


How to Conduct a Community Assessment on Rx Abuse

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Tips on How to Conduct a Community Assessment on Rx Abuse Issues

A community assessment is a vital tool that coalitions use to understand and articulate the substance abuse problems, risk factors and local conditions in their communities. By completing a community assessment, prevention and intervention strategies directly correlate with the problem and desired outcomes. Typically, specific root conditions bubble up to the top, enabling coalitions to

1. Prioritize what needs to be tackled first.
2. Discover local patterns that lead to local solutions.
3. More effectively develop and implement logic models that yield desired outcomes.
4. Craft reasonable and logical evaluation criteria, ensuring that results will be measurable.

Community assessments are designed to help coalitions learn as much as they can about a problem before they craft community-specific interventions. They're more than just about collecting data. The assessment must describe a community's environments in which drug use does and does not occur. To achieve that goal, a community assessment is comprised of five elements—the community description; community history; needs assessment; resource assessment; and problem statement.

For the purposes of this toolkit, we will focus on the needs assessment portion of the assessment which analyzes community-level risk factors and local conditions related to Rx medicine abuse.

Chances are good that many coalition partner organizations already have access to the data that will inform your needs assessment. When you're collecting additional data, the goal is to find specific information that can help you tell a complete story about the Rx abuse challenges in your community. Review this list of potential data measures your coalition could explore.

Rx Abuse Local Data Measures	
WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age of initial use• Males/females
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drugs of abuse• Current abuse rates

WHEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Times of year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ pre- or post-exams ◦ Spring or summer break • Time of day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ After school ◦ At night ◦ On weekends
WHERE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home • Parks • School parking lots • Dorm rooms • Parties
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors and clinics • Friends and family members • Online drug stores
COMMUNITY NORMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of harm • Beliefs about medicine use (e.g., "pill for every ill")
CRIMINAL JUSTICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rx abuse-related arrests • Incident reports resulting from police calls for service
HARM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rx abuse-related <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hospital/ER visits ◦ Deaths ◦ Traffic fatalities ◦ Referral to treatment ◦ Treatment data

Your local data measures should include qualitative data and quantitative data. *Quantitative* data gives you the numbers and *qualitative* data tells you the story behind them. These data collection methods work together to form a more complete picture of your community.

Sample Intervention Map #2

Problem: Teens are abusing Rx and OTC medicines in our community.

Root Cause: Availability

Local Condition: Doctors are overprescribing medications in our community. Over the past year, ER data indicate a 30 percent rise in the incidence of prescription abuse-related problems involving teens and young adults. When asked, a significant portion of patients indicate that they have obtained their medications from doctors who have given them far more medicine than was needed to treat a particular problem.

Potential target audiences: Health care professionals, hospital administrators, parents, pharmacists, medical and pharmacy schools and emergency walk-in medical facilities.

Category	Strategy
Provide Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place articles and opinion editorials into community bulletins, local newspapers and other publications (paper and virtual). • Provide information to parents about the problem of overprescribing and potential results. • Engage health care professionals in discussions about overprescribing and help clarify their role in preventing the potential results of this practice.
Enhance Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct training with local medical and pharmacy schools and medical associations. Collaborate with them on crafting viable solutions—including proper prescribing and medicine disposal strategies. • Supply training to parents and adult caregivers on how to talk to teens about proper medicine use, and the dangers of taking medications that are not prescribed to you.
Provide Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a trusted and reliable Rx abuse prevention and treatment referral resource for health care professionals in your community. • Supply patient-related materials that can be branded by doctors' offices, hospitals and clinics that stress the importance of taking medications as prescribed and properly discarding medications after they are no longer needed.

<p>Enhance Access / Reduce Barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider hosting a dialogue that addresses the intersection between western and alternative medicine, helping to provide patients with a wider variety of treatment options. • Collaborate with law enforcement personnel and health care professionals on creating community-specific drug disposal programs.
<p>Change Consequences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with local government officials to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Officially recognize health care partners that follow prescribing practices that prevent Rx abuse. ◦ Promote the use of disincentives (prescriber losing his/her license) for doctors and other health care professionals who carry out improper prescribing practices. • Incentivize families for properly disposing unused medications (offer free medicine lock boxes, gift cards, movie tickets).
<p>Change Physical Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with local businesses and health care partners to supply medicine lock boxes to patients. • Provide co-branded materials to your health care partners about the importance of proper medicine use, storage and disposal.

Modify/Change Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the passage and utilization of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Prescription monitoring programs (PMP) and model state drug laws.◦ Drug take-back and disposal legislation.◦ Statutes that support increased penalties against doctors who practice unscrupulous prescribing practices.◦ Laws that increase prosecution of those involved in doctor shopping. At the same time, encourage practices that increase treatment availability for Rx abuse and addiction.◦ Laws and practices that reward health care providers for being willing and eager partners in preventing Rx abuse.• Encourage your health care partners to collaborate with neighboring pharmacies, doctors' offices and hospitals outside of your community.• Promote the use of screening and brief intervention and referral to treatment (SBIRT) for teens and also support increased access to treatment that targets this population.• Help ensure that Rx abuse prevention becomes an integral part of the curriculum that trains doctors, pharmacists, law enforcement officers and emergency responders.
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A Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) Initiative