



A Project of the Community Prevention Institute

SIG Evaluation Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q&A Sections: A. Local Evaluation Questions - B. Random Digit Dialing Surveys - C. The Coalition Surveys

Note: Section C. The Coalition Surveys has been updated.

During the last two months the San Diego State University (SDSU) evaluation team has been preparing the statewide evaluation plan and participating in conference calls with county SIG project directors and evaluators. During the course of this work a number of questions have been raised about the statewide evaluation. As a result, SDSU and the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs have prepared the following questions and responses.

If you have additional questions that are not listed below, please contact Kathleen Cronin at 916-327-4867 or kcronin@adp.ca.gov

A. Local Evaluation Questions

1. In discussing the local evaluations, what is fidelity? Who will define fidelity?

Fidelity relates to whether the SIG program was implemented as designed. In the best case, fidelity is defined as following accepted program standards as defined by the program model designer. Unfortunately clear standards for how to implement the environmental models and strategies in many of the SIG projects are not available.

In those cases, SDSU would expect that programs will develop their own plan and steps necessary to implement a specific intervention. Fidelity would then be measured as adherence to that plan.

In addition, SDSU is currently working with Community Prevention Institute (CPI) to obtain available information concerning fidelity assessment, which includes, for example, materials concerning CMCA. SDSU hopes to develop additional resources to assist local programs in developing measurement tools to track fidelity to both program models and specific interventions.

B. Random Digit Dialing Surveys

1. Why does the random digit dial (RDD) survey only include 18-25 year olds?

The RDD survey is limited to only those between the ages of 18 and 25 because obtaining parental permission for those under 18 would be impractical. For this reason, SDSU has separated the population into two groups; those between 12 and 17, and those 18 to 25 years old. For the younger group, California Healthy Kids Survey information will be the primary measure of statewide impact. For those over 18, the RDD telephone survey will provide information concerning alcohol use, consequences, and drinking environments.

2. Will the telephone survey provide a sample for each SIG county project that can be generalized to the entire county?

No. The telephone survey is intended to measure changes only at the regional level: North, Central/Inland, and South. The results will be representative of the combined SIG counties in each region as compared to non-SIG counties in the same region.

However, the survey will not have the power to measure changes within specific counties. While it would be preferable to have samples that are representative of each county independently, the number of surveys required would be cost prohibitive.

SDSU sees the regional comparisons as the next best solution.

3. If a county project focuses on 18 to 20 year olds, how relevant will the RDD results for 18 to 25 year olds be to the project?

The survey results for counties focused on subpopulations within the 18 to 25 year olds may not be sensitive to changes due to the inclusion of non-affected populations. However, SDSU is not able to modify samples between counties. SDSU anticipates that they will be able to analyze data for these smaller populations within the regions.

If a program focuses on 18 to 20 year olds, for example, SDSU will be able to look at changes within that age group within the region but not within a county specifically.

4. If a SIG county is planning its own RDD surveys, should it continue these plans?

SDSU's intent in completing the telephone surveys is to provide consistent information across SIG counties within regions and to provide comparable information for non-SIG counties in the same regions. Initial review of local evaluations indicated that few projects intended to collect comparable information. Among those who did plan community resident surveys, the methods varied across sites from focus groups to RDD surveys. Based on this review, SDSU believes that comparison of these data across sites would be impossible. Further, none of the local surveys included non-SIG county comparisons. For these reasons, SDSU felt it was important to develop uniform RDD survey information that would uniformly measure, with some scientific integrity, changes in behavior across California SIG county projects.

It should be emphasized that SDSU's analysis will focus on the statewide system and geographic regions as outlined in the plan. That is, SDSU will not analyze changes at the county level. While data will be made available to counties, SDSU emphasizes that the data will not be representative of 18-25 year olds in each SIG county. If counties believe that community surveys will provide more useful data for their projects, they should continue with plans to conduct local surveys.

5. When will the RDD survey occur?

At this time SDSU is preparing to submit the survey to their Institutional Review Board for human subjects review. SDSU is also awaiting final approval from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention on the statewide evaluation plan. SDSU anticipates completing these steps by early February, 2006. Following approval, SDSU will finalize the instruments, develop the samples, and train the interviewers. They anticipate going into the field with the surveys in April, 2006.

6. Will counties receive local data from the survey?

Yes. SDSU will provide local evaluators with both aggregate tables for regions and will provide SPSS files of local data upon request. It should be remembered that statewide RDD data is not representative at the local level and should not be viewed as sensitive to changes at the county level.

7. Can counties add local data items to the survey?

No. Adding local questions to the RDD survey may give the erroneous impression that the data gathered is valid for local SIG evaluation. The RDD survey is for statewide SIG evaluation only.

8. How did SDSU determine the regional groups and comparison counties?

The regional groupings were developed based on geographic similarities. SDSU created three general geographic regions: North, Central/Inland, and South. While each county has unique characteristics, SDSU felt this grouping best represented the general geographic areas of the state. The comparison counties were selected from nearby counties. SDSU understands that this does not take into account the uniqueness of each location, but surveying these county groups will provide scientifically defensible statewide outcomes data.

9. When will the regional survey data be available?

SDSU currently anticipates completing the first survey round by June, 2006. They plan approximately two months for cleanup and preliminary analysis. Upon completion of preliminary analysis they will make the data available to each county.

C. The Coalition Surveys

1. Counties are currently surveying their coalitions; won't an additional set of surveys overburden the coalition members?

Yes. If coalition members are being surveyed by local evaluators and the statewide evaluators, this would seem repetitive. SDSU is interested in collecting uniform information across sites. They would like to work with any county that has been surveying its coalition to either assure that questions SDSU is asking are included in county coalition surveys or that items of interest to counties are included in the SDSU coalition survey. SDSU will work together with counties to avoid duplication, while assuring that the needed information is gathered.

2. Can the SDSU coalition survey be modified?

Yes. The SDSU survey is based on the survey developed by Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA), with additional items from other studies of coalitions. For the most part the items are based on SDSU's best assessment of critical issues in understanding coalitions and what makes them successful. It is also intended to provide information to differentiate types of coalitions. SDSU would be happy to provide counties with a copy of the current instrument for review. If counties have specific items or scales they believe are useful, SDSU would be glad to consider modifications. **Any changes for the initial coalition surveys would have to be received by March 17, 2006.**

3. Who is SDSU trying to reach?

Each SIG county has some type of community partnership/coalition/collaborative group involved in its project. The organizing structure and role of these groups varies by project. Some projects have a large coalition that meets infrequently, with an executive committee that is more active. Others have a subcommittee structure dealing with various issues. Others have a single group that serves both executive and subcommittee functions. SDSU's goal is to be as inclusive as possible in defining each county group. At the same time SDSU does not want to include individuals with little or no ongoing involvement with the SIG project. With this in mind, SDSU will contact each project director to determine the best definition of membership in each case and the names and contact information for these individuals.

4. Identification of information such as organizational affiliation, job titles, and demographic characteristics may identify respondents. How can SDSU assure confidentiality?

It is true, especially in smaller counties, that characteristics such as organizational affiliation may identify respondents. This information is necessary in order to assess the extent to which key community sectors are, or are not, involved. Also, these characteristics indicate the level of diversity within the project. SDSU will make every attempt to assure that this information is not presented in a way that would identify individuals in relation to responses. Information concerning organizational affiliation and job titles will be presented as part of the description of each county's coalition characteristics. Organizational affiliation will be described in general terms not related to any specific organization. Thus, affiliation to a private non-profit social services agency rather than a specific agency would be presented. SDSU will not assess the responses at the individual level related to their feelings about the coalitions or its organization.

5. What about language? The terms in the SDSU coalition survey are not necessarily consistent with the terms that counties use.

SDSU is still in the process of modifying the coalition survey language. In most cases SDSU will want to make the survey language as generic as possible. They will provide a definition page or hot links within the survey to definitions of terms. Counties that wish to provide terms for definition or suggest definitions should submit them to Kerrilyn Scott-Nakai, Community Prevention Institute (CPI). SDSU and CPI will work together to create uniform definitions for terms used in the SIG statewide evaluation.

6. What about coalition members who do not have Internet access or who do not want to complete an online survey?

SDSU will strongly encourage participants to complete the survey online. For those who are uncomfortable with this procedure, SDSU will mail a paper copy to the participant, or offer telephone surveys, if necessary.