

Chapter 4

Assessment and Evaluation

The Data and Social Marketing Committee of the planning group reviewed data collection needs and set goals, objectives and principles relating to data collection for this plan.

Youth data was identified as a major gap; there is currently no Delaware data on physical activity and nutrition below high school age (although middle school data will soon be available (see p. 5). Additional needs were identified in the environmental and policy areas. Some essential data may already exist, but the sources have not been identified and the data have not been published or used for health promotion purposes.

The committee recommends four principles to guide data collection and evaluation:

- Evaluation is absolutely vital to all physical activity and healthy nutrition programs, for effectiveness, quality improvement and to increase opportunities for funding.
- Data and evaluation training should be pragmatic, specific to a program, and must meet the needs of the community, agency or group being trained.
- Management and oversight infrastructure is essential to ensure effective analysis, utilization and dissemination of the data.
- All physical activity and nutrition programs and policy initiatives in support of this plan should be data- and science-based, to the extent possible. Innovative programs require stronger evaluation components.

Overall Goal

All physical activity and nutrition programs and policy initiatives in support of this plan will have an evaluation component that includes planning, process, impact and outcome measures [see definitions in appendices].

Objectives:

1. Ongoing, all program announcements, contracts and grants produced and awarded in support of this plan must include requirements for evaluation.

2. By 2004, lead agencies should develop evaluation checklists, training materials, and a mentoring program.

Recommended Strategies for Data Collection and Evaluation

- Identify data needs, and develop or enhance systems to obtain needed data.
- Identify, collect and analyze all existing data – from the Delaware Department of Transportation, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, and other agencies – related to environmental impacts on physical activity and healthy nutrition.
- Develop ongoing sources for collecting data on physical activity and nutritional attitudes and behavior of middle school students, and obesity among children.
- Produce an annual inventory of currently available data and information sources related to physical activity and healthy nutrition.
- Develop sources and databases for social marketing research, to track changes in attitudes, perceptions and values.
- Continue and expand existing data collection resources, including the Behavioral Risk Factor and the Youth Risk Behavior surveys.
- Develop a training network and/or mentoring system to assist community organizations with planning and evaluation techniques and tools.
- Provide participating agencies and organizations with information and examples of how evaluation has helped programs obtain funding and improve effectiveness.
- Develop a central resource, e.g. on the Internet, where agencies and organizations can obtain current, accurate information about evaluation resources and data systems.