

Problem Statement Characteristics

These characteristics are designed to generate a problem statement that will provide the reader with sufficient information to understand the problem in detail. Done well the reader will know how big it is ; if it is getting worse; who suffers; where and when it occurs; how dangerous it is; and what we have tried to do in the past. It should set the frame of reference for identifying the intervening variables and moving the community plan forward.

Magnitude- How big is it? How many of the problem/behavior occurred in the last year, and what is the rate of occurrence per 1000 or 100,000 population (e.g. # of alcohol related car crashes); or what percentage of the populations suffers from the problem/behavior(e.g. % of students using drugs in lifetime)

Rate of change-Is it getting worse, getting better, or staying the same? How has the occurrence of the problem changed over time? Compare the same measures over time, and try to have *at least* three different points in time if possible, the more data points the more secure you can be that the trend is real and not random.

Persons affected-Who is impacted by the problem/behavior? Who is involved in the behavior and who else is impacted by it? Depending on the problem/behavior people other than the user may be impacted. (e.g. alcohol related car crashes, children of meth users, family members of alcohol abusers, etc.)

Spatial/ geographic-Where does the behavior/problem occur? Depending on the problem, the answer will vary, but knowing where the behavior happens is an important piece of data for identifying intervening variables and ultimately programs, policies and practices. Does the problem/behavior happen in homes, in bars, in cars, out in the country side, at school, at your neighbors, in abandoned buildings, etc?.

Temporal/Time-When does the behavior occur? Depending on the problem, the answer will vary, but knowing where the behavior happens is an important piece of data for identifying intervening variables and ultimately programs, policies, and practices. Does it happen after school, before school, afternoons, during the week, weekends only, late at night, or early in the morning, etc.?

Seriousness-How dangerous is the problem or behavior? Inhalant abuse is a relatively rare event compared to Marijuana use, but it causes very severe long term irreparable damage to the users health whereas Marijuana is clearly unhealthy for the user, the long term physical affects are not nearly so dire.

System response-How has the system responded to the problem? What programs, policies, and practices are currently in place to deal with the problem/behavior? Describe the existing system's response to the problem/behavior. This information will be useful in identifying gaps in system services and responses to the issue.