

Assessing Performance in a System of Care

Robert M. Friedman, Ph.D.
Director, Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health
Professor, Department of Child and Family Studies
Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute
University of South Florida
friedman@fmhi.usf.edu

Systems of Care & Evidence-Based Practices Conference
September 17, 2007
Roanoke, Virginia

Sponsored by Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation & Substance Abuse Services, and Virginia Commission on Youth



"The earmark of a quality program or organization is that it has the capacity to get and use information for continuous improvement and accountability. No program, no matter what it does, is a good program unless it is getting and using data of a variety of sorts, from a variety of places, and in an ongoing way to see if there are ways it can do better."

– Weiss, 2002



Purposes of Performance Measurement

- To identify overall level of performance in relationship to goals in order to make improvements as needed;
- To identify specific areas of strength and areas in need of strengthening;
- To determine degree to which program theory is being implemented;
- To provide accountability data to key stakeholders;
- To keep focused on the end-goals!!!



Performance Measurement

Part of data-based decision-making – often a major cultural change for a program, an organization, or a system.



Performance Measurement and Evidence-Based Practice

Two Complementary but Different Concepts

- Performance measurement focuses on how we are doing right now and right here for purposes of continually improving our system or program performance.
- Evidence-based practice involves the use of interventions that have met a specific scientific criteria at some other time and in some other place with some other group of children and families.



Performance Measurement as a Step Before Evidence-Based Practices

Data on system performance with various groups of children and families helps stakeholders determine if they need to make changes, and, if changes are needed, where they may be needed, e.g., with particular sub-groups of children and families.



Measuring Performance

- Combination of in-depth and aggregate information;
- Use of both quantitative and qualitative information;
- Utilization-focused and improvement-focused;
- Focused both on process and outcome;



Measuring Performance (cont)

- Balanced between local needs and state/funder needs;
- An intervention itself—not just a measurement;
- A key part of ongoing reflective process to improve system performance!!



Where do we start?

Establishing goals and a theory of change



Theory of Change

A statement of goals accompanied by the underlying assumptions that guide a system/program/service delivery strategy and are believed to be critical to producing the desired outcomes



Components in Creating a Theory of Change in a Service Delivery Program

- Who are you serving?
- What are you striving to accomplish for the population that you are serving?
- What strategies to you believe will help you successfully accomplish your goals?



Benefits of Developing a Theory of Change

- Supports local solutions;
- Facilitates communication and collaboration;
- Clarifies goals and strategies for systems and programs;
- Supports strategic planning, internal evaluation, and quality improvement.



Process of Developing a Theory of Change

- Highly participatory, including members of all key stakeholder groups;
- May involve outside facilitators/consultants;
- Based on review of knowledge in the field, system values and principles, and identification of strengths of community;
- May involve new ways of thinking, new mental models, new frameworks;



Process of Developing a Theory of Change

- Becomes a working document that leads to resource allocation, programming decisions, evaluation strategies, and partnership-building;
- Is flexible, recognizing that knowledge is not static, unexpected events happen, and system development is iterative and non-linear.



6 Basic Questions to Answer

Remember that the "We" is a partnership of key stakeholder groups in the community!

1. Who do we want to serve and what do we know about them?
2. What are our values and principles about serving this group?
3. What is our goal for this group?
4. What is our theory of how we can best achieve that goal?
5. What do we need to do to implement our theory of change?
6. How will we gather information on how well we are doing and what we need to do to make improvements?



Selection of Process & Outcome Measures/Performance Indicators

- Relevance to important goals or important parts of theory of change – e.g., if treatment planning is considered a major component of effective intervention, then one would want to gather data on it;
- Usefulness of data to program managers, front-line workers, and other stakeholders;
- Feasibility of collecting the data, sharing it with others, and using it as basis for corrective action;



Selection of Process & Outcome Measures/Performance Indicators

- Consistency of measures and data collection procedures with system values and principles, e.g., family-driven and cultural competence;
- Degree to which data gives adequate voice to key parties involved in system.



System of Care Practice Review: An Example

An approach to determine the degree to which services are delivered in accordance with system of care values and principles, based on in depth case studies of children and families served by the system in which the children, the parents, case managers, informal helpers, and others all have a voice



System of Care Practice Review: An Example

- Development of interview questions based on values and principles, and theory of change of local community;
- Use of reports by multiple informants;
- Use of semi-structured interviews with trained interviewers, and open-ended questions in order to best capture the views of interviewees;
- Rapid feedback loops.



Examples of State/Local Performance Measurement Systems

- Hawaii;
- Michigan;
- Central Nebraska;
- Wraparound Milwaukee;
- Provider Organizations.



Summary

- Ongoing measurement of system performance is not a luxury or an overhead expense – it is an essential component of an effective system or organization, and of efforts to continually adapt and improve the system or organization to changing needs and conditions.
- Ongoing measurement is not an isolated component of a system – it is tied integrally to system goals, values and principles, and policies and practices.

