

**Best Education Practices (BEPs) for Water Outreach Professionals**  
**Defining BEPs, Refining New Resources and Recommending Future Actions**

*POSTER PRESENTATION*

**Presenter(s):** Lori Severtson, Gaylord Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies and School of Nursing, University of Wisconsin

**Title:** A Utilization-focused and Theory-based Evaluation of an Arsenic Well Testing Program

Abstract: A utilization-focused and theory-based evaluation study was conducted to understand how private well users responded to an educational arsenic well test program (AWTP). The common sense model (CSM), a health behavior theory, has shown that people process health threat information to formulate personal understandings (representations) that guide responses to threats. In this case the threat was arsenic. The CSM was applied to measure arsenic information use and perceived usefulness, arsenic representations, and outcomes of water safety judgments, policy opinions, and protective behavior. In communities that offered the AWTP, 1496 surveys were delivered to households, with 1237 surveys going to households that tested through the AWTP and the balance to households that did not test through the program. Of the surveys delivered, 1233 (82.4%) were suitable for analysis. Program staff estimated that about 30% of community households tested through the AWTP and study results indicated about 40% tested privately. It is important to provide arsenic information available to the general public. Information mailed with the well test is used the most by all participants and is also considered a very useful source for informing well water decisions. Participants who did not test for arsenic were less aware of arsenic risk. Over 60% of participants with arsenic levels over the current drinking water standard perceived their water as at least somewhat safe. It is important for people to understand how arsenic drinking water standards are selected and what they mean. Participants living in a community that offered the AWTP each year adopted lower arsenic safety thresholds compared to those living in a community where arsenic was highly publicized but the AWTP was offered once over 3 years. Ongoing education may promote more accurate understandings than high publicity.

Target Audience(s): Agency partners, NGOs

Educational Purpose: Information, communications and education

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