

Community Readiness Assessment Checklist¹

Data may reveal which problems a community needs to address—but is the community ready to commit resources to those problems? Do community members believe those problems exist? Psychological preparation is just as important in addressing community needs as having tangible resources in place. Assessing community readiness helps prevention professionals determine whether the time is right for social momentum towards addressing the community’s needs related to substance use disorders. Your assessments should reflect the readiness of all sectors of the community through a process that actively incorporates [cultural competence](#). Effective readiness assessment involves working with representatives from across community sectors to collect data and information. Ultimately, the assessment should include information about:

- The cultural and ethnic make-up of the community
- How problems are perceived among different sectors of the community
- Who has been engaged in previous prevention efforts
- Existing barriers to participation in prevention efforts

Share your assessment findings with key stakeholders and other community members. The better they understand community needs and contributing factors, the more likely they will be to choose to be a part of—and sustain—prevention outcomes.

| OUR AGENCY... | QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> UNDERSTANDS WHAT THE PROBLEM(S) LOOK LIKE IN OUR COMMUNITY | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the problem(s) look like? • What are the associated issues? • Are there particular places, times, or subpopulations that seem to be “driving the data” (consumption patterns, etc.)? • Are there specific outcomes that seem to stand out? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> UNDERSTANDS WHAT MAKES THE COMMUNITY UNIQUE AS WELL AS WHAT ARE SOME OF ITS NORMS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the population disproportionately young—or old? • Are there many transients (characteristic of a college town or vacation destination)? • Does the town have a reputation—for better or worse—regarding substance use? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BELIEVES THE COMMUNITY IS READY TO ACT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do community members understand the problem and believe it is a problem? • Is the community willing and able to implement a prevention effort? • Do competing priorities exist to potential prevention strategies? • To what extent are community leaders available and willing to do the necessary work? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> UNDERSTAND WHO POTENTIAL ALLIES AND OPPONENTS ARE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which individuals are willing to help move the policy development process forward and eventually take ownership of it? • Similarly, which individuals would oppose implementation of a prevention effort? |

¹ Content within checklist adapted from Strategic Prevention Framework content on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s website, <http://www.samhsa.gov/capt/applying-strategic-prevention-framework>



☐ UNDERSTAND WHAT POLICIES ALREADY EXIST

- Have we searched existing policies to understand those already in place and the extent to which they are enforced?
- How can we work alongside and reinforce these policies?
- If policies exist, but are not making a difference in reducing problem behavior, what is the reason(s)? Is the policy clear, understood, or enforced? Is the policy perceived as inappropriate or unimportant?
- Would efforts best be directed at building community awareness of existing policies or strengthening enforcement rather than creating new policies?

For more information and resources, please visit <http://www.samhsa.gov/capt/applying-strategic-prevention-framework>