

PLS 506 Program Evaluation

Exercise: Tailoring Evaluations

Goals of this exercise and role play:

- Apply the theories and concepts from the readings on tailoring evaluations to a real program

Background:

One of the most fundamental tasks for any evaluator is to determine the program theory or causal logic that underlies a program. This assignment will let you explore the theories and concepts underlying the task of developing a program theory. For this assignment, you should assume that you have been hired as the evaluation team to evaluate a local D.A.R.E. program. You will complete the following tasks in order. At the end of each task, the class will reconvene to share and discuss your findings and observations. Since your familiarity of the D.A.R.E. program likely varies, you should prepare for the assignment by familiarizing yourself by reviewing various materials that describe the program in favorable and critical terms:

- <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/darefs.pdf>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_Abuse_Resistance_Education
- <http://www.dare.com/home/default.asp>
- <http://www.dare-oh.org/>
- <http://alcoholfacts.org/DARE.html>
- <http://www2.potsdam.edu/hansondj/Controversies/20060517101921.html>:

You should also read the meta-analysis article by Ennett, et al. (1994) posted on the class website that reviews some of the previous evaluation findings for D.A.R.E..

Directions: 20 minutes

Since it is common for evaluators to be unfamiliar with the details on how a program works, the evaluation team should begin by interviewing the client(s) to find out how the program works. How would you approach this meeting? What would you want to find out? Assume you will have 1 hour for your initial meeting. Develop a list of the questions you will ask the client and the information you want to obtain before leaving the interview. Be prepared to share the answers to the following questions with the class.

- What questions would you want to ask your client?
- What practical considerations must be taken into account in tailoring your evaluation design (i.e., stakeholders, audience, and other constraints and limitations)?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages to using a consultant to conduct the evaluation?
- Based on what you read is D.A.R.E. an example of a symbolic program? Do parents and school officials care if it works?