



**HARVARD FAMILY
RESEARCH PROJECT**

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Emerging Strategies in Evaluating Child and Family Services

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From the Director's Desk

Heather B. Weiss
Director, HFRP

In 15 months, we will each, in our own way, mark the beginning of a new century — indeed, a new millennium. The stock-taking and foreshadowing have already begun as conversations, public debates, and articles and analyses focus on how far we have come and what the future might hold.

This issue of *The Evaluation Exchange* is the first of two which discuss new themes for evaluation in the 21st century. Our focus in this issue — new voices, new methods, new relationships — reminds us that ours is an

ever-changing field and one which always provides new challenges as well as new opportunities.

In this issue, we have brought together a selection of articles that provide a variety of perspectives and provocative and thoughtful ideas about where evaluation is heading. Our Theory and Practice section highlights the experiences of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Evaluation Grants Program, an innovative foundation-sponsored evaluation approach that rethinks the traditional program-evaluator relationship and offers the promise of enabling us to learn better about what works and what does not. We include an article by Jim Sanders of the Evaluation Institute in our Promising Practices section. Sanders discusses the utility of cluster evaluation as a way to examine multiple programs. In our Questions and Answers section, evaluator, educator, and author Carol Weiss shares her thoughts about what the next century might mean for the field of evaluation, the training of evaluators, and the connection between evaluation and policymaking. In our Beyond Basic Training section, we highlight three innovative approaches to including stakeholders in the design and implementation of evaluations. Stan Schneider from Metis Associates writes about using students as ethnographers in a study of a family resource center; Betty Cooke of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning describes Minnesota's experiences using program staff as data collectors; and Cheryl Fish-Parcham of Families USA and Theresa Shivers of

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United Planning Organization/Head Start write about using client families in a study of managed health care. Our Spotlight section features an article by Tom Gais of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, which discusses the use of information technology in welfare reform. In our Evaluations to Watch section, we revisit an evaluation tool used by the Asian Neighborhood Design, which was featured in a previous issue (Vol III, No. 1), and which is now being used to examine welfare reform efforts in San Francisco. In our Electronic Mailbox and New and Noteworthy sections, we provide information on current resources, with a particular focus on toolkits to assist with evaluation.

We have also enclosed a reader survey and I encourage all of you to share your thoughts with us. Since the inception of the newsletter, we have worked to provide an interactive forum to share innovative evaluation ideas and practices. In the coming years, we hope to continue to meet this need, and we would greatly appreciate your comments about how we can best do so.

As this century draws to a close, no doubt all of us working in the field of child and family services will reflect on what we have accomplished, what we have learned, and how we move into the next century with renewed energy and enthusiasm. The discussion about where evaluation is heading is an important one, and we plan to continue contributing to the conversation. ♦

For information on submitting articles to *The Evaluation Exchange*, please call (617) 495-9108 or visit our Web site: <http://hugse1.harvard.edu/~hfrp/eval>

Learning from the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Evaluation Grants Program

In 1993, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched its three-year Evaluation Grants Program. This program, which supported the evaluation activities of organizations working in the area of family support, differed from traditional foundation-funded evaluation in three fundamental ways. First, it established a partnership that involved shared power between an organization and an external evaluator. Organization staff selected the evaluator and participated actively in the evaluation. Second, the Grants Program emphasized both process and outcome studies. Third, in the evaluation process, it fostered broad participation of organization staff beyond the director level. In establishing this program, the Foundation sought to enable organization staff to learn more about their programs, to contribute to understanding in the broader field of family support, and to determine whether this new approach could be a model for future Foundation funding for evaluation.

Three organizations carried out evaluations as part of the Grants Program: the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park (Brooklyn, New York); Kaleidoscope (Chicago, Illinois); and the Center for Successful Child Development (Chicago, Illinois). While each of these organizations differed in the specific programs they provided, they were similar in their overall family support focus and their commitment to evaluation.

To learn more about the Grants Program approach, the Foundation commissioned HFRP to discuss the program with the evaluators and organization staff and to document the results. This work took place in two stages. First, HFRP conducted two telephone focus groups, one each with the evaluators and the organization staff. The purpose of these focus groups was to obtain preliminary insights and thoughts that would help to shape an agenda for a roundtable discussion of the issues. In early February 1998, organization staff, evaluators, and staff from the

Foundation and HFRP met to discuss and reflect on what had worked, what had not worked, and how the approach might look different in the future. A summary of that discussion follows.

A Model for Foundation-Funded Evaluation

- *Flexibility has been the greatest strength of the Grants Program*

Organization staff and evaluators stressed that the flexibility inherent in the Grants Program was its greatest strength. Organization staff expressed dissatisfaction with past evaluations because staff had not had an influence on the evaluation process and thus, the findings often lacked relevance for them. They appreciated that the Grants Program allowed them to select the evaluators and work closely with them to ensure that their questions about their programs were answered. Evaluators welcomed the opportunity to respond directly to the information needs of the organization staff, and in doing so, were able to innovate with new evaluation designs and instruments.

While flexibility has been vital to the success of this program, some guidance and structure can be helpful. Organizations funding this approach need to consider how much guidance and structure they should provide in managing issues of control and responsibilities between the two groups. It is important that evaluators and organization staff understand the purpose of the evaluation in the same way; this means the funding agency must clearly communicate its expectations for the evaluation.

- *Conducting simultaneous process and outcome evaluations has advantages and disadvantages*

For organization staff, simultaneous process and outcome evaluations enabled staff to obtain both immediate feedback that is valuable to their work as well as

information on outcomes in order to respond to demands for accountability. The concern, however, is that it often takes time to demonstrate outcomes. From the evaluators' view, there is a need to spend time up front to become thoroughly familiar with the program, as well as to gain the trust of staff and build the relationships necessary to conduct a useful evaluation. These initial steps, some argue, make it more desirable to spend time focusing on the process first, and the outcomes later. However, within one organization, there may be programs conducive to a simultaneous study of process and outcomes, while for others, a greater understanding of the program may be necessary before a study of outcomes is useful.

One approach might be for sponsoring organizations to consider a two-stage approach to evaluation funding. They may wish to fund a larger set of programs for process evaluations and then choose a subset of those for funding outcome evaluations. This approach provides the added benefit of determining whether a "fit" exists between evaluator and program before moving onto a focus on outcomes.

• *Opportunities to share ideas and experiences are important to the evaluation process*

Participants noted the value of being part of a network within which to share experiences, problem-solve, and learn about each others' practices. These discussions need to begin early in the process. They can include targeted evaluation advice from outside experts but should also provide the opportunity for evaluators to share their insights, practices, and even instruments with one another. Forums for organization staff are also important. This would provide staff the opportunity to discuss common concerns about using information to build reflective practice, developing new tools, and innovating in practice. Bringing together organization staff and evaluators on a regular basis, perhaps annually, would enable them all to engage in a much broader discussion of the evaluation process and its usefulness.

• *Some organizations may benefit more from this approach than others*

Participants noted that there are certain organizational characteristics that might

make some organizations better suited than others to an approach like that of the Grants Program. These include organizations that are willing and able to use data for decision-making; are both proud of where they are but also humble enough to undergo some scrutiny and self-reflection; are risktakers; have experience in their program interventions; and have buy-in and a desire to have research done as well as some understanding of what that means for the organization.

Conducting the Evaluation

• *Engaging staff in the evaluation is key*

The Grants Program facilitated active engagement of organization staff in the evaluation process. Engagement occurred in different ways across the sites, but generally involved selection of the evaluator; formation of research questions; identification of needed data and data collection instruments; and interpretation of results.

• *Relationships have to be nurtured*

While the grants approach changes the evaluator-organization relationship into a potentially more productive one, its success depends greatly on the strength of the relationship. While organization ability to select the evaluator greatly enhances the likelihood of a mutually productive relationship, the relationship needs to be nurtured continually. This requires time and energy and an ongoing negotiation of expectations and roles.

Participants noted that several steps can be taken to help foster a strong evaluator-organization relationship. Organization managers need to be sure to involve their staff members in the evaluation and provide evaluators opportunities to get to know the program and the staff.

Evaluators need actively to listen to, involve, and respect staff; be adaptable and willing to try new approaches; recognize that program experience with evaluation has often been negative and work to improve this; be clear about how much work evaluation involves (Deborah Daro, evaluator of the Center for Successful Child Development noted, "ownership does not minimize the work"); and provide regular feedback to organization staff on the status of the evaluation and its preliminary findings. Both evaluators and staff need to be flexible and willing to listen and communicate. Participants also noted that relationships are strengthened when regular meetings are established and attempts are made to get to

know individuals outside of their roles.

Participants point out that while relationships need to be built and fostered, they are in part luck, and sometimes there simply is not a workable match between the evaluator and the organization. When this occurs, it is important that both parties recognize this and move on. Likewise, the sponsor needs to have sufficient flexibility built into the process, and enough trust in the programs, to reconsider the arrangement.

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• *Both qualitative and quantitative data are necessary*

Organization staff noted that they found both the qualitative and the quantitative data provided from the evaluations to be helpful. The quantitative information has helped them to respond to demands for accountability while qualitative data have provided the in-depth information most useful for program implementation. The inclusion of information about the context in which programs operate, which was provided in one evaluation, has made the evaluation information more meaningful, particularly to external constituents.

Building Learning into Programs

- ***Evaluation can provide program operators the opportunity to reflect on their practice***

Program operators said the evaluation process contributed to an understanding of their practice and ways to improve it. Sister Mary Paul from the Center for Family Life noted, “it provides a way to articulate what is going on in a program, what is missing, and what is underdeveloped.”

Participants noted that the opportunities for reflection can take many forms. For example, an evaluator might use interviews and group meetings to engage staff in a discussion of their practice, or a doctoral student may observe a program and provide feedback to staff enabling them to understand their practice better.

- ***Evaluators can help support and build the capacity for ongoing reflective practice***

Participants noted that there are several things evaluators can do to help support reflective practice among program staff: Engage staff in formulation of evaluation questions and instruments; provide feedback regularly to staff and administrators; engage staff in problem solving and examining why findings are what they are; meet with groups of staff around problem solving (without administrators); and provide training in aspects of evaluation.

- ***Sustainability of evaluation work is a real concern***

Three years after the evaluation Grants Program started, organization staff find that they still have many more questions they would like answered. The evaluations have pointed to new areas for study beyond the evaluation grants period. Peg Hess, evaluator of the Center for Family Life stated, “We’re done...and yet, we’re clearly not done.” Additionally, the fundamental and rapid changes in the policy landscape of recent years require that programs continue to reflect and learn. To some extent, organization staff have developed new skills to help them in their own evaluative work. However, there is more to be done, and it is not clear where the resources will come from.

For sponsoring organizations, this

raises important questions: How much time is enough? what level of resources are needed? how should resources be allocated? While recognizing that, in many cases, programs will not be able to fund full-scale evaluations on their own, sponsors should help develop some capacity for organizational staff to identify what they can do with available resources. Some participants suggested that sponsoring organizations may want to consider continued support for about 6-12 months after the formal evaluations are completed to ensure that some capacity is left in place. Organization staff also pointed out that sponsors may want to consider support for some administrative overhead; currently, agencies extend themselves and their staff to make evaluation work. Finally, developing linkages with universities, as was done in several of the programs, also has resulted in productive evaluation work.

Speaking to a Broader Audience about Family Support Programs

- ***Identifying the audiences and ways of reaching them***

Participants noted that there are a number of different potential audiences for information about this work: program staff; federal, state, and local policymakers; direct service practitioners; educators; agency staff; clients; advocates (for example, the national parent organizations); and researchers. Harriet Meyer of the Ounce of Prevention Fund pointed out that the real way to change programs is to influence the regulations, which requires that people work closely with the staff of public agencies, who, she observes, welcome evaluation information.

Participants identified several ways in which they have sought to reach different audiences: presenting at conferences; training; writing articles; and providing technical assistance. While programs have found success with these approaches, Karl Dennis of Kaleidoscope notes that it is difficult to “be a prophet in your own land.”

A legitimate question when speaking about audience is whether different audiences can be addressed with the same study or set of studies. Process studies enable evaluators to give staff some sense of the kinds of things they can work with as they develop their practice. What convinces policymakers is less clear. Some note that policymakers continue to ask for randomized designs in evaluation, while others observe that

Key to reaching any audience is being creative in presenting the message.

policymakers are increasingly recognizing the importance of context and are asking if “it works here.” Participants noted that understanding of evaluation and its use in the public arena must begin in the university — in policy/public administration and journalism programs. People in these programs often have a strong interest in children and families but little knowledge about what evaluation means and how to use the findings.

Key to reaching any audience is being creative in presenting the message. This means thinking about combining qualitative and quantitative information (for example, presenting a case study of one family with quantitative data which show how many of the program’s clients share similar characteristics), presenting family histories, and using visual approaches such as photographs or a video.

- ***Speaking to the larger evaluation and research communities***

One way to view the broader benefits of funding evaluations of diverse programs is to examine their contribution to the *study* of family support. Evaluators in the Grants Program have, in some cases, found traditional approaches and instruments to be lacking and have developed new ones. For example, Michael Epstein, evaluator of Kaleidoscope, noted that evaluators and program staff involved in the Kaleidoscope evaluation developed a prototype of a strength-based scale that is now being used around the country.

Continued on page 15

Interview with Carol H. Weiss

Over the years, the field of evaluation has changed, in response to both growing knowledge and expertise as well as changes in programs and policies. As we move into the 21st century, the evaluation field will continue to face new challenges as well as new opportunities. We asked Carol Weiss to discuss some of her views on evaluation in the next century. A prominent evaluator, Dr. Weiss is a professor of education at Harvard University and has published 11 books, the most recent of which is *Evaluation: Methods of Studying Programs and Policies*. Although noting that “social scientists do not do a good job of predicting,” Dr. Weiss did agree to share some of her thoughts and observations with us.

1) What challenges do you think face the field of evaluation in the next century?

One of our greatest challenges is that our methods are really not up to the questions that we seek to answer. We want to know not only what the outcomes of a program are but also why those outcomes appear — or fail to appear. When we deal with community-based programs, where many sets of actors collaborate, cooperate, plan, and implement activities, our methods are not adequate to understand the processes and outcomes. Community-based approaches often have multiple dimensions (health, education, job training, transportation, etc). Many of them are opportunistic, in the sense that they address whatever community problems become susceptible to intervention as circumstances allow. The programs employ a range of strategies and reach a shifting array of recipients. Under these conditions, evaluation doesn't have the appropriate tools and techniques to understand fully what is going on.

Theory-based evaluation is one approach that has a great deal of promise. But trying to use theory-based evaluation is difficult when programs do not have any explicit — or even implicit — theories, when programs are amorphous, or

when they shift significantly over time. Foundations and governments will exert pressure on evaluators to develop new ways of evaluating these complex multi-sector programs, and the need to answer harder questions will force us to develop new approaches.

One of the issues that persistently arises in a discussion of evaluation methods is the utility of experimental design. Some people have been much too ready to reject random-assignment designs. I recognize that in many cases experimental design is not workable. But comparison groups are often feasible, and some comparison is usually better than none at all.

Concepts from experimental design, such as “threats to validity”, need to be taken seriously. Mosteller and Tukey identified four factors that are necessary to establish a causal link. First, there has to be responsiveness of the outcome; in other words, the outcome has to follow the intervention. Second, you have to eliminate plausible alternatives that could explain the results. Third, you need to identify the mechanisms that lead to the results. Finally, you have to replicate the results. Note that the authors do not discuss random-assignment design as the only way to establish that the program was the cause of the observed results. They lay out the logical requirements for establishing causality. That last step, replication, is important. One evaluation is not going to settle an issue. Rather, we need to have multiple evaluations of the same kind of program using different techniques. If the different evaluations converge on the same results, we have pretty strong evidence that we know how successful that kind of programming is. I think that this is one way that evaluation should go. We can do this with qualitative and quantitative work; we can do it with small programs and large programs. But it takes a lot of evaluation capacity.

Another direction in which evaluation is moving is toward greater appreciation of the need to understand a program and how it works. Evaluators are

used to switching from one field to another — evaluating a pre-school program one day and a delinquency prevention the next and a nutrition program the third. They rely on their methods. But to do a first-class job, they need to become savvy about the mechanisms of change in the different fields. Such knowledge can come from specializing in a single field long enough to gain profound knowledge of the ways in which interventions produce effects and the conditions under which efforts are most likely to appear. If evaluators move from field to field, they need to be sure that they gain as much knowledge as possible, either from other team members, consultants, reading, or program practitioners. Evaluators cannot rely solely on their expertise in research methodology any longer. They have to understand the program field.

The other missing piece is on the program side. Practitioners need to be much more aware of theory and research. Programs need to be planned more systematically, with close attention to evidence, rather than solely on the basis of unexamined intuition. I don't mean to downplay the wisdom of practice. Practitioners learn a great deal from experience, and experienced practitioners are wonderfully knowledgeable. But they have to examine their knowledge, their assumptions, and their beliefs about why a program should be done in a certain way and how it is going to attain the results they want. They need to look at research evidence as well as the experiences of other programs. There is probably more of a tradition of rational planning in public health programs than in areas such as education, criminal justice, or social work. These fields need to catch up. We have lost a lot of knowledge about effective programming because practitioners and program planners have not systematically examined their experience and the evidence or brought the knowledge to bear on the development of new programs.

2) What do you think this implies for how evaluators and others are educated/trained?

Very few places offer comprehensive training for evaluators. Most university departments offer one or two courses in evaluation to go along with the courses in research methods and statistics. If that is the case, there should be more opportunity for supervised apprenticeship activities. I think that apprenticeship is the best way to learn. Most of us got some education and then went out into the working world. If we were lucky enough to work with good people in our early jobs, we learned a lot.

Practitioners also need a basic understanding of evaluation — what I might call “evaluation appreciation.” They need to understand what evaluation is all about, what it takes to do a good study, how to recognize a good study when they see it, what they should look for, and what to do with evaluation results.

As this implies, we need to train more than evaluators. Colleges and universities should train people who will be requesting evaluations, contracting for evaluations, reviewing evaluations, and applying the results of the work to organizational problems. The use of evaluation results is an obviously important issue. We can demand a lot of evaluators when it comes to supplying useful evaluation reports, but there have to be informed and willing “users” on the other end. Evaluators, of course, have a significant responsibility. They have to address the right issues, they have to provide a quality study, they have to communicate it well, and they have to communicate it to multiple audiences. But there has to be receptivity on the receiving side. Those in program and policy positions have to want to know what evaluation can tell them and how it can help them do a better job and make policy and practice more effective. And they have to have the will to do it.

Influencing and educating the media and policymakers are other challenges. In my research, I have found that the way federal policymakers tend to hear about research is not through journals or books but through the *New York Times* or *Newsweek*. That means that research has to be news. Reporters have to find it newsworthy for one of several reasons: it is on a topic that attracts many readers, it

contradicts taken-for-granted assumptions, it is counterintuitive, or it has human interest. Evaluators need to learn how to present their findings in ways that meet journalistic criteria. These days policymakers tend to be well-educated, and many have familiarity with the social sciences. I think they have greater understanding of evaluation than previous generations. But they, like journalists, need to have the evidence convincingly communicated to them. We also have to pay more attention to ways of making evaluation results visible, beyond the words on the page. With all the marvels of computers and the World Wide Web, we ought to be able to think of ways to get the evaluation messages out.

3) What do you think this implies for how evaluation can better contribute to policymaking?

First, we need to be very good evaluators. Evaluators should not undertake a study if the conditions for good evaluation are not there. Evaluation takes time, resources, and skill. Evaluators should not take on studies when they know they cannot do a good job. I recognize that this is easy for me to say sitting here in a university. But evaluators do not have to be passive in accepting whatever conditions the sponsor sets. They can argue back, explain that the time is too short, the requisite data are unavailable, appropriate comparisons are missing, the money is insufficient for the size of the task, or whatever the problems may be. It is not easy to do. Evaluators want the contract. But I believe that many sponsors, including government sponsors, would sometimes (although not always) be willing to listen to good arguments that what they are asking for is not going to lead to a credible study. They may be willing to change the request if they realize that the kind of study they are asking for is going to yield unpersuasive evidence and will easily be discredited by anyone who dislikes the way the results come out. This is not to say that most evaluators do not do a good job. Most of

them do, and many of them do a very good job. But the field is tarnished by the clunkers.

To have a sustained influence, evaluations have to be well-designed and conducted. And there has to be an accumulation of evidence.

A big issue is improving the influence of evaluation on policy. To have a sustained influence, evaluations have to be well-designed and conducted. And there has to be an accumulation of evidence. We shouldn't think of evaluation as a set of one-

shot studies. We should think of it as a continuing effort. In some areas, such as job training, there has been a conscientious accumulation of evidence since the 1960s. Authors have collected and summarized results critically, and they have drawn conclusions about the kinds of programming that work well. In some areas we have not done these kinds of critical reviews to help inform practice and policy. Evaluators should view themselves as part of an ongoing enterprise to develop knowledge for action.

Several things can be done to develop this stock of knowledge. Meta-analysis has been extremely useful in getting together the quantitative evidence and examining effect sizes, and we need to do more of that. We might take this a step further and set up groups that systematically look at all the evidence that has accumulated about mechanisms of change in particular practice fields and the environmental conditions that are conducive to success. Lee Cronbach once suggested the formation of Social Problem Study Committees to take an ongoing look at such social issues as teen pregnancy or school dropouts. Such groups would study all the evidence that becomes available on their topic and periodically summarize what they have learned and what still needs to be known. If the people in these groups were well respected and had access to policymakers and the media, their words might carry considerable weight. Such work would help us address our greatest concerns as society moves into the next century. ♦

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Cluster Evaluation

Cluster evaluation is an approach to program evaluation that was developed at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation during the late 1980s to address certain outcome questions. The need for a different way of doing program evaluation arose when multiple grants (sites) were awarded to address common problems, and grantees were allowed to operationalize the problems independently, develop strategies to address the problems they defined, and develop their own project evaluation plan. The types of general problems that were being addressed included improving science literacy of children and adults in Michigan, improving agricultural safety, improving health practices of adults in rural communities, increasing public policy participation of rural citizens, and improving public knowledge about environmental issues connected to ground water in Michigan.

Typically, the sites would modify their proposed project designs during the first year of their three-year grant and then continue to change them as they learned from their successes and failures. Each project adapted to its local environment. Its human resources, existing and past programs, priorities (including institutional commitment), and physical resources all shaped the ways in which they tried to achieve their defined outcomes.

The board of the Foundation rightfully wanted to know, given a sizeable investment, whether any progress had been made in the general problem area and, if so, what was it? In each case the question was, "What happened and why?"

The individual project evaluations were insufficient to answer this question holistically. Because of the intentional lack of standardization and control, aggregation of findings was not feasible. There was a sizeable collection of case studies (each cluster had anywhere between 5 and 50 funded sites), but if one wanted to draw conclusions from the total collective experience, he/she would have been hard-pressed to come up with a cost-effective way to do so.

Cluster evaluation was created to address the following questions:

- 1) Overall, have changes occurred in the desired direction? What is the nature of these changes?
- 2) In what contexts have different types of changes occurred and why?
- 3) Are there insights to be drawn from failures and successes that can inform future initiatives?
- 4) What is needed to sustain changes that are worth continuing?

The basic element needed to make cluster evaluation work is *collaboration* — working together across all sites as a team of evaluators with a common goal and learning from everyone's collective experiences to get answers to these questions. The key component of cluster evaluation has been *networking conferences*, during which information is shared and analyzed by all of the grantees. They learn together as if they were in a course together in which cooperative learning was the instructional model. This takes planning.

The steps in cluster evaluation are as follows:

- 1) Grants are made based on proposals for projects addressing a general problem. Each proposal includes a project-level evaluation plan.
- 2) A cluster evaluator is hired by the funder.
- 3) The cluster evaluator visits each site,

collects documents, becomes oriented to the local project and local evaluation plan, makes suggestions, and negotiates roles — a partnership involving the funder; the grantee and its staff, including evaluation staff; and the cluster evaluator.

4) The first networking conference is dedicated to a search for commonalities and uniquenesses in outcome objectives across projects, and to the development of categories of strategies being planned to achieve different outcomes. In general, it serves to develop a common understanding of mission and conceptual clarity.

5) Networking conferences held at six-month intervals continue to refine operational definitions, develop common instruments, and share findings. Cluster-

The key component of cluster evaluation has been networking conferences, during which information is shared and analyzed by all of the grantees.

level questions and data collection plans evolve as data collection and analysis plans, and plans for reporting findings at future networking conferences develop. Outside consultants are invited to stimulate new ways of thinking about the general problem or about evaluation

methods. Later conferences focus on discussions of findings and examine why they occurred. They also include a debate of tentative evaluative conclusions, with a look at missing documentation, which allows for outside interpretations of tentative evaluative conclusions.

Cluster evaluation is intrusive and affects the thinking and practices of all who are involved — project staff, funders, and evaluators. In the end, it supports or rejects claims that were made at the beginning in the form of intended

outcomes. It accumulates a wealth of explanatory information from diverse settings. It involves many minds, leading to considerable certainty about the collective evaluative conclusions that are reached.

Important elements of cluster evaluation are:

- Clear role definitions and understandings
- Cooperation
- Conflict resolution among the partners
- Trust
- Giving credit when it is due.

There are both strengths and limitations to the cluster evaluation approach. On the positive side, cluster evaluation is an evolutionary approach to program evaluation; is participatory and collaborative; helps build capacity; produces information and understandings beyond those found in individual project evaluations; is outcome driven; pushes for clarity; and involves multiple perspectives. Its limitations come from the opportunities for bias and co-optation to occur. Cluster evaluation is also time-bound and depends on goodwill, cooperation, coordination, and stability of cluster membership. All partners should share the vision of the collective effort to bring about change and need to take their responsibilities to the cluster seriously.

If done well, a cluster evaluation can be exciting and productive, producing new understanding and clear results. It is a practice worth trying. ♦

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Parts of this article are based on Sanders, J. R. (1997). Cluster Evaluation. In Eleanor Chelimsky & William R. Shadish (Eds.) Evaluation for the 21st Century. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

BEYOND BASIC TRAINING

Increasingly, evaluators are engaging key stakeholders in the design and implementation of evaluations. The following three articles discuss experiences working with different sets of stakeholders: program staff, youth, and client families. The authors offer insights into training and support as well as some of the lessons learned in using this type of participatory approach to evaluation.

Use of Staff in Family Program Evaluations

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a voluntary public school program for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth and kindergarten. The mission of ECFE is to strengthen families through the educa-

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tion and support of all parents in providing the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. During the 1996-97 school year more than 280,000 young children and their parents participated. Funded by more than \$35 million in state and local funds, ECFE is the nation's largest and oldest program of its kind.

Evaluation of ECFE has been a priority since the first pilot programs began in 1975. In the early years, evaluation was essential to document local acceptance of the program, help shape program development, and inform policymakers of ECFE progress. Over the years, evaluation has become integrated into ECFE practice and is viewed by most staff as a strategic learning opportunity. Both the

process and products of evaluations are used to understand families and shape program effectiveness. Today many ECFE professionals are sophisticated evaluation users.

ECFE has developed and adopted a set of evaluation principles which underscore that ECFE evaluations are collaborative ventures and should be an integrated component of programs. The principles emphasize staff involvement in evaluation and use of information to enhance program effectiveness. They set clear parameters for making evaluation design decisions and allow staff to work as partners with evaluation consultants in all phases of an evaluation.

The most recent study (Mueller, 1996) included use of outside evaluation experts working collaboratively with state and local ECFE staff in determining the evaluation purpose and design. Twenty-eight ECFE staff members from the 14 school district ECFE programs involved served as data collectors. All site evaluators were trained in interviewing, observation, videotaping, and analysis. Site evaluators also participated in the pilot phase of the evaluation and helped revise data collection strategies. Support available to these evaluators included detailed evaluation guides prepared for each round of data collection, access to evaluation consultants for technical assistance, and evaluation workshops held four times during the evaluation. Training and technical assistance for staff involved in this study were provided by the outside evaluator and the state level program coordinator.

In addition to data collection and analysis, site evaluators maintained detailed technical notes on their work. Evaluators also responded to several surveys designed to monitor their reactions to the process and document preliminary conclusions about families and recommendations for program change. Site evaluators or their districts received a nominal honorarium.

Staff described several benefits of the study experience, including personal change, in-depth understanding of the families they serve, ideas for program change, better understanding of the eval-

uation process and information, and the superior advantage staff have over outsiders in engaging families in the evaluation. Challenges noted by the staff involved the complexity and demands of the evaluation, including the amount of time, energy, and organization required. Staff members found it difficult to complete evaluation duties while fulfilling their regular work with families.

Key lessons include:

- Involving outside evaluation consultants who understand and value the importance of collaboration between evaluators and state and local evaluation users is essential.
- Having a project manager — in this case a state-level program coordinator — working in partnership with evaluation consultants to communicate and monitor details of the evaluation, and act as a liaison among all involved provides a necessary link.
- Planning training and technical assistance carefully (i.e., providing evaluation guides for each study phase, workshops when needed, and easy access to evaluation consultants) enhances the development of staff evaluation skills.
- Approaching evaluation as a learning opportunity facilitates capacity building in organizations.

Discussion about new evaluation issues began before the study was completed. A new evaluation agenda is being implemented that responds to the recommendations of the most recent study and continues the tradition of the participatory approach to evaluation in ECFE. ♦

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High Stakes Stakeholders: Involving Youth in the Collection and Analysis of Evaluation Data

In 1988, the Georgia legislature created the Youth Futures Authority (YFA) to “develop a comprehensive plan for public and private organizations to deal with youth problems, help implement the plan, and contract with the appropriate agencies to provide direct services under that plan.” The YFA established the St. Pius X Family Resource Center (FRC) in 1994 to serve as a community-based center offering various social services and community activities that benefit area residents.

Metis Associates recently completed an evaluation of the FRC. We used a participatory approach in which local stakeholders were asked to play significant roles in designing and executing the evaluation, and in analyzing and utilizing the results. Consistent with this, and with the FRC’s dual interests in youth development and community service, fifteen neighborhood youth (middle school and high school students) were recruited, hired and trained to help design, administer, and analyze a youth survey about community conditions and needs. The survey also determined whether the FRC’s programs and activities corresponded to the interests and needs of neighborhood youth.

Our goals in involving youth were to:

- Incorporate youth into the evaluation in a meaningful way
- Ensure that the youth survey reflected the ideas, concerns, and colloquial language of young people
- Provide participating youth with experiences that enhance critical-thinking and research skills
- Introduce career pathways related to research
- Reinforce an emerging sense of *communitas*, or community spirit, that is reflected in the FRC’s approach
- Develop a cadre of neighborhood youth to support ongoing and future local evaluation efforts.

Our approach included training and support for the “youth survey consultants” in reviewing and summarizing the survey findings, preparing tables and graphs, writing about findings, and preparing oral reports to groups such as the YFA. Through a series of workshops, we provided training for these youngsters to make presentations to homeroom classes in their schools, and to distribute, collect, and tally surveys. Metis staff worked with youth survey researchers to identify strategies they could use to obtain commitments and support from school administrators and staff for the survey effort. We wanted youth to explain the purpose of the survey to their schoolmates, describe their own involvement in its development, and identify strategies they could use to encourage high participation rates. This, we believed, would enable youth to learn about and overcome typical administrative challenges as well as improve on the quantity and thoughtfulness of their peers’ responses.

The youth survey researchers were able to obtain almost 800 responses from students, and many were able to obtain a response rate of 100 percent. Metis arranged for data entry and analysis of the survey. We met with the youth researchers to review and interpret the findings, and to help them write up selected findings. One student’s article made the front page of *The Savannah Herald*. Two of the participating youth presented their findings at the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s annual conference on research and evaluation. The survey uncovered a number of significant issues that are currently being addressed by the FRC.

Metis negotiated contracts with the youth participants specifying the activities in which they would provide assistance, and the terms of their employment. Stipends were provided based on the response rate for each class that was surveyed. To recognize and celebrate the students’ accomplishment, Metis hosted a reception for the youth survey researchers and their families. At the reception, we presented the youth with Certificates of Achievement and letters of reference that they could use to help secure part-time or summer jobs.

We believe that the use of youth as evaluators and data collectors deepened

the participatory evaluation approach by incorporating them into the assessment in a respectful and useful way. This methodology strengthened the FRC's understanding of and commitment to youth, and strengthened youths' connection with and commitment to their community. It also provided a means for Center staff to learn more about the interests and concerns of young people, and in turn, to develop a focused response that incorporated youths' perspectives into planning. Involving local youth in this type of evaluation supports them in developing skills needed to clearly define their interests, create plans or programs that enable them to meet their objectives, and advocate on their own behalf. The participatory evaluation process also left youth participants with enhanced interpersonal communication capabilities developed through training and use of interviewing skills that are transferable to other situations. Such a process helped increase their understanding of the importance of research, needs assessment and evaluation, and introduced possible career pathways. By providing youth with opportunities to participate directly in the assessment of their own community, we believe that one can strengthen the unity between learning and social life, and can promote the transfer of knowledge and social wealth from one generation to the next.



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For further information, please contact Gaye Smith, Interim Executive Director, Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority, 316 East Bay Street, Savannah, GA 31412. Tel: (912) 651-6810. Metis Associates has developed a package of sample materials that can be readily adapted for use in a youth assessment activity. To obtain these, contact Berle Driscoll, Senior Associate, Metis Associates, Inc., 80 Broad Street, Suite 1600, New York, NY. 10004 Tel: (212) 425-8833.

Consumers Survey Each Other about Medicaid Managed Care

In 1997, Families USA and the United Planning Organization's Head Start program in the District of Columbia began a project to involve parents in monitoring Medicaid managed care. A team of twelve Head Start parents surveyed 120 households regarding their Medicaid managed care experiences. The team reported their findings to District officials and health plans, successfully advocating for managed care improvements.

Parents described their own problems in managed care in early team meetings. Families USA used the team's sugges-

The project's effect on team members is as important as its results for managed care.

tions and questions from other standardized surveys to develop a survey instrument. The resulting instrument included multiple choice and open-ended questions. After role playing and a pilot test, team members each received a list of randomly selected Head Start parents to survey face-to-face.

We learned several lessons about how to get maximum participation and improve the accuracy of survey results when using peer interviewers:

- We needed to establish interviewers' legitimacy to respondents. We did this by providing letters of introduction signed by Head Start staff and by scheduling the face-to-face interviews at Head Start centers.
- Face-to-face surveys were effective but telephone surveys were not. Troubled by the time it was taking to schedule face-to-face appointments, we allowed parents to try a few interviews by phone. This did not work — respondents thought the interview might be a telephone solicitation or were otherwise suspicious; and many people in our randomly selected sample did not have working phones.

- Staff follow-up on surveys was essential. We thought going into this project that peers would be especially effective in eliciting health experiences from respondents. In fact, peers were good initial screeners for managed care problems, but respondents sometimes told peer surveyors that their health problems were personal and asked that staff instead call them to learn about the details of a problem. We did this.

- Ongoing meetings and education of the survey team helped the project succeed. The survey team needed to understand how managed care was supposed to work in order to probe for problems in the open-ended section of the interview. We discussed Medicaid beneficiaries' rights and case experiences in our monthly meetings and we developed a brochure, "Know Your Rights," which addressed some frequently reported problems. Surveyors gave this brochure to respondents *after* they had completed a survey.

To keep the team together, the project paid members stipends to attend meetings and complete surveys; encouraged parents to speak at community functions; and convened monthly meetings. At these meetings, parents shared survey experiences with each other, and health officials provided updated information about managed care.

Overall, we found the peer survey an effective method of gathering information and of involving Medicaid consumers in advocacy. The survey team testified in city council hearings about their findings and met with the District's Medicaid officials. As a result, parents have seen changes in Medicaid managed care this year. The District has invested in enrollment education. Plans have revised their member handbooks to explain how to get mental health services and how to file complaints. The survey team has established an ongoing relationship with local officials. The team refers individual and systemic problems to the Medicaid agency and meets with officials to ensure a response.

The project's effect on team members is as important as its results for managed care. Participating parents have become

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Following up with the Evaluation Work of Asian Neighborhood Design

In a previous issue of this newsletter (Vol. III, No. 1, 1997), we featured a practice-based anti-poverty strategy developed by the Asian Neighborhood Design (A.N.D.) in San Francisco. The foundation of this strategy is an evaluation instrument that enables the development of a self-sufficiency plan for individual clients. Over the past few years, A.N.D. has used this instrument in its own work and has shared it with many others. In this issue, we follow its progress.

Traditional categorical approaches to addressing the needs of low-income populations often fail to account for the fact that the struggle out of poverty is more of a dynamic process than a static problem. To attack poverty, one needs to go beyond traditional notions of income level that have defined those in and out of poverty. A.N.D. has begun from the premise that stable self-sufficiency must be the goal of an anti-poverty strategy: Those who are self-sufficient exhibit a number of qualities, including the ability to make choices based on plans for the future rather than immediate survival. Thus, anti-poverty work cannot be generic or categorical; rather, it is very personal and individualized.

A.N.D. has developed and implemented an anti-poverty strategy which focuses on individual strengths and weaknesses as a means to address the challenge of self-sufficiency. The foundation of this approach has been an evaluation instrument in which the client and the case worker work together to develop a "self-sufficiency plan" for the client. The self-sufficiency plan is based on an assessment of seven personal and environmental indicators: income/assets; education/skills; housing/food; safety/environment; human services; relationships; and personal attributes. Underlying this approach is the belief that each person's life is a combination of strengths (assets) and weaknesses (barriers) in these areas,

and it is the accumulation of a critical mass of strengths which is the distinguishing feature of those who are considered self-sufficient.

Through a self-assessment and interviews, a profile of the client, including his or her assets and barriers, is developed and a baseline established. The methodology allows the client and the case worker to discuss the various inter-related issues that must be addressed in order for the client to achieve self-sufficiency. The baseline assessment becomes the starting point for the case worker and the client to develop a personal self-sufficiency plan for the participant which delineates what needs to be done to help the client to reach stable self-sufficiency. This is accomplished primarily through utilization of mainstream support systems or through special assistance based on the client's knowledge or initiative. Progress in achieving self-sufficiency is recorded at regular intervals.

A.N.D. has received many requests for the tools we use from all over the country, including public agencies and non-profits. Most recently, the Department of Social Services for the County of San Francisco has decided to adopt this approach for its Welfare to Work program. The agency selected this instrument because it wanted a comprehensive assessment in which changes in people's lives could be mapped over time. A.N.D. is adapting the tool to the population served by this agency and assists in the training of up to 150 staff members. The agency is interested in making sure that the instrument is comprehensive, can be administered quickly (it will be used to work with approximately 9,000 people) and is set up to lead to concrete action plans. Adjustments have had to be made to accommodate department staffing and welfare regulations. For example, for TANF recipients (mostly women or families with children), the instrument has been revised to gather more information on family, children, etc., as indicators of

problems or assets. For those receiving general assistance — mostly single males — the instrument includes fewer questions related to family and more related to homelessness, peers, etc. For immigrants, we are including questions that look at issues of language and culture.

The County will use the tool not only for TANF recipients but also for its General Assistance population. In addition, the San Francisco Housing Authority will use the tools for the residents in their housing, many of whom are on welfare.

We continue to stress that this tool is only a way of categorizing information. What is most important is the approach and the ways decisions are made. The tool should be seen as a way to build a trusting relationship. Unlike many instruments that are administered, our tools in themselves will not lead to good appraisal. Instead, they require a person who can use the assessment as a base for taking action. Common sense decision-making by the assessor is essential, as are discussions with the participants and a cross check of the assessment over time with other indicators. ♦

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For further information on this evaluation approach, please contact: Asian Neighborhood Design, 461 Bush Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94108. Tel: (415) 982-2959.

Please complete
The Evaluation Exchange
Reader Survey, included as
an insert in this issue.

Welfare, Information, and the New Federalism

The Personal Responsibility Act of 1996 may be the first large-scale “information age” social policy in the United States. Informational linkages lie at the heart of the new devolution. Rather than relying on procedural rules and regulations to control the administration of state and local programs, information systems offer the promise that state and local agencies can experiment with different policies, procedures, staffing, and agency assignments — including privatization — while still remaining accountable to central authorities by reporting accurate and interpretable information on program objectives and expenditures.

That promise may be fulfilled some day, but the time has not arrived yet. Data are the only possible major weakness in the implementation of the new welfare. The new federal, state, and local welfare reforms demand a *multiplicity* of new or greatly expanded functions for state information systems, and governments, even during these relatively flush times, do not have

the resources to create systems in the short run that perform all of these functions. A critical political struggle has developed over which of these functions will take priority, a conflict whose resolution could shape welfare programs for many years.

Most of the attention to information systems has focused on generating the new quarterly reports states are required to submit to the federal government. These are controversial since the federal government can impose financial penalties on states that fail to submit timely reports and because they call for data that greatly exceed the information traditionally reported by state welfare systems. Most of these systems were designed to generate routine information on the num-

ber of families served as well as selected characteristics of those families. But the new reports call for information on work participation rates, hours worked, types of work activities engaged in, and reasons why people leave the welfare rolls — information that few state systems ever bothered to collect, much less report.

An even greater challenge for the states is the pending federal proposal to require states to report extensive information on the programs that states treat as “maintenance of effort” (MOE) spending. Federal agencies are concerned that some states may divert hard-to-employ adults away from federally-supported TANF programs — which are subject to minimum work participation

rates — and into separate, state-funded programs not covered by such rates. To be sure that states are not inflating their TANF work rates in this way, the federal government proposed a rule that requires reporting for MOE programs on people who would otherwise be eligi-

ble for TANF. This rule makes sense from a federal perspective, but many states argue that the proposal adds new and difficult reporting burdens and that it works to constrain MOE services to TANF eligibles rather than encouraging support for post-TANF services.

Federal accountability is certainly a legitimate function. The Congress and the federal executive — and the nation’s citizens — ought to know how federal funds are spent. They should be able to tell whether TANF money is spent on the purposes identified in the Personal Responsibility Act, or whether states are instead using the block grant to reduce their own share of welfare spending. Federal authorities also should determine

whether indicators of good performance are attributable to good programs, or whether those indicators are an artifact of a strategic shuffling of client families.

But it is also true that federal accountability is only one of the many functions that information systems need to perform. Before you can account for a program, it seems reasonable that the program ought to be operational — yet in research conducted by the Rockefeller Institute of Government, we are finding that there is an enormous and pressing need for information systems that would give workers and managers the ability to implement the new welfare programs fully.

The State Capacity Study of the Rockefeller Institute is examining the management systems that states have created (or, more accurately, are creating) to carry out their new welfare programs. As of mid-May, 18 out of 21 state research teams in the study had submitted reports and we can tentatively draw several conclusions from their analyses:

- 1) Although many states have devolved authority and responsibility for the design and operation of welfare programs down to local offices — whether they be local governments, local offices of state agencies, or private contractors — they are still using centralized information systems that are designed to support statewide information collection and analysis, not local management and operational needs. Local managers and workers often have no direct access to the state’s welfare information system. They provide data which are entered into mainframe systems but it may be weeks or even months before they receive information about their own caseload, work participation rates, and other summary measures. Local managers cannot use this old information to respond quickly to rapidly changing problems. Nor can they use the information to pinpoint the sources of problems, since the reports are often summaries that do not let managers see whether the problems are occurring at certain points in the administrative

The new federal, state, and local welfare reforms demand a multiplicity of new or greatly expanded functions for state information systems...

process, at certain times of the week, or for certain types of clients or families. The data reports thus offer little information managers can use to improve their own work processes.

- 2) Most states are bringing several functions together in their administrative systems to achieve the ambitious goals of welfare reform, such as child support, child care, employment programs, job readiness training, as well as the traditional cash assistance program. In some states, front-line welfare workers are given broad case management responsibilities and have such titles as “family independence specialists.” Although positions and offices are officially integrated, their information systems are not. Each function typically has its own information system, and workers with new holistic titles and responsibilities may have to deal with three or more different systems — for example, one for child support, one or more for determining and tracking eligibility for assistance, and at least one for job placement and activities.
- 3) There is a lot confusion about what current information systems can and cannot do, especially among state and local officials. Our researchers asked both state and local administrators whether their information systems could answer a wide range of questions that we thought managers would want to know. We sometimes found very little agreement between state and local officials about what questions could and could not be answered by current systems. In particular, state officials saw these systems as much more capable and informative than did local managers and workers.
- 4) Substantively, the current information systems are generally fine at determining program and maintaining information on program eligibility, though keeping track of multiple time limits is more of a challenge. They are much less adept at giving front-line workers a view of the “history” of each family as it goes through the increasingly complicated *process* of welfare, which may include immediate job search, orientation meetings, job readiness training, assessments of employability, waits for child care, individual responsibility agreements, job placement,

job loss, recertifications, partial sanctions, and loops back through one or more of these stages. Thus, the systems are not really designed to help case managers keep track of the families assigned to them.

- 5) State information systems are not readily changed to fit new policies and administrative structures, nor do they easily accommodate variation across localities. They are not very adaptable to local differences in programs and attempts to try out innovations in program design, performance measures, or ways of connecting with other related systems. Part of the problem seems to be the tendency for states to make system changes in one of two ways: by making small changes in large existing systems and patching together previously unconnected systems (which don't change the fact that the basic systems are mostly unsuited to the new policies); and, to a lesser degree, by making comprehensive state-wide redesigns. Both of these approaches are reasonable, but they also generate a tension between information systems (which either change very little or in occasional great leaps) and policies or management needs (which change more frequently and may vary across localities). This tension may be inevitable. However, a modular system might alleviate the problem by creating an integrated platform that permits the development, modification, and replacement of specific functionalities.
- 6) The training of workers who are supposed to use the new systems is generally inadequate. States usually offer short sessions with little follow-up, and day-to-day assistance is typically not available locally. This is hardly a unique or surprising point. Many states are still developing new systems, and weak instruction of end-users is a common problem in the private as well as the public sector.
- 7) The information reported by local service providers and administrative offices is still fairly “thin.” That is, accountability *within* states is often not very well developed, though many states are trying to address this problem. There is still little consensus about what constitutes success in welfare programs and how to measure it, though work participation rates and

caseload reduction tend to dominate the current measures. Even in more “advanced” states with significant experience under the waiver programs, there is very little information on what treatments people receive and why, which can make it difficult to protect against creaming, inequities, and under-service by providers.

These preliminary observations are not criticisms of states, federal requirements, or even welfare reform. State and federal welfare reforms call for major changes in informational capacities, and it is still early in the process of implementation. Instead, we present these findings because we want the full scope of the informational challenge to be recognized — which includes local management needs as well as the demands of federal accountability. When these challenges are understood, it becomes clear to us that, given the current resources available for welfare information systems, there is a need to find a balance among short-term priorities. This need has become even more acute as states' technological expertise is strained by the effort to solve the “Year-2000” problem. Determining this balance demands a wide-ranging discussion of “Informational Federalism,” the proper roles of federal, state, and local governments in creating, managing, and using information — a discussion which the Rockefeller Institute hopes to inform in its future reports. ♦

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Additional information on these and related management issues will be highlighted in forthcoming Rockefeller Reports. Readers of this article may be particularly interested in Dr. Terrence Maxwell's forthcoming report on “Informational Federalism.” To be placed on the mailing list, please contact the Federalism Research Group. Tel: (518) 443-5844 or by e-mail at “fedgroup@rockinst.org”. Our reports are also available at the Institute's Web site: <http://rockinst.org>

We regret that we cannot provide copies of the materials listed below. Please contact the publisher or authoring organization directly.

Bloom, Martin, Fischer, Joel, & Orme, John G. (1995). *Evaluating practice: Guidelines for the accountable professional.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon. This book makes available to students and practitioners in the fields of human services, social work, education, and other helping professions, the knowledge, skills, and specific procedures to evaluate their own practices. **Tel: (800) 666-9433. Allyn & Bacon, P.O. Box 10695, Des Moines, IA 50336-0695. E-mail: simon@neodata.com**

Burt, Martha R., Harrell, Adele V., Newmark, Lisa C., Aron, Laudan Y., & Jacobs, Lisa K. (1997). *Evaluation guidebook: Projects funded by S.T.O.P. formula grants under the Violence Against Women Act.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute. This guidebook is intended to be a resource for all evaluators, policymakers, and others interested in learning about the success of programs aimed at aiding women victims of violence. The guidebook has a broader application though, with chapters covering the evaluation process, choosing an evaluation design, and the use of evaluation information. **Web: <http://www.urban.org/crime/evalguide.html>**

Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice. This is an international, interdisciplinary journal published quarterly by Sage Publications, offering articles from the social sciences and other fields on original evaluation research, reviews of relevant literature, and overviews of developments in evaluation policy and practice. **Fax: (805) 499-0871. Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Newbury Park, CA 91320.**

Evaluation and Program Planning. The emphasis of this journal is on assisting evaluators and planners with im-

proving their practice, developing their skills, and improving their knowledge base. Articles on the techniques and methods of evaluation and planning are presented from contributors in both the private and public sectors. **Tel: (212) 633-3730. Fax: (212) 633-3680. Customer Support Department, PO Box 945, New York, NY 10159-0945. Web: <http://www.elsevier.com/publications/store/5/9/3/index.htm>**

Evaluation Review: A Journal of Applied Social Research. This journal, published six times a year by Sage Publications, is a forum for researchers, planners, and policymakers engaged in the development, implementation, and utilization of evaluation studies in the fields of health and human services, social work, education, criminal justice, public administration, and mental health. The journal features articles on methodological developments, commentaries, and occasional pieces on innovative applications of specific evaluation research techniques, concepts, and ideas. **Fax: (805) 499-0871. Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Newbury Park, CA 91320.**

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management. This journal examines the issues and practices in policy analysis and public management. Contributors include public managers, researchers, and economists. Articles include program evaluations, book reviews, and a department devoted to the discussion of the ideas and issues of importance to practitioners, researchers, and academics. **Tel: (212) 850-6645. Fax: (212) 850-6021. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Subscription Department, 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-0012.**

Ottawa-Carleton Health Department. (1997). *The program evaluation tool kit: A blueprint for public health management.* Ottawa: Author. This tool kit offers a step-by-step guide to evaluating programs. Through a series of modules with simple explanations, specific tools, and accompanying worksheets, the kit brings the evaluation process down to

five easy steps. Although the examples used are primarily from public health programs, the process outlined can be applied to the evaluation of any program. **Tel: (613) 724-4122, ext. 3752.**

Rossman, Gretchen B. & Rallis, Sharon F. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Written for beginning evaluation students, this book offers an introduction to qualitative research methods. Chapters focus on the fundamentals of research, and also examine the personal qualities needed to be a good researcher. **Tel: (805) 499-0721. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. E-mail: info@sagepub.com Web: <http://www.sagepub.com>**

Walsh, Joan. (1998). *The eye of the storm: Ten years on the front lines of new futures.* Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation. This report features interviews with Don Crary of New Futures for Youth in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Otis S. Johnson of the Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority in Georgia, who candidly discuss their involvement in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "New Futures" initiative, and what they have learned in creating systems reform in their communities. **Tel: (410) 547-6600. Fax: (410) 547-6624. 701 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202.**

Weiss, Carol H. (1997). *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. This book provides an overview of the participants and stakeholders, methods, and data use of evaluations. Chapters explain evaluation, the purposes of evaluation, the planning and design of evaluations, and data collection. In addition, the final chapters discuss the writing and dissemination of reports, and ethics in evaluation. **Available through bookstores. ♦**

Jessica Chapel
Editorial Assistant
HFRP

Beyond Basic Training
Continued from page 10

empowered with information. Parents have shared their knowledge of managed care with other parents and have learned how to make changes in the system. Because they now know both how managed care is supposed to work and how consumers actually fare, team members are confident in expressing their needs and recommendations to government officials. ♦

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Theory and Practice
Continued from page 4

They also developed a valid, reliable way to assess an agency's implementation of wrap-around — again, a contribution to the field. Participants point out, however, that innovative approaches are not always welcome by everyone; in some cases, the greatest resistance comes from the research community itself.

• **Informing the family support field**

While the Grants Program allows for flexibility in evaluation and measurement design, the challenge is how the information gathered from three very different sites can come together and speak to the larger family support field. While cross-site comparisons would be useful, the uniqueness of each organization is well-served by the Grants Program approach. Participants suggest that while all programs share common dimensions, specifying these dimen-

sions can be difficult. Some suggest that they might include similarity of client populations or the particular program approach applied (i.e., prevention or treatment). Another suggestion for examining commonality would be to examine how different organizations respond to the same environmental threat, such as welfare reform.

Conclusion

In advancing an innovative approach to funding evaluation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation sought to improve the relevance of evaluation for program staff. The experience of three programs implementing this approach suggests that the flexibility inherent in such an approach fosters more productive and supportive relationships between programs and evaluation staff, provides information of greater use to programs, and promotes reflective practice. This experience also shows that evaluation is never easy — relationships need to be nurtured, opportunities to share experiences must be created, and sustainability of evaluation work needs to be considered. Perhaps the greatest challenge to organizations funding such evaluation approaches is how to translate program-level findings into messages that influence a broader audience. ♦

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Director

Karen Horsch
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Those interested in learning more about the evaluations of each of these programs and/or receiving copies of evaluation reports, should contact the following people: Sister Mary Paul, Director of Clinical Services, Center for Family Life, 345 43rd Street, Brooklyn, New York 11232, Tel: (718) 788-3500; Karl Dennis, Kaleidoscope, 1279 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622, Tel: (773) 278-7200; Deborah Daro, Research Director, National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse, 200 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1700, Chicago, IL 60604, Tel: (312) 663-3520.

HFRP would like to thank the evaluators and program directors who shared their insights with us in such an open and collaborative spirit: Sister Mary Paul and Sister Mary Geraldine from the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park; Harriet Meyer, Karen Freel, and Michael Sullivan from the Ounce of Prevention Fund; Deborah Daro from the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse; Karl Dennis and Ron Hardy from Kaleidoscope; Michael Epstein and Janet McKelvey from Northern Illinois University; and Peg Hess, Brenda McGowan, and Michael Botsko from the Columbia University School of Social Work.

NEW FAMILIES MATTER PUBLICATIONS FROM HFRP

The following reports are part of the ongoing *Families Matter* series published by HFRP. Each paper examines the challenges to training child care providers to deliver family support, and the rationale for and ways of including family support in the definition of quality child care.

• *Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies: Training Child Care Providers to Support Families*

by Holly M. Kreider and Tracey L. Hurd
Profiles the family-supportive efforts of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, drawing from a national survey and in-depth interviews.

• *Family-Centered Child Care*

by M. Elena Lopez
Details indispensable techniques for training staff to support families through child care programs.

• *Making Families Matter at Two-Year Colleges: Training the Early Childhood Workforce to Support Families*

by Julia Coffman
Examines the extent to which two-year colleges offer family-centered training for early childhood professionals.

To obtain these publications, please contact the HFRP publications department at (617) 496-4304.

CYFERNet: Evaluation Tools
<http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu/eval.html>

The CYFERNet Evaluation Tools Web page, maintained by the Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network, offers information on topics such as health, youth development, and welfare reform. The site also offers technology tools and several evaluation instruments, such as a community-level baseline survey and an organizational change survey.

Multimedia Development Tools
http://mime1.marc.gatech.edu/MM_Tools/evaluation.html

Developed to help the producers of software and other media assess the performance of their products, this site provides evaluation tools general enough for other purposes, including an evaluation matrix, an anecdotal record form, focus group protocol, interview protocol, and an evaluation report sample.

Hospital Council of Western Pennsylvania
<http://www.hwcp.org/pe.html>

This site offers evaluation resource pages with an evaluation primer that provides guidelines for evaluations. Sections are devoted to discussing the types of programs which benefit from evaluation, the stages of evaluation, and the audiences for a completed evaluation. An online bibliography and directory provide site users with additional resources.

The Center for Health Promotion, University of Toronto
<http://www.utoronto.ca/chp/hcu>

The Health Communications Unit, part of The Center of Health Promotion at the University of Toronto, offers the *Evaluating Health Promotions Programs* workbook on this site. The guide is useful, providing a simple, step-by-step approach to evaluation. Other relevant workbooks and publications, as well as links, are also available.

National Network for Family Resiliency
<http://www.nnfr.org>

This site provides abstracts of evaluation tools and a bibliography of evaluation resources. Other resources available include an interactive evaluation site, which is a program that allows the user to work through the evaluation process.

The Grantmakers Evaluation Network

<http://hogg1.lac.utexas.edu/Gen>

The Grantmakers Evaluation Network (GEN), an affinity group of the Council on Foundations, provides a list of recently published books on evaluation, and downloadable versions of the GEN newsletter focusing on evaluation issues relevant to the philanthropic community.

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