

Using Data as a Powerful Tool



Estamos Unidos
San Antonio Making Connections
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Definitions

- # DATA = pieces of information (in any form) used to describe people, events, situations, activities, environments
 - Counts, numbers, test scores
 - Opinions, decisions, observations
 - Stories, narrative, histories
 - Photos, videos, pictures, physical evidence (like art or graffiti)

Definitions *continued*

EVALUATION = systematic collection and analysis of information in order to measure change and answer questions about what contributed to that change

Data, Information, & Evaluation:

WHY BOTHER?

- # Make a case to a funder that we are effective and worth funding
- # Demonstrate to board members that we are working effectively and appropriately according to our mission
- # Demonstrate to families, community, and clients that we are an organization that is capable of really helping them
- # Demonstrate to politicians and the public that our services are helping people
- # Determine for ourselves how effective we are and how we can improve our work

Purpose of Evaluation

- # To document and tell a credible "story" of change that:
 - Describes and explains what happened
 - Provides evidence to others that the change really occurred
 - Makes a case for linking what happened with what we did
 - Contributes knowledge and provides an opportunity to learn from our work

Where does your data reside?

Where does your knowledge hide?

- # On little post-it notes all over my desk
- # In boxes and boxes of dusty case files
- # In piles of forms we asked families to complete and never look at again
- # In a black-hole computer (data goes in but we cannot get anything out of it)
- # Ask my receptionist, she/he knows everything about everyone
- # Ask the university evaluators, they took it all away with them when they left

How do we turn DATA/INFORMATION...

INTO

- # Something we can learn from
- # Something we can use
- # Something we can use to positively change the lives of families

Can we *easily* answer the following questions?

- # How many families did we serve last month?
 - How many of those families were new to us?
 - Were these new families in any way different (different problems, different situations) from families we have served in the past?
 - What is it *exactly* that we did (what specific services did we provide) for each family? (And "how much" service or how many services?)

...and the BIG question...

- # What has happened to the families we have served in the past year?
 - Can we say with certainty that they are better off (i.e., in better situations, experiencing better lives) now than when we first began working with them?
 - Can we demonstrate in any way that our help contributed to the improvement in the lives of these families?

Are we using information...

Effectively?

- We collect all the information we need and we use it often

Powerfully?

- We analyze the information we collect to learn what we do well and what we can do better

Purposefully?

- We are trying to learn how we can better help families to achieve *their* goals
- We are using information to help us and others make better informed choices about how to help families

We collect and analyze data to answer these questions:

- # Can we accurately describe, count and keep track of families we serve?
- # Can we clearly and accurately describe the services we provide each family?
- # Can we measure real changes in the lives of families during the period of time we work with them?
- # Can we "take credit" for contributing to these changes in their lives?
- # Can we learn anything that will help us improve our services for families?

How and what do we measure?

- # Characteristics and conditions of a family when we first come into contact with them (TIME 1)
- # The amount and quality of services we provide the family
- # Characteristics and conditions of a family after services, at a later date, or when they leave our agency (TIME 2)
- # Measure, analyze, and interpret the difference between Time 1 and Time 2
- # Compare the changes in our families with experiences of other families
- # (External or environmental changes in the lives of families)

Measuring change

Measuring results

- # Counting, measuring, or quantifying the amount of progress that families have made in their lives in terms of:
 - Increases in income and assets (like homes or savings)
 - Changes in employment or education (like better jobs or higher degree)
 - Changes in conditions in lives of family members (like better relationships, better health, less disease/dysfunction)
 - Changes in the environment (like safer streets or more socially connected neighborhoods)

Results we all want for families *and what families say they want*

- # Increases in employment and income
- # Increases in family assets
- # Increases in family leadership and civic participation
- # Increase in strong social supports and networks
- # Improvements in quality services available to families
- # Increases in school readiness and achievement
- # Improvements in the physical environment of the West Side

How do we measure change?

- # Collect information from families at intake
- # Track services provided by staff (how many, when, how much, how well, complete or incomplete)
- # Collect information (the same types of information) at a later date, like at exit or after the program

WE ARE ALREADY DOING THIS!

⤵ The dirty, secret, scary word is...

EVALUATION

How is this different from what we do now?

- # Collect data regularly and systematically
- # Organize the data so that it can easily be compiled and analyzed
- # Try and use common definitions of what we mean
 - Collect the same data across families and across agencies

How can we get ready?

- # List the changes you expect to see in families you serve (be specific)
 - Families will be healthier and have fewer emergency room visits
 - Families will have stronger relationships with neighbors
 - Families will acquire leadership skills and have the opportunity to lead

How can we get ready?

- # List the changes you expect to see in families you serve (be specific)
- # List the information you would need to determine whether this change occurred
 - Health status (survey, questionnaire, assessment) of family members at entry and exit
 - Record of number of ER visits in past 6 months
 - Record of number of ER visits since services began
 - Health insurance status and history

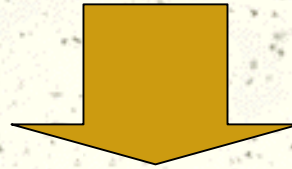
How can we get ready?

- # List the changes you expect to see in families you serve (be specific)
- # List the information you would need to determine whether this change occurred
- # Review all the forms, records, and information you already collect
 - Intake form
 - Exit survey
 - Health survey/assessment form
 - Information from ER/clinics (requires permission of family)

How can we get ready?

- # List the changes you expect to see in families you serve (be specific)
- # List the information you would need to determine whether this change occurred
- # Review all the forms, records, and information you already collect
 - Do you collect all the information you need?
 - Do you organize all the information in a way that will make it easy to analyze and summarize?
- # What new sources of information do you need to answer the questions?

DATA



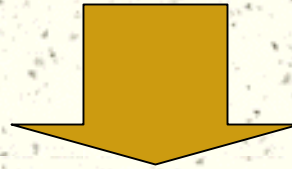
Organize data
Analyze data

INFORMATION



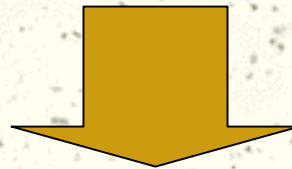
Consider its meaning

KNOWLEDGE



Share knowledge
Learn together

LEARNING



Evaluate ourselves
Apply what we learn

USING OUR LEARNING

To improve our work

To contribute to changes in the
lives of families