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

Sheila Smith
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NCCP, ZERO TO THREE, and BUILD

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National Center for Children in Poverty
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

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."**

Benchmarks, cont.

- 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)

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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 ecmh consultation or a social-emotional learning curriculum

  - **Identify funding options** for expanding ecmh training for home-based child care providers

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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."

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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

  http://www.nccp.org/publications/pdf/text_1016.pdf

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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."

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Thank You!

Sheila Smith, PhD, director of early childhood

sheila.smith@nccp.org

Phone: 646-284-9643