

GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON PRIMARY PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ASSESSING AND PLANNING FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AMONG YOUTH GOOD PRACTICE STATEMENTS FROM BELARUS AND RUSSIA



World Health
Organisation

Mental Health And Substance Dependence
Noncommunicable Diseases And Mental Health
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Introduction

The representatives of the local partners of the UNDCP/WHO Global Initiative on Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse working in Belarus and the Russian Federation met to share their experiences on assessing and planning for substance abuse prevention in St. Petersburg from 29 July to 1 August 2002. The statements contained in this document were identified by the participants as best describing their own experience in five different aspects of assessing and planning for substance abuse prevention. The following participated.

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Baykal Women Union 'Angara'

Drug Abuse Prevention Centre
Drug Abuse Prevention Centre
NGO 'Humanitarian project'
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Collecting existing and new information

What works

1. In selecting the methods for collecting information, it's important to take into account the characteristics of the target group (age, sex, attitudes, etc.). The methods used have to be tested and adapted to the target group.
2. In starting the assessment, be clear with the information you need and the aims and objectives of the assessment (why, what, how, with whom). Consider the assessment as a separate project, following all the steps of the project cycle.
3. In collecting information, choose methods that are adequate to the resources available in the community and your organization.
4. Use personal contacts with key organizations, experts and representatives of the target group.
5. In collecting information, it helps the good reputation and image of the organization.
6. It's important to be flexible and be ready to adapt plans.
7. When approaching the community and the target group for gathering information, give a clear/comprehensive presentation of your organization, explaining your aims and activities.
8. Try to be always specific-addressed, timely and relevant.
9. In collecting information, keep within the law.
10. Always verify the validity of collected information.

What doesn't work/ challenges

1. Try to avoid being manipulated for someone else's interests.
2. Don't use information, which has not been verified.
3. Don't waste time collecting a big amount of information. Give more attention to the quality of data than to their amount!
4. Don't use research methods you are not experienced in. (in which you have no enough experience).
5. The use only of one research method doesn't allow you to verify the validity of the collected information.
6. Don't ignore/neglect the existing information.

7. Don't be too sure of the fact that all the persons approached by you will be willing of giving the required information.

Involving youth in collecting information

What works

1. For involving youth in the collection of information and planning, delegate them some responsibilities (organisational, representative, administrative).
2. Inform parents about the involvement of their children in the project and ask for their authorization.
3. Show attention and respect toward the ideas of young people, delegate them responsibilities, establish a good atmosphere of co-operation and mutual understanding.
4. Provide comprehensive orientation and appropriate training for the young people to be involved in data gathering, using different approaches (workshops, forums, seminars, etc.).
5. Use a peer-to-peer approach, in particular involving students of faculties such as psychology, pedagogy, sociology, etc., which might have a professional interest in participating in the project.
6. The assistance of adults can facilitate and improve the role of youth in the collection of information.
7. Use members/representatives of the target group as collectors of information among their group.
8. With young people, it's important (be ready) to use an individual approach.
9. Organize some alternative activities or use some youth events/programs conducted by others to collect information from young people.
10. The most effective methods of collecting information from youth are focus-group discussions, brainstorming, peer-to-peer interviews, questionnaire.

What doesn't work/ challenges

1. Don't use authoritative manners with young people.
2. Don't use young people under 15 years old for the conduction of questionnaires, interviews and focus-group discussions.

Using the local situation assessment to mobilize the community

What works

1. To mobilize community members, it's important to inform them about the project goals, using both personal contacts and mass media.
2. In community mobilization, the needs of the target partners and groups have to be considered (i.e. time, effort required, etc). Divide responsibilities among partners taking into account their needs and possibilities.
3. In mobilization, a support and co-ordination system of community groups needs to be in place (i.e. working meeting, discussions, information sharing).
4. In motivating community to give information, share with them your information and involve them in the project planning and implementation.
5. Show professionalism and competence in approaching community members (during meetings).
6. To mobilize community groups, it's important to define their attitudes and opinion towards the problem and if necessary, increase public awareness for drug abuse related issues.
7. Existing community organizations should be identified and mobilized to support the project.
8. Use the assessment as a way to involve and improve co-operation with mass media.

What doesn't work / challenges

1. Difficult to provide community members with clear evidence of the effectiveness of prevention programs.
2. The collected information can be misinterpreted by mass media and used against you.
3. Indifference of representatives of government and local authorities.
4. In involving community members, a too high presentation of yourself and your organization can be an obstacle.

5. Parents are not willing to be actively involved (take active part) in the project.

Involving the youth in planning

What works

1. Involve in the assessment and planning the volunteers of your organization.
2. In motivating youth to co-operate in the project, involve people that are considered as leaders or authoritative figures among young people.
3. Show trust and confidence in the youth capacities and if necessary, provide them support.
4. Provide some training to youth on project planning.
5. Be clear with the resources available for the project implementation (financial, human, timeline, etc.), to avoid unreal suggestions from youth.
6. In working with youth, use a youth co-ordinator.

What doesn't work/ challenges

1. Keep in mind that some young people could not be ready to take responsibilities.
2. Lack of supervision during the assessment and planning.
3. Don't give to young volunteers the role of experts.
4. Prior to involve youth in the work, be sure of their motivation.

Involving the community in planning

What works

1. In involving community in planning, take into account (play on) the concern of people for social problems and the desire of self-realization through the participation in problem solving.
2. In involving partners, take into account their professional interests.
3. In involving community in planning, agree all the planned activities with the partner organizations.
4. Principle of 'transparency' needs to be observed. In particular, be clear with the financial limitations of the project and try not to give false expectations.
5. When possible, formalize the partnerships to ensure participation and support of each of the stakeholders (e.g., through signing of Memorandum of Agreement [MOA] or a Letter of Understanding [LOU]). This serves to remind partners of their accountability and responsibility and may influence non-supportive sectors in the community to become involved in the project.

What doesn't work/ challenges

1. Be careful with the establishment of contacts/partnerships! An excessive number of partners can create difficulties.