

## Qualifications for Evaluation Consultants

From Lana D. Muraskin (1993) *Understanding Evaluation: The Way to Better Prevention Programs*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.

- **Background and Experience.** “The individual or group should have specific background and experience in conducting evaluations of school- and community-based substance abuse prevention programs.
- **Knowledge of a Variety of Evaluation Techniques.** “The individual or group should be able to offer assistance with a variety of quantitative and qualitative evaluation techniques in order to allow flexibility in evaluation planning (unless, of course, the program seeks consultation in some specific area such as statistical analysis).
- **Sensitivity to Program Goals and Local Values.** “The individual or group should be sensitive to the program goals, and to values and attitudes of the school or community in which the evaluation will be conducted.”

From Karol L. Kumpfer, Gail H. Shur, James G. Ross, et al. (1993) *Measurements in Prevention: A Manual on Selecting and Using Instruments to Evaluate Prevention Programs*. DHHS Publication No. (ADM)93-1975. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention.

- **Familiarity With Alternative Instrumentation.** “One obstacle often faced in outcome evaluations is the lack of adequate information about available and appropriate evaluation instruments.... Even after locating and ordering the chosen instruments, program staff and evaluators often know little about which ones are best for their population. Many measurement issues must be considered, such as language skills, age appropriateness, cultural relevance, length of the instrument, attention span, and validity and reliability of different tests and sources of information.... The validity of the evaluations results is only as good as the quality and fit of the evaluation measures.”
- **Awareness of Current Theories of Substance Abuse Etiology and Logic Models.** “...[P]rograms must have a theory of causation that guides their choice of intervention strategies....Having a clear concept of what a prevention program is all about is necessary for both effective program evaluation and appropriate, useful evaluation.”

Additional criteria:

- **Affordability.** Assume that the evaluator’s investment of time may be twice what is anticipated or contracted, because the unexpected must be considered. The evaluator’s fees and expenses should be at a level that this amount of time can be compensated by the program.

- **Adequate Availability and Accessibility.** Outside evaluators must be available to assist the program when crises develop, for example, when the proposed source of data relevant to an evaluation, such as a school or criminal justice program, withdraws permission for data collection, or when a new component is added to the prevention program.
- **Communication Skills.** Outside evaluators must be able to explain their work to program staff and volunteers, including how and why specific information must be collected. They must also be able to communicate their methodology and findings in credible, clear language to members of the academic community, to program funding sources, and to the interested members of the community.