



Writing Reports and Telling Success Stories

Once all the hard work has been done and you have solid evidence of positive program results, you may want to “take a breather.” However, you will also want to share the results of your evaluation activities, which will help to build greater public understanding and support for your family support/child abuse prevention services.

Characteristics of an Outcome Report

A carefully constructed report includes a brief history and some background information on the outcome accountability process, the intended outcomes, the findings and recommendations. It may be feasible to prepare separate reports for the different audiences, depending on the nature of the findings and the level of detail you want to make available to them.

The report(s) should include—

- The specific target population you are reaching (a brief description of their social and demographic profile, their specific needs and risk factors, and the number who participated).
- The specific service provided and why it was appropriate for the target population and the intended outcomes. Here you would explain your Logic Model in layman’s terms. Talk about the assumptions, research, and experience that you drew on in choosing that service to produce those outcomes in the target population.
- The findings from your outcome accountability process (the extent to which the outcomes were realized, the extent that they show a good match between service and outcomes, and a description of how short-term and intermediate outcomes can be expected to yield long-term outcomes over time).
- This would also be the place for any cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit data that you have. Is it possible to put a price on the outcomes realized? If not, try to show the cost of the services provided. If available, you could also show the cost savings for avoiding negative outcomes. Although this appears to put you in the deficit mode, cost-effectiveness is often based on the relationship between good and bad outcomes and benefits of dollars not spent on remediation of bad outcomes.



In presenting your findings to stakeholders, funders, and community members, it is also helpful to keep the following points in mind:

- A picture (graph, table, or photo) is often better than a lot of numbers and words.
- Each graph or table should ask a question and then answer it.
- Fewer words are better than more.
- Offer explanations or hypothesis for negative findings.
- Make a bulleted summary at the beginning or end (no more than 1-2 pages).
- Close the report with one or two stories. These stories will breathe life into the report by illustrating how your family supportive environment and holistic approach facilitates the short-term and intermediate changes reported.
- Present the report to your board and staff before releasing it to the public.

Some major pieces of the evaluation process have now been completed, but recall one of the primary reasons we evaluate: to improve services to children and families. Now you must use your results to reflect on how your services should be strengthened or altered to best meet the needs of your consumers.

