ASSESSING COMMUNITY STRENGTHS & ADDRESSING NEEDS
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Goals

• Overview of Implementation Process
• Strengths and Needs Assessments as a Component of Exploration
• The Process of Conducting a Strengths & Needs Assessment
• Typical Challenges/Barriers
• How a Strengths and Needs Assessment can Inform Selection of Appropriate Treatments
• Use of a Logic Model
Overview of the Implementation Process
The Role of Implementation Science

• Bridging the gap between knowledge and practice.
• A structured process for changing practice.
• Improving outcomes and sustaining change.
Implementation Stages (NIRN)

**EXPLORATION**
- Assess needs
- Examine Innovations
- Examine Implementation
- Assess fit

**INSTALLATION**
- Acquire resources
- Prepare organization
- Prepare Implementation
- Prepare staff

**INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION**
- Implementation drivers
- Manage change
- Data Systems
- Improvement Cycles

**FULL IMPLEMENTATION**
- Implementation Drivers
- Implementation Outcomes
- Innovation Outcomes
- Standard Practice
Conducting a Strengths & Needs Assessment
WORD CLOUD ACTIVITY

WORD CLOUD #1
What do you think is the most important strength of your community?

WORD CLOUD #2
What's the significant mental health need or challenge your community is facing?
What is a strengths & needs assessment?

• A strengths & needs assessment helps you determine what must be accomplished to reach your project goals

• Serves as tools for decision making, resource allocation, and reaching program goals

(National Institute for Children’s Health Quality)
Identifying Strengths and Needs of a Bounded System

Strengths

• Individuals, organizations, institutions, services, supports and community resources that can be utilized to improve the quality of life in a community.

Needs

• The gap between what is and what should be. Can be felt by individuals, families, groups or an entire community.
Starting the Process

• Who is asking the questions?
• Who should be at the table?
  • Funders
  • Government agencies
  • Community members / Families
  • Providers / Community agencies
  • Implementation team
  • Faith-based institutions
  • Others
Asking the Right Questions

• The questions we ask and how we ask them may influence the answer/outcome

• Are our goals predetermined?

• Are we asking questions that only support our predetermined goals?

• Do the questions we ask support implicit bias?

• How do we ensure that the questions we ask are inclusive and help us identify the true strengths and needs of the community?
Understanding the Local Context

COMMUNITY

• Describe the strengths and needs with input from various constituents in the community
  • Identify strategies to ensure that community voices are heard.

• Ask question that help describe the community. Describe what matters to people in the community:
  • Issues people care about
  • How important these issues are to the community

• Describe the sources and quality of information
Is it a good fit?
How to conduct a strengths and needs assessment?

Clearly define your assessment objectives

- Ask:
  - Why are you conducting the assessment?
  - What do you plan to do with the findings?
- Helps identify:
  - assessment activities
  - determine knowledge, intentions, assets, and barriers

(National Institute for Children’s Health Quality)
Types of data

Types of data, kinds of information it provides (& pros and cons)

• Quantitative
  • Administrative/archival
  • Survey

• Qualitative
  • Interviews
  • Focus groups
How to conduct a needs assessment?

What data already exists and what data must be gathered?

• Work with government agencies and community partners to identify sources of data
  • What data sources already exist that can be mined?
  • What is the quality of the data?
• Conducting a service scan, what resources currently exist in the community?
• Are there questions that the existing data sources cannot answer?
• Do not need to “re-invent the wheel”
Service Array Development Best Practices

1. Assess Population Needs
2. Prioritize: Populations/Needs
3. Inventory Services-Identify Strengths & Gaps
4. Prioritize: Service Gaps
5. Select Services to Fill Gaps
What is the Quality of Data Being Used?
What impact has the COVID pandemic had on need?

- Unprecedented historical factors
- Significant anticipated needs
- Safety net not functioning
- Children falling through cracks
- How to assess impact on families?
How to conduct a strengths & needs assessment?

Be realistic about your resources and capacity
- What time, money, and staff capacity are available that can be devoted to needs assessment?

Identify target audiences and data sources
- Consider the target audiences and data sources that will help you assess your strengths and needs;
- Consider contextual and cultural factors;
- Sometimes you’ll need several strategies to collect data for a range of stakeholders;
- Consider competing priorities of your target audience and how to encourage participation.
How to conduct a strengths & needs assessment?

When summarizing results “Think Small and Big”

• Summarize and reflect on data for each of your needs assessment objectives individually;
• Think about themes that may apply to multiple needs assessment activities, which may help inform priorities for action.

Get Feedback

• Include community members, colleagues, funders, project partners; community providers and other target audiences;
• Important to engage community members as equal partners in understanding and translating results from the needs assessment;
• A participatory process ensures that the people most affected by the program will have power in determining its design.
How to conduct a needs assessment?

Are underrepresented voices being heard?

• How do we ensure that the needs of community members are considered?
• How to we give voice to vulnerable populations and families in need?
• How have services and supports historically overlooked the needs of the community?
• How do we ensure that our efforts to assess strengths and needs are culturally and linguistically competent?
• How do we ensure that non-traditional community-based strengths and supports are identified?
BREAKOUT ~ 12 MIN

In your breakout, please discuss the following three questions:

1) Are the needs of underrepresented members of your community being heard?
2) What strategies can be used to be sure all voices are heard as you consider community strengths and needs?
3) Provide examples of how you can actively respond to their needs.
CASE EXAMPLE

• County of San Diego created a *Community Action Plan*
  • Identified and assessed needs and resources in the community and established a detailed plan, goals, and priorities for delivering those services to individuals and families.
  • Collected data about region, including demographics such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, language, total number of residents under the age of 16, poverty levels, etc.
  • Collected information about different community and countywide needs, including: youth programs, housing, gang activity, community engagement, access to healthy food, infrastructure, improvement, employment, and transportation.
Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Evidence2Success Model & Rhode Island Youth Cabinet Partnership

**Purpose:** Invest public resources in Providence, RI’s communities’ priorities (3 focus neighborhoods)

**Assessed:** Youth risk and protective factors within 5 outcome domains: antisocial; sexual behavior; substance use; emotional well-being and education

**Data:** Evidence2Success Youth Survey administered to 8,000+ students in 5th, 6th, 8th, 10th & 12th grades
The Youth Experience Survey Drives the Priority Setting Process Between Systems and Communities

"I see some programs that have worked…teen pregnancy, cigarette smoking. How do we apply these mechanisms to the areas of need: school attendance and delinquency?"

“We see one in five kids considering suicide….Though not different from the district, is this okay?"

“There is a clear pattern of disengagement from school. Absences, suspensions, dropout, delinquency are all outcomes that seem high….”

Key Takeaways

- Identifies links between various indicators and outcomes
- Shows correlation between home, school, and community domains
- Demonstrates how impacts in one area may have a positive effect in other areas
- Validates community and systems concerns
The Youth Experience Survey Drives the Priority Setting Process Between Systems and Communities

### Key Takeaways
- Highlights positive outcomes and areas of strength in communities and district
- Identifies similar challenges across communities and district
- Highlights unique areas of focus for community-specific strategies

### Evidence-Based Outcomes — High School (Grades 10 and 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School Outcome</th>
<th>West End</th>
<th>South Providence/Jelmwood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency Past Year</td>
<td>27% n/a n/a</td>
<td>32% n/a n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Belonged to a Gang</td>
<td>6% 1% -6%</td>
<td>6% 1% -6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever had Sexual Intercourse</td>
<td>44% 14% 8%</td>
<td>47% 53% 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risky Sexual Behavior Past Year</td>
<td>36% 40% 4%</td>
<td>49% 49% 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking Past Month</td>
<td>9% 14% 6%</td>
<td>5% 14% 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Past Month</td>
<td>43% 35% -8%</td>
<td>35% 35% -2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or More Drinks in a Row Past 2 Weeks</td>
<td>22% 20% -5%</td>
<td>20% 20% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana Past Month</td>
<td>18% 20% 2%</td>
<td>18% 20% 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms of Anxiety/Depression Past Year</td>
<td>20% 14% -6%</td>
<td>21% 14% -6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered Suicide Past Year</td>
<td>15% 15% 4%</td>
<td>11% 15% 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Emotional Regulation Past Year</td>
<td>20% n/a n/a</td>
<td>26% n/a n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Failing Grades Past Year</td>
<td>18% 15% 11%</td>
<td>17% 5% -5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended or Expelled Past Year</td>
<td>36% 11% 4%</td>
<td>20% 11% -11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Graduated within 4 Years*</td>
<td>35% n/a n/a</td>
<td>35% n/a n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absent 10% or More of Enrolled Days</td>
<td>64% n/a n/a</td>
<td>64% n/a n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ Sick Days in Past Month</td>
<td>12% 12% 1%</td>
<td>12% 12% 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever had ADD/ADHD</td>
<td>11% 12% 1%</td>
<td>9% 12% 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data only available at the high school level distribution.
**A negative number denotes that Providence has a higher prevalence of the problem behavior than the comparison point.
A Strategy for Data Collection: Geo-Mapping

- Using local data can help programs monitor performance, evaluate programming, engage stakeholders, make decision, and develop responses to family needs.

- Geo-mapping is a systematic way of collecting community data and visually describing community assets as well as challenges/deficits.

- Programs can use geo-mapping to examine child welfare data to examine the geographic distribution of child welfare indicators.
  - i.e., abuse and neglect rates, out-of-home placements, exposure to trauma, available placements.
Geo-mapping examples

• Using Geographic Information Systems software to map the rates of occurrence for various levels of child welfare system contact
  • California Child Welfare Indicators Project
• Using a data map to display trends in child welfare data alongside socioeconomic data and service data for substance use, domestic violence and home visiting
  • New Jersey Child Welfare Data Map
• Annual health profiles report rates of confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect by ZIP code across the county
  • San Antonio Metropolitan Health District in Bexar County, Texas
Frameworks for Community Health and Well-Being

- Examples of strategies that have been developed to reflect community health and well-being and monitor community needs, progress and strengths:
  - County Health Rankings and Road Maps
  - Healthy Communities Assessment Tool
  - Healthy People 2020
  - Kids Count
  - Measure of America

https://www.casey.org/what-we-do/research-analysis/data/geo-analysis-applications-frameworks/
Challenges & Barriers
Challenges & Barriers

CHILD WELFARE

History
Limited Resources
Overburdened workforce
Operating in crisis mode
Leadership
Buy-in
Value and utility

Lack of knowledge or expertise
Capacity
Motivation
Time
Competing Mandates
Bureaucracy
Political Agendas
Selecting Appropriate Treatments & Consideration of Fit

One size does NOT fit all
Selecting Appropriate Treatments

Needs of the community and children in the system
E.g. Trauma-focused care and treatment

Risk Factors for children in the system
E.g. Community Violence

Best evidence-based practices to treat these needs
E.g. TF-CBT or PCIT

Do state systems of care have the capacity to learn and implement these practices?
E.g. Financial Resources
Community Resources
Staffing

Considerations for Practice Implementation
E.g. Data Infrastructure and Data Sharing

Appropriate Modifications
E.g. Translation
Consideration of Fit: Child Welfare

• Ensure the interventions are evidence-based and targeted to respond to identified needs
• Ensure intervention aligns with community, regional, state and federal priorities and initiatives
• Ensure the intervention is culturally and linguistically appropriate
• Assess the intervention’s alignment with organizational structure and culture
• Assess initial capacity to deliver the intervention
• Assess ongoing capacity to deliver the intervention
Consideration of Fit: Child Welfare

• Has the intervention been designed specifically to assist in child welfare programs?
  • If not, has there been any research done about the efficacy of using that intervention to assist in child welfare programs?
  • If there is no evidence, does the intervention target specific issues and concerns having to do with child welfare? (i.e. accessibility, sustainability, etc.)
  • Are adaptations necessary and/or possible to address the specific concerns for child welfare programs?
Using a Logic Model
What is a Logic Model?

“A systematic and visual way to present and share your understanding of the relationships among resources you have to operate your program or initiative including the activities you plan and the change or results you hope to achieve.”
Basics of a Logic Model

- Purpose
- Inputs (Community Needs/Assets)
- Activities
- Outputs
- Outcomes
- Effects

- Logic models are flexible and do not have to be linear
Example of Logic Model
Benefits of Using a Logic Model

- Integrate planning, implementation, and evaluation
- Prevent mismatches between activities and effects
- Leverage the power of partnerships
- Enhance accountability
- Help planners set priorities for allocating resources
- Reveal data needs and provide framework for interpreting results
- Enhance learning by integrating research and practice wisdom
- Define a shared language and shared vision for community change
Summary

- Strengths and Needs Assessment as a critical component of the implementation process.
- Strategies and considerations for conducting Strengths and Needs Assessments in the community
- Common barriers
- Use of Logic Models
- Using the Strength and Needs Assessment to inform program selection and goodness of fit.
Our Next Workshop!

May 13, 2:30 PM EST
Differentiating & Selecting Among Evidence-Based Programs to Find One that Fits
Learn more: https://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/ebp-webinars/
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https://lgbtqequity.org/affirm/

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THANK YOU FOR JOINING!