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ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

As mandated by the Principles of Effectiveness as found in Title IV, 21st Century Schools, Part A – Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities, SEC.4115, of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, local education agencies must periodically evaluate the accomplishments of their funded prevention programs in order to demonstrate a substantial likelihood of success.

Program evaluation is a critical step to ensuring that the programs we offer youth are effective in reducing drug use and violence. Further, program evaluation activities are a mechanism providing local education agencies with feedback on progress of program delivery and outcome objectives. Information gathered from a quality evaluation allows districts to make relevant and meaningful improvements to their programs in particular and to their prevention policies more broadly.

This handbook has been provided for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Project (SDFS) Coordinators in order to clarify the scope of the Florida SDFS evaluation effort. Regulatory procedures already require districts to implement programs supported by scientifically based research; what is unknown is whether these implemented programs do produce a substantial likelihood of success within district-specific situations. SDFS Coordinators must focus their evaluation efforts on the way in which a program(s) has been implemented within their school district, given the student population targeted, the resources available, and other circumstances or conditions specific to that district. Of primary importance is the need to know if a particular program is producing positive results for that district.

This handbook is designed to:

Offer SDFS Coordinators who are using outside evaluator services with a means to both understand what the evaluator is doing, and to stay involved in the evaluation process.

Offer SDFS Coordinators who are conducting in-house evaluations a step-by-step instructional guide for planning and executing a program evaluation.

How to use this handbook:

This handbook is not meant to be read from beginning to end all at one time like a novel. Use it primarily as a reference to aid and improve your understanding of the various activities of program evaluation.

This handbook begins with a short presentation of some elementary program evaluation concepts. The sections that follow are divided into evaluation phases; each outlining the basic tasks involved in the evaluation process from initial design plans to report writing. Additional resources are listed for more advanced instruction in specific areas if necessary.

NOTE

In order to illustrate certain points, the fictitious district, Oceanside, and its implementation of the Life Skills Training Program (LST) will be used throughout this handbook.

> Life Skills Training (LST) focuses on (1) developing personal and social skills to improve student's general competence and reduce the motivation to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and (2) improving students' ability to apply these skills to situations in which they may experience social pressure to use drugs.
>
> The LifeSkills program consists of three major components that cover the critical domains found to promote drug use.
>
> - Drug Resistance Skills
> - Personal Self-Management Skills
> - General Social Skills