Using "The CDC Guide" to Strengthen Partnerships and Inform Evaluation for the Maryland Asthma Control Program

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Background

Partnerships are a key component of a state asthma program’s infrastructure. They aid in the effective, efficient, and sustainable delivery of asthma services. To guide state asthma programs in conducting infrastructure evaluations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) National Asthma Control Program (NACP) developed the award-winning Learning and Growing through Evaluation: State Asthma Program Evaluation Guide (The “Guide”). The Guide offers a state asthma program a programmatically-sound, data-driven approach to evaluation that can be implemented in multiple contexts. This poster provides an overview of the partnership modules and describes how the guidance has been applied by the Maryland Asthma Control Program (MACP) to evaluate and improve program infrastructure.

Methods

The MACP funded by the NACP addresses asthma burden through partnerships, surveillance, and interventions. To strengthen its infrastructure, the MACP completed a partnership evaluation between December 2011 and November 2012. Strong partnerships are fundamental to the MACP’s long-term success because they give the program the ability to leverage resources and coordinate interventions with multiple partners. The MACP utilized the Guide to develop a detailed plan that included stakeholder input, a logic model, evaluation questions, and a dissemination plan. Specifically, the evaluation focused on five areas: partnership roles and responsibilities, network functionality, partner expertise, and communication. In response to the evaluation findings and in order to address the partnership needs in each of these focus areas, an “Intranet” using the Google for Nonprofits Application Suite was set up to facilitate communication between partners outside of meetings.

Results

The following recommendations informed MACP evaluation planning in the subsequent program year:

1. Partners who are not actively engaged members of the executive council (EC) should be replaced or shifted into different roles.
2. Partner meetings must occur quarterly (at a minimum) to preserve momentum and continuity of activities.
3. The EC should make a targeted effort to recruit new partners to represent populations in rural areas of the state (specifically in Southern Maryland and the Eastern Shore).
4. The intranet developed for EC members should be expanded to include portions of the site that would be publicly accessible for external community members and intervention partners.

Comments

Partnerships can be challenging to evaluate due to unique and dynamic interpersonal relationships and variables. Although the MACP failed to achieve all of the evaluation strategies proposed, the Guide proved to be a valuable tool for MACP to effectively evaluate its partnerships in order to improve planning, implementation, and sustainability of program efforts.

Reference


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Table 1. Partnership Evaluation: Plan, Indicators, and Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>EC Member Roles and Responsibilities</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Area 1</td>
<td>EC member attended at least 75% of meetings</td>
<td>80% of EC members submitted signed agreements</td>
<td>75% of EC members attended meetings</td>
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<td>Focus Area 2</td>
<td>EC members received 100% of monthly reports</td>
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<td>Focus Area 3</td>
<td>EC members identified at least one year of data on outcomes</td>
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<td>Focus Area 4</td>
<td>EC members submitted at least one annual report</td>
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Figure 1. Learning and Growing Guidelines for Partnership Evaluation: Six-Step Evaluation Process

1. Engage Stakeholders/ Identify Primary Users
2. Describe the Partnership/ Construct the Logic Model
3. Focus the Evaluation/ Develop a Design Plan
4. Gather Credible Evidence/ Select Methods, Measures, Indicators
5. Analyze Data/ Justify Conclusions
6. Ensure Use of Findings/ Learn

Figure 2. Partnership Evaluation Logic Model

Inputs Activities Outputs

- Staff/partnerships, program management, evaluation team
- Stakeholders (EC & Coalitions, public with asthma, hospitals, schools, community leaders)
- External expertise (State & National Asthma Council, state, CDC, MDH, etc.)
- Technology

- Engaging EC member in roles and responsibilities
- Promoting meeting attendance
- Executing new members to staff in regions on EC & MAC
- Selecting and/or creating mechanisms to enhance communication between meetings

- Overview/ court relationship
- MAC meeting attendance logs, meeting minutes, schedule of work group deliverables
- EC and MAC member and workgroup leaders
- Communication forum

Outcomes

- Short- Term
  - Consistent expectations between program and partners
  - Consistent meeting attendance/ informal networking/ interaction
- Long-Term
  - Mechanism established to promote effective communication between meetings
  - EC members submitted signed agreements

Focus Area 1: EC Member Roles and Responsibilities

- What steps are being taken to ensure that EC member roles and responsibilities are clearly defined?
- What percentage of EC members accepted their roles and responsibilities?
- What are the specific expectations of EC members engaged and effective?

Focus Area 2: Coalition Networking Functionality

- Has the workgroup attended at least 75% of meetings?
- What deliverables have resulted from interactions during workgroup meetings and activities that enabled the coalition to achieve its goals?
- Have there been new collaborations developed as a result of networking during workgroup meetings?

Focus Area 3: Partner Expertise in Areas Relevant to the Program’s Strategic Plan

- What are the specific expertise needs of the MAC and EC?
- What are the ways that EC members have been successfully engaged in utilizing the new method of communication?

Focus Area 4: Communication between Meetings

- How have the methods of communication utilized over one year period?
- What methods of communication were most effective?
- How were messages communicated in a functional and user-friendly format?
- How were EC members successful in utilizing the new method of communication?