

Family Living Programs

Community Assessment and Evaluation: Helping local organizations develop more effective programs

Situation

Many of Wisconsin's children, youth and families are at risk for such problems as child abuse, school failure, substance abuse, domestic violence, teen pregnancy and mental health disorders. These problems disrupt family life and prevent individuals from reaching their full potential and becoming responsible workers, family members and contributing citizens. A significant number of public and non-profit agencies and organizations provide programs and services to address these concerns and are increasingly challenged to show positive outcomes as a result of their efforts. Unfortunately, these organizations often lack both the tools to assess local needs so that their efforts are appropriately targeted and the expertise to evaluate their programs so that they can be improved and shown to be effective.

Response

A growing number of UW-Extension Family Living Educators are providing technical assistance to local organizations and agencies on assessing local needs, improving program delivery and evaluating the quality of program services. As county, state and federal funding becomes tighter, the importance of providing quality services that are targeted to local needs, are efficient, and have a documented impact, is increasingly critical.

Outcomes

In counties across Wisconsin, UW-Extension Family Living Educators have been providing technical assistance to help improve services to a diverse array of local public and non-profit agencies and organizations. Some of these efforts include:

- In Langlade County, the Family Living Educator conducted an assessment of the health needs of county residents for the Langlade County Health Department. These results are being used to guide more effective health services in the county.
- In La Crosse County, the Family Living Educator assisted the United Way in developing a county-wide needs assessment process. Four areas of primary concern to La Crosse County residents were identified and are now being used to guide United Way program funding requests.
- On behalf of the Manitowoc County Hispanic Consortium, a fifty-member consortium of community leaders, the Family Living Educator assessed the needs of the Hispanic population in Manitowoc County. The results of the assessment are being used to guide policy and programs for the rapidly growing Hispanic community.
- In Oconto County, the Family Living Educator conducted a survey of school district staff in order to help the district better understand the needs of staff and develop more effective family-school partnerships and teacher in-service opportunities.

- As part of a statewide assessment process, the Portage County Family Living Educator collaborated on the assessment of needs of Hmong families in Portage County. The findings from the assessment are helping the county to develop more effective strategies to reach the traditionally underserved Hmong community

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