AmeriCorps National Measures
Pilot Year 2: 2011-2012
Outcome Instrument Packet

YOUTH DECREASED SUBSTANCE ABUSE, ARRESTS, OR GANG INVOLVEMENT

Programs that choose to measure outputs Education ED1-ED2 or Education ED3-ED4 must choose and measure at least one of seven national outcome performance measures. Below is one of the national outcome performance measures programs can choose; or they can choose one or more of six other education national outcome performance measures. See other education outcome instrument packets for information on the other six measures.

Education Focus Area

National Performance Measure
Outcome: Unduplicated number of youth with decreased substance abuse, arrests, or gang involvement (ED8).

This national outcome performance measure is designed for those unique AmeriCorps programs that specifically target youth who have had substance abuse problems, been arrested, or have been involved in gangs in the prior year. This national outcome performance measure assumes that programs have access to records documenting these behaviors.

Definition of Key Terms[1]

- ***Youth:*** those youth reported in the Education Program, ED2 or the Youth Mentor Matches, ED4 (see above).
- ***Gang involvement:*** may mean associating with gang members or participating in gang activities.
- ***Substance abuse:*** may mean use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, including abuse of prescription drugs.
- ***Arrest***: means an action by a police officer that is called "arrest" by that law enforcement agency regardless of whether the arrest results in a conviction.

Considerations for this National Performance Measure[2]

Output

- Will you be providing services to youth documented as substance abusers, arrested, and/or involved in gang activity during the year prior to receiving service?

[1] 2011 National Performance Measures: Background Information References and Authorities, Definitions, Suggestions Regarding Data Collection, and Additional Notes, CNCS: http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/11_1018_americorps_nofo_background_document.pdf

[2] For more on alignment of performance measures, see the AmeriCorps Toolkit: http://nationalserviceresources.org/star/ac-program-toolkit.

Outcome

- Will your education or mentoring program be designed to assist youth decrease/eliminate future substance abuse, arrests, or gang involvement?
- Will your education or mentoring program provide the amount of service needed for youth to succeed in decreasing substance abuse, arrests, and/or gang activity?
- If you plan to decrease substance abuse, will you address all substances (e.g., alcohol, illicit drugs, prescription drugs) or a subset of these drugs? How will you know if a youth has engaged in substance abuse?
- Do you have a clear definition of "gang activity"? How will you know if a youth has been involved in gang activity?
- Will you partner with a local police department, juvenile division, or drug dependency program to obtain data?
- Will you be able to recruit AmeriCorps members who have the qualifications and skill set to assist youth who have a record of substance abuse, arrests, or gang activity?
- What benchmarks will you establish to determine "decreased substance abuse, arrests, and/or gang activity?" You need to indicate how much of a decrease (e.g., units, percent) you expect youth to make in order to be counted as having successfully decreased negative behavior.
- If you choose to measure the outcome using computer-assisted survey interviewing (CASI), will you have the financial resources to purchase the hardware and software to run CASI?

Data Collection Challenges

- Will you be able to collect prior year's data on each youth from a police department, juvenile division, other law enforcement institution, or health institution?
- Can you obtain records from the police department, juvenile division, or other law enforcement agency to determine whether youth were arrested or involved in gang activity during the program year? Note: police records are filed at the local police department in the community where the infraction or crime was committed. This may not necessarily be the same community where the youth lives. However, police departments do share data on serious crimes.
- Because these data are sensitive, do you have qualified staff or other professionals who will be trained in collecting and handling the data?
- To measure decreased substance abuse, will you be able to administer an instrument (e.g., self-report survey) that has been validated? Will youth have confidence that they can respond to the survey without fear of retribution? Both the type of instrument and process of administering the instrument should be considered.
- Will the instrument you use allow the youth to be anonymous, or will the instrument maintain confidentiality?
- Will you need consent from a parent or guardian before administering instrument to youth?
- If the validated instrument you use is a pre-post survey, will you be able to match the pre-survey with the post-survey for each youth? Because you have to determine whether each youth decreased their use, each participant's pre-survey needs to be compared with the participant's post-survey.

Data Collection Strategies

- Before choosing this national outcome performance measure, you may want to determine whether you will be able to access arrest or gang involvement records from the police department or juvenile division during the prior year, as well as obtaining these data during the year that youth participate in your education or mentoring program.
- Consider creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with law enforcement or medical institutions clearly stating the assistance and the data you need.
- If you are obtaining information from youth, you may want to prepare a consent form for a parent or guardian that allows you to administer the instrument to their child.
- Because the data being collected are sensitive, you may want, or be required, to keep all data (e.g., surveys, summary forms, existing data forms) under lock and key.

Sample Instrument in this Packet

AmeriCorps programs will need to identify instruments and/or existing data that measure decreased substance abuse, arrests, or gang involvement. In addition to this instrument or instruments, programs will need tracking logs to compile the data collected. The following documents provide information on some substance abuse instruments and a summary log to track youth behavior.

Information on Validated Substance Abuse Instruments

The instrument you use to measure a decrease in student substance abuse must be a validated instrument. The information on the following pages provides information to help you begin to search for instrument that will meet your needs. Keep in mind that you will need to identify an instrument that will allow you to compare individual youth results prior to participating in the program with results for the same individuals after participating in your program to determine the number of unduplicated youth who decrease their substance use.

Youth Tracking Decrease in Crime Outcome Log

This summary log can track the number of unduplicated youth who participate in your program, as well as record the information on their substance abuse, arrests, and gang involvement during the prior year (collected using another instrument selected by you). This log can also be used at the end of your education or mentoring program to document the same information for each youth. The third section of this log, “Place “1” if decreased use/occurrence” can document unduplicated youth who decreased their negative behavior in each of the three activities.

In addition to selecting the instrument and/or accessing partner records, you will need to establish benchmarks or indicators for determining when youth can be counted as having decreased substance abuse, arrests, and/or gang activity. These benchmarks will indicate how much of a decrease (e.g., units, percent) you expect youth to make in order to be counted as having decreased negative behavior and clearly define the behavior. For example, you may decide that <u>no involvement</u> in gang activity is expected of youth during their participation in your program. You will also want to precisely define what “no involvement” means (e.g. no arrest for criminal activity, no contact with known gang members, no tagging, etc.).

Decreased Substance Abuse, Arrests, or Gang Involvement

Sample Instrument:

Information on Validated Substance Abuse Instruments

Youth Tracking Decrease in Crime Outcome Log

Information on Validated Substance Abuse Instruments

Instructions	
What is the purpose?	To provide information to help AmeriCorps programs select instruments to determine how many youth decreased their substance abuse after participating in an education or mentoring program.
Who should complete this instrument?	**Trained individuals that can maintain anonymity or confidentiality of youth should administer the instrument to youth.**
When should we complete this instrument?	At the beginning of the program year (if using a pre-test), and toward the end of the AmeriCorps program year (post-test).
What should we do to prepare?	Identify a validated instrument to measure a decrease in youth substance abuse. Depending on your organization and the type of instrument to be used, consider the following preparatory steps: • Obtain consent from a parent or guardian. • Process the instrument through an Institutional Review Board (IRB). • Train the persons who will administer the instruments. • Develop a secure process for maintaining sensitive data.
What should we do afterwards?	Keep all logs and verifying documentation together in a safe place; **this is your data.** You will aggregate these data later to determine if you met your output target.
Can I use an alternative instrument?	You must choose an instrument that has been validated and will provide you with data comparing the use of substances for each youth participant prior to participating in the program and then again after the youth completes participation in your program. The instrument must allow you to determine if each youth decreased his/her substance abuse/use after participation in your program.

Information on Validated Substance Abuse Instruments

The Corporation for National and Community Service researched the availability of validated surveys to measure youth substance use. The information in this section addresses "big picture" issues to consider when selecting an appropriate instrument to measure a decrease in youth substance abuse. Take into account your program's or institution's experience in providing service to this target population when identifying a validated substance abuse instrument, procedures for data collection, and analyzing the results.

Self-Reported Indicators for Youth Substance Abuse

- There are many self-report surveys that have been validated by one study or another, even in classroom settings. But the key to producing valid results is anonymity[3]: self-report questionnaires produce more accurate estimates of substance abuse prevalence than face-to-face interviews. Anonymity encourages respondents to report truthfully; in a non-anonymous setting, respondents may underreport their usage. In this context, measurement errors are much more likely to result from underreporting of substance use rather than over-reporting. However, if conducting a pre-post survey, anonymity will not allow you to match the pre-survey with the post-survey of respondents.
- It is not complicated to ensure respondent anonymity unless programs are required to do pre-post assessments. The problem arises when you need to make sure the post-program survey goes to the same respondent who completed the pre-program survey; if not for this, there would be many valid assessment options.
- Computer-assisted survey interviewing (CASI) looks like a viable alternative to paper-and-pencil interviewing (PAPI). The first major study that compared these survey modes was published in 1998.[4] This study found that PAPI surveys produced significantly higher prevalence estimates than CASI surveys, on average, especially for teenagers and/or mistrustful respondents—who are probably overrepresented in a program's target population.
- However, this difference disappeared after controlling for the distance between students and computers. As subsequent research has suggested,[5] if respondents can be reassured that nobody can see the screen while they are completing a CASI survey, they will be more confident that their responses will be kept private.
- Several more recent studies tend to show that CASI surveys tend to produce higher reported substance use rates than PAPI interviews[6], and that school-based surveys produce higher

[3] Anonymity means that the respondent is unknown, and the program cannot match an instrument with a particular respondent. This differs from confidentiality, wherein the respondent is known, but the program does not divulge the responses of particular respondents.

[4] Beebe, T. J., Harrison, P. A., McCrae Jr, J. A., Anderson, R. E., & Fulkerson, J. A. (1998). An evaluation of computer-assisted self-interviews in a school setting. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 62, 623-632.

[5] Carine A. Vereecken, M.Sc. and Lea Maes, Ph.D. (2006). Comparison of a computer-administered and paper-and-pencil administered questionnaire on health and lifestyle behaviors. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 38, 426–432.

[6] Hallfors, Denise, Shereen Khatapoush, Charles Kadushin, Kim Watson, Leonard Saxe (2000). A comparison of paper vs computer-assisted self interview for school alcohol, tobacco, and other drug surveys. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 23, 149-155.

prevalence estimates than home-based surveys.[7] Since more valid survey methods tend to produce higher prevalence estimates, these studies argue in favor of surveying youth program participants in school, with computer-assisted survey methods.

- There are precedents in the program evaluation literature for using self-reported surveys to conduct pretest/posttest assessments of youth substance abuse. Without third-party data collection, it might be difficult to ensure anonymity for youth responding to a paper and pencil survey, but it would be much easier to ensure anonymity with a computer-assisted method.

Selecting your Validated Instrument

The Corporation's research stated above finds that anonymity encourages respondents to report truthfully; in a non-anonymous setting, respondents may underreport their substance use. Also, studies differ on whether to use a computer-assisted instrument or a paper-and-pencil survey; however, it was suggested that a computer-assisted survey may make it much easier to ensure anonymity. However, you may need to match prior year's data with the post-survey data for each respondent to determine whether individual respondents reduced their substance use. Therefore, you may need to choose an instrument that is confidential rather than one that provides anonymity.

Validated Assessments

The Corporation identified two validated assessments that are widely used in schools, and developed or supported by government programs:

1) Youth Risk Behavior Survey – developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and conducted periodically by them to monitor trends in youth risky youth behavior (does not include gangs and arrests) but does include illegal drug use, drinking/driving, smoking, etc. http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm

The CDC provides a do-it-yourself guide and free access to the surveys, and journal citations that validate the method.

Find the *General Information* section and click on the *Questionnaire and Item Rationale* link. Two questionnaires are available: one for high school participants (87 questions) and another for middle school participants (50 questions). These instruments cover content areas in safety, violence behavior, bulling, suicide, tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, other drugs, sexual intercourse, body weight, nutrition (high school survey only), physical activity, and health related topics.

> *Note: you may want to use only the questions on tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs (30 questions for high school; 15 questions for middle school).*

This website also provides information on software to use to analyze the data.

2) Communities that Care Survey (CTC) – endorsed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); measures the prevalence of substance use, delinquency and related problem behaviors, and the risk and protective factors that predict these problems in your community. This survey is used by many states and school systems; the CTC system also provides lots of standards and benchmarks, as well as national data from the past 10-15 years.

[7] Brener, Nancy D, Danice K Eaton, Laura Kann; Jo Anne Grunbaum, et al. (2006). The Association of Survey Setting and Mode with Self-Reported Health Risk. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70, 354-374.

Survey page – http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/features/ctc/resources.aspx
Survey instrument –
http://download.ncadi.samhsa.gov/Prevline/pdfs/ctc/CTC_Youth_Survey_2006.pdf

Communities That Care Community Planning System

Please note: All of the files on this page are in PDF format except for the Power Point Presentations and the CTC Readiness Checklist From Milestone & Benchmarks (Excel). Use Adobe Acrobat Reader available for free to open the PDF files.

Milestones & Benchmarks Introduction (PDF 68KB)
Communities That Care Readiness Checklist from Milestones & Benchmarks (XLS 137 KB)
Communities That Care Youth Survey (PDF 161 KB)

Note: The CTC Youth Survey is a scannable form; however, the survey booklets must be printed to exact specifications. SAMHSA recommends that users contact a company for printing and scanning the survey booklets; producing profile reports, and conducting other analyses.

Risk and Protective Factor Scale Construction Summary (PDF 67 KB)
Communities That Care Youth Survey Normative Database (CTC NDB)

Youth Tracking Decrease in Crime Outcome Log

Instructions

What is the purpose?	To track data collected from instruments and existing data to determine how many youth decreased or stopped substance abuse, being arrested, and/or gang involvement.
Who should complete this instrument?	Project Director or designee can complete the instrument. The information is sensitive; therefore, it should be a person who is responsible for confidentiality issues.
When should we complete this instrument?	As youth begin the program and when services are completed
What should we do to prepare?	When youth are identified to participate in the program, but before or soon after your program begins, obtain prior year's data for each youth for the indicators being measured (i.e., substance abuse, arrests, gang involvement). You will need to determine the amount of progress required for the youth to meet the target using the identified instrument/records. If measuring gang involvement, you may want to contact local law enforcement agencies to discuss the definition of "gang involvement." If measuring a decrease in substance abuse, you must identify a validated instrument (i.e., self-report survey) to be administered to the youth. If you do not measure all three of the negative behaviors (substance abuse, arrests, gang involvement), the columns for those behaviors not being measured can be deleted.
What should we do afterwards?	Keep all the logs and verifying documentation together in a safe place; **this is your data.** You will aggregate these data later to determine if you met your output target.
Can I use an alternative instrument?	Different forms can be developed/used to document unduplicated youth who decrease their substance abuse, arrests, and/or gang involvement. You may want to develop a database using an Excel spreadsheet. However, whether your instrument is in paper format or electronic format, remember to save this "raw" data as proof that a systematic process was used to document the outputs.

Youth Tracking Decrease in Crime Outcome Log

Program Name: _____

Person completing this Log:_____ **Program Year/Date:** _____

Target Statement (amount of progress required): _____

Instructions: Enter the name of each youth who participates in your education program or your mentoring program and the date when the youth begins in your program. Insert rows as needed to document additional unduplicated youth. Using an identified instrument or existing partner data, The information in the "Data one year prior to the program year" section should be completed for each youth prior to the beginning of your program or soon after. At the end of the program year, place a "1" in the appropriate column in the last section, "Place "1" if decreased use/occurrence" for youth who decreased their substance abuse, arrests, and/or gang activity.

Youth			Data one year prior to the program year			Data at end of program year			Place "1" if decreased use/occurrence (1)		
Last	First	Date began program	Substance Abuse	Arrests	Gang activity	Substance Abuse	Arrests	Gang activity	Substance Abuse	Arrests	Gang activity
1.											
2.											
3.											
4.											
5.											
6.											
7.											
8.											
9.											
10.											
Total number of youth who decreased their negative behavior by type of activity:											

Note: Establish a benchmark (e.g., units, percentage) for determining when youth can be counted as decreased substance abuse, arrests, and/or gang activity.