



Data-driven Performance Improvement

 Collins-Camargo, C., Sullivan, D., & Murphy, A. (2011). Use of data to assess performance and promote outcome achievement by public and private child welfare agency staff. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(2), 330-339.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This article discusses the findings and implications of a study that measured public and private frontline worker perceptions of evidence-informed practices (EIP). Research focused on the various types of evidence available in child welfare agencies and the extent to which this information is incorporated into daily practice. The article offers suggestions for utilizing EIP in child welfare agencies.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

 There has been an increased interest in program accountability and evidence-based practice (EBP) in the social services. It is crucial that child welfare workers learn how to use evidence effectively in their practice.

 The figure at right shows the evidence-informed activities that can be used to assess effectiveness of practice and improve performance:

 The findings suggest a disconnection between worker awareness of how agency and team performance is judged and their views of the data available to them and its usefulness in practice. The majority of participants were aware of the child and family outcomes that determine agency performance. However, only one-third of participants reported having access to data to evaluate the impact of their work. Almost one-third of participants stated that their team did not review and utilize permanency achievement information, and one-quarter indicated their teams rarely came together to evaluate their effectiveness.

 Participants from private agencies showed higher levels of understanding, access, and team-based activities to use data and improve practice.

 Private agency staff rated all six of the evidence-informed practice activities as effective in improving practice and outcomes, with the strongest relationship being supervisory review.

 Areas of concern included low levels of agency supports for the use of data and infrequent utilization of evidence-informed activities within frontline child welfare workers.

*Limitations exist in sampling and data collection, including a small sample; limited research; and secondary analysis of data.

SIX EVIDENCE-INFORMED PRACTICE-RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. Peer record review
2. Consumer input
3. Supervisory review
4. Outcomes management
5. Use of Child and Family Services Review Data
6. Program evaluation

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

 Agencies should take steps to promote critical thinking, reflective practice, and research-based decisions.

 Agencies should evaluate their own beliefs and processes regarding data sources, and create environmental conditions to promote the use of EIP and innovation, as well as the necessary supports, supervision, and education for staff in the use of data.

 A joint effort between the private and public sectors could lead to overall systems improvement and greater use of evidence to drive practice and performance improvement.