



Walla Walla County Department of Human Services Executive Summary of the Community-Level Progress Evaluation Reports

*Department of Social and
Health Services*

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Executive Summary

Walla Walla County Department of Human Services 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. Walla Walla's second year experiences with SIG are reported here.

Project Site

There are three Walla Walla County schools at which prevention services are provided through SIG funding: Pioneer Middle School in Walla Walla and Sager Middle School and Meadowbrook Intermediate School in College Place, a few miles southwest of Walla Walla. Through the Parent Navigator Program, parent and family training and resource materials are distributed in community gathering sites in both towns. Life Skills Training is the prevention program selected for College Place. Across Ages and After School Action Clubs are provided in Walla Walla.

Walla Walla County is a major agricultural and service community for southeastern Washington State. The majority of jobs are service-related. Agriculture has been replaced as the primary employer by government, light manufacturing, and retail trade. Washington State Penitentiary is located between Walla Walla and College Place. The county's population grew 14% over the past decade, less than Washington State's 21%. Over half of the county's 55,180 residents live in the city of Walla Walla: 29,686. College Place has 7,818 residents. The county's (estimated) 1997 median household income was lower than the state's: \$34,471 compared to \$41,715.

Prevention History

Before receiving SIG funds, Walla Walla County Department of Human Services already had some familiarity with creating prevention partnerships, using a risk and protective factor framework, and using data for determining needs and assessing resources. However, their use of data for needs and resource

assessment was not standardized. They had not implemented prevention programs known to be effective, also known as science-based programs.

Progress toward Community Level Objectives

Objective 1: Establish partnerships...

Walla Walla County Department of Human Services was involved in multiple prevention partnerships before receiving SIG funding. Partnerships include the Community Public Health and Safety network, Community Connections, the Substance Abuse Coalition, the Children's Home Society, the Walla Walla Public Library, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program.

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 County has a previous history of using the risk and protective factor framework for planning. It has conducted local collaborative needs assessments prior to the spring 2001 statewide pilot test. Every couple of years, the Walla Walla County Department of Human Services publishes an Agency Resource Guide. In addition, the Department and the Walla Walla Area Library Network is creating an electronic interactive community resource and referral database.

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 local SIG project director reported that matching the needs of the community to specific best practice programs was a challenge. Life Skills Training addressed risk factors identified by using results from the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors, but other identified needs were harder to match to science-based programs. Across Ages was selected because it partly met the identified needs of the community and the partnering school, but the program was not successful in Walla Walla. The Parent Navigator program was developed locally to meet identified needs in the community, as was the After-School Program at Pioneer Middle School.

Objective 5: To use common reporting tools...

Reporting tools are used to measure the effectiveness of prevention programs. At the program level, Walla Walla had available through SIG the Everest program outcome monitoring system. For measurement of community level outcomes, Walla Walla and College Park schools participate in the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behavior. Because of SIG requirements, the survey was administered in three additional schools. Both Everest and the survey measure risk and protective factors. The survey also measures substance abuse prevalence.

Successes

Parent Navigator, a new prevention program designed to meet local needs, was designed and successfully implemented. Results have been documented, the first step toward proving the program effective and making it available to other communities. The Mental Health Division of the Department of Social and Health Services thought the program worthy of additional funding to expand services. This is an example of leveraging funds, as SIG funding was used to design and implement the initial program, and, with a documented beginning, additional funding was acquired. It is also an example of building prevention partnerships.

While Across Ages was discontinued, a new partnership was created with the Friend's, a mentorship program planned about a year before SIG funds were received. Mentoring matches began in late 1999. This is an example of recognizing and using existing resources, instead of duplicating services. A science-based prevention program, Life Skills Training, was successfully implemented with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in the College Place School District. While not directly attributable to the program, the school counselor noticed that incidents of substance abuse, detention, and disciplinary actions were fewer in the middle school after completion of Year 2 LST.

Challenges

Staff turnover at county, school district, and SIG program level made it difficult to carry out plans smoothly. It took time to recruit and train new staff, and institutional memory was lost.

Walla Walla continued to have difficulty with data input and retrieval when using the Everest database. This was frustrating, especially with the Life Skills program, because teachers and program facilitators were anxious to see if the program had the promised effects with program participants.

Rival Explanations for Changes

There are over twenty-five active social service coalitions in the community, many focusing on youth. The community applies for many grants on behalf of youth. Below is a list of some of the services that help youth in the county and that are also contributing to risk reduction and protection enhancement. Any changes in long-term prevention outcomes must be attributed to the influence of these services, as well as those funded by SIG:

- A partnership among the city of *Walla Walla Parks and Recreation Department and the Community Network* opened a teen center during the first project year (1999-2000). It is viewed as a great success. The center now has an advisory board and non-profit status.
- *Children's Home Society* has a grant to provide prevention services in the public schools. The project is located at the high school, with outreach to 8th

graders. It involves recruiting tutors and mentors of all ages to assist students with their studies and transitions from middle to high school.

- *D.A.R.E.* (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) programs operate in the county schools outside the city of Walla Walla.
- Law enforcement officers provide a *Gang Resistance Education and Training* (GREAT) program in local schools.
- *Youth And Family Yellow Pages* provide an easy-to-use guide to family and youth services and resources. The *Pages* also include information on ATOD prevention.
- Tobacco settlement funds, administered through the *Department of Health*, are used to educate kids about the dangers of tobacco use.
- ESD #123 places prevention specialists in Sager and Pioneer Middle Schools. Among other services, they provide the *Teens Against Tobacco Use* (TATU) prevention program.
- *Community Connections, Community Network, and local DASA* prevention staff collaborated to present a methamphetamine awareness workshop in 2001.



Research and Data Analysis
Progress Report Number 4.43-18a pr