



Sustaining Evidence-Based Prevention Interventions and Community Coalitions

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What is left after the funding ends, staff leave, and programming decreases? Can we build coalitions that survive and even thrive after the research study? The answer is a resounding “yes!” We provide some key elements of sustainable coalition building.



Figure 1 *Community Meeting*. Wikimedia Commons. Used under [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/).

How can we soar, when the funding is no more?

Coalition capacity is the ability of organizations and key stakeholders to respond to community problems. The Tennessee Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) provided funding for substance use prevention interventions and capacity building for community coalitions. Forty-two percent of the intervention implementations were evidence-based prevention interventions (EBPIs). Five and one-half years after the end of funding, 70% of coalitions that participated in the Tennessee SPF SIGs were still intact.

Highlights

Creating community coalitions around EBPIs can require great effort.

We don't always know what it takes to sustain these coalitions after funding ends.

Coalition capacity building is an important factor in sustaining evidence-based interventions.

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Methods

Secondary survey data, evaluation surveys, telephone interviews, and web-based surveys were conducted with the individual from each coalition identified as most knowledgeable about the EBPIs.

Study Results

- 37 of the 88 interventions implemented (42%) during the SPF SIG were EBPIs
- 22 of the 29 intervention implementations studied (76%) were sustained for 5 1/2 years
- 19 of 27 coalitions that implemented EBPIs (70%) were still active 5 1/2 years after the SPF SIG ended
- Length of EBPI intervention sustainability was predicted by the following coalition capacities:
 - Increases in data resources (e.g., evaluation data and survey data from different populations within or outside of the coalition's county)
 - Increasing funding over time
 - Increasing expertise in the goals of the SPF SIG
 - Having written bylaws, membership lists, and new-member materials for the coalition (formalization)
 - Ability to pilot the intervention in small steps (trialability)



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The time and effort required to build and enhance strong community coalitions is worthwhile.

What Does This Mean For?

Research and Evaluation- We know the importance of implementing prevention programs in communities, but it is important to study what contributes to the *long-term* survival of community coalitions and the sustainability of interventions.

Practice- Increasing coalition capacities can help sustain evidence-based interventions beyond grant funding.

Policy Makers- Given that less than half of the prevention intervention implementations were evidence-based, funders should ensure that their resources are used for evidence-based interventions.

Read more: Johnson, K., Collins, D., Shamblen, S., Kenworthy, T., & Wandersman, A. (2017). Long-term sustainability of evidence-based prevention interventions and community coalitions survival: A five and one-half year follow-up study. *Prevention Science*, 18, 610-621. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0784-2>.

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