

Evaluating and Reporting Your Efforts

If evaluation scares or intimidates you, try thinking about it as a guide. Evaluation can be an informant that assists you in understanding the issues, perceptions, and attitudes of your students and campus as well as impact, outcomes, and overall difference prevention is making on your campus. The process and information gained from evaluation will guide you to the success of your efforts, outline next steps, and ultimately strengthen your strategies.

Evaluation exists in different formats and which format you use is dependent upon what you want to know. Some campuses collect use, attitude and perception data using surveys and focus groups. Other campuses use environmental scans to learn more about the campus' policies, enforcement work, and general support for prevention. Peer education groups can implement program evaluations after each educational event they host to gauge learning, intent to change behavior, and questions that still need to be answered.

If you are new to evaluation, it can be helpful to start small. Simply using a program evaluation can give you information about the usefulness of the program, what messages students are learning, and what they would like to know in the future. For stronger results, it is helpful to conduct a brief, 5-10 question pre-test as well as the follow up post-test and evaluation. To make this evaluation a stronger guide for you, you may want to ask perception and intent questions, such as "how often do you think students at this campus drink" or "if you currently drink, how likely are you to decrease your drinking in the future".

Other groups will partner with an evaluator or faculty member on campus to collect the names and emails of students who attend a program. The group and evaluator can then follow up with the students three to six months after the program to assess any longer term retention of knowledge and behavior change.

With evaluation, your most valuable approach is to make progress in small steps. Your most valuable resource can be in finding a campus faculty or staff member with a background in evaluation. This person can help you create, conduct, build upon, and understand your evaluation efforts and response. With evaluation as your guide, you will be able to track the growth of your program and the true difference it is making with students and on campus.

Reporting Evaluation Results

Some campus groups are required to report on the number of students reached and programs conducted and on the impact of their work on the campus. These reports may take the form of monthly updates to a peer education advisor or health center supervisor. They may also exist as year-end reports to the department funding your campus' prevention work. It is important to showcase your successes and next steps for the upcoming term. Reporting on your results can also be an opportunity to ask for additional support by discussing what you would be able to accomplish with extra funds, staff, or resources. For example, your report could state:

"For NCAAW, with \$200, five peer educators, and one staff advisor, we were able to engage 300 first year students with an educational program on alcohol poisoning as well as a skill building program on how to lower one's risk while drinking. Based on our program evaluations, we know that 93% of the students learned at least two new skills or pieces of information and that 75% of students plan on implementing one of the protective behavior skills the next time they choose to drink.

"Next year, with your support and an additional \$500 we will expand these programs to reach an additional 500 students by targeting two more first year residence halls, two intramural sport teams, and one fraternity or sorority."

It will be important to strengthen your request with a breakdown of how the funds will be spent, how your group will connect with these additional groups on campus, and how you will continue to measure your progress.

By collecting evaluation information and reporting on your results and future plans, your group will become known for being willing to commit to the energy and follow through required for increasing the effectiveness of your prevention strategies in the future.

