

COALITION GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



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Connecticut Strategic Prevention Framework Coalitions Initiative

This guidance will direct the coalition's efforts to conduct a focused local Needs Assessment, and provides the step by step basic activities involved in assessing the scope of substance abuse.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Purpose of the guidance document	3
The Strategic Prevention Framework at the Community Level	4
Import Reminders and Considerations	4
Section 1: Establish and Assessment Process	4
Section 2: Examine the Sub-Regional Profile	4
Section 3: Collect and Interpret Data on Local Risk and Protective Factors	5
Section 4: Consider Student Survey Data	7
Section 5: Draft Narrative of Process and Findings	7

Coalition Guidance for Community Needs Assessment

CONNECTICUT STRATEGIC PREVENTION FRAMEWORK COALITIONS INITIATIVE

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

This document takes prevention coalitions step by step through the basic activities involved in assessing the scope of substance abuse and the risk factors proven to contribute to it. Throughout this process, the guide **will direct the coalition's efforts to conduct a focused, local Needs Assessment** and provide a framework for collecting and organizing local data and information. The end result is a narrative that describes the risk and protective factors for the priority problem substance in your community; and identifies the local underlying circumstances that contribute to consumption and consequences, including information on gaps and resources. Together, this knowledge represents much of the foundation on which the coalition will build a strategic plan.

The Guide is divided into the following five sections each of which describes specific tasks derived from the SPF model:

- **Establish an Assessment Process**
- **Examine the Sub-Regional Profile**
- **Collect and Interpret Data on Local Risk and Protective Factors**
- **Consider Student Survey Data**
- **Draft Narrative of Process and Findings (no more than 15 pages)**

Remember the SPF Needs Assessment step does not include deciding which risk factor(s) the project will address. The coalition will prioritize risk factors and determine which will be targeted and addressed as part of step 3, strategic planning.

NOTE: Coalitions should seek guidance from and work closely with their local evaluator throughout the Needs Assessment process.

THE STRATEGIC PREVENTION FRAMEWORK AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

The idea behind the SPF is to use findings from public health research along with evidence-based prevention programs to build capacity and sustainability. Grounded in outcomes-based prevention the SPF process decreases risk factors in individuals, families, and communities. A combination of risk factors, lack of protective factors and underlying conditions collectively contribute to or “cause” substance abuse in communities. Population-level changes in consumption and consequences are brought about by impacting these factors. In order to plan for and direct desired outcomes, coalitions must develop a solid understanding of local risk factors, protective factors and underlying conditions by examining community-level data, including information on gaps and resources. Only then can priorities be set and appropriate strategies be identified to reduce substance abuse and related problems.

SECTION 1 | ESTABLISH AN ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Each coalition must identify members to participate in and develop a local process for identifying, gathering, organizing and interpreting data and information related to local risk factors, protective factors and underlying conditions contributing to substance abuse in their community.

Coalitions will:

1. Identify coalition members who will work on the assessment process.
2. Ensure that diverse cultural and social groups representative of your community are involved in all facets of the process to consider aspects of culture and diversity such as language, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability status, sexual/affection orientation, reading or developmental levels, socio-economic status, etc.
3. Identify what persons and groups are and are not being represented in the Needs Assessment process, and identify additional expertise that may be needed and potential sources of that expertise.
4. Determine specific roles, such as collecting data, organizing data, and assisting with data interpretation for coalition members.
5. In examining information on consumption patterns and consequences, look to answer who, what, where, when, how, how much, as well as the how much more for one group over another.
6. Identify community supports or technical assistance needs for bridging any gaps.

SECTION 2 | EXAMINE THE SUB-REGIONAL PROFILE AND LOCAL STUDENT SURVEY DATA

Each coalition will use their Regional Action Council’s (RAC) most recent Sub-Regional Profile to begin to explore substance abuse in their community. The profile is a starting point and an example of secondary review of existing, quantitative data such as local student survey data. As your Needs Assessment process unfolds you will incorporate both qualitative data and anecdotal information and will likely collect at least some new (primary) data to supplement your research and understanding. Together this information describes the underlying conditions that contribute to substance abuse in your community.

Compare and contrast your community with the sub-region in terms of the following:

1. Demographics
2. Past-month use data (compare with local student survey data)
3. Substance abuse related mortality and morbidity data
4. Substance abuse related crime data
5. Other substance abuse related social consequence data

Contact your RAC to determine if there is additional data or more recent information related to substance abuse in your community. In some cases, RACs are also able to assist with dis-aggregation of sub-regional data to the community level. It may also be helpful to compare and contrast data related to substance abuse in your community with Connecticut state level data.

Begin to discuss with coalition members how the data related to substance abuse and consequences in the sub-regional profile compares with their experience and understanding of substance abuse in their community.

Note areas of agreement and discrepancy for later consideration. Coalitions, by virtue of their membership and connection to other organizations, possess a wealth of information about substance abuse issues. Supplemental information should flow naturally from on-going discussion and relationships with coalition members so it is important to acknowledge and explore different perspectives and opinions and keep the lines of communication open. **Here is where the coalition will identify which priority problem substance they will address in their community for work under the CSC Initiative.**

SECTION 3 | COLLECT AND INTERPRET DATA ON LOCAL RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

In this section, coalitions examine indicator data for a specific set of community risk factors known to contribute to the abuse/misuse of the priority substance. This process identifies the unique strengths and vulnerabilities impacting the problem locally. To do so, each coalition **gathers data that describe precisely what is happening, where it is happening, to whom, and why.** Coalitions review a variety of sources including survey results, focus groups and key informant interviews and supplement existing information with primary data collection where needed.

In line with the RAC Sub-Regional Profiles the top priority substances in Connecticut are underage drinking, marijuana use, prescription drug misuse/abuse, and tobacco use. A chart with each of these substances and the corresponding risk factors with definitions can be found on this DMHAS webpage at <http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2912&q=570918>. In Step 3, Strategic Planning; coalitions will prioritize risk factors, select strategies that address those priorities, and complete a community-specific logic model. By linking community-specific risk factors to appropriate evidence based strategies coalitions will over time increase their probability of reducing the abuse/misuse of the priority problem substance at the community-level.

Coalitions will:

A. Identify and collect indicator data they will use to examine each risk factor. This process should be repeated for each risk factor.

1. Determine potential sources of community-level data available for each indicator
 - Data sources may include behavioral and/or mental health data as they relate to each risk factor
2. Collect and describe indicator data and information
 - What does it tell you?
 - Does it point to gaps or resources?
 - Is the source reliable and the information valid?
 - How often is it collected?
 - Can you report on trends?

B. Examine and interpret indicator data for each risk factor. Collectively, what do each set of indicators say about how each risk factor contributes to the selected priority problem substance in your community? Consider the following for each risk factor.

1. What is the magnitude of this risk factor in your community?
2. What is the severity of this risk factor in your community – how lethal is it?
3. What sub-populations of selected priority problem substance are most affected by this risk factor?
4. Where does this risk factor have the most and least impact?
5. From a broad cultural/multicultural perspective, what disparities exist in this information among groups and cultural variables?
6. What available resources are linked to this risk factor?
7. What gaps in resources are linked to this risk factor?
8. What are the limitations of the available local information on this risk factor?
9. How confident are you that this data accurately reflects circumstances in your community?
10. What additional information can you get or do you wish you had?

C. Summarize key findings for each risk factor.

DEFINITIONS

MAGNITUDE describes the number of people affected by a problem.

SEVERITY refers to premature mortality or years of potential life lost.

IMPACT relates to the depth of a problem in terms of social, health, economic and legal costs.

SECTION 4 | CONSIDER ADDITIONAL LOCAL INFORMATION ON THE PRIORITY SUBSTANCE

What additional local information do your community partners or stakeholders have that might provide further insight into the priority problem substance in your community? Are there any aspects or dimensions of the priority problem substance that coalition members feel were not captured by or adequately reflected in your examination of the sub-regional profile or review of community risk factors?

Describe and discuss any additional local data and information or anecdotal evidence and perceptions about the nature, causes or impact of the priority problem substance in your community that have been raised during the Needs Assessment process.

- What does it tell you about the local underlying factors driving the priority problem?
- What additional needs does it identify?
- What resources does it point out?

SECTION 5 | DRAFT NARRATIVE OF PROCESS AND FINDINGS

The final task of Needs Assessment is documenting your methods and results. This information will form the backbone of the assessment section of your Strategic Plan. Be clear and concise and use plain language. Aim to educate and inform lay people and community members outside of your coalition and SPF process. Your narrative must not be longer than 15 pages and describe the information outlined below:

A. Summary of the local Needs Assessment process and coalition members who participated:

1. The processes used to identify, gather, organize and interpret data
2. Coalition members who contributed
3. How the coalition ensured diverse representation in the Needs Assessment process
4. The multicultural considerations and strategies used.
5. The role of the Regional Action Council

B. Summary interpretation of sub-regional profile and local student survey data related to the identified problem priority substance with a community-specific comparison and contrast in terms of:

1. Demographics
2. Past-month use data
3. Priority problem substance mortality and morbidity data
4. Priority problem substance related crime data
5. Other priority problem substance social consequence data

C. A community-specific summary of major findings for each of eight risk factors examined.

1. What is the magnitude and severity?
2. What sub-populations are most affected?
3. Where does it have the most and least impact?
4. What disparities exist among groups and cultures?

5. What resources are linked to it?
6. What gaps in services are associated with it?
7. What are the limitations of the available local data and information?

D. A description of additional local information related the priority problem substance considered, and for each identified indicator summarize:

1. What it tells you about local underlying factors contributing to the problem?
2. What additional needs it identifies?
3. What resources are associated with it?

REMEMBER: You will not choose which risk factor(s) your coalition will focus on or identify prevention strategies in this step. You will gather and interpret data on each risk factor and collect supplemental information as warranted to describe the local underlying factors contributing to the selected priority problem substance in your community.

SOME SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Risk Factors for Alcohol, Tobacco, Marijuana, and Prescription Drugs

<http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2912&q=570918>

Sub-Regional Profile

<http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2912&q=335124>

World Health Organization: Risk to Mental Health

<http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2912&q=570918>

NIDA Commonly Abused Drug Charts

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/commonly-abused-drugs-charts>

National Survey on Drug Use and Health

<https://nsduhweb.rti.org/respweb/homepage.cfm>

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/>

SAMHSA's CAPT: Product Suites Selected Examples

<http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2912&q=570918>

SPF Step	Deliverable	Due Date
Assessment	Needs Assessment	12/1/15
Capacity	Coalition/Board Member List	10/1/15
Planning	Strategic Plan (work plan & evaluation plan included)	2/16/16
Implementation	Impact Data Entry	3/1/16
Evaluation	TBD	TBD