

Software to Guide Your Prevention Programming: CSAP's PreventionDSS

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Closing the Gap, Substance Abuse Prevention: What's Working to Keep Our Youth Drug Free?
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Need guidance on how to make your substance abuse prevention program work better?

Try PreventionDSS Version 2.0 from the Federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP).

With 1,600 registered users already working on more than 550 prevention projects, and a new version 2.0 released in May, the folks at the CSAP are delighted with their new computer software tool.

PreventionDSS (DSS stands for Decision Support System) is a free, web-based tool that provides step-by-step guidance on how to apply what works in prevention to your program.

"It's useful to anyone creating a prevention program because it guides you through a thinking process that considers needs assessment, demographic make-up, on through to implementation and evaluation," says Terri Singer, manager of the Central Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies, one of several projects funded by CSAP. Singer adds that organizations serving minorities and involved in minority health issues will find it useful because "there are sections that allow you to specify the populations that will be served by the program you are creating." Then, the program provides specific resources and strategies geared for the group you've identified.

Although initially designed to be used by prevention service professionals, community coalitions, graduate course instructors, and students involved in prevention science, "its tools are flexible enough to be useful for many other types of projects in other fields,"

says Jon Rolf, Ph.D., senior health advisor at CSAP's Prevention Application and Education Branch. Extensive online tutorials, an online library that provides relevant documents and resources and online technical assistance are available to guide the user.

"PreventionDSS has been described as a real breakthrough for the dissemination and application of science-based prevention programs and relations," Rolf says. Before PreventionDSS, "there were books, monographs, training manuals and videos, and a few web-based resources with static documents about the what, how, and why."

PreventionDSS is more than an information suite, according to CSAP. It contains interactive tools that can be tailored to meet the needs of a specific project. As information is collected and used, the different modules of the decision support system can "learn" what the project needs. If information is entered during a needs assessment session indicating that the project is a school-based prevention project for children ages 6 to 12, then information relevant to elementary school-based prevention activities will be presented to the user later, during the program selection stage.

And why should community-based organizations use PreventionDSS? "Because," says Rolf, "it helps them do many kinds of difficult prevention work easier, faster, and better."

For more information, go to <http://www.preventiondss.org>, or contact Dr. Jon Rolf, CSAP at (301) 443-0380. ❖

