Developing an Evidence-Informed Approach to Human Services Programming: Translating Research into Practice

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Why Use an Evidence-Informed Approach?

• Research studies and the value of integrating the most appropriate research and evidence in order to achieve improved client outcomes.

• Evidence-informed practice (EIP) has become an emerging component of the delivery of a variety of human services.

• The Federal government continues to push for the use of evidence across the board in government programming.
Challenges and Concerns Implementing EIP in Human Services Field

- Capacity of some social service agencies or programs
- Relevance, applicability, and adoptability of EIP concepts to direct service contexts.
ICF Research

Qualitative description analysis to gather information from participants in a nationally-funded pilot targeted to improving EIP institutionalization, findings included:

(1) Inconsistent understanding and utilization of evidence in program design and implementation;

(2) Common inhibitors and universal facilitators to integrating EIP in actual practice; and

(3) Consistent need for continuous support and training for sustainability of EIP in the human services.
Lessons Learned

• Program Model & Implementation
  • Context: Unintended Impact
  • Program Theory: Good Evidence
  • Prioritizing: Clients needs vs. Evidence Informed Practices

• Making Data Actionable
  • Balance quantitative data with qualitative data
  • Balance aggregated and disaggregated data
  • Competition data demands
Lessons Learned - Continued

• Disconnect between funders, policymakers and researchers
  • Variation in expectations
  • Availability of lessons learned
  • Generalizability of the research
Generating Evidence: The Evidence Pathway

1. Define Practice

2. Examine and Document Fidelity to Practice

3. Capturing Non-experimental Evidence

Evidence Informed

- Experimental Evidence
- Quasi Experimental Evidence
- Non Experimental Evidence

Evidence Based
Importance of Technical Assistance

Moving Innovation Forward by Building Evidence of Effectiveness

**Evidence Informed**

Create or Refine:
- Logic Model
- Implementation Materials

- Evaluate program’s quality
- Document program’s process
- Establish continuous process improvement protocols

- Conduct pre-/post-intervention evaluation to measure outcomes
- Conduct process evaluation

Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes

- Conduct evaluation with random assignment (RCT)
- Carry out multiple evaluations with strong comparison group (quasi-experimental design)

- Carry out evaluation with a comparison group (quasi-experimental design)
- Conduct regression analysis (quasi-experimental design)
- Perform multiple pre- and post-evaluations (time series design)
- Conduct meta-analysis of various studies

Final Thoughts

• Leadership Matters

• Value of a Data Specialist

• Tools are Valued and Empowering

What is needed is a culture that promotes learning from individual promising practices, as well as clusters of programs and initiatives with similar goals that can be adapted to a new context. It should become a continuous cycle of innovating, testing and reassessing, supporting optimal implementation. Understanding what worked, how and for whom, provides greater opportunities for scale up.