



Preparation for careers in substance abuse or mental health can begin as early as elementary school.

6 ASSESSING PROGRAM SUCCESS

**De nuestros errores aprendemos.
[From our mistakes, we learn.]**

Popular Folk Saying

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide program staff, mentors and mentees with an overview of the mentoring program assessment process.

Introduction

The process of assessment, or evaluation, involves the collection of information about the activities, characteristics and results of mentoring programs. This information allows us to improve program effectiveness and make sound decisions about these programs. Assessment is an essential component of all successful mentoring programs.

Many mentoring programs use persons from outside the program to conduct assessments. However, several successful programs have a lead staff member coordinating the assessment process in-house.

Program assessments can:

- Determine if the mentor program is meeting its objectives
- Determine if the mentor program is serving the needs of the participants

- Provide timely and critical feedback that can be used for improving the program
- Provide information to inform current and potential funders
- Assist management in decision making about the mentor program

The Evaluation Process

It is important that the evaluation effort, whenever possible, be designed and incorporated at the very beginning of the mentor program when proposed activities are formulated. As soon as the program is funded it is important to begin monitoring the project. Program monitoring helps ensure that the goals, objectives and the programs are being implemented and tracked throughout the life of the project. While various program management software are available, often all that is needed is a simple tracking sheet such as *Tool 6-2. Project Monitoring Tool*.

The evaluation component of a mentoring program should be an integral part of your program budget. Adequate resources are needed to conduct a good evaluation. Your evaluation budget should include: supplies, equipment, time of staff and consultants involved in evaluation and costs associated with obtaining the information such as: development of data collection instruments, reproduction and data analysis (see *Tool 6-3. Evaluation Budget*).

When possible, staff, mentors and mentees should be involved in the planning phases of evaluation, so that the evaluation process is participatory and clearly understood and supported by all. Staff should also play a role in interpreting the findings. *Tool 6-4* provides a sample of an *Evaluation Management Schedule*.

Collecting Baseline Information

Your mentor program should collect baseline data on the program and participants. Baseline data is information that provides a picture of the program at its beginning or at the start of the evaluation process. Much of this information can be collected on the mentees and mentors when they enroll in the program by completing an intake or application form. For participants this information can include variables such as: gender, age, racial/ethnic group, educational level, address, career interest, interest in going to college and income.

For mentors, this information can include information such as: gender, professional career, ethnic/racial group, address and time available. Other data can be collected from parents and schools, such as: student grades, family income level, parent education and extracurricular activities.

Formulating an Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan provides a framework for evaluating your program. It should provide a method for gathering information, a plan to analyze information and a method to communicate results.

The evaluation plan includes five basic components:

1. Development of evaluation goals and objectives
2. Formulating questions
3. Design of data collection instruments and strategies
4. Analyzing information
5. Reporting evaluation results

Development of Evaluation Goals and Objectives

Your evaluation plan should directly relate to the mentoring program's goals, objectives and activities. The evaluation goals should focus on the extent to which the project is meeting its intended goals and objectives.

In Chapter 4, we discussed the importance of developing clear and precise goals and objectives. *Tool 6-5. Goals and Objectives Worksheet* encourages program planners to clarify the relationships between actual results and outcomes that should be achieved. Once goals and objectives are clear, the evaluator's task is to determine the degree to which goals were attained. An example of a goal is: *"Increase the number of Hispanic Professionals in mental health."* An example of an objective is: *"To match 50 high school students with 25 mental health professionals that provide counseling services."*

Formulating Questions

The first step in evaluation is to ask questions about the program, participants in the program and staff involved in conducting the program.

Forming questions is the work of the evaluation team. Questions developed should be:

- Simple
- Clear
- Meaningful
- Have no gaps or missing points

Generally, evaluation questions can be grouped as either:

- Process evaluation

■ Outcome evaluation

Process Evaluation is designed and used to improve an existing mentoring program, especially when it is still being implemented. New programs may need to make periodic changes to ensure that the program meets its objectives. It informs management whether or not the program is being implemented as intended and whether changes need to be made. A process evaluation usually includes regular meetings with project staff to assess the program. Process questions vary depending on the kinds of project activities being provided, but may include:

- In what kind of and in how many activities did mentors and mentees participate?
- How many mentors and mentees were matched?
- What kind of and how many training opportunities were provided to staff and volunteers?
- Were the activities offered logical and sequential?
- Were program services implemented as planned?
- What methods were used to collect and analyze information?

Other process questions are provided in *Tool 6-6. Process Evaluation Questions*.

Outcome Evaluation is designed to present concrete results of the mentoring program. The evaluation plan should use specific and quantitative measures of the project's success in meeting the program objectives. It should also provide information on the indicators used to monitor and measure progress towards achieving results.

An Outcome Evaluation informs program planners. It allows program planners to keep track of progress and lets planners know how well the program has achieved its objectives. The data collected is directly tied to the program's goals and objectives. There are many potential questions that can be answered through an outcome evaluation. It is therefore necessary to decide which evaluation questions would be most important and practical to answer. Sample questions include:

- Did the program meet its intended results (impact, outcomes and products)?
- What was the impact of program services on the participant's knowledge about substance abuse and mental health prevention careers?
- What was the impact of services on student satisfaction?
- What was the impact of services on student's educational

progress?

Tool 6-7. Outcome Evaluation Questions provides examples of outcome evaluation questions. Other questions that should be addressed by the evaluation plan include: (see also *Tool 6-8. Other Evaluation Questions*)

- What is the potential impact of the program on continued student interest in the substance abuse and mental health prevention careers?
- Were there any unanticipated project outcomes?
- What is the potential for replication of project to other areas?

Design of data collection instruments

The evaluation strategy (generally known as “methodology”) should maximize the information gathered to show the strengths and weaknesses of the mentoring program. It is recommended that a combination of methodologies be used to gather information. However, systematic data gathering is important, as it will lead to making more accurate judgments about the program. Some of this can be accomplished by program staff using existing records and documents. *Tool 6-9. Methods of Evaluation* provides a brainstorming activity that can be done by the evaluation team.

The four questions associated with data collection are:

- What data do you need to collect?
- From whom are you going to collect them?
- How are you going to collect them?
- How often are you going to collect data?

Data collection methods vary depending on the nature of the program. It is important to identify who will be included in the sample size. Sampling involves both who is going to be studied, and how they are to be selected for inclusion in the evaluation study. For a mentoring program, your sample will include mentors, mentees, staff and possibly parents and teachers.

Examples of data collection methods (Worthen, et al., 1996) for a mentoring program are:

- Mentee surveys
- Mentor surveys
- Interviews
- Observations
- Staff surveys
- Progress reports on the mentoring program

- Student grades
- Parent surveys
- Results of standardized self esteem instruments
- Document analysis
- Case studies
- Focus group commentaries

When developing the student tracking assessment instruments, it is important to have sufficient detail so that the adequacy of the information obtained can be studied. It is recommended that questionnaires be short and to the point.

Analyzing Information

The first step for interpreting the results is to determine what data are relevant. Then you need to summarize the data. How you summarize the data will depend on the type of questions originally asked.

Your evaluation approach and data gathering strategies can produce rich information in both quantitative and qualitative form about your program.

Quantitative data are information that can be presented in specific and measurable terms. It can also be descriptive and be used to make statements about a particular group of people, for example: *the mentoring program served 40 Hispanic youth between the ages of 10 to 16 years of age.*

Qualitative data are rich, descriptive and detailed accounts of a place, person, or program. It can include the use of individual interviews, case studies, focus group commentaries and observations. For example: *Dr. Carlos Mora, a physician at The Betances Mental Health Center, said that his experience with his mentee was an experience he will remember for a lifetime.*

Reporting Evaluation Results

In reporting your evaluation results or findings, it is important to consider the audience. Your evaluation report will be used as a tool to inform individuals about the program. It can be used by management to make decisions about a program or by funders to determine continued funding. It can also be used by policy makers and others to identify best practices for mentoring programs.

Who uses the results of evaluations?

- Program staff
- Program managers

- Organizational boards
- Policy makers
- Funders
- Other community-based organizations

Generally, your program funder will provide you with a format for presenting the evaluation report. Most report formats include the following components:

- *Introduction*: A relatively short paragraph describing the applicant organization; overall purpose of the project and some indicators of what you did; what you found, and what it means.
- *Summary of findings*: If applicable, explain the major findings of the evaluation in both quantitative and qualitative terms.
- *Methodology*: Explain the evaluation process; how you gathered the data and who was involved in data collection.
- *Evaluation*: Explain the findings of the evaluation in a more comprehensive format, providing both process and outcome data. Indicate any unanticipated outcomes.
- *Implications*: Explain how you can use the information found to improve the program.
- *Summary conclusion*: Wrap the whole report up in no more than two paragraphs — what you did, what you found and what it means.

Ethics of Evaluation

Whenever people are involved in evaluating a mentoring program, it is important to consider the ethical issues surrounding the evaluation, such as culture and privacy issues. Some large evaluation projects aim only to get as much information as possible in the most efficient way available. If one is concerned about Hispanic youth development, as they progress along the educational continuum, they need to be included as an integral part of the evaluation process. Hence, in evaluating a program that focuses on Hispanic youth, it is important to note that the way in which one collects data must also take into account confidentiality issues, as well as cultural issues. Furthermore, the evaluation should involve the mentee in a meaningful way and not cause emotional discomfort.

Conclusion

Assessing program success begins with the process of evaluation. The process of evaluation involves collecting important information on the activities, characteristics and results of mentoring programs. This information allows for improved program effectiveness and for making sound decisions about the mentoring program.

An evaluation plan provides a framework for your mentoring program. Five important components to include are: developing evaluation goals and objectives, formulating questions, designing data collection instruments and strategies, analyzing information and reporting results.

Your evaluation plan should include both process evaluation and outcome evaluation questions that can be addressed by your assessment instruments.

Developing assessment instruments requires attention to detail so that the adequacy of the information obtained can be studied. With the right evaluation approach, your data gathering strategies can produce rich quantitative and qualitative data on your program that you will need in reporting your findings.

Finally, whenever people become involved in evaluating a mentoring program, it is important to consider the ethical issues surrounding the evaluation, such as: culture, privacy issues and involving mentees in a meaningful manner.

The tools section provides templates to help you in the assessment process. They include:

- *Tool 6-1. Assessing A Mentor Program (p. 141)*
- *Tool 6-2. Project Monitoring Tool (p. 142)*
- *Tool 6-3. Evaluation Budget (p. 143)*
- *Tool 6-4. Evaluation Management Schedule (p. 144)*
- *Tool 6-5. Goals and Objectives Worksheet (p. 145)*
- *Tool 6-6. Process Evaluation Questions (p. 146)*
- *Tool 6-7. Outcome Evaluation Questions (p. 147)*
- *Tool 6-8. Other Evaluation Questions (p. 148)*
- *Tool 6-9. Methods of Evaluation (p. 149)*

References for Further Information

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Tools



TOOL 6–1. ASSESSING A MENTOR PROGRAM

Assessing the success of a mentoring program generally entails a fact-finding mission. Program assessment allows us to improve project effectiveness and make second decisions about the program services and its participants. Program assessment can be conducted using in-house staff or hiring program consultants with greater expertise.

The broad range of evaluation approaches and data collection materials available presents a difficult choice. An overly broad approach might provide too abstract information. A narrow approach might yield information that only focuses on one aspect of the program.

The development of an effective evaluation plan requires five major steps:

1. Developing evaluation goals and objectives directly related to the mentoring program
2. Formulating questions about the mentoring program participants and program staff
3. Design of data collection instruments and systemic data gathering methods
4. Analyzing information in quantitative and qualitative terms
5. Reporting evaluation results

TOOL 6-2. PROJECT MONITORING TOOL

Project Title: _____

Project Director: _____

Project Period: _____

Project Number: _____

Task	Staff	Date
Official notification of award:	_____	_____
Budget review meeting with funder:	_____	_____
Project operation details completed (staff hired, space prepared, etc.):	_____	_____
Project review meeting with funder:	_____	_____
Project revisions/amendments filed with funder (e.g., revisions in objectives or timeline, budget line item changes, etc.):	_____	_____
Evaluation plan finalized:	_____	_____
Progress reports submitted:		
Time period covered:	_____	_____
Financial reports submitted:		
Time period covered:	_____	_____
Evaluation report submitted:	_____	_____
Continuation proposal submitted:	_____	_____
Other reports submitted:		
Type of report:	_____	_____
Site visits conducted:	_____	_____
Press releases issued:	_____	_____
Grant closed out:	_____	_____

TOOL 6-3. EVALUATION BUDGET

Direct costs:	\$ _____
Salaries:	\$ _____
Fringe benefits:	\$ _____
Consultant's fees:	\$ _____
Supplies:	\$ _____
Computer expenses:	\$ _____
Telephone expenses:	\$ _____
Instrument development expenses:	\$ _____
Travel expenses:	\$ _____
Other direct costs:	\$ _____
Indirect cost _____%	\$ _____
Total project costs:	\$ _____

TOOL 6-4. EVALUATION MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE

Activity:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Hire outside or assign Internal Evaluator:												
Identify evaluation activities:												
Outline evaluation timelines:												
Set deadline for completing each activity:												
Review project goals, objectives, outcomes and evaluation design:												
Brief project staff on evaluation:												
Observe project in action:												
Meet with evaluation staff to discuss in-house resources:												
Prepare evaluation strategies:												
Collect evaluation data:												
Prepare data for analysis:												
Analyze and interpret data:												
Prepare preliminary evaluation report:												
Present initial findings to Project Director:												
Write final evaluation report:												
Present final evaluation report:												

TOOL 6-5. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WORKSHEET

What goals can be set for the program

Need a. Lack of role models Goal a. Exposure to role models

Need b. Goal b.

Need c. Goal c.

Need d. Goal d.

What objectives will the program achieve in promoting substance abuse and mental health careers?

a. To match 50 students with 25 health professionals

b.

c.

d.

What activities can be incorporated into the program? What are the desired outcomes?

Activity **Outcome**

Visit mental health centers Exposure to work-setting

How can activities be monitored and measured?

Activity **Indicator**

Student survey Student feedback

How will measurement data be collected? Who will be responsible?

Measurement **Collection Method** **Staff Responsible**

Survey Survey Student advisors

TOOL 6–6. PROCESS EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. How many mentors and mentees were matched?
2. How long were they paired?
3. Was student attendance adequate?
4. Was mentor attendance adequate?
5. What was the length of each meeting? Were adequate facilities available for each meeting?
6. How many mentors left before the program ended?
How many mentees left before the program ended?
7. In what kind of and in how many activities did mentors and mentees participate?
8. What kind of and how many staff and volunteer training opportunities were provided?
9. Were the activities offered logical and sequential?
10. Were program services implemented as planned?
11. What methods were used to collect and analyze information?

TOOL 6–7. OUTCOME EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Did the program meet its intended results (impact, outcomes and products)?
2. What was the impact of program services on participant knowledge about substance abuse and mental health careers?
3. What was the impact of services on student satisfaction?
4. What was the impact of services on student educational progress?
5. What percentages of assignments did mentors in the program complete?
6. Was there an increase in school attendance as a result of participation in the mentoring program?
7. Was there an increase in enrollment and in successful completion of pre-college courses?
8. Did teacher(s) report positive changes in student behavior and attitude?
9. Was there a reduction in the dropout rate?
10. Was there an increase in participant knowledge about substance abuse and mental health careers?
11. Is there an increased enrollment in post-secondary education programs?
12. What is the potential for long-term impact of services on student satisfaction and continued student interest in the substance abuse and mental health careers?

TOOL 6–8. OTHER EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the potential impact of the program on continued student interest in the substance abuse and mental health careers?
2. To what degree did the program have beneficial effects or unintended effects?
3. What is the potential for replication of project to other areas?
4. Was the quantity of service sufficient to meet the needs of the participants?
5. How fast did the program respond to requests for service?
6. How did you measure whether staff treated participants with courtesy and dignity?
7. How accessible was the program to mentees?
8. Did participants view the service as satisfactory?
9. What was the cost per participant?

TOOL 6–9. METHODS OF EVALUATION

The planning group is asked to brainstorm different methods which can be used to carry out a process of evaluation. These are written on newsprint.

Note To Facilitator: In groups of 4 or 5, discuss 'What are the advantages and disadvantages of each method?'

This session is very important because people can learn a lot from each other about methods they might never have used in their own situation. Some methods that might be suggested are:

- Case studies
- Document analysis
- Focus group commentaries
- Group discussion method
- Small group method
- Whole group method
- Informal-oral interviews
- Interviews
- Mentor and student surveys
- Observation
- Observations
- Parent surveys
- Progress reports on the program
- Results of standardized Self esteem instruments
- Staff surveys
- Student grades
- Student surveys
- Written questionnaires
- Tracking data on participants