

West Virginia Partnership to Promote Community Well-being

External Evaluation Research Team Progress Report

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As noted in our October, 2009 progress report, during this last year of the SPF SIG project, our team is engaged primarily in analysis, interpretation, and writing based on our research/data from the entire six-year period. That said, we are continuing to generate a small amount of state and community-level data, primarily in areas where we have less than full understanding of the project. The remainder of this document reports on our progress in data collection and analysis as well as in dissemination of findings.

Data Collection and Analysis

As was true last quarter, the main source of new data this quarter is focus group interviews with SPF SIG-funded local community coalition members. We had anticipated having the focus groups completed earlier this quarter, but have had difficulty scheduling the meetings. We believe these county coalition data are important to our understanding of the project and will continue to try to schedule the focus groups. **If your county is contacted for this purpose, we strongly urge you to assist in gathering a group of coalition members to meet with us.**

In addition to local coalition focus groups, we are continuing to conduct a few observations and interviews as needed to fill perceived gaps in our data. For example, we are trying to keep abreast of new activities, events, and understandings occurring in this last year of the project.

Dissemination of Findings (Presenting and Writing)

- We are pleased to report that our manuscript, formerly titled *Eyes on the Process*, has been accepted for publication in a well-respected, peer-reviewed, national journal. The revised manuscript, now titled *The Power of Process: A Story of Collaboration and Community Change*, will be published in the *Journal of Community Development*. The abstract of the article, which should appear in print this spring, reads:

Based on a year-long ethnographic study, this narrative chronicles the planning year of the West Virginia Partnership to Promote Community Well-being—a collaborative effort to develop a comprehensive statewide substance abuse prevention system. The study provides evidence that the WV Partnership's focus on people- and relationship-oriented *processes*, rather than only *outcomes*, was key to its success in obtaining a State Incentive Grant and laid a foundation for

creating a comprehensive statewide prevention system. The essay explores the sustainability and replicability of the WV Partnership in relation to the high human and organizational costs of the ambitious, collaborative endeavor. Using a critical theory framework, the project is discussed as a site of social transformation in the context of economic and social circumstances in central Appalachia at the turn of the twenty-first century. Transformative elements include: (1) countering within-state community imbalances between levels of need and availability of resources; (2) featuring inclusive, community-based, capacity-building approaches to social reform; and (3) challenging recent trends to legislate narrow, quantitative definitions of social science.

As soon as it is in print, we will circulate copies of the full journal article to WV Partnership participants.

- In November we facilitated a workshop at West Virginia's 17th annual Share the Vision conference. We drafted the following brief overview of the workshop, entitled "Using Qualitative Research to Evaluate Community Change," for our initial presentation proposal:

This interactive, participant-centered session will provide community practitioners within the state prevention system with a basic overview of qualitative evaluation research and its value to them in their local programming efforts. Initially participants will become familiar with qualitative research methodologies and findings generated over the last four years related to the state level prevention system. Then they will be given the opportunity to move onto a county-level focus in which they will begin to apply those same methodologies to their own community-level work. This dynamic session will include the opportunity for a high degree of participant interaction and will include a discussion of the presenters' emerging model for community change gleaned from four years worth of prevention-related evaluation research.

The presentation seemed to be well-received by an active and engaged group of participants including folks from SPF SIG-funded counties as well as people with a general interest in the topic. Several participants expressed an interest in more extensive qualitative research information and training at a later time.

- We continue to make progress on our next formal writing about the project. Featuring our data-based model, "Getting (it) Together: Collaborative Community Change," the essay will be based on a meta-analysis of data from our longitudinal study over the life of the project. As in the case of the article about the state planning year, we will draft the essay in journal article format in hopes of broad dissemination of findings in a national, peer-reviewed journal.