



Learner-Centered "SMART" Program Objectives

Overview

This fact sheet offers a brief guide for program managers to develop learner-centered "SMART" objective statements for their psychological health and traumatic brain injury (TBI) training programs. SMART is an acronym to help in the writing of performance management or skill development objectives. These statements become the foundation for setting accountability targets and set the stage for the development of program evaluation measures.

Writing SMART Objectives

Using the SMART framework to write objectives ensures a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished and the measures of success. All stakeholders in training benefit when objectives are clearly defined and documented.

S (Specific)	M (Measurable)	A (Achievable)	R (Realistic)	T (Time-Bound)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed, well-defined Do the objectives specify what the program needs to achieve? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numeric, observable Can you measure if the program is meeting the objectives or not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievable, appropriate Are the objectives set achievable and attainable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant, reality-based Can the objectives be met with the available resources? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined end point By when do you want to achieve the set objectives?

Core performance objectives that align with the program's purpose and goals result in successful programs. In training programs, explicit objectives are critical for guiding the scope of the program, i.e., subject matter, activities and metrics. Well-defined, prioritized, SMART objectives include action verbs, such as "list," "describe" or "evaluate," and characterize a desired outcome. By avoiding vague verbs such as "understand," "appreciate" or "promote awareness," variation in both instructor and learner interpretation is reduced. Simple, clear and outcomes-driven instruction also maximizes learners' understanding and appreciation for and application of the material that is taught. Using the SMART acronym as a checklist for objectives can support development of robust training programs. Furthermore, the use of SMART can be done out of order - often the best way to write objectives is: M-A/R-S-T. The most important input to evaluating program effectiveness is "measurable" objective data.

Any type of objective can be written using the SMART format including:

Type of Goal	Description	Example
Process	What to do and how to do it by describing participants, interactions and activities	Physicians will demonstrate understanding of the mTBI clinical practice guideline by sending 100 percent of patients with seizures for immediate referral as identified by retrospective chart review.
Impact	Future implications or impact of a program/ activity on a target audience or organization	By Jan. 1, 2012, the nursing education department will have trained more than 95 percent of the credentialed providers on the community resources available for service members with TBI diagnoses.
Outcome	Describe how the knowledge, skills, behavior, and degree to which attitudes will change	Upon completion of the "Reducing Stigma" course, participants will state at least one policy change the Department of Defense has made to the security clearance process to decrease the stigma associated with military members seeking psychological health care.
Personal	Setting and tracking individual measures of performance	Within the first year of returning from deployment with post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD, the service member will have initiated an account and signed into afterdeployment.org at least four times.

Summary: Why Write SMART?

Clear, concise SMART objectives identify the sequence of the content, select the target audience, determine training activities, and decide evaluation methods to be used. Carefully-crafted learning outcomes communicate high expectations by showing learners the challenges ahead and the standards to be achieved. Creating SMART outcome statements is a vital step in planning successful programs.

About the DCoE Training & Education Directorate

The Training & Education (T&E) directorate's mission is to assess training and educational needs in order to identify and promote effective instructional material for stakeholders resulting in improved knowledge and practice of psychological health and TBI care.

For more information visit: <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/WhoWeAre/Directorates/TrainingandEducationDirectorate.aspx>
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