Using Benchmarks as a Tool in Building Supports for Young Children’s Mental Health

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NCCP, ZERO TO THREE, and BUILD
Overview

- Three kinds of benchmarks for planning and assessing progress toward implementing state-wide supports for children’s mental health
- Some benchmarks are more helpful than others…
- Why it may be helpful to establish benchmarks *early* in planning/implementation activities
Benchmark definition

- A goal or target, usually established in relation to existing information and a broader goal;
- For example…
  - A state survey shows that ECMH consultation currently reaches 3% of center-based programs;
  - The state sets a benchmark reflecting the broader goal of increasing children’s access to early childhood programs with strong ecmh supports: “ECMH consultation will be provided to 10% of center-based programs in the state.”
Two important types of benchmarks:

- Benchmarks that focus on **expansion** (social-emotional screening of children will occur in 75% of center-based programs across the state)

- Benchmarks that focus on improving **quality or effectiveness** (all ECMH consultants will receive 45 hours of training on the state’s model and a quarterly review of practice records and outcomes)
Benchmarks, cont.

- Benchmarks might also **specify tasks to be completed** as part of strategic planning or implementation (i.e., **process benchmarks**);

- For example,
  - **Complete a survey** of child care directors to determine how many use ec mh consultation or a social-emotional learning curriculum
  - **Identify funding options** for expanding ec mh training for home-based child care providers
Features of helpful benchmarks

- Specific and measurable (you’ll be able to document whether you reached it or how close you came)
- Include a target date

- Compare these examples:
  - Increase preschool teachers’ access to S-E training
  - Training on the Incredible Years curriculum will be provided to 100 early childhood teachers by August 1, 2013
Why establish benchmarks early?

- Makes larger goals of ECAC or workgroup more meaningful
  - **Larger goal:** “Emotional disturbance is prevented in birth through 5 children at risk....”
  - **A benchmark:** “50% of early care and education providers...have sufficient access to a local ecmh consultant.” [from MI Great Start planning document]
  - **Larger goal:** “All early childhood practitioners and settings support healthy social-emotional development.”
    - **A benchmark:** “25% of ecmh consultants ...in early care and education settings...participate in standardized training on research-based best practices...[to meet] training requirements for MI-AIMH endorsement, minimum level 2.”
Why establish benchmarks early? cont.

- Help direct work time toward productive tasks, and help group achieve early success
- Help workgroup or ECAC with ongoing self-assessment of progress

- Link to NCCP brief with planning tool:
  Building Strong Systems of Support for Young Children’s Mental Health: Key Strategies and a Planning Tool
One more example….(what would strengthen #2?)

**Recommendation:** “Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health consultation initiatives that are accessible and available to programs and providers in key child-serving systems including early childhood education, child care, ….. “ [2005 IL Children’s MH Plan]

**Short-Term Strategies and Action Steps:**

2. “Expand current early childhood mental health consultation efforts into programs including early education, family support, health care, Early Intervention, public health and child care.”
Thank You!

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