Podcast 1: Designing a Prevention Program — From Need to Meaningful Change

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Full Transcript

[00:00 – 00:13]

(Introductory theme music plays)

Singer: "Welcome to Professor Peterson's classroom, where the..."

Host:

"All right, hello everyone, welcome to uh Substance Abuse Prevention, and uh as we're working along uh for my class, what we're going to be going over is uh the three worksheets plus your final um project. So uh these podcast series along with the worksheets on the on the uh webpage will get you to that final part that we need to get get complete.

So, first of all, hello everyone, and welcome back uh we're doing a discussion on substance abuse prevention, where the idea is we develop a prevention idea. And throughout this course, we have explored psychological, social, cultural, and environmental conditions that may influence substance use and the development of substance-related difficulties. We have also examined the importance of understanding the communities in which prevention efforts occur.

Today, we're going to begin bringing the concepts together as you develop your own substance abuse pro—prevention program. But before we begin, I want to emphasize something important about these worksheets. The first three worksheets are not graded assignments for the course. They are meant for developmental activities intended to help you work through the decisions involving creating a prevention program. There are no expectations to have all the answers immediately. In fact, I anticipate that some of the decisions you make today will change as you progress through the remaining worksheets. That is a normal and important part of program development.

A prevention program is more than a collection of activities that we believe will help people. We need to explain why those activities should produce a

meaningful change, under what circumstances they might be effective, and how would we determine whether our assumptions were accurate.

So, we're going to start with the first worksheet and Question 1, which is: **Defining the contributions and early changes**.

The first question asks you to identify your population, setting, selected prevention strategy, and proposed pilot period. Think think back to the earlier work you completed identifying on identifying community needs, strengths, and available pur—resources. Who is your program intended to serve? Where will your program occur? What particular needs are you attempting to address with your prevention program?

Imagine that you are developing a prevention program for adolescents who are experiencing social pressure to engage in substance use. Your long-term goal might involve contributing to a reduce reduction in harmful substance use among adolescents with a particular community. However, simply stating the goal does not tell you tell us how your program will contribute to that outcome. What needs to change—we should ask a question: what needs to change before we might reasonably expect change in substance use?

Perhaps adolescents need greater confidence responding to peer pressure. Perhaps they need access to supportive relationships. Perhaps they need social opportunities in which declining substance use does not threaten their sense of acceptance. These represent possible early changes that could contribute to your long-term goal.

Notice that we are not assuming that providing information about substances will automatically change behavior. We are beginning to identify the psychological and environmental con—conditions through which change might occur."

[03:36 – 03:40]

(Gentle acoustic guitar interlude)

Host:

"**Question 2: Set three measurable objectives**.

Your second question asks you to develop three measurable objectives. One is a delivery objective identified by identified as two uh in the brackets, and remaining two are outcome objectives identified as 1 01 and 02.

A delivery objective describes what your program intends to provide. For example, your program might propose delivering six prevention workshops during eight-week pilot period.

An outcome objective describes a change you hope participants will experience. One out—outcome objective might concern the change in participants' confidence responding to social pressure. Another might concern change in their perceived access to supportive, substance-free social opportunities.

Notice the distinction: delivering six workshops tell us tells us the activities that occurred; it does not tell us whether the workshop benefited participants. Your objective should identify who and or what will change, the amount or direction anticipated to change, and when the change will be evaluated.

You will also need to identify your baseline, or how you would obtain that information, and explain the reason behind your proposed target. At this stage, your targets are pro—are even that excuse me—your targets are proposals rather than established findings."

[05:03 – 05:07]

(Short melodic transition)

Host:

"**Question 3: Building your logic model**.

The next section asks you to develop a one-page logic model. A logic model is a visual representation of how you believe your prevention program will contribute to begin to to change.

Begin with identified needs and ecological contexts. Then consider the resources, the input, and neces—uh necessary to deliver your program. Your activities describe what the program will do; your outputs describe what the what the program will deliver. Your mechanisms describe the process through

which those activities may influence participants. Your outcome describes changes that may occur.

For example, imagine your program includes facilitated discussion in which adolescents explore experiences of peer pressure. The discussion is an activity. The number of discussions delivered and the number of participants attending are outputs. An increased sense of relational safety might represent a psychological mechanism. Greater willingness to discuss substance-related concerns or seeking assistance might represent early outcomes. Over time, these changes might contribute to healthier decisions concerning substance use when it comes to peer pressure.

However, each connection in the model represents an assumption that then needs to be examined. Your logic model should also include alternative pathways and external influences and feedback loops, and possible harmful pathways. Preserve this initial version because you will return to it later."

[06:44 – 06:48]

(Short acoustic guitar chime)

Host:

"**Question 4: Explain how change could occur**.

This question is particularly important because it asks you to explain the arrows connecting each activities, mechanisms, and outcomes. Using concepts from the Ecological Identity Model, think about how participants experience and interpret their social environment.

Imagine that an adolescent participants in a group discussion about substance use. One participant may experience the discussion as a supportive, and recognize their older adolescents share similar concerns. The experience may increase relational safe—safety and reduce perceived social costs of discussing substance-related difficulties.

Another participant, on the other hand, may experience the same discussion differently. Perhaps they are concerned that disclosing their experience could damage their relationships, affect how others perceive them, and result in disciplinary consequences. The same activity therefore can produce different psychological responses.

Things like identity appraisal, relational signals, regulatory expectations, cross-pressure, and perceived ecological costs may all influence how someone responds to your prevention strategy. Participants may calibrate what they say, what they disclose, and how they behave according to the consequences they anticipate within the environment.

Your task is not simply to identify these concepts. Your task is to explain how relevant processes may operate within your particular program. You should also consider whether more than one pathway could lead to the same benefit. For example, greater willingness to seek assistance might develop through increased trust in a facilitator, or through greater confidence that supportive services are accessible and confidential."

[08:31 – 08:35]

(Short musical cue)

Host:

(Take 1)

"**Question 5 and Question 6: Audit two important links, examine power, access, and possible harm**.

In Question 5, select two important connections within your logic model. For each connection, identify evidence supporting your assumptions, whose experience might differ, and another possible explanation for the change you anticipate. Then consider what information you would need to determine whether that connection is operating as expected.

For example, if you believe the group discussion increased relational safety, what would you need to observe to support that explanation? Attendance alone would probably not be sufficient. You might need information about whether the participants feel respected, whether they believe they can decline to disclose personal questions, and whether they feel comfortable seeking assistance. You are beginning to transform a theoretical assumption into something that could be evaluated.

In Question 5, finally consider who defines the problem your program is attempting to address. Whose perspective influenced the design? Whose perspective might be missing?

A prevention strate—program developed entirely by adults may not reflect how adolescents understand the circumstances influence influencing their substance-related decisions. Similarly, a program that appears accessible to its developers may create transportation, financial, cultural, relational, and emotional barriers to participate.

You also being asked to identify possible harmful pathways. Imagine that a prevention activity unintentionally makes participants feel labeled as problematic or as at-risk. That experience could increase stigma, reduce stress [increase stress], and discourage future participation. What could you change about the program to reduce the possibilities? Carry these things concerns forward into the implementation and evaluation worksheets."