

# Preparing state documents for an effective review: The librarian's role

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Many librarians—myself included—have taken the US government documents course as part of their library training, and, at best, we gained a theoretical appreciation for the function and utility of US government documents and materials. Working as a librarian who manages state document collection, organization, and dissemination gave me a new appreciation for state documents and the critical roles they can play in the development of knowledge and, in particular, improving a substance abuse prevention system.

Since 2007, the Strategic Prevention Framework Advance and Support project and now the State Technical Assistance project conducts site visits throughout the United States and its territories supporting the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. The goal of each site visit is to assess the strength of the state substance abuse prevention system and to create a 3-year plan for its further growth and development. This task needs to be accomplished during the course of a 2-day site visit. How can such a complex and comprehensive goal be accomplished? The answer lies in a thorough review of state documents before the site visit.

The librarian initiates the state site visit process by requesting from each state particular documents that describe the prevention system organization. Such documents include organizational charts, vision and mission statements, policies, and procedures. Other kinds of documents detail the strength of the workforce, the state's strategic planning direction, and the

effectiveness of prevention strategies as measured against evaluation plans. States send 50 to 70 documents for site visits, all of which are organized and disseminated by the librarian to the site visit team. About 1,200 total documents are collected and organized for 10 to 14 site visits in a year.

The librarian disseminates the state documents to each site visit team. It is at this point that state documents prove their usefulness beyond their usual governmental function. The site visit team reviews the state documents and prepares the analysis of the state substance abuse prevention system. The state documents support the analysis and provide an in-depth picture of the state prevention system, preparing the review team, leading to stronger conversations and better decisions for the state. Site visits that used to last 5 days are now accomplished in 2 days, thanks to the detailed and elaborate preparation.

State documents can be used to monitor changes in state systems over time when viewed by trained eye of the prevention specialist. State documents also are used to understand a state's organization and functioning, and clarify the next steps for capacity building and development. These materials, in turn, form the basis of recommendations that guide federal technical assistance until the next site visit.

After site visits are completed, the librarian's role includes archiving the state materials for future use via a searchable index and database. This easily accessible compendium of materials also assists in

responding to State Information Request (SIR). States, though different in organization and needs, seek ways to learn from each other and share ideas. As it has evolved, the site visit process concludes with a review of the state's strengths, challenges, and potential enhancements that would support the development of the substance abuse prevention systems. Some of the enhancements require multiphase technical assistance with consultants; but others are more ably addressed by learning from other states through sharing notable and useful state documents. Thus, the SIR came into being. How are other states integrating mental health promotion into their substance abuse prevention? How are other states addressing neonatal abstinence syndrome? What are other states doing to coordinate and collaborate with community coalitions? All of these requests can be addressed by peer-to-

peer sharing of state documents and information in the SIRs. In the last 2 years, 112 SIRs have been addressed for 36 states or jurisdictions—a practical example of states sharing and learning from one another.

It remains the role of the librarian to collect, organize, access, and disseminate information; this applies to state documents and materials as well. State documents, when collected and organized for review teams, prove dynamic and useful in understanding state substance abuse prevention systems.

A Note on the Poster Presentation: This poster was designed using an infographic approach (i.e., using visual images to tell a story or present processes quickly and clearly). The librarian in the infographic bears a close resemblance to the real live Mary Kelly, who is a health librarian at JBS International, Inc.

