
MODELS FOR PRACTICE

FOCUS AREA: SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Program Name: Project Forward, a Program of the Center for Community Outreach, Marshfield Clinic

Location: Marshfield, Wisconsin

Problem Addressed: Substance Abuse

Healthy People 2010 Objective: 26-6, 26-9, 26-10, 26-10b, 26-10c, 26-11, 26-15, 26-16, 26-17, 26-23

Web Address: <http://www.marshfieldclinic.org/research/dept/outreach>

SNAPSHOT

Project Forward is a community-based youth development program designed to address behavioral health issues, particularly alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse. Project Forward is active in 24 community partnerships and three ethnic communities (Ho Chunk Nation, the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation, and the Hmong Association of Wood County) in rural and urban Wisconsin.

Including the youth, parents, community members, and governmental officials, 3,321 members are involved in Project Forward.

THE MODEL

Blueprint: Project Forward is a program of the Center for Community Outreach, Marshfield Clinic. The program serves males and females ages 12-18 and their adult partners and families by providing technical assistance, consultation, education, training, and resources to the community partnerships and ethnic communities. Currently, 1,776 youth are enrolled in the program. Including the youth, parents, community members, and governmental officials, 3,321 members are involved in Project Forward. Surveys are administered upon program initiation to test the hypothesis that youth who are more actively involved in the learning events throughout the year will have scores that document a greater level of knowledge, more positive attitudes, and fewer alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse-related behaviors.

The Marshfield Clinic, a 501(c)(3), provides a base budget, facilities, and support services offset by grants and contracts that also help support the project. Staffing includes 12 full-time professional and support staff, in addition to 21 part-time Project Forward coordinators, one full-time National Guard member, and 20 AmeriCorps members. The program is administered at the community level.

The program is multiphasic and delivered through a variety of channels. Prevention specialists attend partner community meetings and organize community teams to address the issue of substance abuse. Project Forward

coordinators and AmeriCorps members are also placed in the community to work with youth. Each Project Forward community has a prevention services plan that includes a goals statement, target population, measurable outcome objectives, evaluation component, and budget. Each plan is tailored to the unique characteristics of each community.

A series of learning events are designed to develop the knowledge and skills in adults and young people that are needed to change individual lives and affect community norms. These learning events are hosted by the community partnerships and ethnic communities. Camps, retreats, and single day learning events are provided to serve as educational resources for Project Forward participants.

Making a Difference: Using baseline data collected since 1998, an evaluation strategy utilizes change scores in knowledge, attitude, and behavior as key outcome measures. These measures include age or grade of onset, perception of risk and social disapproval, and recent use. Additionally, the program measures community-based citizen participation, improved partnership capabilities, and level of community participation in prevention planning.

Since the program's inception, it has continued to expand to include new community partners. Currently, there is a waiting list of communities interested in implementing the program. Expansion decisions are based on capacity and funding.

Beginnings: The original stakeholder, the Northwoods Coalition, was founded in 1995 by a grant from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. The coalition compared rates of alcohol, drug, and tobacco use in the five counties and three ethnic communities comprising the Northwoods Coalition to state and national data. For grades 8, 10, and 12, the coalition member counties and communities reported higher usage rates than the state and national averages for all substances including alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, and marijuana. With a Drug Free Community Support Program grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and matching funds from the Marshfield Medical Research and Education Foundation, Project Forward was launched in 1998.

Using funds from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation/Bureau of Transportation Safety, Wisconsin National Service Board, and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) Alliance for Wisconsin Youth, the program has been replicated in 27 Wisconsin communities.

Challenges and Solutions: Distance and weather are the major challenges faced by the program. Therefore, the program relies on video conferencing and teleconferencing as well as traditional face-to-face meetings.

Project Forward is communicated via a variety of avenues locally, regionally, and nationally. Community involvement, newspapers, a website, and word of mouth are powerful publicity measures. The project also includes an active approach to networking across the state. The Center for Community Outreach develops relationships with prevention providers as well as presenting at conferences and workshops.

Ultimately, program developers believe it is the quality of the program that has brought the most attention to the program and gained the most support. A primary goal is to develop a program that is replicable across communities. The program is currently under review as a science-based model program by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

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