This brief provides an overview of the first three steps in the program evaluation Framework as they apply to policy evaluation: engaging stakeholders, describing the policy, and focusing the evaluation design.

Step 1: Engage Stakeholders

Because multiple sectors participate in injury prevention policy efforts, it can be challenging to come up with a complete list of potential stakeholders. Consider the following types of stakeholders:

- Policy experts
- Evaluation experts
- Subject matter experts
- Implementers

For examples, see Appendix E. It can also be valuable to involve some of the stakeholders who were or are opposed to the policy.[1] They can provide valuable insight into initial or on-going resistance to the policy and implementation, and their involvement can lend credibility to evaluation findings.

Roles and Responsibilities

Team members need a clear understanding of their degree of involvement and specific responsibilities. Establish clear goals and expectations for each of the team members to keep the process on track and hold members accountable.[1] Consider which participating stakeholders are appropriate and available for the core team.[1,2] The core team should include stakeholders who are involved in the evaluation from beginning to end and will assist with design and implementation of the evaluation as well as analysis and dissemination of results. Other stakeholders may be more appropriate for specific steps of the evaluation process. Select one or more evaluators to lead on the core team to coordinate the evaluation efforts. The lead evaluator is often responsible for activities including planning, budgeting, developing the evaluation plan, guiding the team in selecting evaluation questions and design, addressing data collection issues, compiling results, facilitating discussion about interpretation of results, and preparing final evaluation results.[1] Key considerations for selecting an evaluator can be found in **Appendix F.**

Step 2: Describe the Policy Being Evaluated

When planning the policy evaluation, it's important to have clarity and consensus on the components of the policy being evaluated, what it is supposed to accomplish, and its underlying logic (i.e., why should this policy achieve the intended impact?). Describing the policy can also assist with selecting appropriate indicators and points of measurement. A logic model can be useful in describing the policy because it articulates the underlying logic, the assumed causal pathways between a policy or policies and behaviors, and the links between those behaviors and long-term impacts such as injury rates.[3] A logic model helps to identify:
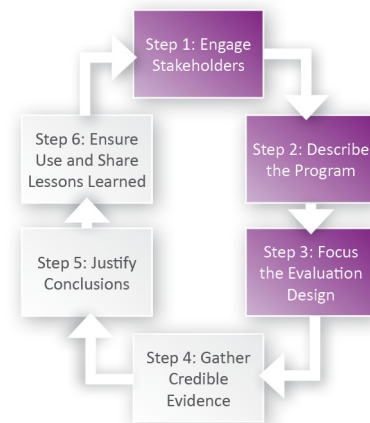
1 MacDonald, G., Starr, G., Schooley, M., Yee, S. L., Klimowksi, K., & Turner, K. (2001). *Introduction to program evaluation for comprehensive tobacco control programs*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tobacco_control_programs/surveillance_evaluation/evaluation_manual/pdfs/evaluation.pdf

2   W. K. Kellogg Foundation (1998, rev. 2004). *Evaluation handbook*. Battle Creek, MI: Author. Retrieved from http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2010/W-K-Kellogg-Foundation-Evaluation-Handbook.aspx

3 Milstein, B., & Chapel, T. (2012). Developing a logic model or theory of change. In *The Community Toolbox* (Part A, Chapter 2, Section 1; V. Renault & S. Fawcett, Eds.). Retrieved from http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1877.aspx

- **Inputs** - the information or resources required for developing and implementing a policy.
- **Activities** - the actions that are carried out in order to implement the policy.
- **Outputs** - the direct results of these action steps.
- **Outcomes** are short-term and intermediate changes in target audience behaviors, awareness of risk factors, attitudes, and knowledge.
- **Impacts** are long-term changes in indicators.
- **Indicators** are specific, observable, measurable characteristics of changes that demonstrate progress toward outcome or impact.

The logic model process is an easy way to ensure that all stakeholders have the same understanding of the policy and its intended outcomes.[1] For an overview of logic model components as well as a template and examples, see **Appendices G, H, I, J,** and **K**. **Appendix I** provides an example of a logic model developed in a more traditional format, while **Appendix J** presents a logic model developed using an alternative format. Understanding the policy components and implementation requirements will ensure that you are planning a thorough evaluation.

Step 3: Focus the Evaluation Design

Once the core team is assembled and stakeholders have a clear understanding of the policy and roles, it is important to clarify the goals and expectations of the evaluation and identify the focus for the evaluation (content, implementation, or impact). This clarity guides the selection of evaluation questions and appropriate design, and it helps ensure efficient use of resources.[4] Suggestions for implementing Step 3 for each of the three main phases (content, implementation, and impact) are discussed in Briefs 3, 4, and 5.

Questions To Guide Selection Of Evaluation Focus

- What type of policy is being evaluated (legislative, regulatory, or organizational)?
- What level of policy is being evaluated (local, state, national)?
- What type of evidence base exists for this policy?
- How complex is the theory of change and the implementation of the policy?
- What phase is the policy in? Has it been fully implemented?
- How will the evaluation be used and who is the potential audience?

To ensure a thorough understanding of a policy, you will often need to conduct evaluations for all three of the phases discussed in Brief 1 (content, implementation, and impact).[5] It is important to follow the steps separately for each phase to ensure a clear match between the evaluation focus, questions, and design. Results from each of the evaluations can then inform interpretation of the other evaluations.[5] Brief 5 and **Appendix O** provide information about different types of evaluation designs.

4   Newcomer, K. E. (2009, May). *Enhancing the usefulness of evidence to inform practice* (National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research [NCCOR] Obesity-Related Policy Evaluation Webinar Series, Session 3). Retrieved from: http://www.nccor.org/downloads/Webinar_3.pdf
5   Her Majesty's Treasury (2011). *The magenta book: Guidance for evaluation*. London, UK: Author. Retrieved from http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_magentabook_index.htm

Selecting Evaluation Questions

Once the team has pinpointed the focus of the evaluation, the next step is to identify the specific evaluation questions. Having clear evaluation questions helps to establish the boundaries of an evaluation.[6] The logic model of the policy may be a helpful tool as you identify and select specific policy sections or components to evaluate.[2] In addition, the focus of the evaluation will influence the evaluation questions chosen. Examples of evaluation questions within each of the three types of policy evaluation are provided in Briefs 3, 4, and 5. When selecting evaluation questions (and designs), it can be useful to consider the evaluation standards of feasibility and utility. Feasibility considerations include available resources, data, and complexity.[7] Utility focuses on the extent to which an evaluation meets stakeholder needs.

Selecting an Evaluation Design

The evaluation design, which can have a huge impact on evaluation results, should balance utility and feasibility.[4] The design influences the types and amounts of data required, the analysis techniques used, and the conclusions that can be drawn. Keep in mind that there is no one "right" design. It is important to find the most appropriate design for answering the evaluation questions and meeting the needs of the stakeholders.[2] If resources allow, choose a mixed-methods approach to balance the pros and cons of the different methods. Suggested evaluation designs for each type of evaluation are found in Briefs 3, 4, and 5.

Selecting Meaningful Indicators

Once you have selected the focus, questions, and design, the next step is to define outcomes and measurable indicators. Your answers will depend on the type of policy, the phase of the policy, and what data is available. Monitoring short-term and intermediate outcomes of a policy is just as important as knowing its long-term impacts. If the policy is based on strong scientific evidence, measuring short-term and intermediate outcomes can provide further evidence that a policy will have an influence on injury-related behaviors (i.e,. long-term outcomes). Because seeing a change in impacts may take a long time, evaluation of short-term and intermediate outcomes can be useful in providing support for a particular policy approach in the meantime.[5]

The team should also identify the indicators that will be used to measure progress toward selected outcomes. These are specific, observable, measurable variables that show the progress a policy is making toward achieving a specified outcome.[1] Identify meaningful indicators along each step of the logic model that will allow an assessment of the planned work and the intended results.[3] Doing so will ensure the collection of relevant data and selection of the most appropriate design.[5] Select indicators that will realistically be affected by the policy within the evaluation time frame.[2,4,5] Research the field of interest to identify any well-established outcomes and indicators that are part of federal or large-scale initiatives. **Appendix L** provides examples of outcomes and impacts, indicators, and data sources.

6   CDC. (1999, September). *Framework for program evaluation in public health* (MMWR Recommendations & Reports vol. 48, No. RR-11). Retrieved from ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/rr/rr4811.pdf
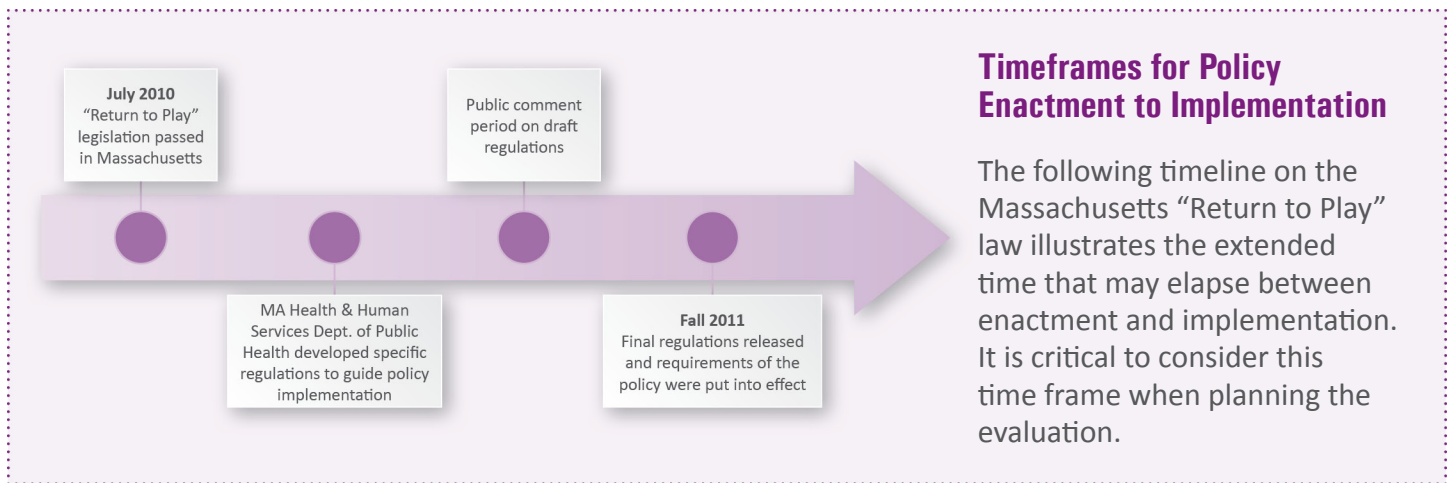
7   Chapel, T. J. (2008). *Evaluation 101: An overview for new evaluation practitioners*. Presented at the American Evaluation Association Summer Institute, Atlanta, GA. Retrieved from http://www.eval.org/summerinstitute/06SIHandouts/SI06.Chapel.TR1.Online.pdf

Tips for Developing an Evaluation Plan

Ideally, evaluation planning should begin during the development of the policy, prompting the inclusion of data collection, implementation, and resources in the policy content.[5] One way to document the important decisions is by creating an evaluation plan. The main components include the following:

- Evaluation team members.
- Evaluation goals and questions.
- Evaluation methodology, design, and timetable.
- Data collection and analysis plan.
- Dissemination plan.
- Resources.

Remember that evaluating impact prematurely—before implementation has begun—will result in erroneous or nonexistent findings.

July 2010
"Return to Play" legislation passed in Massachusetts

Public comment period on draft regulations

MA Health & Human Services Dept. of Public Health developed specific regulations to guide policy implementation

Fall 2011
Final regulations released and requirements of the policy were put into effect

Timeframes for Policy Enactment to Implementation

The following timeline on the Massachusetts "Return to Play" law illustrates the extended time that may elapse between enactment and implementation. It is critical to consider this time frame when planning the evaluation.

Consider the following when developing the evaluation timeline:

- Time required for evaluation planning
- Time for realistic change in indicators[5]
- Time required to fully implement the policy[4,5]
- Availability of data

It is also important to consider the resources available for conducting the evaluation:

- What funding is available for the evaluation?
- Who is responsible for conducting the evaluation?
- What resources are required for data collection?
- Do you need to consult internal or external experts?

Examples for maximizing and supplementing available resources are provided in **Appendix M**.

Action Steps

- Identify stakeholders involved in policy implementation and define key roles and responsibilities.
- Describe the policy by developing a preliminary logic model and identifying meaningful indicators.
- Identify the initial evaluation focus and evaluation questions.
- Identify resources available within and outside your agency to conduct policy evaluation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CDC Program Evaluation Page: Overview of Framework Steps 1, 2 and 3

http://www.cdc.gov/eval/steps/engagingstakeholders.PDF
http://www.cdc.gov/eval/steps/Describingtheprogram.PDF
http://www.cdc.gov/eval/steps/focusingtheevaluationdesign.pdf

Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan. From the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, and the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (Both CDC, 2011). Available at http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tobacco_control_programs/surveillance_evaluation/evaluation_plan/index.htm