

Reflections on NAWRS:

Past, Present and Future

For more than 50 years NAWRS has served as an ongoing forum for sharing research findings and best practices for state and local government-administered social services and assistance programs. It's amazing how this has gone on for that length of time.

What is NAWRS?

NAWRS is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and as such we hold Workshops all over the country: Phoenix to Savannah, New Orleans to Madison. We also hold conferences in exciting destinations like Jackson Hole, Nashville, Vail and LA. The Board of Directors is chosen from state and local government agencies and runs the organization. We hail from coast to coast.

We're from all over

In 1955, Kathryn D. Goodwin, the Acting Director of the Bureau of Public Assistance of the US DHEW sent a letter to a group of State Research and Statistics Directors proposing that a general conference be set up at which they could "share experiences in meeting research problems and explore ways in which research can contribute more effectively to the administration of the Public Assistance Programs."

The result was a set of meetings held in Chicago from March 13 to 16, 1956.

History

NAWRS workshops seek to bring the sectors of the human services field together to close the loop between research and implementation & post-evaluation.

The Workshop stays current with large movements in our field.

Relevance

NAWRS workshops were active during the AFDC waiver period in the 1990's and TANF's implementation phase.

DRA; performance measurement movement during the 2000s

The Workshop hit the 1115 waivers hard last year during the height of the controversy.

Many, many interventions evaluated and implemented

Big Topics

The Annual Workshop planning is a year-long process

But we're also focusing more on developing the organization

- Standing committees
- Staying in touch
- Engage more of the attendee membership throughout the year

The Present

NAWRS works to build relationships through our formal and informal events
NAWRS membership is at the individual level rather than institutional

As former Board member Editha Ponder noted in a 1974 paper, "To many of us the organization has become an important force in our lives, not only for professional relationships, but also in terms of life-long friendships.

Maintaining a Network

Mike Fishman of MEF Associates
proposed and launched the
Academy at the 2012 Workshop
We had our first webinar last
Spring

Building rigorous research
capacity in st/loc agencies is the
goal

The Research Academy

Michael-Oklahoma 2004

Vince-San Diego 2003

Our NAWRS Connections

We've shared our personal
NAWRS stories.

What was your first NAWRS
experience?

Future