



Swinomish Tribal Community Executive Summary of the Community-Level Progress Evaluation Reports

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Executive Summary

The Swinomish Tribal Community is one of eighteen recipients of the Washington State Incentive Grant (SIG). SIG funds are allocated to communities to prevent the use, misuse and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drugs by Washington State youth. Community grantees are expected to make their local prevention system more effective by establishing prevention partnerships, using a risk and protective factor framework for data driven needs assessments, and by implementing and monitoring science-based prevention programs.

Project Site

Swinomish, a small tribe of 750 members in Skagit County, has seen an increased use of drugs and alcohol among its members. The Swinomish Reservation is located on Fidalgo Island across the Swinomish Channel from the town of LaConner. Alcohol use among members has been a problem for many generations and has now been compounded by the use of other drugs. Many tribal members believe that this is due in part to the loss of traditions and tribal ways. The community is trying to address these problems through cultural renewal, and have used their SIG project as part of that renewal.

Prevention History

Prior to SIG, the tribe provided prevention programs with little funding. These efforts were activity-based and conducted by caring, concerned tribal members. In 1998, Swinomish received a grant from Washington State's Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse to conduct a prevention program for youth. This program is also activity-based: youth meet weekly in a drug-and-alcohol free environment to plan and participate in activities such as dances, conferences, and cultural craft classes.

Progress toward SIG Community Level Objectives

Objective 1: *To establish partnerships...to collaborate at the local level to prevent alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use, misuse, and abuse by youth.*

Partnerships around substance abuse prevention are relatively new to the Swinomish Tribal Community. There were several previously existing committees and governance organizations that addressed cultural and health

issues. These entities meet to provide guidance to the SIG project. They include the following groups Swinomish Cultural and Environmental Protection Agency, the Swinomish Tribal Senate, and the Health Education and Social Services committee, among others.

Objective 2: *To use a risk and protective factor framework to develop a community prevention action plan...*

and...

Objective 3: *To participate in joint community risk and protective factor and resource assessment...*

The substance abuse prevention community that provides services to Swinomish youth uses the risk and preventive factor framework. The risk and protective factors addressed in the SIG project reflect community concerns, not only survey data from Skagit County, the schools, and the Tribal Court and Police. Tribal members feel that their SIG project reflects their community's unique cultural needs, not only the risk and protective factors provided in the model.

Objective 4: *To select and implement effective prevention actions...*

The programs selected do address the risk and protective factors selected as priorities by the SIG project. Programs selected were familiarity and through local development. The Sobriety Institute was familiar to Tribal members through past successful presentations. The Speaker's Forum was made up of locally known speakers. Canoe Club reintroduces a cultural practice that has been absent from Swinomish for eleven years.

Prevention program selection involved the Swinomish Tribal Senate, the community, and the LaConner School District. There was much debate over the use of a cultural approach to substance abuse prevention for the youth. Key to their approval was linking the programs to risk and protective factors, chosen based on data.

Objective 5: *To use common reporting tools...*

One of the requirements for participating in the SIG project was to participate in the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behavior. Survey data provide cross-sectional substance abuse prevalence rates and measures of risk and protective factors among 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students. The LaConner School District complied with this requirement.

SIG monitoring of program level outcomes is done through the Everest program outcome monitoring system, which provides pre- and post-tests and results over the web. Everest pre- and post-tests were administered to SIG-funded program participants. During the first year, too few pre- and post-tests results were received to allow meaningful statistical analysis. Second and third year program level results are not yet available. Program participant numbers show a great

many participants, but this does not necessarily reflect the success of the program. That success comes through the observed positive change of behavior throughout the community.

A tribal court officer made the following observation (paraphrased):

There has been fewer youth drug and alcohol cases the Swinomish Court System. The numbers are improving if ever so slowly. This is encouraging. I hope that one day I will be out of a job.

Conclusion

SIG brought to the Swinomish Community an approach to prevention that included cultural classes and activities. Prior to that, prevention programs were solely activity-based, giving young people acceptable alternatives to drugs and alcohol, but not focusing on instilling cultural values and traditions. The SIG program has involved the whole community, where in the past, substance abuse prevention programs were focused on youth only. SIG has helped to foster greater cooperation between the Swinomish Tribal Community, the town of LaConner, LaConner School District, and other area communities through participation in such community activities as Native American Day, school speakers forum, Swinomish pre-school native language program, and teacher training on Native American alcohol and other drug prevention.



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