

Framework for Integrating Formative and Summative Evaluation Functions

Ana Maria Brannan, Ph.D.
Center for Evaluation and Program Improvement
Vanderbilt University

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Purpose

To present a framework to guide the integration of formative and summative functions of evaluation in children's mental health services research.

To illustrate the application of the framework using an example from a currently funded system of care

Formative Evaluation

Formative assess is designed to collect, analyze and interpret information for the purpose of improving practice, procedures, and/or system performance.

Types of questions that can be addressed through formative evaluation include

- What is the quality of treatment?
- What are the procedural barriers to access to care?
- How do clients perceive the usefulness of the services they receive?
- Do CMHS funded communities function in a way that embodies system of care principles?
- Why do some clients terminate service prematurely?
- What training methods lead to greater fidelity to the treatment model?

Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation aims to improve the knowledge base, providing evidence of the effectiveness of one intervention over another, usually by using information collected longitudinally.

Types of questions that can be addressed through summative evaluation include:

- Does a given treatment have better child clinical outcomes than treatment as usual?
- Which program works best for improving family outcomes?
- Does greater adherence to the treatment model lead to better clinical outcomes for children?
- Does the intervention result in less juvenile justice recidivism?
- Do intensive in home services reduce out of home placements for children?

Formative vs. Summative Functions

Tension emerge when formative evaluation efforts compromise summative functions, and vice versa. As a result of this tension, many practitioners and policymakers find that the work of evaluation researchers does not inform their decisions, and evaluation researchers devalue local efforts to understand service and system as unscientific (c.f., Rossi & Freeman, 1993; Kapp & Stipp, 2008).

- Families, practitioners, administrators, treatment developers and policy makers often want answers to different questions
- What constitutes evidence differs depending on the question, the consumer of the information, and the purpose of the information
- To make evaluation scientifically rigorous, we often compromise its utility for families and practitioners
- Relevance is in the eyes of the beholder

Levels and Stages of Assessment

Levels of assessment relate to the ecologic and transactional nature of children's lives

- Child
- Family
- Provider and/or service
- System

Stages of assessment refer to the "distance" from the event designed to achieve the desired goal

- Immediate (assessment of a critical event)
- Proximal (assessment of broader program activities)
- Distal (assessment of ultimate impact)

Framework for Integrating Formative and Summative Assessment

| | Stage of Assessment | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|--|---|
| | Formative | | Summative | |
| | Immediate | Proximal | Distal and/or Aggregated | |
| Level of Assessment | Youth | Care of an individual child in a single event | Information aggregated over time and/or across youth | Examine long term impact on children served across agency and over time |
| | Family | Care of and/or interaction with individual family in a single event | Information aggregated over time and/or across families | Examine long term impact on families served across agency and over time |
| | Service/ provider | Individual or team of providers' care of an individual child and family in a single event | Information aggregated over time and/or across youth and providers | Examine long term impact on children served across agency and over time |
| | System | Focus on an individual system activity | Assess changes in processes to meet system goals | Examine impact of system activities on system goals (e.g., reducing out of home placements) |

Framework for Integrating Formative and Summative Assessment

| | Stage of Assessment/Evaluation | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | Formative | | Summative | |
| | Immediate | Proximal | Distal and/or Aggregated | |
| Level of Assessment/Evaluation | Youth | • Involvement in treatment planning | • Adherence to treatment plan over time and across youth | • Relationship between treatment plan involvement and child outcome |
| | Family | • Need for family support services | • Planned versus received support services across families | • Relationship between receipt of support services and family outcomes |
| | Service/ provider | | | |
| | System | | | |

Framework for Integrating Formative and Summative Assessment

| | Stage of Assessment/Evaluation | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| | Formative | | Summative | |
| | Immediate | Proximal | Distal and/or Aggregated | |
| Level of Assessment/Evaluation | Youth | | | |
| | Family | | | |
| | Service/ provider | • Fidelity to evidence based treatment model | • Overall shift in practice • Maintenance of treatment fidelity over time | • Relationship between EBT fidelity and child/family outcomes |
| | System | | | |

Framework for Integrating Formative and Summative Assessment

| | Stage of Assessment/Evaluation | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|
| | Formative | | Summative | |
| | Immediate | Proximal | Distal and/or Aggregated | |
| Level of Assessment/Evaluation | Youth | | | |
| | Family | | | |
| | Service/ provider | | | |
| | System | • Multiple agency involvement in system governance | • Shared funding across agencies | • Relationship between shared funding and sustainability |

Feedback: When and to Whom

Type and timing of feedback is tailored for the stage of assessment

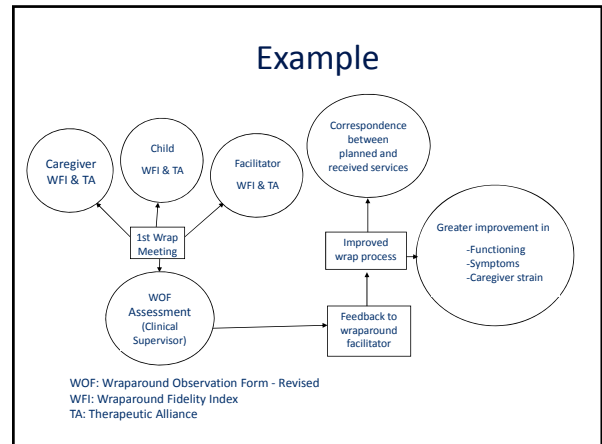
- Immediate stage calls for quick feedback to those involved in the event in order to impact the care provided to youth and families at that time
- Proximal stage has a longer feedback loop (i.e., weeks or months) because more time is needed to collect information over time and to aggregate information across families, providers, and agencies. At this stage, aggregation of information helps with confidentiality issues (e.g., when youth and families are asked to rate their provider)
- Distal stage has a long loop (i.e., months or years) because it requires time to collect information on the impact of activities from a sufficient number of informants, manage and analyze data, and develop dissemination materials. Methods are more rigorous at this stage, an often involves to be some form of comparison.

Example from a Funded System of Care Community

commUNITY cares is providing evidence supported treatments to youth with severe emotional disorders with substance misuse.

The purpose of this endeavor is to

- Use a systematic process to assess fidelity to the wraparound treatment planning approach
- Provide feedback about model fidelity in routine clinical supervision
- Assess whether feedback led to improved wraparound process
- Examine whether better wraparound was related to better clinical outcomes for youth and families



Summary

- Stages and levels of assessment need to be carefully considered when planning evaluation activities
- Need to consider the consumers of the information
- Timing of feedback depends on the stage of assessment
- Feedback is only helpful if it is useful and used