Part 1b. Stating Outcomes and Developing a Logic Model

Why is it important to state your outcomes, and what does that have to do with evaluation?
Goals are important because they help you clarify your priorities and explain to others what you hope to accomplish. Once you have general goals, going a step further to write out specific outcome statements helps to do the following:
1. Sharpen the purpose and content of each prevention activity. Writing out the specific changes you hope to see as a result of an activity can help to clarify the scope, content, teaching methods, and audience.
2. Demonstrate to funders and other stakeholders that you have a plan for proving accountability.
3. Set the foundation for your outcome evaluation. Once you have strong outcome statements, it will be much easier to plan your evaluation and develop your evaluation tools.

In the PIES framework (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation, and Sustainability), you first develop outcome statements and then develop your evaluation plan. In many cases, however, developing outcome statements and evaluation methods will be a back-and-forth process. For example, you may need to refine the wording of an outcome statement to fit with the wording of an item on a standardized questionnaire.

Why are logic models important, and what do they have to do with evaluation?
At their best, logic models provide a concrete "road map" for program implementation and evaluation that partners refer to frequently to make sure things are on track. At their worst, logic models are seen as pointless busy work—created for a funding application, and quickly forgotten. When logic models are used well they can do the following:
1. Clarify how an activity will lead to a specific outcome and goal (also called the "theory of action"). Does it make logical sense that this activity will lead to this kind of outcome? What are the steps that need to happen to get to that outcome?
2. Provide an easy-to-read visual to communicate components of a strategy, goals, and outcomes. This format can be used to display program plans, and to report on evaluation results (e.g., plug evaluation results into the "outcome" section).
3. Require you to set targets for implementation ("outputs"), which may push you to be more assertive in getting things done within specific time frames.
4. The "input," "activity," and "outputs" portions of the logic model set the foundation for your process evaluation.
5. The "short and intermediate-term outcomes" portions of the logic model set the foundation for your outcome evaluation.

Once you have a logic model with clearly articulated "outputs" and "outcomes," it will be much easier to develop an evaluation plan.