

► Building Community Programs

Step One: Solicit Community Support

Community involvement is key to the success of any project at the local level. Commitment from the police and highway patrol, fire department, medical community, county health department, Native American tribes, ethnic organizations, schools, senior groups, churches, civic groups, and safety and community coalitions among others will



provide the encouragement, helping hands, input and resources needed to build and implement the most effective injury prevention measures. Support from program participants is necessary to ensure that your efforts are effective and well received.

Step Two: Define Community Needs

Each community is unique with individualized preferences and needs. Certain injuries are a bigger problem for some communities. To best understand these differences, it is important to begin by collecting local statistics. Such data collection, also called surveillance, should serve as the foundation of community injury prevention programs. Surveillance methods may include analysis of existing data and reports, conducting telephone and on-site observation surveys, and generating input from different community groups and leaders. Data make it possible for you to identify and understand your injury problem. For assistance in finding quality sources of data, see the Where You Can Go section of this manual.

Step Three: Select the Injury

With the needs of your community in mind, focus on "who" is being affected by injuries, to "what" extent, and the best, most realistic approach for preventing these injuries. Factors to consider include:

- number of deaths
- severity of injuries or disabilities

- number of people affected
- age groups affected
- race or ethnicity affected
- community geography and environment
- high risk occupations (i.e., farming)
- circumstances of the injuries
- effectiveness of injury prevention measures
- resources available for implementing prevention measures.

Step Four: Select the Population at Risk

Demographic information (see [Appendix A](#)) is useful for getting a clearer picture of the make-up of your community. Age, race, sex and other socioeconomic factors should be considered, as well as the ability to reach those most at risk. For maximum effect, focus your efforts on a specific sub-population, such as Native American children less than 5 years of age in a given city or county, or persons 65 years and older receiving county health department services.

Step Five: Select the Intervention

The surest route to success is by being realistic about your goals and subsequent selection of the most appropriate injury prevention projects and activities. Also consider what resources, including time, people, and money, are available. The best interventions have maximum impact on the intended population in a shorter amount of time and with the most effective use of your resources.

Interventions can be one of three types: education, legislation (enforcement), or technology/devices (engineering). The ideal program would contain aspects of all three, however, an injury intervention may target just one type. The *Intervention Decision Matrix* is a simple tool designed to identify intervention options and choose between them (see [Appendix B](#)). It can also identify long-term goals and intervention options that support each other. The seven elements of the Intervention Decision Matrix can be used as decision criteria when selecting an intervention: 1) effectiveness; 2) feasibility; 3) cost feasibility; 4) sustainability; 5) ethical acceptability; 6) political will; 7) social will; 7) potential for unintended benefits and potential for unintended risks.¹

Step Six: Determine Project Goals & Objectives

The importance of establishing goals and objectives cannot be overstated. Project goals and objectives will be used to guide and evaluate your efforts. Goals should be clearly stated in measurable terms. Objectives tell you how to accomplish your goals. Goals and objectives should focus on preventing the injury from occurring and/or changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to the injury. For example:

Project Goal: Increase the use of bicycle helmets by 25% among children 5-12 years of age in the intended population.

Project Objective 1: Ensure the availability of low-cost helmets.

Project Objective 2: Educate parents about the extent of bicycle-related head injuries.

Project Objective 3: Implement an elementary school policy requiring helmet use when riding bicycles to school.

Step Seven: Determine Project Strategies

The strategies you select for your injury prevention project will help you to accomplish your goals and objectives. Your strategies should be realistic and easily implemented within your community. This is a good place to utilize new and existing programs and coalitions to develop activities and ideas. For example:

Strategy 1: Distribute free or low-cost bicycle helmets at local events.

Strategy 2: Work with law enforcement and school officials to ensure compliance of a helmet policy.

Step Eight: Develop and Organize

Clearly identifying who will do what and when from the beginning will help the project run smoothly. Establish project goals and objectives, as well as a timeline for each aspect of the course of the project. Proper training and orientation of those involved will also make sure the project is administered consistently and runs smoothly.

Step Nine: Implement the Project

This is where the real fun begins. Once your project has been outlined and participants trained, you are ready to implement the project. Be sure to stick to your timeline and strategies, although these are not set in stone. If you should encounter a problem, then plans can be adjusted even as the project is being implemented. However, keep in mind your goals, objectives, and evaluation methods before making major adjustments.

Step Ten: Evaluate

Evaluation of your efforts should occur before and after implementation of each injury prevention strategy. Evaluation measures can focus on the process of implementing the project (i.e., number of smoke alarms distributed) or the outcome of the project interventions (i.e., decrease in number of injuries, increase in smoke alarm prevalence). Even the most basic pre- and post-analysis and evaluation of your efforts can be important in acquiring funds and resources, promoting the validity of your injury prevention efforts, and helping to determine if your project was a success.

Reference

1. Fowler CJ, Dannenberg AL. *The Revised Intervention Decision Matrix* © Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. 2003. Baltimore, Maryland.