

Background and Purpose

Communities with higher levels of readiness are more likely to effectively plan, implement, and sustain programs. Health disparities can magnify the variations between communities in their levels of readiness (Brackley et al., 2003; Kostadinov et al., 2015).

- Knowledge of local readiness levels is key to building prevention capacity and promoting health equity (Kostadinov et al., 2015).
- A number of measures have been developed to assess community readiness; however, there is a lack of clarity regarding the relative importance of each readiness dimension. So, when evaluating community-based substance use prevention programs, choosing a measure can often be a confusing and frustrating experience.
- Furthermore, administering these measures can be time and resource intensive, and data needs to be collected prospectively. The identification of publicly available proxy variables for readiness will not only be more resource efficient, it will also help dissemination and evaluation efforts in which readiness data has not been collected prospectively.

The objectives of this study are twofold: 1) to identify common dimensions of readiness across measures, and 2) to identify publicly available proxy variables for measuring community readiness for prevention.

Methods

Operationalization of Readiness

- Community readiness: willingness to foster a prevention coalition and address its prevention-related needs.

Analytic Procedure

- Step 1. We conducted an extensive literature review to integrate the literature on readiness measures for prevention programs. We used qualitative thematic analysis of these measures to identify common dimensions of readiness.
- Step 2. We conducted a systematic, three-round Delphi study to garner expert consensus on publicly available variables that could be considered as proxy for readiness. Ten prevention researchers and practitioners across five states comprised the expert panel.

Delphi Study Procedure

Round 1 (Interview)

Experts answered open-ended questions about publicly available variables that could be considered as proxies for readiness.

We developed Round 2 survey based on all unique proxy variables identified by experts in Round 1.

Round 2 (Survey)

Experts rated their level of agreement with each variable being a proxy for readiness using a seven-point Likert scale.

Round 3 survey consisted of only those variables that did not garner expert consensus in Round 2.

Round 3 (Survey)

Question structure and response options were similar to that of Round 2, along with individualized feedback from Round 2.

Results

- Literature review resulted in the identification of 7 measures of community readiness for prevention programs.
 1. Community Key Leader Survey (Goodman & Wandersman, n.d.)
 2. Community Prevention Readiness Self-Assessment Tool (Prevention Institute at the Center of Well-Being, n.d.)
 3. Community Prevention Readiness Index (Community Partner Institute, n.d.)
 4. Community Readiness Tool (Oetting et al., 2014)
 5. Community Self-Organizational Community Readiness Scale (Chilenski et al., 2007)
 6. Minnesota Institute of Public Health Community Readiness Survey (Beebe et al., 2001)
 7. SPF-SIG Community Readiness Survey (Indiana SEOW version) (Wright & Green, n.d.)
- Thematic analysis resulted in the identification of 7 common dimensions of readiness.
- Delphi study resulted in the identification of 17 proxy variables for readiness; 7 of 17 publicly available variables can be mapped onto common dimensions of readiness.

Common Readiness Dimensions (Step 1)	Proxy Variables for Readiness in Publicly Available Secondary Dataset (Step 2)	Data Source (Step 2)
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children eligible for free/reduced price lunch • Density of non-profits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local school district data • Internal Revenue Service
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index of collaboration in community • Index of collaboration between school and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to self code • Need to self code
Efforts Towards Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth rewarded for engaging in prosocial behaviors in community • Services in school for students with alcohol tobacco, and other drug problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA Healthy Youth Survey
Attitudes Towards Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable parental attitudes towards drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA Healthy Youth Survey
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No publicly available proxy variable identified in Delphi study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable
Knowledge of Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No publicly available proxy variable identified in Delphi study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable
Knowledge of Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No publicly available proxy variable identified in Delphi study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable

Conclusions

Readiness is a multidimensional construct and different measures place emphasis on different dimensions. Some dimensions of readiness can be assessed using publicly available secondary datasets. The list of proxy readiness variables is especially useful in large scale evaluations or in circumstances where limited resources prohibit the collection of readiness data.

- However, critical readiness dimensions such as leadership, knowledge of issues, and knowledge of prevention efforts do not have publicly available proxy variables; thus, data has to be collected prospectively.
- All 7 readiness dimensions are not included in any one measure. So, evaluators interested in assessing these common dimensions may need to combine questions and sub-scales from different measures.