has worked with supporters of sexual minority youth for several years, providing data, presentations and other resources. Initially, DDATA worked with a CDC-funded coalition, which later dissolved. Currently DDATA is providing LGBTQ data to a program being run by Delaware Big Brothers, Big Sisters funded by PBHS to help form and increase capacity in Gay/Straight Alliances in the high schools, which have proven to be an Evidence-Based Practice to reduce risk behaviors in LGBTQ youth.

DDATA has also worked for a number of years with the Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCADV), adding questions to the Delaware School Survey which brought awareness of not only the breadth of the problem, with one in ten students witnessing adult violence in their homes in the past year, but also the tremendous impact living in such a situation has on student behavior, increasing substance use, self-violence and interpersonal violence perpetrated by the student. Specific analyses and reports enabled DCADV to secure funding from the CDC and elsewhere. DDATA also provided data for the legislative task force investigating and instituting strategies for the prevention of teen dating violence. At the college level, DDATA gathered and analyzed data from College Risk Behavior Surveys administered at the University of Delaware to work with the Delaware grantees relating to the Violence Against Women Act, and provided a presentation on sexual assault for a federally-funded statewide conference.

Capacity Building

Much has been done by the SPF-SIG project to build capacity at the community and at the state levels. DSAMH has arranged for a wide diversity of trainings in prevention skills and information. These have been linked to the collaboration with the Certification Board to professionalize prevention workers by instituting a Prevention Specialist Certification. In the past few years, almost one hundred persons have passed the certification exam, which will benefit the field as a whole. There has been some leveraging of funds to provide trainings accessible to professionals outside of the funding supporting the training, which is a promising trend. DSAMH has also arranged for training for youth via an online program, building leadership in the next generation

SPF-SIG contractors have reached out and formed links with community and faith-based organizations, coalitions not funded through SPF-SIG, schools, and other community sectors, all seeking common goals of reducing youth risk. DDATA has provided training and consultation to expanding coalitions in logic model development, planning and evaluation, and has provided support in their implementation, currently working with the Wilmington Prevention Coalition, the 19809 Youth Nation, and the Kent County Partnership for Reentry. As coalitions have evolved in high need communities, SPF-SIG contractors have expressed a need for more prevention training not just for themselves, but also for their committed coalition members. Because coalition members are frequently persons of high impact in the community, such training would further strategically embed prevention knowledge and strategies in communities and would enhance Delaware's prevention infrastructure.

DDATA also provided support with data to coalitions applying for Drug-Free Communities Support Program grants, while DSAMH and DPBHS provided trainings designed to help contractors develop successful applications to the program. ONDCP, SAMHSA and CADCA also provided support in this effort.

Capacity building is also accomplished through dissemination of DDATA's data products, including detailed epidemiological reports, special topic reports, PowerPoint presentations, one-page fact sheets called DDATAgrams, brief fact sheets with information of interest to parents and community members, trainings, the DDATA website and a list-serve with a growing contact list. DDATA's subcommittees have recently produced a grid of community sectors and the data products they will receive which will be implemented on a staggered schedule beginning in the summer of 2014. In addition, DDATA shares information with other agencies so that they can use it for a variety of capacity-building purposes, including raising awareness of the prevalence of risk behaviors and their consequences, advocating for policy change, and seeking resources such as federal and state grants.

DDATA has also acted as a resource to members of the State Legislature. Prevalence rates and information on sources of alcohol cited by students on the Delaware School Survey, as well as summaries of alcohol laws in Delaware and in other states was provided to Representative Michael Barbieri during the development of social host legislation, which was not successful. A special analysis of college drinking in the Newark area was requested by and supplied to Representative Paul Baumbach. In addition, DDATA has provided presentations and information to the Kids Caucus of the Legislature and attends Kids Caucus meetings regularly to act as a resource.

The Delaware Lieutenant Governor's Office also requests information from DDATA, and school survey data formed the justification for legislation on bullying, requiring parental notification. Further analyses were used to monitor the impact of the legislation and clearly showed decreases in specific bullying behaviors. The Delaware State Legislature provided special funding in the current budget for after-school programs targeting bullying and youth suicide, including student survey data in the RFP and

For the past three years, DDATA has worked with the Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies and the Delaware Council on Disabilities to provide data and presentations to raise awareness of issues faced by students with disabilities, who are at greatly increased risk of victimization and increased levels

of risk behaviors, including alcohol and drug use. The Council uses the data for advocacy, while the Center focuses on grant-writing and other strategies to leverage resources for this population. Data collected is also being analyzed at the national level by aggregating data from all of the states participating in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey who include a question on disabilities.

Delaware has one of the highest rates of teen sexual risk behaviors of all the states participating in the YRBS—the percent of teens who are sexually active and the percent who have had sex with four or more partners. This area of risk behaviors is also closely related to substance use, though which may be a consequence of which cannot be determined, or if both stem from a third factor such as family context. DDATA has done numerous presentations both for the staff of the School-Based Health Centers and for the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Board and the Wilmington Teen Pregnancy Prevention Board. The co-Chair of DDATA has recently been nominated and named by the Director of the Division of Public Health to a position on the statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Board.

Kids Count, funded through the Annie B. Casey Foundation, produces an annual book of data relating to youth and families in Delaware which is a widely recognized and used resource for those working in social services and in politics in Delaware. A special section, called “Delaware Kids Speak” was developed to highlight students’ perceptions of the behaviors and contexts they see around them and their own positive and negative behaviors.

One group that has long been a key player in Delaware’s prevention arena is the Delaware Prevention Coalition (DPC). Formed with support of a much earlier SAMHSA prevention grant and evolving over the years, this coalition of community centers, community organizations, schools and others is now in part supported through an award to two of its members from the portion of the SAPT-BG allocated to the DSCYF with the goals of nurturing the growth of prevention capacity at the community level with the aide of Prevention Specialists assigned to each of the Sub-state Planning Areas. In some cases, SPF-SIG contractors have worked directly with the Prevention Specialists to amplify their efforts and increase their reach. An example of this kind of collaboration is an all-out effort to bring youth to a recent youth conference sponsored by one of the SPF-SIG contractors. This group is also included in DDATA’s list-serve to disseminate current information on issues and resources.

Information is a resource that we leverage. Building capacity through list-serves where community members can share information and connect to collaborate is efficient and effective in linking prevention groups to better utilize available resources—trainings fill up, coats and food are given away to those who need them, youth events are well attended. DSAMH has provided a great deal of information on local trainings and events through its list-serve and its link with the Lieutenant Governor’s Office list-serve. SPF-SIG’s Coalition of Coalitions links many community groups and agencies throughout the state and holds promise to act as a platform for sharing of information and collaborations for advocacy and leveraging of resources. DDATA is beginning the process of extending its contact lists for data-product dissemination, which will broaden the reach of information and opportunities to identify others in the community with common interests. Also, the Data In and Data Out Subcommittees have developed a grid of target audiences and publications to ensure that the

information gathered will be optimally disseminated to both raise awareness and to guide policy and planning.

Planning and Implementation

Collaborative planning and implementation is taking hold at the community level in Delaware. Community coalitions and community and faith-based organizations are working together to plan and successfully bring about events and programs. For example, youth conferences in the past year—Teen Summit, Back to the Beach, the Youth Anti-Drug Conference—have involved attendance and support from the Delaware Prevention Coalition members, as well as contractors funded through the SPF-SIG and partnering schools. Groups with diverse funding have attended the Coalition of Coalitions meetings, where collaboration and co-participation are being nurtured, and where the hope is to develop a united voice for prevention in Delaware for advocacy and leveraging of resources. It is hopeful that more long-term planning will take place collaboratively.

Evaluation

Effective evaluation is intrinsically collaborative. Data is collected before and after an intervention and analyzed to see if the intervention brought about changes in attitude, knowledge or behavior—determining if the program is having the desired and predicted effect. If it is, then it may merit more resources; if not, it may need tweaking or replacing. Decision-makers at the state, community and agency level need to be able to understand and execute this process to make best use of their resources. Through SPF-SIG, DDATA is training contractors to be able to enter their data, understand their data, and use their information to better align and allocate resources. In addition to providing trainings, online and telephone support, DDATA staff attend many of the community coalition meetings, providing additional support.

DDATA supports decision-making at the state level by preparing reports and tables of prevalence rates and related factors, both on a regular basis and by special request. Information concerning gaps and discrepancies is also vitally important—there are fewer prevention resources available in Kent and Sussex County than there are in New Castle County and the City of Wilmington. There are specific sub-populations, as cited in a recent report, with disproportionately high levels of underage drinking and drug abuse, as well as other risk behaviors—students with disabilities, students who have had someone in their family incarcerated in the past year, students who identify as LGBTQ.

DDATA also participates in other groups tasked with evaluating and planning—the Governor’s Task Force Prescription Drug Abuse Committee (PDAC), the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Board, among others.

