NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT COALITION
Resource Sharing Project

Getting Ready: Helping Local Programs Prepare Internally For Evaluation

Evaluation is a mindful and planned effort to capture the meaning and impact of our work; our results can help future practitioners in their efforts to prevent sexual violence and support survivors' healing. Evaluation also helps keep us ethical and accountable to the communities and programs we serve. The tips within this resource are meant as a starting place to begin creating an intentional evaluative practice within your coalition and while working with local community-based sexual violence programs. As part of a three-part toolkit, this resource will focus on questions and processes that will build a strong foundation for evaluation: internal buy-in, narrowing focus or scope, and planning appropriate activities with available resources.

Cultivating Interest & Buy-In:

Evaluation can and should be empowering for staff and survivors. Making sure folks are on board from the beginning is the best way to ensure that it is the case. In order to cultivate buy-in, there are some of questions we ask ourselves and our program staff when embarking on the evaluation adventure:

- Who are the critical stakeholders who will be impacted by either the process of evaluating or the results of the evaluation?
- How are we ensuring that our process acknowledges the barriers that those stakeholders may have regarding evaluation? How can we use the process to meet their needs, so that all parties are served through the evaluation?
- What ways can we include them in the planning, implementation, analysis, and dissemination of the results?

 Direct service providers may feel uncomfortable with the idea of collecting evaluations or associate evaluation with invasive questions asked of survivors in crisis. It is important to include providers in conversations about creating a process that is empowering to survivors and has outcomes that are helpful to their work. *What* we want to evaluate drives *how* we evaluate and of whom we ask questions. There are

ways to evaluate services without asking questions of survivors, and there are ways to approach survivor questionnaires that feel supportive and empowering rather than invasive.

Involve your identified stakeholders in the development of tools and come to agreement on what will be evaluated.

Evaluation projects are most successful and sustainable when they are tailored to specific aspects of programming and not uniform across all of an agency's services. Many of the samples included in this publication are just that, examples. For all organizations, an effective evaluation plan is one that reflects the goals and values of the program and community. In culturally and linguistically specific programs, for example, this could mean ensuring that the process of evaluation is aligned with cultural values and language.

Keep stakeholders updated on progress, preliminary results, and analysis of the final results. Seeing their work in the completed products builds buy-in and confidence in the evaluation process. Results are important to maintaining engagement.

When advocates see that the data they helped to collect has produced meaningful or useful insights, they become more committed to the project. Craft the results in language your stakeholders can relate to and appreciate in practice. For example, "We've always known this service was important to survivors and now we have the proof to show our community the value of our work."

Finally, it is important to make this information useful, digestible, and accessible by including a narrative or explanation of what the numbers *mean*. Make sure your reports back to the field are to the point with plenty of white space, bullets, headers, and short paragraphs. Online resources such as Canva and Piktochart offer template, simple graphics and icons, and tutorials to help create visually interesting presentations and reports.

<u>Thinking About Scope:</u>

The possibilities for evaluation are endless, so it's helpful to start with defining what exactly you want to know and the ways results will be used or useful. Clarity and purpose from the start will help focus the evaluation methodology and data collection.

- What do we want to know?
- What is it we are trying to explain? (e.g. Are we interested in outcomes, such as shifts in attitude or changes in behavior or in the strategies, context, or activities that promote successful implementation?)
- What will we do with the results? (e.g. share them with funders, develop technical assistance resources, report to programs on statewide or regional changes, etc.)

There is an evaluation approach to help at any stage in the lifecycle of our agency or program. Different orientations of evaluation might support strengthening or finding innovative solutions to services and infrastructure. You might engage in evaluative efforts with any one or more of the following orientations:

Developmental - You are working on innovative new programming and want to follow its implementation to develop insights. Developmental evaluation can also focus on how organizational processes effect social change over time.

> For example, an organization wants to institute a trauma-informed intake process using an innovative model. The model is instituted, along with regular check-ins to measure changes in session attendance, communication, and to determine if other processes within the organization need to change.

Questions to generate a developmental evaluation plan:

- What are the desired changes?

- Who is involved in making decisions that could impact desired changes?

- What drives decision making within those organizations or entities?

- What values inspire programming?

- What outcomes do we hope will emerge from the various aspects of programming?

Improvement - You want to improve your current programming/efforts.

For example, you sit on a community task force for child abuse prevention and engagement has been waning in the past few months. Folks are not attending meetings or updating members on resources and events. The task force may choose to organize interviews with members at various levels of engagement: regular attendees, members who have attended at least two meetings, and members who haven't attended any meetings in the last six months. Results could assist in developing stronger or clearer roles for task force members, addressing any concerns, and identifying any possible trends in waning participation.

Questions to generate a program improvement plan:

- Who are you reaching? Are they the right people (i.e., the people who most need this programming)?

- How efficient is the delivery of your program?

- Why do people choose to access or not access your program?

Outcomes - You want to make a statement about the overall effectiveness or worth of your programming/efforts, OR you want to figure out which aspects of your current programming/efforts have the most or least impact on your target population.

For example, your program holds a closed eight-week support groups for male survivors of sexual assault. Part of the pre-screening and exit interview process could be asking about well-being, self-esteem, and connectedness as a result of topics and activities within the support group.

Questions for getting at outcomes or impacts:

- Are you reaching your stated outcomes? To what extent?

- Which components of programming seem to be most or least impactful toward these outcomes?

Resist the urge to collect data outside the scope of the plan or data you will not use. Plan for how you will analyze, interpret, and use data from the very beginning. You may want to collect certain information, but not have the resources to make sense of it or take action on it. If it's just something you want to know but you don't know how it will serve you, it shouldn't be collected.

The best way to show how much you respect your participants and partners in evaluation is to put the results to use and share what was learned. For example, if you ask a support group participant if the host facility is conveniently and safely located, you have to be prepared to make change based on responses. If you know your agency does not have the money for an alternate group location right now, let participants know that you plan to use the data for a new grant proposal. Whether or not you get the grant, participants should know you are using this data for a reason. If you do get the grant, let them know that they contributed!

Making evaluation work on any budget:
Evaluation is still possible on a shoestring budget. Staff should have the skills and be able to implement evaluation in a way that doesn't sacrifice quality or rigor (which we'll define here as the methodical adherence to a known or proven process or procedure). Many agencies don't have dedicated funding to spend on evaluation but are still motivated to measure and improve the work they are doing. Although a healthy evaluation budget allows an agency to do more rigorous, robust evaluation, not everyone has those resources, and not all of our evaluative questions require this level of rigor. As we are planning to evaluate, we must consider:

- What do we have the capacity and resources to do?
- What are the resources?
- What are the barriers?
- What support do we have from within the organization and from other key stakeholders?

Evaluative processes and thinking can be built into the existing agency structure without the infusion of additional resources, other than the time it takes to plan for shifting a little bit of energy in the direction of data collection and use. If you think about evaluation as both ongoing learning and as storytelling, you'll begin to see ways to seamlessly weave it into your current work. This might involve becoming more systematic about the way you collect and use information gleaned from program participants and community members. Additionally, you can always use materials that

have already been developed by other agencies, assuming those materials meet your needs and feel comfortable to all stakeholders. There might not be a need to reinvent any wheels or design your own process. If you have universities in your area, consider asking them to help you build your internal capacity to think in evaluative terms and engage in evaluation work.

Asking invasive questions doesn't have to be part of your evaluation process. Embrace your creativity! See the data all around you. Get out of the pre/post and paper/pencil evaluation box. There are many ways to conduct evaluation. Advocates have a lot of information in their daily work and can document observations in helpful ways using checklists and qualitative data. It's not necessary for everything to live up to the standards of academic research or even to the standards of evaluation practice as presented in textbooks. Strive for the level of rigor that supports results with reasonable certainty that you are answering your primary evaluation questions.

Some examples of creative and affordable evaluation techniques include:

- Using free online software (such as Survey Monkey or Google Forms) to do annual surveys of multi-disciplinary teams or other stakeholders to measure perceived effectiveness and impact, and developing training and resources based on the results. Even the free version of these allows you to create charts and graphs of your results.

- Adapting existing client satisfaction, empowerment, and/or outcome surveys and implementing them utilizing free online software. These can be administered to longer-term clients, support group clients, and more, and can often be done by the client themselves to minimize data entry;

- Integrating evaluation into prevention program activities, in order to immediately measure the effectiveness of curricula

- Conducting annual focus groups or online surveys with staff at rape crisis centers to determine the most valued and impactful coalition programming;

- Adapt existing systems checklists, or create your own, to measure whether best practices are being met in internal or related systems (such as at SANE exams),

then track them in a simple Excel document. Remember to have the buy-in of any external partners you may be working with!

- Conduct observation (where appropriate) of team meetings, prevention programs, or other efforts, using simple rubrics to ensure that key elements are included;

- Look at your regular data collection with different or new questions. There's a lot of useful data in your filing cabinets right now.

- Conduct focus groups of teachers or adult advisors annually to measure the perceived impact on student behavior of prevention programming;

- The possibilities are endless!

About this Resource

This publication is a collaborative project of the Resource Sharing Project Evaluation Workgroup. It is for coalitions who know service evaluation is important and struggle with the daunting task of designing and sustaining evaluation of their own efforts, as well as rape crisis systems and services. These collective thoughts aim to focus on how we can collect and showcase the great work of the anti-sexual violence movement.

Evaluation Resource Roundup

Knowing is Half the Battle
Resource Sharing Project
http://resourcesharingproject.org/attachments/375_SASP-Program%20Evaluation.pdf
This publication discusses the benefits and creative possibilities in program evaluation and looks at doing evaluation that is practical, respectful, and innovative. It includes resources for starting your own program evaluation.

Listening to Our Communities: Assessment Toolkit (SADI)
National Sexual Violence Resource Center and Resource Sharing Project
http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications-toolkits/listening-our-communities-assessment-toolkit
This toolkit from the National Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative focuses on key tools and skills for conducting community assessments in order to strengthen services for sexual assault survivors. It is written specifically for multi-service programs, but will be useful for most victim service programs.

Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative (SADI) eNewsletter, Winter 2014
National Sexual Violence Resource Center and Resource Sharing Project
http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/nsvrc_publications_sadi-newsletter-winter-2014_0.pdf
This edition of the SADI eNewsletter shows how your organization can listen to the communities and use this information to shape community-driven sexual assault services. Learn more about how SADI Project Sites engaged in the community assessment process and access tools designed to help organizations conduct their own community assessments.

Activity-Based Assessment: Integrating Evaluation into Prevention Curricula
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault and The Texas Council on Family Violence
Publication: http://www.taasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Activity-Based-Assessment-Toolkit-Final.pdf
Podcast: http://www.preventconnect.org/2014/12/activity-based-evaluation-a-tool-for-change/
As a facilitator of social- and behavioral-change-oriented curricula, you have the opportunity to notice and document growth and change like few others at your organization. This toolkit will help you take a fresh look at your curricula and educational materials to develop simple strategies to assess your participants' understanding of the material and their ability to apply the knowledge they have gained.

Evaluating the Initiative
Community Tool Box
http://ctb.ku.edu/en/evaluating-initiative
This toolkit aids in developing an evaluation of a community program or initiative.

evaluACTION
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/index.php/evaluaction/
evaluACTION is designed for people interested in learning about program evaluation and how to apply it to their work. Evaluation is a process, one dependent on what you're currently doing and on the direction in which you'd like go.

Jennifer Grove on One Practitioner's Journey to Embrace Evaluation
American Evaluation Association: A Tip-a-Day for Evaluators
http://aea365.org/blog/jennifer-grove-on-one-practitioners-journey-to-embrace-evaluation/
Evaluation has been an area of interest for programs for several years now, as many non-profit organizations are tasked with showing funders that sexual violence prevention work is valuable. But how do you provide resources and training on a subject that you don't quite understand yourself?

Coalition Spotlights:

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
Victim Service Program Evaluation

Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs
Healing Voices Project: Procedures for Evaluating Counseling and Advocacy Services (Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs)