

# COMMUNITY ACTION/COMMUNITY ORGANIZING



GETTING STUDENTS INVOLVED IN ADDRESSING  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES IN THEIR SCHOOL  
AND COMMUNITY

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unit is to actively involve students in examining substance abuse problems in their school and/or community and to identify initiatives students believe might be effective in addressing these problems.

Active learning is central to this unit. Encourage all students to get involved. The unit makes extensive use of Talking Circles. The Talking Circles provide an opportunity of students to share ideas and work collectively on projects. Use the Talking Circle Rules Poster to introduce the concept before beginning the unit.

The lessons also ask each group to select a messenger who will summarize the group's discussion and share this information with the entire class. Each group should select a messenger before beginning the unit. The messenger's responsibilities can be reassigned periodically.

## **COMMUNITY ACTION/COMMUNITY ORGANIZING UNIT OUTLINE**

**GOALS:** Students will increase their knowledge of:

1. Substance abuse problems and needs in their school or community.
2. How to plan a project to address these problems and needs.

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will be able to:

1. Develop a process for identifying school or community substance abuse problems and needs.
2. Identify important steps in a planning process.
3. Develop ideas for a school or community substance abuse project to address unmet needs.

**METHODS:** The teaching/learning methods include:

1. Brainstorming
2. Small Group Problem Solving and Consensus Building
3. Small Group Field Project
4. Classroom Discussion
5. Lecture

**OPTIONS:** Other options for using this unit:

1. Ask half of the class to focus on a school problem/project and the other half focus on a community problem/project.
2. Ask students to examine a school problem first and then examine how the same problem affects the community.

## **COMMUNITY ACTION/COMMUNITY ORGANIZING INDEX**

**LESSONS: Lessons include:**

Page

A) School Oriented Lessons:

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| 1) Identifying a School Substance Abuse Problem     | 5  |
| 2) School Needs Assessment                          | 8  |
| 3) School Needs Assessment Planning Guide           | 12 |
| 4) Collecting Data on School Substance Abuse Issues | 16 |
| 5) Planning a Substance Abuse Project               | 18 |

B) Community Oriented Lessons:

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 1) Identifying Community Substance Abuse Problem       | 21 |
| 2) Community Needs Assessment                          | 24 |
| 3) Community Needs Assessment Planning Guide           | 28 |
| 4) Collecting Data on Community Substance Abuse Issues | 32 |
| 5) Planning a Community Substance Abuse Project        | 34 |

**MATERIALS: The teaching aids and materials included in the supplemental packet are:**

Item

A) School Oriented Worksheets/Group Study Guides

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1) School Brainstorming Guide                  | CA/CO #1 |
| 2) School Planning Guide                       | CA/CO #2 |
| 3) Sample School Questionnaire/Interview Guide | CA/CO #3 |
| 4) School Project Planning Guide               | CA/CO #4 |

B) Community Oriented Worksheets/Group Study Guides

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1) Community Brainstorming Guide                   | CA/CO #5 |
| 2) Community Planning Guide                        | CA/CO #6 |
| 3) Sample Community Questionnaire/Interview Guide- | CA/CO #7 |
| 4) Community Project Planning Guide                | CA/CO #8 |

C) Lecture Notes And Transparencies:

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| 1) School Substance Abuse Needs Assessment | CA/CO/T #1 |
|--|------------|

2) Four Techniques for Gathering Information

About School Needs

CA/CO/T #2

3) Community Substance Abuse Needs Assessment

CA/CO/T #3

4) Four Techniques for Gathering Information

About School Needs

CA/CO/T #4

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:**

Page

A) Talking Circle Rules Poster

4

## **TALKING CIRCLE RULES**

- LISTEN QUIETLY WHEN SOMEONE IS TALKING
- EVERYONE'S IDEAS ARE IMPORTANT



- NO PUT DOWNS
- IT'S OKAY TO JUST LISTEN

**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Identifying A School Substance Abuse Problem

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 30 Minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop a process for identifying school substance abuse problems and needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- School Brainstorming Guide (CA/CO #1)

**PROCEDURE:**

- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to examine methods for identifying problems in their school that are related to substance abuse.
- Ask the students to form Talking Circles. Distribute one Brainstorming Guide to each student. Remind the group messenger that he/she is responsible for completing Section 2 of the Guide and Reporting to the whole class.
- Explain that each group member should make a list of at least five problems in their school that they believe are related to substance abuse. Encourage them to approach this task openly and honestly.
- When each member has completed a list he/she verbally shares it with the others. The group messenger develops a combined group list. When the combined list has been developed the group should number the problems in order of importance from the group's perspective.
- Ask the group messengers to present a summary of their group's ideas from the brainstorming guide.

**CLOSURE:** Explain that during the next class sessions the group will be asked to select one of the problems they identified and develop a plan for gathering more information about it.

## SCHOOL BRAINSTORMING GUIDE

**PURPOSE:** Identifying a school substance abuse problem.

**DIRECTIONS:** Ask each student to complete section #1 by him/herself. When all group members have completed a list, give each member an opportunity to verbally share his/her list. As group members share their lists the messenger develops a Combined group list. If more than one group member identifies the same problem, list it only once; but place an 'X' next to it for each time it was identified. When the combined list is complete, prioritize the problems by numbering them in order of importance from the groups' perspective.

Section 1. List the problems that occur at school as a result of substance abuse.

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**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** School Needs Assessment

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 30 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop a process for identifying school substance abuse problems and needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- School Substance Abuse Needs Assessment (CA/CO/T#1)
- Four Techniques for Gathering Information About Community Needs (CA/CO#2)

**PROCEDURE:**

- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to examine methods for identifying problems and needs in their school that are related to substance abuse.
- Present lecture materials on School Needs Assessment.
- Encourage the students to ask questions as you present materials.
- Review the main concepts.

**CLOSURE:** Explain that during the next class session the group will be asked to use this information to develop a needs assessment plan and present it to the rest of the class.

## **SCHOOL SUBSTANCE ABUSE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

- Conducting a School Substance Abuse Needs Assessment Involves Four Main Steps:
- Identifying and gathering information about the extent of the substance abuse problems in a school.
- Identifying what the school is currently doing to address the problems.
- Examining what the school is currently doing to determine if it is meeting the needs.
- Developing a plan to improve what the school is currently doing and/or create new services, programs, or policies. Examples of needs assessment outcomes could be: a) offering more classroom education about substance abuse; b) creating new peer support groups for students returning to school after treatment or for children of alcoholics; c) changing school policy on student smoking.

## **FOUR TECHNIQUES FOR GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL NEEDS**

**\*KEY INFORMANT:** Collecting information from knowledgeable people. In a school setting this would include students, teachers, teacher aides, counselors, administrators and parents. Using this technique, representatives from each group are surveyed, interviewed or asked to attend a meeting where a series of structured questions are discussed, and responses recorded.

### **EXAMPLES/PROCESS:**

- The Brainstorming Guide you completed on problems in your school could be used to collect information using a group of key informants. You would probably want to ask additional questions to help identify the effectiveness of what the school is presently doing.

- Decide on the information you want to gather. Develop a list of questions you need to ask. Develop a survey form with these questions on it. Select the key informants and ask them to complete the survey or use the survey to interview them.

**\*SCHOOL SURVEY:** Collecting information from a random sample of students, teachers, counselors, administrators or parents.

### **EXAMPLE/PROCESS:**

- Decide on the information you want to gather. Develop a list of questions you need to ask. Develop a survey form with these questions on it. Select the random sample and ask them to complete it.

- A random sample guarantees that each student has an equal chance of being selected to complete the survey. A simple way to achieve a random sample is to list students alphabetically, draw a random number from 1-4, and the student in this rank position on the list is chosen along with every fourth student thereafter.

\*DEMOGRAPHICS: Collecting data about the students in your school. Information could include the number of students, age and sex.

EXAMPLES/PROCESS:

- Decide on the information you want to gather. Ask the school administration to provide you with it or assist you in gathering it.

\*SCHOOL PROGRAM DATA: Collecting data on the school's existing efforts or programs to address substance abuse issues. Information could include the number of students receiving the service, the staff and resources available to these students, and whether the resources are adequate.

EXAMPLES/PROCESS:

- If the school provides substance abuse education/prevention, you might want to find out at what grade levels, how many students are receiving this service, who provides it, and are the resources adequate.

- If the school provides peer support groups, you might want to find at what grade level, how many students are receiving this service, who provides it, and are the resources adequate.

- If the school has a policy on alcohol/drug use and sports participation you might want to find out how effective it is from the perspective of students, teachers, counselors, administrators and parents. (School policies are written rules that govern school activities and behavior.)

**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** School Needs Assessment Planning Guide

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 50 minutes

When the student has completed the activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop a process for identifying school substance abuse problems and needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- School Needs Assessment Lecture Material (CA/ CO/T# 1) (CA/CO/T#2)
- School Needs Assessment Planning Guide (CA/CO#2)

**PROCEDURE:**

- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to develop a plan for conducting a needs assessment study focusing on a specific problem in our school.
- Ask students to form Talking Circles. Distribute the Needs Assessment Planning Guide. Remind the group messenger that he/she is responsible for completing the guide and reporting to the whole class.
- Ask each group to begin by selecting a substance abuse related problem they want to learn more about. They should refer back to the Brainstorming Guide they developed to select a problem. Ask students to collectively complete the Planning Guide. Allow them in-class time as necessary.

**CLOSURE:** Explain that during the next class session the group will be asked to present their needs assessment plan to the entire class.

## School Needs Assessment Planning Guide

### MAJOR STEPS:

1. Identify the substance abuse related problem you want to learn more about:

2. What do you hope to accomplish? Which questions do you want to answer?

\_\_\_ How serious is the problem?

\_\_\_ Who is affected?

\_\_\_ What is currently being done?

\_\_\_ Is it working?

\_\_\_ Are the resources adequate?

\_\_\_ What else is needed to address this problem?

\_\_\_ Other questions \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What methods do you want to use? Select one or more.

\_\_\_ Key Informant

\_\_\_ Demographics

\_\_\_ School Survey

\_\_\_ School Program Date

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Briefly describe how you plan to use the method(s).

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What questions do you want answered?	Who will you ask?	What method will you use?
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**5. Develop a needs assessment workplan:**

Identify all the tasks, timelines, and persons responsible.

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TASKS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	DATE
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1. Develop a:

\_\_\_ survey form

\_\_\_ interview guide

\_\_\_ list of questions for a group meeting of key informants.

2. Decide who to collect information from.

3. Get approvals needed to collect the information.

4. Collect the information.

5. Organize and analyze the information.

6. Decide how to use your findings.

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**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Collecting Data on School Substance Abuse Issues

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 50 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop a process to identify school substance abuse problems and needs.
- Identify important steps in a planning, process.

**RESOURCES:**

- Completed School Needs Assessment Planning Guide  
(CA/C0#2)
- Sample School Questionnaire (CA/C0#3)

**PROCEDURES:**

- Ask the messenger from each group to present a summary of the groups' ideas from the Needs Assessment Planning Guide. If the group prefers, the entire group can participate in this presentation.
- When each group has presented their information direct the students' attention to items 3 and 4.
- Explain that needs assessment often involves the use of a survey or interview to collect the data needed. Ask each group to review their list of questions and methods and develop a survey or interview guide to gather it.
- Distribute copies of the sample questionnaire.
- When each group has completed their questionnaire or interview guide, explain that the next step is to select a group of people who will complete the survey or who will be interviewed. Explain that each group must collect data from at least 20 people, using a random sample of some group or key informants.
- If interviews are to be conducted, suggest that the group practice conducting the interview with each other before they actually conduct it.

**CLOSURE:**

- Explain that during the next class session each group will be asked to analyze the data they collected and use it to develop a plan to address the problem they have collected information on.

**SAMPLE SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. All schools have problems related to substance abuse. Identify three problems in your school (related to substance abuse.)

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2. Based on your knowledge, what is the school presently doing to address substance abuse problems?

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3. Do you think what is presently being done is adequate?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Explain.

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4. What do you think is needed?

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**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Planning a School Substance Abuse Project

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 45 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVE:**

- Develop ideas for a school substance abuse project to address unmet needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- School Project Planning Guide (CA/CO #4)
- Data collected from questionnaire or interviews.

**PROCEDURE:**

- Ask students to form their Talking Circles and develop a summary of the data they collected. This will involve tabulating the results from questionnaires or summarizing comments.
- Distribute the Planning Guide and ask students to complete it. Group messengers complete the form and report to the entire class.
- Ask the entire class to evaluate each group's plan using the following questions:
  - Are the steps the group outlined in item #4 adequate? Is there anything missing?
  - Are the steps the group outlined in item #5 adequate? Is there anything missing?
  - Do you think this plan would work? Explain.

**CLOSURE:**

- Explain that this process of needs assessment can be a useful and powerful tool for bringing about change in a school. Encourage students to take this process a step further by actually trying to conduct the project or activities they described in their plan. To actually conduct a follow-through on this plan would require the group to develop a more detailed work plan; a sample format is included on page # \_\_\_\_\_.

**SCHOOL PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE**

1. Describe the problem or need you are focusing on.

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2. Describe what is already being done.

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3. What do your needs assessment findings suggest should be done?

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4. What steps would you need to take to accomplish this?

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5. Whose help and support would you need? How would you get it?

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**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Identifying a Community Substance Abuse Program

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 30 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVE:**

- Develop a process for identifying community substance abuse problems and needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- Community Brainstorming Guide (CA/CO#5)

**PROCEDURE:**

- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to examine methods for identifying problems in their community that are related to substance abuse.
- Ask the students to form Talking Circles. Distribute one Brainstorming Guide to each student. Remind the group messenger that he/she is responsible for completing Section 2 of the Guide and reporting to the whole class.
- Explain that each group member should make a list of five problems in their school that they believe are related to substance abuse. Encourage them to approach this task openly and honestly.
- When each member has completed a list, he/she verbally shares it with the others. The group messenger develops a combined group list. When the combined list has been developed, the group should number the problems in order of importance from the group's perspective.
- Ask the group messengers to present a summary of their group's ideas from their Brainstorming Guide.

**CLOSURE:**

- Explain that during the next class sessions the group will be asked to select one of the problems they identified and develop a plan for gathering more information about it.







**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Community Needs Assessment

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 30 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVE:**

- Develop a process for identifying community substance abuse problems and needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- Community Substance Abuse Needs Assessment (CA/CO/T#3)
- Four Techniques for Gathering Information About Community Needs (CA/CO#4)

**PROCEDURE:**

- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to examine methods for identifying problems and needs in their community that are related to substance abuse.
- Present lecture materials on Community Needs Assessment.
- Encourage the students to ask questions as you present materials.
- Review the main concepts.

**CLOSURE:**

- Explain that during the next class session the group will be asked to use this information to develop a needs assessment plan and present it to the rest of the class.

## **COMMUNITY SUBSTANCE ABUSE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Conducting a Community Substance Abuse Needs Assessment Involves Four Main Steps:

- Identifying and gathering information about the extent of the substance abuse problems in a community.
- Identifying what the community is currently doing to address problems.
- Examining what the community is currently doing to determine if its meeting the needs.
- Developing a plan to improve what the community is currently doing and/or creating new service, programs, or policies. Examples of needs assessment outcomes could be: a) offering more alcohol and drug free activities; b) developing positive peer and adult role models and leadership; c) developing positive community service activities for youth.

## **FOUR TECHNIQUES FOR GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT COMMUNITY NEEDS**

**\*KEY INFORMANT:** Collecting information from knowledgeable people. In a community setting this would include youth, parents, substance abuse and social service program staff, police, youth worker's, elders, Tribal Government representatives and others. Using this technique, representatives from each group are surveyed, interviewed or asked to attend a meeting where a series of structured questions are discussed and responses recorded.

### **EXAMPLES/PROCESS:**

-The Brainstorming Guide you completed on problems in our community could be used to collect information using a group of key informants. You would probably want to ask additional questions to help identify the effectiveness of what the community is presently doing.

-Decide on the information you want to gather. Develop a list of questions you need to ask. Develop a survey form with these questions on it. Select the key informants and ask them to complete the survey or use the survey to interview them.

**\*COMMUNITY SURVEY:** Collecting information from a random sample of youth, parents, elders, etc.

### **EXAMPLE/PROCESS:**

-Decide on the information you want to gather. Develop a survey form with these questions on it. Select the random sample and ask them to complete it.

**\*DEMOGRAPHICS:** Collecting data about the people in your community. Information could include the number of people, age, and sex.

EXAMPLES/PROCESS:

-Decide on the information you want to gather. The local tribal and other community personnel could probably provide you with it or assist you in gathering it.

\*COMMUNITY PROGRAM DATA: Collecting data on the community's existing efforts or programs to address substance abuse issues. Information could include the number of youth receiving the service, the staff, and resources available to the youth, and whether the resources are adequate.

EXAMPLES/PROCESS:

-If there is an adolescent substance abuse treatment program in your community how many youths are served and how effective is it from the perspective of youth, parents or others?

-If there are alcohol and drug free recreating activities in the community, how many youths are participating, are they meeting the needs of all youth, are there enough activities?

**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** School Needs Assessment Planning Guide

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 50 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVE:**

- Develop a process for identifying school substance abuse problems and needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- Community Needs Assessment Lecture Material (CA/CO/T#3) (CA/CO/T#4)

**PROCEDURE:**

- Explain that the purpose of this activity is to develop a plan for conducting needs assessment study focused on a specific problem in our community.
- Ask students to form Talking Circles. Distribute the Needs Assessment Planning Guide. Remind the group messenger that he/she is responsible for completing the guide and reporting to the whole class.
- Ask each group to begin by selecting a substance abuse related problem they want to learn more about. They should refer to the Brainstorming Guide they developed to select a problem. Ask students to collectively complete the Planning Guide. All them in class time as necessary.

**CLOSURE:**

- Explain that during the next class session the group will be asked to present their needs assessment plan to the entire class.

## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLANNING GUIDE

### MAJOR STEPS:

1. Identify the substance abuse related problems you want to learn more about:

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2. What do you hope to accomplish? Which questions do you want to answer?

\_\_\_ How serious is the problem?

\_\_\_ Who is affected?

\_\_\_ What is currently being done?

\_\_\_ Is it working?

\_\_\_ Are the resources adequate?

\_\_\_ What else is needed to address the problem?

\_\_\_ Other questions \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What methods do you want to use? Select one or more.

\_\_\_ Key Informant

\_\_\_ Demographics

\_\_\_ Community Survey

\_\_\_ Community Program Data

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Briefly describe how you plan to use this method(s).

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What questions do you want answered?  
will you

Who will you ask?

What method

use?

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5. Develop a needs assessment workplan:  
Identify all the tasks, timelines, and persons responsible.

TASKS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE	DATE
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1. Develop a:
  - \_\_\_ survey form
  - \_\_\_ interview guide
  - \_\_\_ list of questions for a group meeting of key informants.
2. Decide who to collect information from.
3. Get approvals needed to collect the information.
4. Collect the information.
5. Organize and analyze the information.
6. Decide how to use your findings.

**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Collecting Data on Community Substance Abuse Issues

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 50 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop a process to identify community substance abuse problems and needs.
- Identify important steps in a planning process.

**RESOURCES:**

- Completed Community Needs Assessment Planning Guide (CA/CO#6)
- Sample Community Questionnaire (CA/CO#7)

**PROCEDURES:**

- Ask the messenger from each group to present a summary of the group's ideas from the Needs Assessment Planning Guide. If the group prefers, the entire group can participate in this presentation.
- When each group has presented their information direct the student's attention to items 3 and 4.
- Explain that needs assessment often involves the use of a survey or interview to collect the data needed. Ask each group to review their list of questions and methods and develop a survey or interview guide to gather it.
- Distribute copies of the same questionnaire.
- When each group has completed their questionnaire or interview guide, explain that the next step is to select a group of people who will complete the survey or who will be interviewed. Explain that each group must collect data from at least 20 people, using a random sample of some group or key informants.
- If interviews are to be conducted, suggest that the group practice conducting the interview with each other before conducting it.

**CLOSURE:**

- Explain that during the next class session each group will be asked to analyze the data they collected and use it to develop a plan to address the problem they have collected information on.

CA/CO #7

## SAMPLE COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. All communities have problems related to substance abuse. Identify three problems in your community (Related to substance abuse).

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2. Based on your knowledge, what is the community presently doing to address substance abuse problems.

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3. Do you think what is presently being done is adequate?

Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Explain.

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4. What do you think is needed?

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**NAME OF ACTIVITY:** Planning a Community Substance Abuse Project

**UNIT:** Community Action/Community Organizing

**LEVEL:** 7-12

**TIME REQUIRED:** 45 minutes

When the student has completed this activity, he/she will be able to:

**OBJECTIVE:**

- Develop ideas for a community substance abuse project to address unmet needs.

**RESOURCES:**

- Community Project Planning Guide
- Data collected from questionnaires and interviews.

**PROCEDURE:**

- Ask students to form their Talking Circles and develop a summary of the data they collected. This will involve tabulating the results from questionnaires or summarizing comments.
- Distribute the Planning Guide and ask students to complete it. Group messengers complete the form and report to the entire class when the groups have completed their tasks.
- Ask the entire class to evaluate each group's plan using the following questions:
  - Are the steps the group outlined in item #4 adequate? Is there anything missing?
  - Are the steps the group outlined in item #5 adequate? Is there anything missing?
  - Do you think this plan would work? Explain.

**CLOSURE:**

- Explain that this process of needs assessment can be a useful and powerful tool for bring about change in a community. Encourage students to take this process a step further by actually trying to conduct the project or activities they described in their plans. To actually conduct the follow through on this plan would require the group to develop a more detailed workplan; a sample format is included on page 36.

## COMMUNITY PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE

1. Describe the problem or need you are focusing on.

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2. Describe what is already being done.

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3. What do your needs assessment findings suggest should be done?

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4. What steps would you need to take to accomplish this?

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5. Whose help and support would you need? How would you get it?

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