

YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCILS

USING DATA



Data and information come in different forms, depending on the problem at hand. Reliable data will help you **understand and address key issues** when making decisions about programs, policies, and practices.

Youth Advisory Councils need to understand the data they use. Knowing a *topic* is one thing. Understanding **what data will be helpful** when making decisions is critical.



- ▶ With the help of supportive adults, Youth Advisory Councils can use data about schools and students to guide their work.
- ▶ High-quality data and accurate information are important when schools make decisions, including decisions about policies and practices.
- ▶ Using data is essential when planning for and implementing programs.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Use these tips to drive decisions:

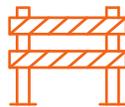


Determine where you should **focus** your attention.

- Are you interested in a specific topic?
- What about the topic interests you?

Here is an example:

- Are you looking at data to help you understand what school-based mental health services are available in your district?
- Would you like to understand the differences in services provided in schools in your district?
- Do you want to know whether teens in your district need mental health training (e.g., how to identify and respond to mental health challenges among peers)?



Determine the **limitations** of the dataset.

Qualitative data focus on why the problem may exist and how it affects people.

- These data are based on people's experiences and knowledge.
- These data may provide more detailed information on why a problem exists and how it affects people.
 - Open-ended surveys or interviews may offer less reliable evidence if they rely on the views of only a few people.

Quantitative data focus on numbers and help you understand the scope of the problem.

- These data rely on information gathered from many people.
- These data give a big picture view of the problem in a large population.
 - You should pair both types of data when making decisions.



Identify **gaps** in the data.

Sometimes, you don't have the data you need to make decisions:

- Is the problem you care about addressed in the available data?
- If not, you may need to collect new data.
 - Work with experts to determine what data you need and how to best collect that data.



Determine what **stories** the data are telling you.

Draw conclusions:

- Whose experiences are focused on in the data?
- Whose experiences are left out?
- Do the data show that some students' needs are addressed differently from other students with different backgrounds?

Learn more about
Youth Advisory Councils

www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth

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