How to Think Critically About Needs Assessment Data

When reviewing data sources for your Needs and Resources Assessment it is important to think about the data critically so you can understand IPV/SV in your community or state. The figure below provides key considerations to thinking critically about data. You can use this flow chart or the How to Think Critically about Data Worksheet to help your Needs and Resources Assessment team think through the data review process to inform your Needs and Resources Assessment.

1. What do these data tell us about:
   • Magnitude of the problem (or prev. of IPV/SV) among universal and selected populations
   • Risk and protective factors among universal and selected populations
   • Assets/resources
   • Prevention system capacity

2. What are the strengths and limitations of this data source? For example, was this data collected for a specific purpose? Is it based on police reports; is it self-reported, what is the sample size? Is it inclusive?

3. What do these data add to or how do these data compare with what we already know about:
   • Magnitude of IPV/SV among universal and selected populations
   • Risk and protective factors related to IPV/SV among universal and selected populations
   • Assets/resources
   • Prevention system capacity

4. What do these data not tell us about:
   • Magnitude of IPV/SV among universal and selected populations
   • Risk and protective factors among universal and selected populations
   • Assets/resources
   • Prevention system capacity

5. Do we have enough information to proceed to clearly define needs?
   If YES
   Only after multiple data sources have been collected
   If NO
   6. What do we still need to know/what are the gaps?
   7. Where do we get that information? (Balance community knowledge, evidence-based & social justice EE principles).

This could be an existing data source (e.g. census data) or a new data source (e.g. from surveys, focus groups, or key informant interviews.)

For each data source, ask questions 1-7