

Data Collection Overview & Planning

You are hoping to achieve a decrease in problems or issues facing your community. In order to do this, you need to identify what the challenges and issues are, as well as strengths and resources that support change. In this module, you will collect data from your community to review in-depth to identify the priority issues in your community. This is the initial step in the data-driven decision-making process mapped out below.



Data collection is overwhelming, so remember the END Goal!

Narrowing down the most relevant and important data to collect can be a challenge during this process. First, meet with your team and determine what you want to know. Refer back to your team's goals and using that to outline the areas of interest for your data collection. It is helpful to define categories of data you would like to collect, and then identify specific data points, known as indicator data, to help answer your overall question. For example, you may choose to look at your substance use rates for youth in your community. This will help you narrow down indicator data points you would like to consider, including such things as substance use rates and rates of substance-related involvement in the juvenile justice system.

It will be important to collect and review data on your current welfare and justice systems involved populations to identify if any systems reform strategies are needed. In addition, for a comprehensive understanding of the communities' needs, you will want to include data on Risk and Protective Factors and/or Social Determinants of Health in your data identification and collection process. Adopted from the public health arena more recently into the juvenile justice field, the Risk and

Protective Factor theory offers a way of understanding the causes of delinquency and other challenges youth experience and provides guidance in ways to prevent these challenges. The Social Determinants of Health, which overlap the Risk and Protective Factors in many cases, move a bit further upstream to analyze and address more systemic and environmental conditions that contribute to the challenges youth face, thus highlighting the potential for change on these levels.

Please refer to the attached articles listed in Tool #3 for more information on and examples of Risk and Protective Factors, the Social Determinants of Health, and Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Reform. You may choose to select indicator data based on the information provided in these articles. More information on how to determine what specific data indicators you may want to collect and review can be found in the Data Questions tool and Data Categories tool.

What are indicators?

Indicator data provide information about or help define the extent to which an issue affects a community. They can be used to determine need as well as track progress toward goals, making them part of both the implementation and evaluation phases of a project. For example, if assessing a juvenile justice issue, information about arrests, types of arrests, detention, and diversion would be useful pieces of indicator data. Risk and protective factor data and data points related to the social determinants of health are useful indicator data when seeking to understand what some of the broader issues and problem are facing your community. When looking at indicator data, you will also want to seek out data broken out by demographic. This will indicate there is a disparity or a point where Minority Over Representation is an issue in your community.