



Spokane County Community Services Division Executive Summary of the Community-Level Progress Evaluation Reports

*Department of Social and
Health Services*

*Research and Data Analysis
Division and the University
of Washington, Washington
Institute for Mental Illness
Research and Training,
Western Branch*

Anne D. Strode, M.S.W.,
Christine Roberts, Ph.D.,
with Dario Longhi, Ph.D.

Spokane County Community Services Division is one of eighteen recipients of the Washington State Incentive Grant (SIG). SIG funds are allocated to communities to prevent the use, misuse and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drugs by Washington State youth. Community grantees are expected to make their local prevention system more effective by establishing prevention partnerships, using a risk and protective factor framework for data driven needs assessments, and by implementing and monitoring science-based prevention programs.

Project Site

The SIG project is situated in Spokane's East Central Neighborhood, which is one of the oldest in the city. Youth in this neighborhood experience many factors placing them at higher risk for using or abusing substances. The neighborhood has two community centers, both of which participate in the SIG project. East Central Community Center (ECCC) receives the bulk of its funding from the city of Spokane. Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Outreach Center (MLK) is a private, non-profit organization. In addition to providing SIG-funded activities at the two community centers, Washington State University's Spokane County Cooperative Extension offers a parenting education program for families throughout the city, focusing on families in the East Central Neighborhood.

Prevention History

Spokane County used the risk and protective factor model to assess needs based on key informant surveys. The county contracts for prevention services from a variety of agencies and schools. There appears to be little collaboration among agencies around prevention funding, planning, delivery, and monitoring, except for the SIG project. No school survey data is available in the City of Spokane because the school district does not allow administration of the survey.

Progress toward Community Level Objectives

Objective 1: Establish partnerships...

SIG expanded the local prevention partnership to include the community centers and Spokane County Cooperative Extension. The SIG Advisory Board created a mission statement and by-laws.

Objectives 2 and 3: Use a *risk and protective factor framework* for planning and *participate in joint community risk and protective factor and resource assessment.*

The SIG community grantee, Spokane County's Community Services Division, is familiar with using the risk and protective factor framework and with using data for needs and resources assessments. Spokane County Community Services Division led the local 2001 collaborative needs assessment process, which encouraged local prevention partners to share data and collaborate in prevention planning.

Objective 4: *Select and implement effective prevention actions...*

This objective refers to implementing prevention programs that have been shown to be effective through research. The concept of using science-based prevention programs, shown to be effective across venues and populations, was introduced to the East Central Neighborhood through SIG. Two science-based prevention programs were implemented: the Nurturing Program and the Family Advocacy Network program.

Objective 5: *To use common reporting tools...*

Reporting tools are used to measure the effectiveness of prevention programs. At the program level, Spokane had available through SIG the Everest program outcome monitoring system. The practice of evaluating prevention program outcomes using pre-tests and post-tests at the program level was new to Spokane with SIG. Neither the county nor the neighborhood have access to data from the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behavior, as the local school district, Spokane School District 81, refuses to participate in the survey. Both Everest and the survey measure risk and protective factors. The survey also measures substance abuse prevalence.

Successes

Two major contributions of SIG to Spokane's prevention system are the introduction of science-based programs and program evaluation. All of the prevention programs met or nearly met their participation goals. Over 100 youth and at least 30 parents benefited from prevention programs at the two community centers. Leadership skills have evolved among participants. Examples of institutionalization of science-based programs in Spokane are that Children's Home Society used the Nurturing Program for two classes, and the program may be offered as an after-school program in Spokane School District 81.

Challenges

Staff turnover continued through the second year of the SIG project at both MLK and ECCC. Leadership has remained constant at ECCC, but there have been three directors at MLK since the inception of the project. Turnover of program staff has been high at both centers. It is impossible to know the reason without

further inquiry, but there was a decrease in youth participation levels after staff departures. Staff turnover is costly because all instructors need to be trained in the programs they are to provide. Establishing trust and open communication in the midst of It has been difficult to develop trust and open communication in the midst of changing staff composition.

There are few eligible mentors who are willing to work with at-risk youth and to commit the amount of time required. This factor and the complexity of the Across Ages program led to the revision of the program.

It continues to be difficult to recruit and engage parents in prevention programs. Many factors contribute to this, including work schedules, defensive attitudes, and social barriers.

Conclusion

Spokane County Community Services Division has shown progress toward achieving all of the community level objectives established by the Governor's Substance Abuse Advisory Committee. During the last year of SIG community funding, Spokane's challenge will be finding ways to institutionalize the changes they have achieved under SIG in its system of prevention program planning, funding, implementation, and monitoring.

Several families in Spokane County learned valuable family management skills. During the Nurturing Program, families are asked to draw their image of home life at both the beginning and end of the program. The child of one family who participated provided a poignant example of how such programs affect individual lives. This child's picture was totally black at the program's beginning. The child's drawing at the end of the program was half black and half yellow. When asked about the difference between the two drawings, the child explained, "Now there is some sunshine in my life."



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