

# SDFS Best Practices, 2003-2005

## INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the *Principles of Effectiveness* local school divisions are required to:

- Base their program activities on “an assessment of objective data regarding incidence of violence and illegal drug use in elementary schools and secondary schools and communities to be served...” [NCLB Sec. 4115 (a)(1)(A)]
- “Undergo a periodic evaluation to assess its progress toward reducing violence and illegal drug use in schools to be served based on [local] performance measures [for drug and violence prevention programs and activities] as described in Section 4114(d)(2)(B).” [NCLB Sec. 4115 (a)(2)(A)]
- Make results from periodic evaluation available to the public upon request. [NCLB Sec. 4114(d)(2)].

Needs Assessments whether at the school level or district level provide invaluable information not only for SDFS coordinators, but also for any prevention group working with youth issues. Program Evaluations accomplish the overall purpose of examining and assessing how prevention programming efforts affect student performance. More specifically, these two types of evaluative reports serve a number of functions such as to demonstrate accountability, provide a basis of information for policy development and other decision-making needs, and/or to serve as information for advocacy.

Since 2003 district Safe and Drug-Free Schools have made great strides in incorporating evaluative activities as part of their general project requirements. It is our intention to provide prevention practitioners across the state with the exemplary examples of District SDFS Evaluation Reports and Needs Assessment Reports. The majority of the 100 district SDFS reports submitted since the 2003-04 school year have been of significant quality, thus, making selection for this list a difficult task. Even though many of the reports reviewed provide valuable information for district programming decisions, our selection process concentrated on strength of evaluation design, creativity in the evaluation questions addressed, and overall readability of the report. On a more technical level, evaluation reports selected were judged on the following criteria:

### 1. *Focus of the evaluation:*

- demonstrates a clear and specific focus of the evaluation conducted
- states well defined evaluation questions

### 2. *Context of the evaluation:*

- provides the context within which the program and the program evaluation has taken place

- provides a summary overview of the program being evaluated
- provides a summary description of program participant population

### **3 *Evaluation design plan:***

- provides methodological and technical information needed to establish the adequacy and credibility of the evaluation
- provides an evaluation design that holds up to the standards of (a) clearly described procedures, (b) defensible information sources, and (c) data collection instruments that are valid and reliable and relevant to the study questions and population

### **4. *Data analysis and findings:***

- presents well organized and sufficient program documentation
- presents systematic analysis of data collected
- when reporting quantitative data, uses statistics that are easy to understand, such as means and percentages; when using more complex statistics, provides it in language that most audiences will understand what is being presented
- presents graphs and charts of the most important data within the body of the report
- synthesizes analysis of information by linking findings, and identifying implications
- provides sufficient data to answer evaluation questions

### **5. *Conclusions and recommendations:***

- identifies limitations of the evaluation
- focuses on major evaluation findings and their implications
- relates interpretation of findings to goals and objectives of programming activity
- links issues of program implementation with program outcomes
- demonstrates justified conclusions
- provides recommendations

### **6. *Overall report:***

- demonstrates impartial reporting
- presents a report format that is well organized, making it easy to read
- written in a manner that addresses a variety of identified stakeholders
- reports submitted in electronic format