Technology for Research, Evaluation and Measure Development with Complex, Multisite Community Initiatives

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Responding to Evolving Evaluation Needs in a Comprehensive Early Childhood Initiative

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What is First 5?

◘ The 1998 California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10), enacted January, 1999
◘ Funding from tax on tobacco products
◘ Promote and improve the early development of children from prenatal to age 5
◘ Support new services and enhance existing programs (not supplant)
◘ County-administered to meet local needs
◘ Most counties act as grant-makers

First 5 Santa Barbara County

◘ Funding: ~$4-5 million annually
◘ Direct Services Initiatives
  • Early Care and Education
  • Early Childhood Oral Health
  • Early Childhood Mental Health & Other Special Needs
  • Family Support
  • Newborn Home Visiting
  • School Readiness

Family Support Initiative

FSI—Overview

◘ 9 Funded Programs (~$1 million annually)
  • 7 Family Resource Centers/Programs
  • 1 Health Linkages Program
  • 1 Information and Referral Center
◘ Service Strategies
  • Case Management, Quick Referrals, I&R
  • Parenting Education, Support Groups
  • Family Literacy
  • Basic Needs & Enrollment Assistance
FSI—Evaluation Context

- Most programs funded 5+ years
- Participatory planning process
- Challenges
  - Value of evaluation v. direct service
  - Time, training & expertise, accountability
  - Outcomes notoriously difficult to measure
    - Are we measuring the right thing?
    - Are they understandable and impactful?

Participants

- All programs
  - 893 children; 427 parents
  - 80% Hispanic/Latino; 80%+ Spanish speaking
- Services
  - Case management: 4,219 hours
  - Resource linkages: 4,205 hours + 2,200 contacts
  - Parenting education: 780 hours + 270 classes
  - and more...

Findings

Family Development Matrix

- Subsample
  - 161 families receiving case management
  - Average interval between pretest and posttest: 171 days
- Domains
  - Child Health
  - Social-Emotional Health & Competence
  - Family Relations—Parenting
  - Child Education & Development
  - Adult Education & Development
  - Employment
  - Food & Nutrition
- Ratings
  - 5-point rating from "In Crisis" to "Thriving"
  - Operationally defined rubric

Child Health Domain

- Pretest mean: 2.94
- Posttest mean: 3.54
- Paired comparison t-test: t(160) = 5.97; p < .001
### Child Health Domain

**Pretest**

- In Crisis: 1
- At Risk: 2
- Stable: 3
- Safe/ Self-Sufficient: 4
- Thriving: 5

**Posttest**

- In Crisis: 1
- At Risk: 2
- Stable: 3
- Safe/ Self-Sufficient: 4
- Thriving: 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Crisis</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Risk</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe/ Self-Sufficient</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>69</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Number of families “In Crisis” reduced from 23 to 1
- 7 families improved from “In Crisis” to “Thriving”
  - 39% of families improved at least 1 level;
  - 23% improved 2+ levels;
  - 9% declined 1+ level

### Social-Emotional Health & Competence

- Pretest mean: 3.02
- Posttest mean: 3.37

**Paired comparison t-test:**

- \( t(153) = 4.04; p < .001 \)

### Family Relations–Parenting

- Pretest mean: 2.97
- Posttest mean: 3.47

**Paired comparison t-test:**

- \( t(156) = 7.06; p < .001 \)

### Child Development & Education

- Pretest mean: 2.90
- Posttest mean: 3.21

**Paired comparison t-test:**

- \( t(143) = 4.77; p < .001 \)

### Adult Education & Development

- Pretest mean: 2.45
- Posttest mean: 2.87

**Paired comparison t-test:**

- \( t(146) = 5.79; p < .001 \)
Impact

- Families
  - Easy to understand, more meaningful
- Program personnel
  - More intuitive, easier to use
  - Buy-in, relevant to service provision
  - Higher likelihood for sustained use
  - Meaningful outcomes
- Funders and other stakeholders
  - Buy-in, resonance
  - More communication power

Family Development Matrix

- Developed and published by
  Institute of Community Collaborative Studies (ICCS),
  California State University, Monterey Bay


- URL: http://hhspp.csumb.edu/community/matrix/index.htm