

## Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE):

Utilizing the Strategic Prevention Framework and Rigorous Evaluation to Create a Prevention Program for Older Adults

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## Today's Presentation

- Overview of the WISE Program
- How we used the Strategic Prevention Framework to fine tune an existing program
- How the NECAPT enhanced our evaluation efforts



## Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE)

- Launched in 1996
- Substance abuse prevention program targeting older adults
- Provides education on a variety of topics



## The WISE Program

- Developed in response to very high levels of drinking in senior living complexes in Ocean County, New Jersey
- Targets seniors as they reach retirement age



## The WISE Program

- Program has been revised based on multiple evaluations done over the past ten years
- Program has six lessons, two hours each



## The WISE Program

- Goal: Help older adults celebrate healthy aging, make healthy life choices, and avoid substance abuse
  - Positively impact participants in three key areas:
    - Knowledge
    - Behavior
    - Social Support



## The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson One: “Understanding the Changes Associated with Aging”



## The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Two: “Aging Sensitivity”



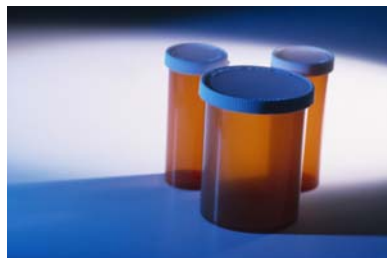
## The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Three: “Valuing Cultural and Generational Diversity”



## The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Four: “Medication and the Older Adult”



## The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Five: “Addiction, ATOD and the Older Adult”



## The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Six: “An Enhanced Quality of Life”



## Strategic Prevention Framework

- Nothing new, just common sense
- As with many simple and direct processes,  
– **IT WORKS!**



## Strategic Prevention Framework

### **Step One: Assess prevention needs based on epidemiological data**

- Started with observation and anecdotal data
- Identified projected need based on population and prevalence rates
- Identified existing resources – and lack thereof



## Strategic Prevention Framework

### Step Two: Build prevention capacity

- Started with a “train the trainer” model
- Evolved to viral marketing model
- Piloted program in different counties each year



## Strategic Prevention Framework

### Step Three: Develop a strategic plan

- Identified our theory of change
- Built a logic model
- Hired evaluator
- Set a goal of NREPP listing



## Strategic Prevention Framework

### **Step Four: Implement effective community prevention programs, policies & practice**

- Piloted the program in multiple counties with varied populations
- Built fidelity instruments



## Strategic Prevention Framework

### **Step Five: Evaluate for outcomes**

- Annual evaluations with independent evaluator
- Adjusted curriculum
- Adapted instruments as necessary
- Added focus groups
- Adjusted delivery
- Repeated as necessary!



## Evaluation of the WISE Program

- Initially created as a “train-the-trainer” program to empower seniors to educate other seniors
- 10 years later, refined and modified to become a true prevention and wellness program for older adults



## An Enhanced Evaluation Process

How did we accomplish this?

**NECAPT's**  
**Service to Science Academy**



## Evaluation of the WISE Program

### **NECAPT's Service to Science Academy**

- Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technology...a **GREAT** resource
- NJPN was selected to participate and get free technical assistance for the WISE Program in Spring 2006
- Brought our evaluation efforts to a new level



## NECAPT's Service to Science Academy

- Two days of presentations and information in Boston
- Personal consultation with two evaluation experts with knowledge of our target population



## NECAPT's Service to Science Academy

### **After the Academy**

- Additional free technical assistance
- Follow-up and feedback on each of our assignments



## NECAPT's Service to Science Academy

### **After the Academy**

- Opportunity to apply for a sub-grant to further evaluation...*and we got it!*
- Conducted focus groups with program participants and refined our evaluation tool
- Submitting our proposal and reporting requirements for the sub-grant were simple and straight forward



## Evaluation of the WISE Program

### Evaluation Design

- Four NJPN member agencies in New Jersey selected to participate
- Two intervention groups of 20-25 seniors each participated in each county
- 35 seniors recruited in each county to act as control group
- Pre-tests and post-tests distributed to all intervention and control group participants



## Evaluation of the WISE Program

### Evaluation Design

- \$20 gift card given to intervention group participants who attended at least five lessons and completed both “tests”
- \$20 gift card given to control group participants who completed and returned both “tests”



## Evaluation of the WISE Program

### **2007/2008 Evaluation**

- Conducted by the Institute for Families, an applied social science research and training center affiliated with the School of Social Work at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey



## Evaluation Results

### **Participants told us they:**

- Increased their knowledge about medications
- Increased their knowledge about alcohol
- Felt more confident in their ability to manage their health issues
- Adopted a more assertive relationship with their physician and more likely to ask their doctor questions



## Evaluation Results

### Participants told us they:

- Developed a more positive outlook on aging and coping with aging issues
- Changed their doctor and/or their pharmacy, got more involved with their doctor, asked for a reduction in their medications, got off unnecessary medications, and were more careful about taking their medications



## Evaluation Results

### Participants told us they:

- Felt the lessons provided an open and comfortable atmosphere to express their feelings, including things they don't usually talk about
- Felt they obtained a substantial amount of good information relevant to the life issues of older adults and enjoyed learning from each other
- Came out of their shells and had their spirits lifted



## Evaluation Results

### **Evaluation confirmed:**

- Study participants who completed the WISE Program had statistically-significant improvements in knowledge compared to subjects who did not participate in the WISE Program.



## Evaluation Results

### **Evaluation confirmed:**

- Study participants who completed the WISE Program made more positive changes in their health behavior over time than subjects who did not participate in the WISE Program.



## Evaluation Results

### **Evaluation confirmed:**

- Study participants who completed the WISE Program reported greater increases in social support over time than subjects who did not participate in the WISE Program.



## Evaluation Results

### **Evaluation confirmed:**

- Study participants who completed the WISE Program had significantly higher scores over time on a combination of the three outcomes (knowledge, behavior, social support) than subjects who did not participate in the WISE Program.



## Next Steps

- Look for new funding opportunities to expand the program in New Jersey
- In 2009, submit WISE to the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), a service of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), for consideration as a model program for older adults
- Develop “booster” sessions to provide additional educational opportunities for seniors



## Thank you for joining us

### **For more information:**

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### **For a copy of our presentation:**

<http://www.njpn.org/programs-and-services/wise>

