

## Steps to Becoming a SAFE Certified Community

Coalitions will be asked to go through a five-step process in order to be SAFE certified. The SAFE certification application can assist coalitions in completing this process. These steps are listed in detail below:

- **Organization** - A SAFE coalition can be a new or existing coalition. However, it is recommended that the SAFE coalition include members from many different segments of the community.
- **Assessment** - In order to determine the best course of action, the SAFE coalition is asked to prepare a community assessment using local data. The local substance abuse prevention agency can help provide data to the coalition. This data should be closely examined to help focus the coalition on issues prevalent within the community.
- **Capacity Building, Planning, and SAFE Certification** - Capacity building involves mobilizing human, organizational, and financial resources to meet project goals. Training and education to promote readiness are also critical aspects of building capacity. Planning involves the creation of a comprehensive plan for the coalition with goals, objectives, and strategies aimed at meeting the prevention needs of the community. During this phase, coalitions create logic models and select evidence-based programs and policies. They also determine costs and resources needed for effective implementation. After these first three steps have been completed, coalitions can then apply for SAFE certification. This process will help coalitions prepare for the last two steps.
- **Implementation** - The implementation phase is focused on carrying out the various components of the prevention plan, as well as identifying and overcoming any potential barriers. Within this phase, coalitions develop specific timelines for implementation of evidence-based programs and policies and structure ongoing program evaluation needs.
- **Evaluation** - Evaluation helps coalitions recognize what they have done well and what areas need improvement. The process of evaluation involves coalitions measuring the impact of programs and practices to understand effectiveness and any need for change.

## Benefits of SAFE Certification

Substance abuse, crime, violence and their related problems cost an estimated \$1,000 each year for every Iowan. A key to preventing these costly health and financial problems is community involvement. A community with a comprehensive, collaborative, and long-range prevention plan is a SAFE community. So, why should a coalition choose to become SAFE certified?

### SAFE certification can:

- Focus the work of the coalition
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in a coalition's efforts to reduce substance abuse, crime and violence
- Address the issues most prevalent in the community
- Pool resources to build strengths in the community
- Connect the coalition to numerous state agencies, funding information, legislative updates, and links to other coalitions

### Coalitions that become SAFE certified are eligible for:

- A framed SAFE certificate personalized to the coalition or community and signed by the Governor of Iowa
- A scholarship for the coalition coordinator or chair to attend a statewide substance abuse conference (during the year of certification as funding permits)
- A monthly newsletter that provides information regarding other SAFE coalitions, funding availability, and resources

Source: Iowa Department of Public Health

[http://www.idph.state.ia.us/bh/sa\\_safe\\_network.asp#certified](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/bh/sa_safe_network.asp#certified)

