

Promoting a Coordinated Multi-Site Evaluation for Community-Based Opioid Prevention Programs



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Project Background

The effectiveness of substance use prevention efforts is often difficult to measure over short grant cycles, especially for emerging issues such as prescription opioid misuse where data is less available and evidence-based strategies are not well understood. Coordinating state and community level evaluation efforts adds further complexity.

Since 2016, six communities in Alaska, through a single federal funding stream, have worked to prevent opioid misuse among youth and young adults using policy, system, and environmental strategies.

The project is focused on three key intervening variables to reduce prescription opioid misuse:

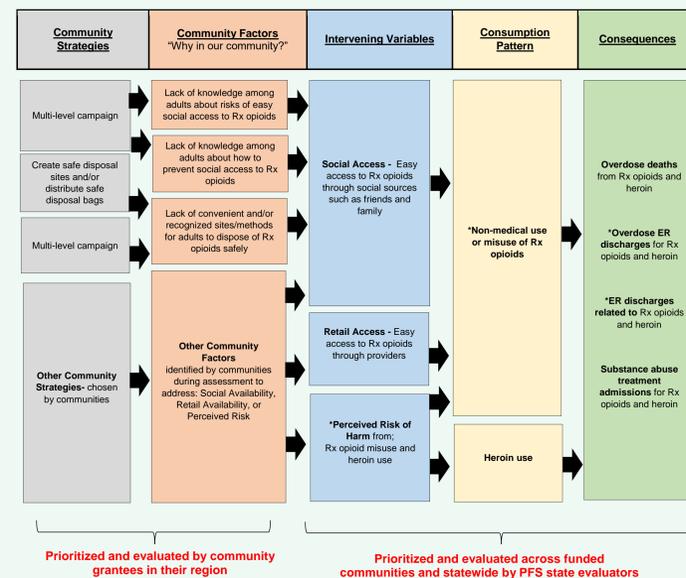
1. Reduce access through friends and family
2. Reduce access through providers and dispensers
3. Increase perceptions of risk for harm from misusing opioids

State evaluators created a practical multi-site evaluation design based on current prevention theory to focus on measurable outcomes at the state and community levels while maintaining flexibility for communities to address outcomes based on local data and identified needs.

Step 1: Create a High-Level Logic Model

An overarching logic model was developed to:

- Guide project efforts and to help state coordinators and funded communities maintain a focus on outcomes.
- Serve as a roadmap for how communities would address intervening variables with chosen strategies.
- Identify roles for measuring outcomes with:
 - state evaluators measuring outcomes on the right side (consumption and consequences).
 - communities measuring outcomes on the left side (community factors) – these can be modified based on local data, readiness, and chosen strategies.



Step 2: Community Evaluation Planning

Resources, trainings and collaborative technical assistance helped communities plan strategy evaluation efforts to:

- Identify indicators to be collected and monitored per strategy over time along with data collection methods
- Include a maximum of four indicators per strategy to keep the evaluation manageable.
- Select both process and outcome indicators with an emphasis on strategy awareness and reach to identify needed strategy modifications early on.

Individual community evaluation plans were streamlined into one cohesive table by state evaluators for easy communication throughout the grant.

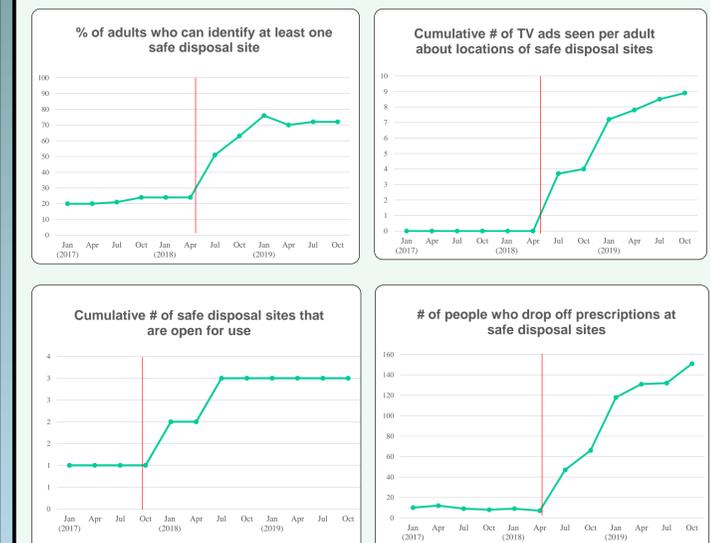
COMMUNITY EVALUATION: STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SAFE DISPOSAL SITES AND A CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND USE OF SAFE DISPOSAL SITES GOAL: REDUCE RX OPIOID MISUSE/ABUSE		
Community Factor: Lack of convenient or recognized sites for adult community members to dispose of Rx opioids safely	Intervening Variable: Social Availability of Rx opioids	Strategy Target Population: Adults 18+
KEY STRATEGY OUTCOMES	INDICATORS	METHOD / MEASURE
Increase # safe disposal sites to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to safe disposal sites Launch multi-level campaign to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of safe disposal sites • Increase use of safe disposal sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of disposal sites created and # of days open ^(P) • # and reach of awareness products disseminated (posters, articles, etc.) ^(P) • % of adults aware of at least one local safe disposal site ^(O) • # visitors of visitors and/or pounds of Rx opioid pills discarded at disposal sites ^(O) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity tracking • Dissemination tracking • Quarterly random survey of 100 adults (e.g., DMV) • Activity tracking

Step 3: Community Evaluation Implementation

After training was provided, communities collected data and developed small dashboards for each strategy which allowed them to:

- Visualize strategy indicators before and after implementation in Excel (i.e. red line in graphs).
- Share data with coalition members and other stakeholders over time.

Strategy Dashboard: Increase safe disposal sites, awareness and use



Key Community Challenges

The multi-site evaluation was designed to be practical, feasible, and flexible enough for funded communities, yet challenges still occurred.

Collecting quarterly random community surveys

- Challenges in finding a consistent survey location with broad community representation to assess strategy awareness and reach.
- Convenience samples at various community events were often used instead which made data interpretation difficult.
- Baseline data collection was omitted and a less frequent collection schedule was utilized by some communities to reduce burden. While more manageable, it reduced their ability to monitor change and respond with needed strategy adjustments in a timely manner.

Selecting too many indicators

- Numerous indicators led to time consuming data collection efforts and less focus on the data that was most important.
- Data interpretation was the step most often omitted when time was limited.

Conclusions

- **Ensure collaborative planning** for successful multi-site community evaluation efforts.
- **Increase technical assistance** and joint decisions in response to real-world challenges that occur during initial evaluation efforts.
- **Impose tighter evaluation requirements** to improve data quality. However, it could result in loss of community flexibility which should be considered.
- **Respond to staff turnover** with regular trainings.

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