Assessment and evaluation: An overview

Every program needs to identify measures of success. Because SANE programs are health care programs they should predominantly focus on health care measures. Defining success can be as simple as numbers of patients served, percentage of patients offered onsite advocacy or specific treatment such as STI prophylaxis. Programs also may choose to look at criminal justice outcomes, but should be cautioned to make sure it's not the only measure of success evaluated—there are many reasons an individual case may not progress through the criminal justice system or end in an acquittal. The capacity for high-quality patient care most likely won't be reflected in case disposition or prosecution rates.

Success also could be reflected at the programmatic level: retention rates, time frames for moving new staff through orientation, currency of policies and procedures. There are many ways to look at success in SANE programs, and program managers need to be able to articulate how success is defined in their own programs. Funders and key supporters, within and outside of the parent organization, will be interested in that information. Markers of success are the underpinnings of any argument for support, so tracking success is an ongoing part of the program manager's job.

Formal evaluation is one of the most effective ways to gather this data, but not every program is prepared to undergo this process. Before moving to evaluation, we recommend starting with taking stock of (or assessing) the program. The basis for taking stock revolves around accepted competencies and standards/scope of practice in your state. It also should include looking at policies and procedures, ensuring they are appropriate, complete, and consistently followed.

Most programs will effectively be served by choosing one of two options: external assessment or self-study. External assessment involves bringing in a trusted expert from the field that then assesses whether core competencies are being met and looks at the appropriateness of and adherence to policies and procedures. With a self-study approach, an internal workgroup is convened to thoroughly review competencies and policies and procedures. Key stakeholders also might be interviewed for feedback as part of the process, particularly from within the institution, such as members of the Executive Director staff and the Chief Nursing Officer, and community collaborators, such as victim advocates who are responding for the medical-forensic exam. For programs more firmly entrenched within their organization's operations, a 360 approach is an alternate method for taking stock. This involves all stakeholders assessing the program (program staff, ED staff, agency administration). Success of this approach is predicated on stakeholders truly understanding your professional competencies and the program's policies and procedures.

Not every SANE program will choose to evaluate their programs. Deciding to evaluate your program requires some analysis about your level of stability.

Programs that are unstable (due to issues such as staffing, funding, or institutional support) should not consider evaluation until improvements can be made and sustained. Taking stock is the first step toward identification and implementation of improvements prior to an evaluation of your program. Once the identified improvements have been completed, you might be ready to conduct an evaluation of your program.

Evaluation can be broken down into two types: 1. Process evaluation (what are you doing; how is it being perceived?) and 2. Outcome evaluation (how is your program impacting patient health and well-being; is your program impacting the criminal justice system?). See the checklist on page 10 of the **SANE Program Evaluation Toolkit** to determine if your program is ready for evaluation.

Program assessment resources

Efficacy of a 2-year-old Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program in a Canadian Hospital
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11830729

SART Readiness Assessment
http://www.nsvrc.org/projects/sart-readiness

Listening to Our Communities: Assessment Toolkit
http://nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-toolkits/listening-our-communities-assessment-toolkit

Taking Stock: Questions for Nonprofit Leaders
http://www.lapiana.org/blog/blog-detail/id/65/taking-stock-questions-for-nonprofit-leaders.aspx

Forensic Compliance in Colorado: An Examination of System Response to Sexual Assault
http://www.ccasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/FCEP-Rpt-v04-Web.pdf

Strategic Planning and SWOT Analysis
http://www.ache.org/pdf/secure/gifts/Harrison_Chapter5.pdf

Program evaluation resources

Evaluating the Work of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Programs in the
Criminal Justice System: A Toolkit for Practitioners
https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/240917.pdf

The effectiveness of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Programs: A review
of psychological, medical, legal, and community change outcomes.
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16217119

The Effectiveness of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Programs
http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/AR_Sane.pdf

Evaluation of Outcomes
http://www.councilofnonprofits.org/resources/resources-topic/evaluation-and-measurement

What is the Difference Between Research and Evaluation and Between Process
and Outcome Evaluation?
http://www.dvevidenceproject.org/wp-content/themes/DVEProject/files/issue/EvalSeries2-
ResearchVSEvaluation.pdf

Evaluating Children's Advocacy Centers' Response to Child Sexual Abuse
https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/218530.pdf

A Room of Our Own: Sexual Assault Survivors Evaluate Services
http://www.svfreenyc.org/media/research/bc_1_full.pdf

How SAFE is New York City? Sexual Assault Services in Emergency Departments
http://www.svfreenyc.org/media/research/2007_04_hospital_survey.pdf

For more information review the *Quality Assurance tools* in the *Assessment and Evaluation* section of the App.

About the author

Dr. Jenifer Markowitz is a forensic nursing consultant, writer, curriculum developer, and educator. She received her clinical doctorate in nursing from the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, and is board certified as a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner – Adolescent/Adult. She spends a great deal of time on airplanes, on military instillations, online, and in court (in no particular order). You can find her at her website, Forensic Health care Online (**www.forensichealth.com**) or on Twitter: @**ForensicHealth**.

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