

Getting Started:

8 Steps to Developing a DEC Program

1. Consider possible team members from each CORE agency in your locality: Child Protective Services, Special Assistant Attorney General, Prosecutor's Office, Law Enforcement, and Healthcare Professionals. Find the individuals who are interested in child endangerment and illicit drug manufacturing and/or trafficking, like multidisciplinary work, and are involved in agency policy development.
2. Decide how you will all communicate (i.e. email, phone, faxes, interoffice mail, etc.). Consistently structured meetings (face-to-face or conference call) are initially needed to develop a team cohesion and establish working relationships. Clear communication and participation with agency supervisors are recommended.
3. Cross-train among team members so each member has a clear sense of what other team members from different disciplines do. Familiarize yourselves with the philosophies, departmental policies, and hierarchies of your own and other team member agencies. Each team member needs answers to the following: What are Team goals? What is each member required to do when arriving at a drug scene? When encountering a child, what are team priorities in handling a case?
4. Utilize the cross-training to develop guidelines as a team for what should happen during an intervention at a drug-producing/trafficking home with children. First, all existing core agencies' guidelines must be gathered, reviewed, and analyzed to see: What is already in place? What needs to be changed to facilitate the Team's work? What might impede Team goals? Where are the gaps? Where are the overlaps? With buy-in/approval of each agency, the Team should utilize the state model to develop a unified DEC TEAM guidelines.
5. Distribute draft guidelines among agency colleagues for input/feedback. Revise guidelines with reviews and comments. Re-review FINAL DRAFT guidelines with all relevant agencies. Be sure to include front line professionals as well as policy development staff in this process. Finalize guidelines with approval by Core Team member agencies. Publish the guidelines with a date and caveat that it will be modified as experience and circumstances demonstrate the need to do so.
6. Identify Team member needs for additional formal and informal training (i.e. shadowing/ride-alongs, etc.). Seek additional assistance and training from the professional members of the GADEC Training Network and other relevant agencies.
7. Identify key "auxiliary" agencies that your Team wants involved in DEC cases that need DEC training. These may include medical/health care providers, mental health providers, fire personnel, Emergency Medical Services, Hazardous Materials team staff, foster parents, probation/parole officers, school personnel, drug treatment providers, domestic violence service providers, criminal and juvenile court personnel. Contact a professional member of the GADEC Training Network to schedule and provide trainings for the groups.
8. Develop a way to monitor the progress of your program, the effectiveness of your guidelines, and intermittently discuss how the DEC process can be improved. Discuss what is working well and provide praise. Look at what isn't working and make necessary adjustments. **GOOD LUCK!**

*Source: Drug Endangered Children Resource Center, 2001, **Getting Started:***

10 Steps to Developing a DEC Program, with revisions by the Georgia Alliance for Drug Endangered Children