

The Decatur Prevention Initiative Community Readiness Interviews

Partnership for Success Grant – June 2020

The Decatur Prevention Initiative (DPI) utilized the Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Services' Community Readiness Model to determine the community's readiness level related to illicit drug use. The eight (8) interviews were conducted by an experienced Cr interviewer and consensus scoring by Tyrone Bell (PFS Epidemiologist) and Carol Treible (PFS Evaluator) in June 2020.

Those chosen represent a diverse cross-section of community leaders including, law enforcement, local schools/colleges, parents/grandparents, residents, law enforcement/first responders, and the faith-based community. These interviewees are diverse in age, race, gender, education, and income. The interviews are scored according to the Tri-Ethnic Center's protocol.

Dimensions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
Knowledge of Efforts	4	3	3.5	3.5	4.5	2.5	3	3	3.375
Leadership	3	3.5	3.5	4	4.5	3	4	3	3.56
Community Climate	4	4	3.5	3.5	4	1	3	3	3.25
Knowledge of Issue	2	2.5	2	3	3	2	2.5	3	2.5
Resources	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	3	2.68
Average Score Total									3.07

Average CR Score 3

The overall dimension scores of individuals were in a range from 2.5 to 3.56. The average overall score was 3.07. Tri-Ethnic protocol dictates that scores are rounded down, resulting in a Community Readiness Score of 3 (Vague Awareness). This level indicates most feel that there is a local concern, but there is no immediate motivation to do anything about it.

There is limited knowledge of current and potential resources, and DPI's obtaining funding to support the expansion of efforts.

Knowledge of Community Efforts

The average Community Readiness (CR) score for the local Knowledge of Community Efforts was 3.375. Half of those interviewed rated this 3.5 or higher.

Most respondents indicated being aware of DPI and that the organization offers programs for the community. However, in-depth knowledge was limited. Those interviewed who work in the city but live outside of the city were not often aware of grassroots efforts. Representatives from Agnes Scott College were knowledgeable of activities at the college.

Leadership

Leadership was the highest-scoring area at 3.56. Leadership is essential in planning, implementing, and ensuring the sustainability of efforts and programs. Those interviewed spoke

highly of DPI's Project Director. The respondents described the Director as a leader, capable of implementing efforts and programs.

Community Climate

The *Community Climate* score was 3.25, indicating that those interviewed see the climate as neutral, disinterested, or believe this issue does not affect the community. Comments and scores for the community climate ranged from: this is not considered an issue, it goes unnoticed, or overlooked, to those beginning to reflect an interest and concern about the issue.

Knowledge of Issue

The *Knowledge of Issue* was 2.5, indicating that there is no knowledge about the issue to a few in the community know about the causes, consequences, signs and symptoms, and the prevalence of *illegal use of marijuana and illicit drugs*. The faith community was not familiar with the issue of the illegal use of marijuana and other drugs.

This readiness level indicates recognizing the issue as a problem but no ownership of it as a local problem. If there is some idea that it is a local problem, there is a feeling that nothing needs to be done about it locally. "It's not our problem." "It's just those people who do that." "We can't do anything about it."

Resources Related to the Issue

The *Resources Area* received an overall score of 2.68. The majority of those interviewed indicated the community is not sure what it would take to initiate efforts. One respondent feels there is no awareness of the need for resources to deal with this issue.

Many were aware of DPI and spoke highly of the Project Director and activities they had been involved with over the years.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Obstacles

DPI is well known amongst those interviewed and can be a leading force in tackling illicit drugs, especially marijuana. DPI's relationship with other organizations, stakeholders and a willingness to take on a leadership role in prevention and education is a critical component in this effort. The relationships DPI has built within the community is a strength that will prove an asset in increasing awareness of this issue. Specifically, DPI's relationship with the school system and parents, including the Parent Network involvement, is a real strength. DPI is a well-respected organization., and the information shared is trusted and valued.

There is a sense within the community that the train track divides the city into black/white, haves/have-nots. In the current national climate, it is essential to acknowledge and continue to build relationships. It is a time to listen, engage, and involve people from all community sectors and areas. Continuing to build relationships across all populations will be essential to the success of this and other projects. The diversity within the community is a strength. The Decatur Housing Authority is home to some first-generation immigrants from Somalia who do not speak English and need to be at the table.

The lack of awareness of this issue is a starting point. Educating the community on the definition of the problem, options for addressing the issue, and the resources available is essential in developing an effective strategic plan.

One potential weakness is the tunnel vision people feel when they work in the community but live outside the community. They know what their business or agency is doing within the city but can be unaware of other community efforts.

To prevent duplication of services and increase participation, DPI can build awareness of all efforts implemented within the community.

One possible potential obstacle is the view of some of the local law enforcement. Some felt that local law enforcement was not willing to initiate action and assume responsibility.

Potential Partners and Stakeholders

Agnes Scott College is a potential partner. Engaging and collaborating with the college can open up new resources and help the college become an active partner with DPI. The Community Prevention Alliance Workgroup/Coalition has representation from all twelve of the recommended sectors and is the DPI's backbone. Their involvement and dedication are critical to DPI's continued presence and local success.

Decatur is a prosperous, educated community and could provide additional resources to DPI's efforts, including local experts, volunteer time, space, and funds. The residents of Decatur have many CDC employees and university staff from Emory and Agnes Scott. Some of these members are already experts in topics related to drug and alcohol misuse. Respondents indicated that Decatur tends to be a community willing to work together and tackle a problem once they take ownership.

Insights from Community Readiness:

The Community Readiness score of 3 indicates a vague awareness of the issue of illicit drugs. Thus, there is an opportunity for progress. DPI can continue to educate the community on efforts made to address the use of, especially marijuana. The use of current social media strategies can help inform the community about this issue. The organization can also conduct informal local surveys and interviews by phone or door-to-door, publish newspaper editorials and articles with general information and regional implications.

Knowledge of the Issue and resources scored the lowest; raising awareness that the community's problem exists is an initial goal. Continue one-on-one visits and encourage those you have spoken with to assist in your efforts. Discuss descriptive local incidents related to the issue. Approach and engage local educational/health outreach programs to help with flyers, posters, or brochures. Begin to point out media articles that describe local critical incidents. Prepare and submit articles for church bulletins, local newsletters, club newsletters, etc. Present information to local related community groups. Efforts should be directed towards educating the community that the use of marijuana (especially) and other illicit drugs are concern is an initial step.

Note: The interview focus was primarily on high school students, college-age students, and young adults.: Interviews were conducted after the death of George Floyd and during a time of protests in the Atlanta area. It is a sensitive and emotional time for many.

