NATIONAL RECOVERY INSTITUTE

CENTER FOR BEST PRACTICES

AT

FACES & VOICES OF RECOVERY

L.E.A.R.N-Community Needs Assessment-Template

L • Leadership

E • Environment

A • Awareness

R • Readiness

N • Network

Leadership

Leadership is a critical component of recovery efforts and should be assessed to identify local leaders, their respective roles, and their potential to engage in future recovery initiatives. Leadership should be assessed before other elements as leaders are important sources of information about recovery in their communities.

Gatekeeper- A gatekeeper is someone who can provide access to certain segments of the community. They may provide access through physical means (in the way a college administrator can provide access to a university) or through social means (in the way a churchgoer can provide access to a church recovery group.

Informant- An informant is someone who cannot provide access to the community but can provide information about a group. An informant could be someone who frequents recovery events, such as a peer recovery coach, or someone who otherwise knows a lot about a recovery community, such as a drug treatment provider

Opinion Leader- An opinion leader is someone who is well-respected and influential in the community. It can be easy to confuse popularity with influence, but the two are very different. Opinion leaders are trusted and are often trend-setters in their circles.

Stakeholder- A stakeholder is someone who has an interest in your program or initiative. They can be a member of the recovery community, a service provider, or a government official, to name a few possibilities.

Sample Leadership Assessment Questions

- What is your recovery story? (Prompt Questions: What does recovery mean to you?

- How long have you been in recovery (if applicable)?

- What has been your path to recovery?)

- What do you consider your role in the recovery community? (Prompt Question: How do you support the recovery of other individuals?)

- Who do you consider to be the main leaders in the local recovery community? Why?

- What role would you like to play in the recovery community moving forward?

Environment

Environment is a key factor influencing both the nature of drug use and recovery in communities. Environment consists of several major subcomponents, including local culture, relevant policies, needs and resources.

- **Culture**- Culture is an important part of any community and most communities consist not of one culture, but many cultures. A key part of any environmental assessment is an assessment of the community cultures and how they inform attitudes and practices related to recovery.

   Policy- Different communities have employed different strategies to address local issues related to drugs and drug addiction. It is critical for anyone doing work to support recovery to understand the relevant policies and how they are implemented in practice.

   Needs- A common component of most community assessments is a determination of the most widely identified needs. Defining and prioritizing these needs is an important first step before undertaking any initiative.

   Assets- Often neglected in favor of identifying needs, assessment of community assets should be used to bolster intervention design, integrating community resources into recovery support efforts.

Sample Culture Assessment Questions

o What is your zip code?

o How old are you?

o What are some of the common misconceptions about recovery?

o   What are some of the activities you take part in as part of your recovery?

Awareness

Awareness is an often-overlooked element of recovery initiatives. This model recommends an assessment of the awareness of the nature of drug use, addiction, and recovery within communities.

- **Awareness**- In the most basic type of awareness assessment, you may just ask community members whether or not they are aware of:
    - Community issues such as drug or alcohol addiction
    - Community strategies such as peer recovery support services, or
    - Community solutions such as addiction recovery.

- **Understanding**- In addition to general awareness, you may want to explore the understanding of community members with respect to specific relevant topics, such as addiction as a brain disorder or the distinction between treatment and recovery.

- **Importance**- Beyond awareness, you may also want to know how important issues such as drug addiction are to community members. Importance should be measured through the use of Likert scales rather than dichotomous variables.

    Relevance- Finally, you may want to know how relevant certain issues, strategies, or solutions are to different groups of community members, especially potential partners and policymakers. As with importance, this should be measured through the use of Likert scales.

Sample Community Awareness Questions

- What are the basic demographics of my community (income levels, races/ethnicities, number of youth)?

- Who are the faith- and community-based organizations serving people in my community?

- What services are they providing and to whom?

- What services are local public agencies providing, and to whom? (Include law enforcement, probation, courts, schools, and workforce development.)

- What organizations are funded by foundations and government agencies to address the community issues?

- What do local residents see as the primary needs for this community?

- What are the various intervention strategies being used in my community to address the issues?

- What local volunteer groups serve the community?

- Who are the people in my community who care about the issue?

- What community organizations focus on these issues? Are they delivering service in a meaningful way?

- Are there partnering opportunities with other nonprofits or faith-based and community organizations?

- What are the gaps in service to people in the community? What would a complete system look like?

- Are community members ready for a change in the issue we are trying to address?

Readiness

Understanding- In addition to general awareness, you may want to explore the understanding of community members with respect to specific relevant topics, such as addiction as a brain disorder or the distinction between treatment and recovery.

Importance- Beyond awareness, you may also want to know how important issues such as drug addiction are to community members. Importance should be measured through the use of Likert scales rather than dichotomous variables.

Relevance- Finally, you may want to know how relevant certain issues, strategies, or solutions are to different groups of community members, especially potential partners and policymakers. As with importance, this should be measured through the use of Likert scales.

Sample Community Readiness Questions

o What do you see as the top three greatest issues or challenges facing your community?

o In your opinion, to what extent do others in the community see drug addiction as a problem?

o   What resources are available in the community to support recovery from drug addiction?

o   What is the vision for recovery from drug addiction in the community?

o   To what extent is the community committed to addressing drug addiction and supporting recovery? Is there long-term commitment?

o   What local, state, or national networks exist that could connect to the community efforts?

o   How do community members demonstrate civic engagement (e.g., voting, volunteering, attending government meetings)?

Network

Network refers to the nature of relationships within the recovery community. A network assessment looks at existing alliances within the recovery community as well as the level of interconnection between different recovery community leaders, organizations, and gatekeepers.

Sample Network Assessment Questions

Network Purpose

- Is there a current network in place?

- What are the benefits of being part of ta network?

- Do all members of the network share a common purpose for the network?

Network Performance

- Are members of the network working jointly to advance network goals?

- As a network, have the members identified strategic goals and objectives for the network?

- Are network members adding value to each other's work?

- Are there specific challenges the network is facing?

Network Operations

- Do members reflect on network experience and adjust network practice accordingly?

- Do network members have the connections they need to advance goals?