Introduction

CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) is a unique source of support for HIV, STD, and pregnancy prevention efforts in the nation's schools. DASH provides funding and technical assistance that enables state and local education agencies to deliver HIV and STD prevention programs that are scientifically sound and grounded in the latest research on effectiveness.

DASH also plays a key role in working with state and local education and health agencies, national organizations, parents and teens to ensure that health and education activities support adolescent health, development, and learning. In particular, DASH focuses on ways to create safe and supportive environments so that all young people have the opportunity to learn and be healthy.

For DASH funded partners, program planning includes developing five-year program goals (a broad statement of program purpose that describes the expected long-term effects of a program), strategies (the means or broad approach by which a program will achieve its goals), and annual workplan objectives (statements that describe program results to be achieved and how they will be achieved). Objectives are more immediate than goals; objectives represent annual mileposts that your program needs to achieve in order to accomplish its goals by the end of the five-year funding period. Each year, your workplan objectives should be based on the strategies you have selected to reach your program goals. Because strategies are implemented through objectives and program activities, multiple objectives are generally needed to address a single strategy. Objectives are the basis for monitoring implementation of your strategies and progress toward achieving your program goals. Objectives also help set targets for accountability and are a source for program evaluation questions..

The Smart Objectives can be applied to any Programs having defined goals.

Smart Objectives

Writing SMART Objectives

To use an objective to monitor your progress, you need to write it as a SMART objective. A SMART objective is:

1. Specific:

☐ Objectives should provide the "who" & "what" of program activities.

☐ Use only one action verb since Objectives with more than one verb imply that more than one activity or behavior is being measured.

☐ Avoid verbs having vague meanings to describe intended outcomes (e.g. "understand" or "know") since it may prove difficult to measure them. Instead, use verbs that document action (e.g., "At the end of the session, the students will list three concerns...")

☐ The greater the specificity, the greater the measurability.

2. Measurable:

☐ The focus is on "how much" change is expected. Objectives should quantify the amount of change expected. It is impossible to determine whether objectives have been met unless they can be measured.

☐ The objective provides a reference point from which a change in the target population can clearly be measured.

3. Achievable:

☐ Objectives should be attainable within a given time frame and available resources.

4. Realistic:

☐ Objectives are most useful when they accurately address the scope of the problem and programmatic steps that can be implemented within a specific time frame.

☐ Objectives not directly relate to the program goal will not help toward achieving the goal.

5. Time-phased:

☐ Objectives should provide a time frame when the objective will be measured or a time by which the objective will be met.

☐ Including a time frame in the objectives helps in planning and evaluating the program.