

# Preface

In 1991, USDA-CSREES (Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service) began funding the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk National Initiative (CYFAR). In 1999, CYFAR was graduated into Extension base programming. CYFAR includes State Strengthening projects and New Communities projects, CYFERnet, and the former National Networks. CYFAR emphasizes a holistic approach to preventive educational programs that address risk and resilience in children, youth, families, and communities. The goal of CYFAR is to facilitate the development and maintenance of healthy, happy environments that enable those at risk to develop life skills necessary for contributing, fulfilling lives.

State Strengthening projects were initiated in 1994 and designed: 1) to improve statewide capacity to support community-based programs for children, youth, and families at risk; and 2) to improve the quality and quantity of comprehensive community-based programs for children, youth, and families at risk.

The Evaluation Guide was first developed in 1997 by the members of the CYFAR Evaluation Collaboration at the University of Arizona. The guide was then updated in 2000 to reflect changes within the CYFAR Program and CYFERnet. The revised edition of the guide also includes various Web sites to assist users in evaluation of their community-based programs. In addition, a new evaluation template has been incorporated into Tier 4 of the current version of the guide. The efforts of the National Outcome Work Groups (NOWGs) have been integrated into the CYFERnet Program Component and are therefore not discussed separately in this revised edition. However, the NOWGs' work is an important part of the CYFERnet evaluation resources and is extremely valuable. Finally, although the revised guide is still based upon Jacobs' five-tiered approach to evaluation (1988), some of the evaluation language has been changed to be more user-friendly (e.g., "short-term outcomes" and "long-term outcomes" replacing "outcome" and "impact"). We hope these changes have made the revised Evaluation Guide more useful to those evaluating community-based programs for children, youth and families.

This guide will step you through a process that will help you evaluate community-based programs. The links between theory and research base, program goals and objectives, measures, variables, and program implementation are discussed.