

PII-TTAP

PERMANENCY INNOVATIONS
INITIATIVE

Training & Technical
Assistance Project

GUIDE TO DEVELOPING, IMPLEMENTING, AND ASSESSING AN INNOVATION

Introduction



Children's
Bureau

Acknowledgements

To support the Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII) Grantees in better meeting the needs of children and families, the PII Training and Technical Assistance Project (PII-TTAP) team created the Development, Implementation, and Assessment Approach (the Approach). The Approach helps organizations develop new innovations or adapt existing ones and effectively implement them to ultimately improve outcomes for children and families. The PII-TTAP team created this Guide which operationalizes the Approach and aids in the transfer of learning by providing detailed information, tools, and instructions for innovation development and adaptation, data and fidelity monitoring, and sustainability planning within child welfare systems. It is based on lessons learned working with the tools, guidance, and resources provided to PII Grantees. This Guide was created by:

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Suggested citation:

Permanency Innovations Initiative Training and Technical Assistance Project. (2016). *Guide to developing, implementing, and assessing an innovation*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau.

This document was created under JBS International, Inc. Contract No. HHSP23320095638WC funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and does not necessarily reflect its views. Subcontractors under this contract include: the Center for the Support of Families and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) at the University of North Carolina Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute¹.

¹ NIRN was actively involved in PII-TTAP from October 2010 through June 2015.

Introduction to the Guide to Developing, Implementing, and Assessing an Innovation

The field of child welfare faces many challenges. Families in the child welfare system deal with complex issues, and few evidence-based innovations are available to address them. Therefore, child welfare agencies are often faced with developing innovations not previously implemented or tested, adapting innovations from other settings, and developing a process to establish the effectiveness of the innovations. In addition, limited implementation knowledge in child welfare and lack of attention to implementation¹ result in insufficient planning, testing, understanding of necessary supports, and paying the requisite attention to fidelity. Without strategic planning to correctly diagnose the problem and root causes, agencies may rush to implement a solution without a clear connection to the problem or a path to achieving the desired outcomes.

The Guide to Developing, Implementing, and Assessing an Innovation (the Guide) is intended to improve the capacity of child welfare professionals to develop or adapt an innovation, implement innovations methodically and with fidelity, and build evidence. The Guide is relevant to a broad array of state, local, and Tribal child welfare practitioners, managers, and administrators and can be used at any point during the implementation process. Anyone preparing to develop and implement an innovation in child welfare will benefit from its application.

Background

The Guide is based on *The Development, Implementation, and Assessment Approach* (the Approach), which was developed as part of the Permanency Innovations Initiative (PII), a 5-year, \$100 million initiative underway since 2010 that includes six Grantees,² each with an innovation designed to help a specific subgroup of children leave foster care in less than 3 years.³ PII combines requirements for purposeful application of implementation science, rigorous evaluation, and coordinated dissemination of findings. PII aims to:

- Implement innovative strategies, informed by relevant literature, to reduce long-term foster care stays and to improve child outcomes
- Use an implementation science framework enhanced by child welfare expertise to guide technical assistance activities
- Rigorously evaluate the validity of research-informed innovations and adapted evidence-supported interventions (ESIs) in reducing long-term foster care
- Build an evidence base and disseminate findings to build knowledge in the child welfare field

This integration of implementation science and program evaluation is intended to build or enhance the capacity of child welfare agencies to develop, implement, and evaluate research-informed innovations

¹ Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A synthesis of the literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231). Tseng, V. (2012). *The uses of research in policy and practice*. Society for Research in Child Development.

² The PII Grantees include: Arizona Department of Economic Security; California Department of Social Services; Illinois Department of Children and Family Services; Los Angeles LGBT Center; University of Kansas; and Washoe County, Nevada Department of Social Services. For more information about Grantees' target populations and interventions, please visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/pii-project-resources>.

³ At the time of this printing, PII Grantees are in a no-cost extension period.

and adapted ESIs and to provide evidence about program effectiveness. An overarching objective of PII is to increase the number of ESIs available to the child welfare community.



Overview of the Development, Implementation, and Assessment Approach

As noted above, the Approach serves as the foundation for the Guide. The Approach, which was developed by the PII Training and Technical Assistance Project (PII-TTAP) team to support PII Grantees, is a framework that helps organizations develop new innovations or adapt existing ones and effectively implement them to ultimately improve outcomes for children and families. The Approach builds on the technical assistance provided to PII Grantees and incorporates best practices and lessons learned from its application in the child welfare field. The Approach provides a systematic, practical framework for implementation in a child welfare setting.

The Approach involves activities that can be organized within four implementation stages: exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation.⁴ Each of the stages includes steps that must be completed to progress through the implementation process. The

early steps in the Approach focus on strategic planning: correctly identifying the problem, developing a theory of change, and selecting from existing solutions or deciding to develop a new one. The later steps are focused on clearly operationalizing the innovation and the implementation supports, effectively using data to make improvements in the innovation and the implementation supports, and focused planning to sustain desired outcomes. Functional teaming and strategic communication provide a critical foundation for the entire implementation process. See *The Development, Implementation, and Assessment*⁵ Approach for additional information.

Based on the Approach, the PII-TTAP team developed three products, including the Guide, to support the transfer of learning and assist public, private, and Tribal organizations to use the Approach. In addition to the Guide, the PII-TTAP team created the Development, Implementation, and Assessment Toolkit (the Toolkit), a T/TA website that includes virtual hosts, automated tools, and interactive training modules with activities, knowledge checks, and video clips of PII Grantees.⁶ The Toolkit provides a more intensive, interactive transfer of learning than the Guide. The PII-TTAP team is creating a manual to support the transfer of learning and assist the target audience in applying the Approach through training and technical assistance. The manual (*Providing Technical Assistance to Build Implementation Capacity in Child Welfare: A Manual based on the Development, Implementation, and Assessment Approach*) is intended to be used by training and technical assistance providers who are supporting public, private, and Tribal child welfare organizations in applying the Approach.⁷

How the Guide is Organized

Based on the Approach, the Guide is organized according to four implementation stages: exploration, instal-

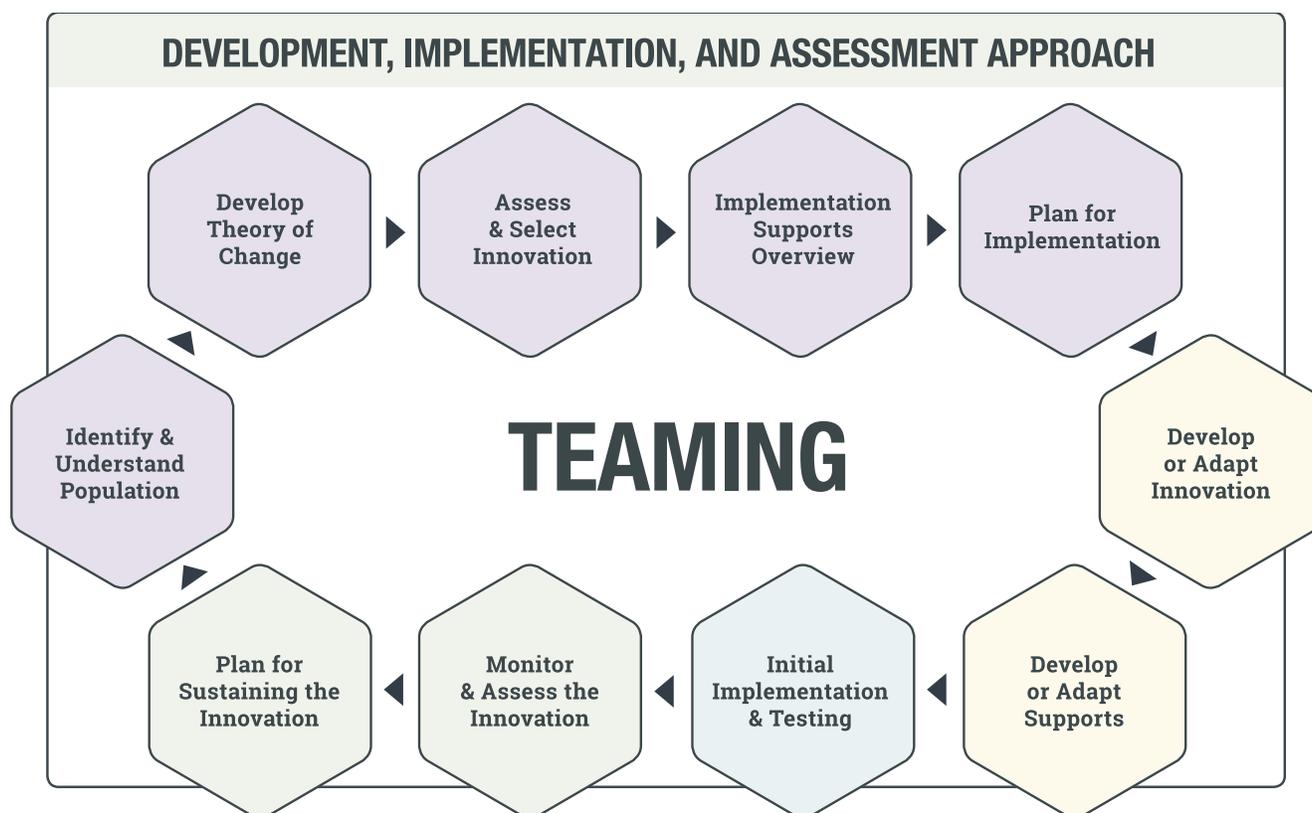
⁴ The four stages are based on the NIRN Active Implementation Stages.

⁵ The Approach is available on the Children's Bureau website.

⁶ The Toolkit is currently under review by the Children's Bureau and is scheduled to be released in 2016.

⁷ The Manual will be released in 2016.

Figure 1. Development, Implementation, and Assessment Approach



lation, initial implementation, and full implementation. Figure 1 shows the four stages of implementation and the progression of the implementation process with Teaming and Communication Linkages placed in the center of the 10-step process. The Guide is divided into five volumes that follow these four stages and includes each of the 10 steps.

- **Volume 1. Teaming and Communication Linkages:** Assembling effective teams critical to implementation success; developing a plan for team interaction; writing a charter that defines the purpose, mission, roles, responsibilities, and timelines for the implementation team; and developing a strategy to ensure that teams communicate with maximum efficiency
- **Volume 2. Exploration:** Assessing the potential match between community needs and the proposed innovation, making a decision whether to proceed with implementation, and planning for organizational change. The steps in Exploration include:

- Section 1: Identify the Problem and Understand Target Population
- Section 2: Develop a Theory of Change
- Section 3: Assess and Select an Innovation
- Section 4: Implementation Supports Overview
- Section 5: Initial Assessment and Implementation Plan
- **Volume 3. Installation:** Preparing staff and organizational infrastructure for implementation of the innovation
 - Section 6: Develop or Adapt the Innovation
 - Section 7: Develop or Adapt Implementation Supports
- **Volume 4. Initial Implementation:** Testing critical elements, such as key processes and data

collection activities, and modifying early-occurring components to improve innovation processes

– Section 8: Initial Implementation and Testing

- **Volume 5: Full Implementation:** Integrating changes of the innovation into practitioner, organizational, and community practices, policies, and procedures

– Section 9: Monitor and Assess the Innovation and Implementations Supports

– Section 10: Plan for Sustaining the Innovation

How To Use the Guide

The Guide is intended to be a reference for individuals and teams as they move through the stages in the implementation process. Each section includes guidance to help users understand the purpose and key activities associated with each step, quizzes to test understanding of concepts, real-world examples to help users relate the content to their initiative, and tools to support the application of concepts to an initiative. An appendix provides examples and additional materials to help deepen understanding of the concepts described in each section. Individuals can use the guidance and tools to inform discussions with leadership or implementation teams. Teams can review the guidance together and use the tools to guide discussions.

The implementation process described in the Guide is a complex cycle that appears to be linear, but some iteration of steps and overlap of conceptual emphasis is required to effectively implement an innovation. Implementing or adapting an existing ESI may decrease time spent completing some activities. The Guide allows child welfare organizations to enter the implementation process at any point. However, the planning and assessments suggested in the early stages lay the groundwork for implementing an innovation with fidelity and should be completed before moving to later stages in the process.

Volume 1 of the Guide includes information about teaming and communication processes. These preliminary activities precede the exploration stage of implementation and should be applied throughout the implementation process. They include assembling effective teams critical to implementation success; developing a plan for team interaction; writing a charter that defines the purpose, mission, roles, responsibilities, and timelines for the implementation team; and developing a strategy to ensure that teams communicate with maximum efficiency. The tools and guidance in this volume should be used at the beginning of an initiative as the core team and teaming structure are being built. Teams can refer to this volume whenever they need to re-assess their teaming structure.

Getting Started

The questions below can help determine where in the implementation process an innovation is. Evaluating an initiative with these questions can determine which volume of the Guide offers the best starting place. After determining the volume, a quiz at the beginning of each volume helps to determine which section is the most appropriate starting place.

For the following questions, an answer of “no” to any of the following questions most likely indicates an initiative is currently in that implementation stage. Since implementation is not linear, and the concepts are interconnected, reading all of the questions before moving forward is advised.

Teaming and Communication Linkages (Volume 1)

- Do you have a team in place that is responsible for your initiative?
- Is there a team in place that is responsible for ensuring the innovation is operationalized and the implementation supports are in place?

- Are teams clear about their individual functions, their decision-making authority, and how they should interact with other teams supporting the initiative?
- Are there clearly stated and active communication links between the teams supporting your initiative?
- Are organizational and systems leaders and stakeholders engaged in your initiative?

Exploration (Volume 2)

- Have you identified an outcome of interest? A target population?
- Do you understand the needs of the target population (i.e., items that can be remediated)?
- Have you researched innovations that address the underlying needs of your target population?
- Have you assessed the fit of potential solutions with the needs of your target population? Have you assessed the fit of potential solutions with current initiatives, organizational priorities, community needs and values?
- Have you researched the evidence base for each potential solution?
- Do you understand what resources are needed to support the potential solution and associated implementation activities?
- Have you developed an implementation plan that outlines the critical activities that will need to occur as your agency rolls out the initiative?

Installation (Volume 3)

- Have you outlined the essential functions (i.e., activities or strategies that a practitioner engages in to address the identified problem) that are needed to deliver the innovation as intended?
- Have you made the structural changes that are necessary for implementing your innovation

(e.g., referral pathways, ensuring availability of human and financial resources, purchasing new technology or equipment)?

- Have you developed protocols for staff selection, training, and coaching?
- Have you established data systems for continuous quality improvement?
- Do you have a set of key indicators to assess whether practitioners are implementing the innovation as intended?

Initial Implementation (Volume 4)

- Have you begun implementing your innovation? Are all of your implementation supports at least partially in place?
- Is your team using rapid-cycle problem solving to test critical elements and make rapid adjustments to your innovation?

Full Implementation (Volume 5)

- Has your innovation been integrated into everyday practice with increasing adherence to the model? Are processes and procedures routine?
- Are practitioners delivering the innovation with proficiency and skill? Do practitioners carry full caseloads? Are managers and administrators fully supportive of the innovation?
- Have you created a formal plan for sustaining your innovation?

No matter where an innovation is in the implementation process, the Guide can be a key resource as an implementation team completes the necessary steps to develop or adapt an innovation with fidelity. Referring to the material during each stage for guidance, tools, and examples will help with the complex work of implementing an innovation that meets the needs of children and families.

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