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Best Practices for Evaluation

How can I make sure my evaluation goes well?

Consider these tips to help conduct a successful program evaluation.

Plan an early presentation. Start the evaluation process with a mini-presentation for your co-workers and possibly your board of directors. This engages them in the evaluation and builds their support. It can be as simple as telling them your program's goal (from your Theory of Change) and your evaluation questions (from your Evaluation Plan).

Meet frequently with your colleagues who are involved in implementing the evaluation. This gives them time to ask questions and for you to resolve potential challenges.

Observe your colleagues as they implement the evaluation. This is especially important at the beginning to ensure that tasks, such as data collection, are being carried out as you planned.

Maintain consistency. Make sure everyone who helps with the program is collecting and entering data in a consistent manner.

Define roles among staff members. Who will enter data, who will track participants, and who will input data from the field into your tracking system?

Document everything. Keep an informal project log — paper or electronic — of successes, challenges and decisions that have been made. The log will be useful when it comes time to report on the success of your evaluation. Sometimes, you may make adaptations in either your program or your evaluation plan itself. This is fine to do — just track the changes you make. A good resource for this is the Adaptation section of the CDC's **Violence Prevention in Practice tool**.

Create a system for tracking data, such as the number of participants and the dates you provide programming. Excel spreadsheets are a helpful tool for this.

Be flexible. If any part of your evaluation is failing to give you the information you seek, consider changing course.

Ask for help. Consult with colleagues at your agency who have experience conducting evaluations.