

# State Incentive Grants: Illinois DHS Seeks Statewide Collaboration

By Houkje Ross

Closing the Gap, Substance Abuse Prevention: What's Working to Keep Our Youth Drug Free?  
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“In some ways, we feel like we are the pioneers in the development of a comprehensive, statewide prevention plan. Because Illinois was one of the first to receive State Incentive Grant (SIG) funding, it's been a kind of trial-by-fire process, but very exciting,” said Kim Fornero, chief of the Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention in the Illinois Department of Human Services and project director for the Illinois SIG.

Fornero is talking about the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) State Incentive Grant, which Illinois and five other states received in 1997. CSAP developed the SIGs to boost the number of community-based programs using scientifically proven strategies to reduce youth substance abuse. SIG funding is granted for three years. At least 85 percent of funding must go to the support of community-based organizations, and other local efforts (see model program next page). States that receive SIG money are also required to create a comprehensive state prevention plan.

“None of us—state agencies, CBOs, and other non-profits in Illinois— have enough funding to really be effective in reducing substance abuse in our state. My \$20 million alone isn't going to do much. But if we take your \$3 million, my \$20 million, and his \$15 million, and make sure they are going to the right places, we can really have an impact. We need to work together,” said Fornero.

“Working on this project has really forced me to think about systems issues—how things are connected. Nothing works in isolation,” she said.

## Real Impact Takes Collaboration

“In order to make a real impact, we have to streamline and coordinate our efforts,” said Fornero. Her hope for the future? A State database that can tell her the types of programs that are working in a specific geographic area within Illinois. “Before we put new money out for prevention efforts, we want to be able to scan our system to identify where money and services are most needed, what is already out there, and where gaps exist,” she said.

But Fornero and her team—the Prevention Advisory Council, which consists of five workgroups—have only just begun. And Fornero knows that she has a lot of work ahead for the Council. “Before I started this project, I wasn't aware that our state has 43 programs within 11 agencies that are in some capacity addressing substance abuse prevention—and I work for the state. If I don't know, it's unlikely anyone at the community level will know either,” said Fornero.

To increase the likelihood that others in her state will know about the programs already working to prevent and curb substance abuse,

the Council created the following workgroups: Best Practices, Communications, Policy Review, Data Collection, and Collaboration. Each workgroup has its own goal.

For example, the Collaboration workgroup's goal is to build an alliance between agencies, organizations and others engaged in substance abuse prevention-related initiatives throughout the state. “One of our first steps was to send out a survey to 12 state agencies in order to identify commonalities, and potential partnership opportunities,” said Fornero. This was done in December 2000.

The agencies—like the Illinois Department of Public Health, State Board of Education, Liquor Control Commission, the National Guard, State Police, and the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs— were targeted because they have programming that addresses substance abuse or related risk factors, and they target youth in some way.

The survey gathered information about each state agency's programs. Types of information gathered included:

- ♦ Long range goals;
- ♦ Target populations, geographic areas served;
- ♦ Existing collaborations;
- ♦ Specific strategies or approaches to programs;
- ♦ Mechanisms for measuring success (process and outcome); and
- ♦ Needs assessments.

In addition to completing the survey, agencies were asked to submit documentation related to their programs. Agencies could submit a variety of documents including: a copy of a Request for Grant Application/Proposal, quarterly reports or evaluations, training plans, and mailing lists of service providers. “The response we received from agencies was great,” said Fornero. She attributes agency willingness to respond to the survey to the type of information requested. “We asked for documents that could tell us about an agency's program, but didn't require much work from the agencies. The onus is on us to evaluate each program,” she said.

According to Fornero, the next step for the collaboration workgroup is to sort through all the information, summarize, and develop recommendations to present to the Council. “It is overwhelming,” said Fornero. The workgroup will identify opportunities for collaboration as well as potential gaps in service. The workgroup has already found that many agencies are targeting youth, but very few are targeting families, schools, or the community. For a comprehensive approach, these gaps have to be addressed.

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## Need More Information on Creating Partnerships with Other Organizations?

Want more ideas on how to collaborate with state agencies, CBOs, or non-profits in your state? Check out the page 10 story in the September/October 2000 issue of *Closing the Gap* entitled, “Tennessee Creates Latino Network.” You'll learn how the Tennessee Office of Minority Health created a network for information sharing. Call the Office of Minority Health Resource Center at (800) 444-6472 and request publication #424. ❖

