



TOGETHER!/ROOF, Thurston County Executive Summary of the Community-Level Progress Evaluation Reports

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Executive Summary

TOGETHER!/ Rochester Organization of Families of Thurston County are 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

TOGETHER! is a community mobilization organization located in Lacey, Washington, a suburb of Olympia. Both the director, Earlyse Swift, and the board of director's were recognized for their prevention efforts when they became recipients of the 2001 Drug Free Washington Month Governor's Recognition Award.

TOGETHER!'s SIG project is in the unincorporated town of Rochester, located about thirty miles southwest of Olympia in rural Thurston County. Community members in Rochester have over a decade of activism behind them, forming the Rochester Organization of Families (ROOF) ten years ago and opening the ROOF Center in its present location six years ago. The ROOF Center is a multipurpose community center that houses a food bank, alternative high school, and space for the Kids Place elementary school students to meet after school for SIG- and other funded activities. About 40% of the Kids Place participants are of Hispanic descent, and many of these children come from families where English is a second language. Teen Zone SIG programs are provided at the middle school.

Prevention History

Rochester has a ten-year history of providing prevention services for youth through the countywide TOGETHER! organization. Rochester was one of the initial Thurston County communities to do prevention planning using the Communities that Care model. Prior to SIG, services were provided only for elementary school students; SIG allowed expansion of prevention programs to include middle school age youth. It has also provided motivation to include more science-based prevention programs and evaluation tools.

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.*

SIG enhanced ROOF's relationships with Rochester schools, especially the middle school. There are few other organizations in Rochester with which to partner. ROOF and TOGETHER!'s decades long experience with community mobilization around prevention has taught them that consistent, motivated, and informed local leadership is essential for a community to maintain its momentum and make progress toward its long term vision.

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...*

After over a decade of work in the prevention field, both TOGETHER! and ROOF staff are aware of and use the risk and protective factor model. They collaborated with all available prevention partners around both needs and resource assessments.

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

The SIG process encouraged the choice of programs shown through published research to be effective in different locales and with multiple populations. These are known as research-based programs. ROOF and the Rochester School District choose a systems perspective, rather than focusing on individual prevention programs. They view ROOF's prevention efforts as a system of helping children mature in a safe and healthy environment that teaches them to make appropriate decisions. However, they value the firsthand experience they received through SIG with research-based programs, a concept they had been exposed to at trainings but never implemented. The challenges involved in budgeting, training, unplanned expenses, and monitoring will be useful in future endeavors.

ROOF staff looked beyond prevention programs to the contexts in which they are presented by addressing language needs: a Spanish speaking assistant is available as 40% of their elementary age participants are from Spanish speaking families; Spanish language parenting classes are available at the primary school; and ESL classes are provided.

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

Common reporting tools include the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors (WSSAHB) and the Everest program monitoring outcome

system. WSSAHB data provide cross-sectional substance abuse prevalence rates and measures of risk and protective factors among 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students. Rochester School District has participated in the WSSAHB since its inception. The staff measured Kids Place and Teen Zone Tutoring programs with Everest pre- and post-tests. Other programs used evaluation instruments that were developed by program designers or alternative methods of feedback, such as teacher data, staff observations, attendance, reading scores, and class grades.

Conclusion

The prevention project at Rochester became stronger with SIG. SIG improved coordination with prevention partners, allowing ROOF to move beyond serving only elementary school children to addressing the needs of middle school youth, as well. Teachers and school administrators are now more aware of the effects of ROOF on the behavior, literacy levels, and academic achievements of students who participate in their programs.

ROOF staff became aware of what works and what doesn't work with science-based prevention practices, which they feel is important now that so many funders are requiring them. SIG taught them about having a target population. SIG changed the immediacy of evaluation. With other three-year CSAP grants, they never saw preliminary results before the end of the grant. They didn't have feedback on results along the way

Although not SIG-sponsored, part of the prevention infrastructure that ROOF has created is English as a Second Language classes, held at the primary school. Since those classes began, teachers have reported an increase in Spanish-speaking parents' participation in school conferences and meetings.

TOGETHER!'s SIG project has shown progress toward meeting its internal SIG goals and objectives, and toward achieving the community level objectives established by the Governor's Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee. During the third and last year of SIG community funding, TOGETHER! and ROOF intend to move toward institutionalizing some of the changes they achieved in the system of prevention planning, funding, implementation, and monitoring that they developed under SIG.



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