WHY IS EVALUATION IMPORTANT?

Evaluation is important because…

1. **Evaluation is useful to program staff.**

   - It helps staff to keep the program focused on outcomes that are achievable. From the beginning, developing an evaluation plan helps staff to think clearly about the links between the problems they are trying to address, specific program activities and the fulfillment of program objectives.

   - It helps staff and others to answer the question: "Did the program work?" Conducting an evaluation allows you to explain and describe: 1) program activities, 2) the number and characteristics of program participants (for example, were they the people that really needed the program) and 3) the results (or the outcomes) of program activities.

   - Evaluation data can be used to make changes that will improve the program or to help it to expand.

2. **Evaluation is useful to the outside world.**

   - Funders are increasingly interested in evaluation, so they can determine whether their money is being spent on programs that are carefully implemented and that are effective. Evaluation is often required by funders.

   - Evaluation data are useful to other organizations that have similar interests and concerns. Evaluation data can help them make decisions regarding replication of, or adaptations to, proven programs. Evaluation data can provide them with the some instruction regarding program design.

   - Evaluation data can be useful for people looking for services. It can help them make choices about programs that best meet their needs.

Some useful evaluation resources (all publicly available) include:

   ✓ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health. MMWR 1999; 48((No. RR-11)). *ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4811.pdf*

   ✓ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide. 2005. *http://www.cdc.gov/eval/evalguide.pdf*

   ✓ W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook. 1998. Battle Creek, MI. *http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf*

   ✓ W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide. 2004. Battle Creek, MI. *http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf*