Child Welfare IT Managers' Webinar Series: Child Welfare Information Technology Systems Managers and Staff

New Jersey's Manage by Data Fellows Program: Changing Culture and Capacity to Improve Outcomes

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Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time.

All participants are in a listen only mode until the question-and-answer session of the conference. During that time if you'd like to ask a question please press star 1 and clearly record your name for question introduction.

I'd now like to turn the call over to your host, Miss Joyce Rose. You may begin. Thank you.

Joyce Rose: Thank you and welcome to the Child Welfare Information Technology Systems Managers and Staff webinar series brought to you on behalf of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Children's Bureau and presented by ICF International.

Today's webinar is entitled New Jersey's Managed by Data Fellows Program and I'm Joyce Rose, your host and moderator for today's webinar, next slide please.

For new attendees and for those who may have missed previous webinars here's a list of the previously recorded sessions which I've posted to the link identified on the slide. Please note that in August we're planning to present the webinar focusing upon processes to better estimate IT project costs and were currently working on identifying future webinar topics. Next slide please.

Attendees are encouraged to participate in our webinar with questions and comments. All of the participant lines are muted now but we'll open those for the Q&A session at the end of the presentation. However please be aware you can submit questions at any time using the go-to webinar chat feature and those will be addressed during the Q&A session.

Now, should we run out of time, we'll respond to your questions via email, and/or should you have additional questions you may submit those to me at the email address listed on the slide, joyce@kassets.com. Also if you have any topics that you'd like to recommend as potential webinars please do not hesitate to contact me at the email listed above. Next.

The Division of State Systems within the Children's Bureau continues to provide a steering of monthly webinars or the information showing in discussion. Understanding who's attending the webinar helps to identify content that's applicable for everyone participating in your agency's CWIS efforts. Please also select one of the five categories listed and my colleague Kristy will conduct the poll. Kristy?

Kristy: And at this time you should be seeing that question on your screen so go ahead and select. And we have about 80% at this point so we'll wait for the remaining. And we'll go ahead and close.

So we have about 12% of you saying that your state project managers, 73% state program, policy or technical, no tribal and 15% ACF.

Joyce Rose: Thank you Kristy and I'm very pleased to see the large percent coming from across discipline in the agency. So let's move on now and let's actually meet our participants - our presenters.

Amanda O'Reilly is the Director of the Office of Research Evaluation and Reporting for DCF. She is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the department's outcomes analysis, program evaluations and federal child welfare recording. Ms. O'Reilly also provides leadership and technical assistance around the department's continuous quality improvement and capacity building efforts.

She's experienced in public health, child welfare and health services research to work as a research scientist with policy lab at the Children's Hospital at Philadelphia.

Abbie DiMeo is the Coordinator for the New Jersey Department of Children and Families managed by data Fellows Program. Abbie oversees and manages the data Fellow Program and her work includes qualitative and quantitative analysis, curriculum development and delivery, leveraging the work of the Fellows alumni toward current DCF goals and priorities and ensuring that the alumni remain engaged in the project work and continue to utilize the skills they learned.

Unfortunately Aubrey Powers was called away and he won't be part of the presentation or presenter today. So now let's get to the presentation and I'd like to turn it over to Abbie. Abbie?

Abbie DiMeo: Thank you Joyce and thank you to the team for the Children's Bureau for the opportunity to present today. So I want to just review the objectives for the webinar.

We're going to talk a little bit about our challenge here in New Jersey, back about six years ago in building capacity to utilize data to improve outcomes for children and families. We're going to talk a little bit about our methods of teaching, talk about quality improvement project initiated by the data Fellows and identify some of our successes, some of our lessons learned and talk a little bit about sustainability as well.

So our primary function here is to support the department's continuous quality improvement efforts. So we with the participants, we want to develop their leadership skills and really create, communicate and anchor a vision of creating a data culture in every level of the department, not just where we sit in central office in research evaluation and reporting.

We want to influence and motivate our participants to have them use their skills to motivate others and really become champions of data and to really ultimately sustain the agency as data driven. Next.

So a little bit of background about our agency. We want to make sure that everybody understands what the structure is. We want to talk about the why and how of Fellows and talk a little bit about the history. So we've had to adapt the program model. We're about to enter our 5th cohort of Fellows so things in round five was a lot different than they did in round one. So we'll talk a little bit about the tracking and adjusting that we've done over the years. Next.

So Department of Children and Families is a cabinet level agency here in New Jersey and our mission is to ensure the safety, well-being and success of New Jersey's children, women and families so some of our priorities right now include reducing incidents of child abuse and neglect, ensuring permanency for children who enter out of home care, continuing the integration of the system of care for children with behavioral, intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as co-occurring disorders and supporting programs and services for women and adolescents in the transition into adulthood as well as managing outcomes by data.

So Child Protection and Permanency is our child protective service unit and our largest operating unit. Almost 90% of the department staff sit in Child Protection and Permanency which is about 6500 employees. So CP&P - you'll hear me refer to it. We love our acronyms here. CP&P meets federal requirements for New Jersey's child protection and child welfare agency.

Our children system of care is an integrated system of care and again it serves children and youth with developmental disabilities, emotional and behavioral challenges as well as substance abuse disorders and supports their families as well. The Office of Family and Community Partnerships is our prevention arm and they support a number of programs through a statewide network of community programs including Family Success Centers, our home visiting initiative as well as school-based services with the aim of preventing child abuse and neglect.

Our Office of Performance, Management and Accountability is where my office or Amanda's office, our office sits, the Research, Evaluation and Reporting. Under Performance, Management and Accountability we also have our Office of Quality and we also have a specialized unit that focuses on the most - the worse outcomes, our child fatalities, our domestic violence fatalities and reviews cases where there may be unusual circumstances or incidents.

We also have a Division on Women which advances discussion of critical women’s issues as well as an Office of Adolescent Services which coordinates service delivery for youth aging out of the system and transitioning to adulthood. So that’s an overview of our department. Next please.

So we’re a state administered child welfare system. New Jersey -- if you’re not familiar with it -- is made up of 21 counties and we have 46 field level offices in those 21 counties and those offices are overseen by 9 area offices. We do have a specialized abuse and neglect hotline, our centralized state specialized registry.

In the first half of 2015 the hotline averaged about 13,000 calls a month. About 6,000 were child protective service investigations and child welfare assessments and that’s again in the first two quarters of the year. And as of June 30, 2015 we had over 50,000 children under our supervision with 7,500 of those being in placement and out of home placement. Next please.

So to bring you back a little bit, our reform in New Jersey began in 2006. The department - the cabinet level department was created and New Jersey entered a modified settlement agreement which required obviously data production for outcomes. We started by implementing a case practice model and focused on engaging our children, youth and families.

We reduced caseloads. We increased training. We require - still require staff to take 40 hours annually of training. We also recognize that managing by data is important to track progress and also to increase accountability so we have invested substantial resources to increase the capacity of our case management data systems.

Much of our data that we use is real-time and is accessible at every level of the agency. It's important to note that here in New Jersey our Office of Information Technology is actually separate from our Office of Research Evaluation and Reporting and that's relatively recent. The two offices began as one and split in 2012 but we have a very close working relationship with OIT.

So our statewide - excuse me. Our Statewide Child Welfare System, New Jersey SPIRIT, we had released one in 2004 and we rolled out a full release in August of 2007. So at this point our SACWIS system is well stabilized and there's direct worker input to our SACWIS system. Our Safe Measures is very close to real-time data reporting and it uses the case management data to display actionable items for use by frontline child welfare workers, their supervisors as well as folks here at central office.

We are – transparency is something that's very important to leadership here at DCF. So we have public reports that are published on our website – on the state website – as well as we have internal reports that are published on our Intranet. And those reports include point-in-time data, longitudinal data on a number of different divisions and offices within DCF.

Research evaluation reporting is also responsible for ad-hock reports for staff. So we do requests as staff needs to analyze something in their area we also will produce ad-hoc reports. We – our local offices for Child Protection and Permanency, participate in Child Stat which help assess case practice model implementation, provide an in-depth case review of one case by one office, and there's a number of different staff that participate, so we can really build up the quality improvement processes on a broad level with the hope that folks there will bring it back to their local office.

We do targeted reviews of investigation quality and adolescent services and we have regular calls with our local offices here at RER and the Office of Quality on our key performance indicators for our various federal measures. Next please.

So we produce a number of different types of data here and there is obviously different data for different users and uses. So this is one of the first things that we teach the fellows, is about the different kinds of data and what each one means. So our point in time data is simple timely, it's easy to understand, it's easy to produce.

Our key performance measure indicators provide the staff in the field process measures that are familiar to them and relevant to their direct service. Our outcome data is our big picture measure of our system performance and we also have our qualitative data through our qualitative reviews and our targeted reviews. That's more exploratory. That's more descriptive and I've provided some examples of some of our data for each of these types. Next please.

So we thought it was important for you because we know different states and tribes have different ways of using their case management data. So this is a screenshot of our system safe measures. Our modified settlement agreement has 55 indicators with over 200 measures. So safe measures is our case management system, includes 100 different measures to assist field staff with managing their work and is separated into different categories like case practice fundamentals, permanency case management and tabs for investigations and assessments.

So when a supervisor is going into their measure, and for this particular measure it's their contact with children, in New Jersey monthly contact is our minimum requirement. So supervisors usually will use this screen to click on the small pink bar in 'contact not reported' and then look at those 95 cases that were not seen that month. So this data is near real-time. It's extracted overnight so some staff check in daily. Some staff check in weekly but for most staff this is where it ends; it's really a compliance tool to see what has not been done.

They don't necessarily focus on the trend over time and they don't necessarily look at how other offices or units compare to them or compare to other places in the state. Next please.

So in 2009, a few years after our reform started, we had a lot of data and we found that staff both - some in leadership roles as well as our front line workers and supervisors tended to be uncomfortable using data and uncomfortable talking about data and just weren't data savvy. So while our technology grew our staff's analytics skills did not grow at the same rate as the technology. So our challenge was how to get staff outside of IT and outside of reporting and outside of executive leadership to really understand data and to actually value it.

So we wanted all levels of staff – at all, you know – throughout the agency to be able to transition between the numbers and good practice because we know at this level that numbers can lead to the practice and we want to build that capacity as an agency to become data driven and self-correcting. Next please.

So to bring you to the beginning of fellows, in 2009, 2010 much of the work to create the data Fellows Program started. The department applied for and received a grant from the Northeast and Caribbean Child Welfare

Implementation Center. There was a call for applications in fall of 2010. And in January of 2011 the first round began so we really sought to transform DCF into an organization where data is used routinely to inform practice and performance as well as identify diagnose and address issues.

So DCF and NCIC conducted interviews with other states that were identified by the Children's Bureau to examine what some promising practices in relation to managing by data and other quality improvement. So there was a literature review conducted of best practice. There were interviews conducted and from that DCF contacted with an outside agency to develop the managing by data Fellows Program. Next please.

So something that data Fellows does is something that emerged from the work that was done to crate the program was that we thought it'd be successful if we could target mid-level staff. So we think that's relatively unique. We target middle managers so the frontline supervisors, our area of quality coordinators and support staff at a level of some decision making in other divisions and offices.

So central office staff uses data driven management but field and direct service staff were less comfortable and in some cases even distrustful of data. So the applications went out and about 150 staff applied for 5–for 100 spots in the program. So each—the strategy was to seed offices with staff with these skills so they were grouped geographically into five groups throughout our state, each with their own dedicated facilitator to deliver the class materials to teach the concepts, provide hands-on coaching and to really guide their work over the 18 months of the program. Next please.

So our objectives in data Fellows -- and this is something that has not changed since the inception of the program -- we're grounded in case practice principles. We want to develop the presentation skills of our participants. We want to help them understand and de-mystify data. We want them to be data experts and master qualitative and quantitative tools, be able to recognize challenging while also celebrating good practice and supporting positive change, act as a local resource while they're in the program as well as when they graduate and really grow the work for us. And this is a sustainability plan for our workforce to create a promotable workforce that has data management skills and understands how to use data for good outcomes.

So we partnered with two external groups, a New Jersey based firm and a non-profit in Alabama to develop and deliver the curriculum. Both had extensive welfare knowledge and experience with our department and they were very excited to partner with our leadership on the initiative. So an 18 month curriculum was created which included project work, analyzing live administrative data, conducting qualitative case reviews and finally they developed options for solutions for executive leadership.

So the program teaches analysis in a way that uses both the quantitative and qualitative data on the ground, at the frontline level and throughout the organization as opposed to just central office with executive staff or central office staff.

The program also focuses on developing the Fellows skills in leadership presentation, team building and part of the program is that there are two large presentations, an interim and a final with an audience with executive staff, external stakeholders, their colleagues and their offices and our last couple of presentations have had 200, 250 participants. So these are our large presentations that are not something that most participants would have an opportunity to experience. Next please.

So this learning and improvement cycle, I just wanted to compare and contrast it with what's going to be my next slide so this is the approach that we use in fellows. We begin with the diagnostics and we spend a lot of time on diagnostics.

We begin by identifying some of their assumptions and using those assumptions to form hypotheses and we tell the Fellows from day one some of your assumptions may be correct but we need to do the diagnostics and look at the data in order to prove it or disprove it. And chances are if we have to disprove it there will be other folks at the office doing the work that you'll need to convince as well. And that's where building their data skills really will help them throughout the program and after.

So they do investigation of both the quantitative and qualitative data. They conduct a literature review. They analyze their data and discard the myths and this really is a cycle because they may be working on something and realize they have to then track and adjust and do a bit more analysis before really getting to the planning and implementation part of the cycle.

So the next slide is the framework for effective practice in child welfare in order to design, test, and spread. Even though the language is different there's a lot of similar concepts used. So as we as an agency begin to embrace this framework the work that the Fellows has been doing really, really connects with a lot of these concepts that we develop and test.

We compare and learn. And when we find things that are working and when we see good outcomes and we learn about the business process of what's happening to get to those good outcomes that's when we try to replicate and adapt it in other places.

So as a program we're beginning to talk more about really being able to evaluate and how to successfully evaluate some of the things that the Fellows have implemented which have been really driven by the Fellows themselves. So one of the - next slide please.

So with our external consultant we currently now - the Fellows Program is completely in-house so we have transitioned from being - it was a contract program delivered and administered totally by an outside consultant to now having the program completely in-house. So that was a transition over five years coming.

So in round one back in 2011 there were 18 seminars over 18 months. The first round was successful. The Fellows explored topics like investigation quality, delayed permanency, frequently encountered families and they explored resource care. Fellows found – fellows examined data and practices and found that offices that took the time to hold investigative supervisory conferences more often tended to have highly quality and timely investigations.

So they looked for things that mattered to their staff as well as to our leadership and our stakeholders here and tried to replicate that. So in – the first six seminars were structured all about data. We exposed them to external data, internal data that a worker or a supervisor on the frontline level may not have a lot of exposure to. The middle portion of the curriculum is focused on utilizing data to manage change.

We talked a lot about business process and data flow. We focused on safety, permanency and well-being around our case practice. And then the final seminar focused on improving outcomes, so we pulled back the lens a little bit and looked at data, all of the data, that they've done over the project work in a really systemic context and using all of the analysis to make informed decisions about potential solutions or implementation at a local level.

So leadership across the department was very encouraged by the results of the first round and decided to invest in a second round. That first round was - there was an evaluation done by an external evaluator, so there were some recommendations made as a result and the time of having, you know, your valuable staff out of the office for 18 months was a common refrain. So in round two the seminars were condensed from 18 months to 9 months.

Now it wasn't less information but the 18 seminars were now condensed to 2 a month. And the participants get the same content, the same expectations. They just get less time to do it. So we think about sustainability of the program of promoting of Fellows leadership skills.

So we began using Fellows alumni as coaches so the graduates of the program agreed to come back and their leadership agreed for them to come back to work with the next round hands-on with coaching, with feedback to support the facilitation team who was doing most of the analysis and delivery of the materials. Next slide please.

So these nine rectangles are the scenes of the nine seminars that we have and this is what the program looks like today. So it's the same curriculum, just condensed and we, as you can see going through it, we begin with just building their basic Excel skills, building charting skills, introducing them to PowerPoint and walk them through to a much more sophisticated level of both technical and practical knowledge.

So the way that the structure of the program works, we aim for about 40 participants. It really seemed to be the sweet spot for the project work that they do as well as classroom management. Each round starts in September and ends in June and we split the group of 40 into 2 groups of about 20 each and each group has one assigned alumnus to act as their facilitator to again provide that hands-on coaching and support.

So the time commitment is still significant. There are generally three fellows days a month but as it gets closer to presentation time it bumps up to four to ensure that all participants are ready. We have every year raised the bar for expectations and we find that the extra planning around those times really does pay off.

So some of the research that we've done shows that after three months, adults retained about 10% of what they learned in lecture training, lecture based training, when they learn by doing about 65% of the learning is retained and when they practice what they learned in the workplace for a number of weeks 100% of the learning is expected to be retained.

So we use that study to inform the curriculum and because of that we have developed - the first day of the month is a full day seminar where they're taught the concepts. It's very interactive but it's a more traditional classroom setting. The second day, which is usually two days later, is a coaching day which is also interactive but it usually takes place in a computer lab.

So the participants are in Excel. They're in the various reports produced by research evaluation and reporting and they are manipulating the data. They are making their own discoveries. They're given a worksheet to guide their work but they're given a number of different activities during class aside from just, you know, the computer work. They have multimedia presentations. They're expected to produce charts, their simulations and then we expect them and we challenge them and we kind of force them to tell us what they're doing to bring their work back to their office or unit.

So we begin the first class by asking what they did to impact their office and we listed a few responses from people so we can learn about the things that they're taking back. We have them practice public speaking. We have them create elevator pitches. We have them practice for the presentations to leadership and that's where they really hone those skills and become data champions.

So we protect time for assignments. That was another change that was made as the program evolved because the two days we found wasn't enough to get really all the learning done and once people are back at the office doing their daily work it becomes difficult to manage the Fellows assignments which are fairly intense with their day to day work and decision making. So we protected a day for assignments which the facilitation team also takes part in in order to ensure that they're grasping the concepts. And when we find Fellows that are really ahead of some of their colleagues we enlist them to help others.

So we begin each round of the Fellows Program with a charge from leadership. They're assigned a topic and then they spend the nine months completing, like, a quasi-research project. It's not strict by research methods but we do go through as I said a literature review. They do data analysis. They do qualitative case review and we ask them to focus deeply on an area of practice that could benefit from an in-depth analysis.

So they're so used to time being this constant pressure that they're just used to making decisions quickly and having people roll with it. So we give them the opportunity to take a step back, to learn, to understand more sophisticated quantitative and qualitative skills to read research, to explore best practices and to really integrate their experience when working with their colleagues and their staff in the program, in the office, as well as in our alumni network of Fellows graduates. Next please.

So as I mentioned the administrative structure of the program has shifted and each year we do more to work towards, or we did more to work towards, internal sustainability and capacity building. So critical to the sustainability and success of the program is the support of leadership throughout the department. Our commissioner is a champion of the Fellows and much of our executive staff are excited, and encourage their staff to participate.

We have a professional center which is our centralized training facility that houses our mandatory 40 hours of training as well as different events within the department as well as in some of our sister departments and community agencies and the professional center allows us to utilize space in their classrooms and in their computer labs for the nine months.

This is a huge time commitment for the Fellows as well as for their offices so really their managers and their direct supervisors have to be onboard as well. But we found, and as people have more staff participate, that the investment does pay dividends during the program as well as after graduation. So as a coordinator I’m responsible for the daily administration, curriculum updates, seminar delivery, oversight of coaching days with Amanda and the team here in research evaluation and reporting. They help with data analysis and we - I like to tell the Fellows that I’m about five minutes ahead of them.

So we start the data analysis before they do but we don’t know where the data is going to lead them. And because they’re dealing with live data they may take a different turn with their projects that we anticipated or expected but it's not a bad turn, that's actually what we'd like to see them doing.

So the program is a two facilitator model. There are two people that deliver the materials and work with the teams as a whole. So there's this group of alumni that is our facilitation team. They have full time roles outside of the data Fellows Program but they volunteer and they have their managers and directors approval to come back to work with the teams for the entirety of the program.

So we have seven facilitators usually that work with the teams and they bring a diversity of knowledge in both their experience and roles and they come from all different rounds of the Fellows Program. Some have been involved every year since Fellows' inception and some are recent graduates. They are expected to be out of the office the same days as the Fellows are as well as an additional planning day where we do a, kind of a, teach back, a practice teach of the material, they are responsible for delivering the seminars. I will jump in as needed but this is really - we try to make them the face of the program.

It can be a strain on operations but they develop additional valuable skills in working with teams and developing relationships from staff throughout the department honing their skills and really having their management skills be brought to the next level which benefits their local or assigned office.

So the original staffing again was this outside consultant and there was an internal advisory group. We've maintained the internal advisory group and we have the full time coordinator and some year six sometimes eight part-time facilitators or facilitators in training. Next slide please.

This is just a snapshot of our retention rate as of June 2015 and you can see in each round there is some attrition through the course of the program. When the application process, when the application is announced, during the application process, participants get a copy of the schedule. They do sign a commitment letter certifying that they'll remain employed by the department for two years after graduating. And during the first few seminars I am explicit about the expectations.

They need to be there for each session for their benefit and for their colleagues. Because the nature of the material and the nature of the interactive nature of the class and coaching, if they miss more than one day of the program they can't complete the program so this really is an intensive commitment.

And the people, you see the 95%, 97% retention rate. Some of those are retirements and some of those are folks who have left the agency. We've done a great job in retaining the staff and really promoting their skills. Next slide please.

So just a glance at the meeting experience of participants is 13 years with the department. We've had some folks who have as few as three years, and we have participants - we have several with 25, 30+ years with the department so if you think about - and those have been folks who have been in the most recent rounds. I think this is a testament to the program and what people are seeing when people graduate and go back to the office that people who have been here 30 years sign up for a nine month program and commit to two years after graduation.

So the largest group of roles are people in the local offices, the frontline supervisors, their supervisors, case practice specialists. So these are the roles that are critical to day to day decision making that drives the work and drives their outcome. So these are the staff that need to be making data informed decisions to improve practice with children, women and families. Next slide please.

So our goal has always been to have Fellows throughout the department and on the left the pie shows our current alumni distribution with 72% of our staff at that local field direct service level and 28% in other divisions and offices of the department. More than half of the alumni - so when we talk about promotability and skills - more than half of those alumni have either – have - been promoted either during the program or after graduation and there are many more that shifted roles or assumed different responsibilities in their offices because of the skills that they gained during the program.

There are a number of offices within the department that now, when they are looking and creating positions, will include that they prefer Fellows experience because they’ve seen the payoff that these people can bring to their offices.

Next slide please. So in order to shift to this a data-driven culture, we look at the fellows when they began and we try to gauge where they are with, you know, accepting data as a part of their daily work.

So when we did the survey in the first round, we heard things like data is part of the numbers game. It’s done to make the managers and upper-level staff look good. And really, when they see other places doing well in certain measures, they feel like they’re manipulating data and they’re doing things differently to just look like they’re practicing well instead of actually practicing well.

So we really want to shift from this mistrust of data to having people see how it can benefit them and benefit the children and families they work with. Next slide please.

So this is an overview of the project topics from round one through round four. So something you'll notice in round one, there are five different topics that, while they relate to each other, they are five completely separate topics.

We narrow that down a little bit in round two, and in the most recent round, and what we found to be really successful is creating an umbrella topic. So in round three we looked at the statewide placements increase. We saw that are placement numbers are creeping up and were higher than they had been at in the past.

And out of that, came a few sub-topics that groups got to focus on. With the fellows in round one, while there were really good results and there was really good information found, we found that people were kind of stretched thin and umbrella topic allows enough flexibility within to focus on different things that matter to different places.

So in the most recent round, we looked at stability and we looked at it through the framework of short stays in care and reentries into care, at placement stability as well as educational stability that was really manageable for our group.

And each group got to look at a topic because some groups do very well with reentry into care and some do not. So we're not really pigeonholed into one specific topic. Next slide please.

So we used a number of different data sources, and because participants come from a range of experience, a range of offices across the department, their technical skills do vary.

So we do our very best to bring everybody to some sort of baseline level. There are people in class who have never opened Excel. There are people who have never used Excel for more than making a table.

We teach them how to use functions. We teach them how to create charts. And we teach them how to use PowerPoint and present a clean, professional looking PowerPoint without animations and pop-ups and, you know, things that you would want to present to leadership versus things that you know, are just fun.

So we teach them both those technical and practical skills to become better consumers of data and ingrained the data driven management into their day-to-day jobs.

So the first two coaching sessions of the program are devoted to the technical data. And we use the census data as well as larger DCF reports to help them learn how to use Excel.

Depending on the area of the departments, because there are some that do not work in our child welfare arm, some have never opened our case management system Safe Measures, so we have to teach them how to use that.

And fellows and local offices - so a fellow who sits in our state capital in Trenton may not consider what’s happening in an office up north, may not consider what’s happening with practice in Atlantic City.

So we do try to open their minds to pick up your head, look around at what's happening around you, and that includes other states and other countries. So that's where we bring in literature reviews. We bring in white papers, briefs, journals to expose them to other state's data, other county's data and then here in RER, we develop a cohort of children specific to their topic.

And we present that to them to allow them to understand what folks here in RER have to do because they get to experience of data cleanup first hand and they realize that when they see a report that there's a lot more that goes into it than just getting a clean and polished report, that there actually is a lot of work that's done to clean it up and make it usable product.

Next slide please. So I want to provide you a couple of quick examples from the fellow's first seminar this year. Again, we challenged them to think about things in ways that they have not in the past, how they, in their office, may look different from other places and how practice differs in other places, how resources differ in other places.

And as we progress through the seminars, they begin to learn more sophisticated analysis of the data and transition just from a consumer to storyteller and using all of the data that they've looked at to really tell a story and to advocate for something in their local office.

So here we like to show the counties, and these are a few counties in the southern part of our state, really how different population change can look. And we challenge them to think about the impact that that has on their day-to-day work.

Next slide. So we, again, defined the different types of data. We talk about point in time data, longitudinal data, and we display things in volume and rates to challenge them to think about things in different ways.

We look at patterns. We challenge them to look at trend lines and we have them ask questions about the information we present. So we spend a lot of time in the beginning of the program challenging their assumptions about data and teaching them to check their assumptions because they will need to do that as champions back in their local offices or the divisions that they work in.

So we really talk a lot about challenging the status quo because that is how we will make change and sustain progress. So for these particular slides, we would actually have a fellow walk us through, and it may seem very tedious, but we start with the title and they tell us where the source was.

They tell the story of, you know, we started with our highest ever, almost 8000 children in 2010 and our most recently - while we went down, we’re now - when this chart was created in August of 2014, we are right where we were in 2010.

So we challenge them to think about what impact that might have on practice and what some of the assumptions about that maybe. Next slide please. So a lot of the lexicon of fellows has caught on throughout the department through our final presentations and through the fellows bringing their knowledge and their learning back to their offices.

So thanks to them, the phrase, “bright spots,” or, “bright spots analysis,” has caught on throughout DCS. We succeeded in infusing this language throughout the department and it’s a process that we introduced to the fellows very early on.

We used a book called Switch which is in - at the end - of the presentation; it's on the references and resources page. And it talks all about how to harness small-scale changes to produce big outcomes and gives a lot of good real-life examples about ways that other people have figured things out that it had big impact.

So fellows learn that the bright spots analysis starts with identifying the goal and identifying where people are meeting the goal. So it's not just identifying great practice.

It's actually a set of steps about understanding, diagnosing and once they identify and analyze the data, we want them to study the practice and map out the business process and to clone the practice as it relates to their work in whatever office they fit in.

So what works for them is that we tell them people like you have figured this out. They've struggled in the same areas. They've figured out. So it's not about finding solutions and investing a lot of money or creating sweeping policies about the new way that we should be doing things.

We challenge them to think about how do we make it easier for people, whether it's our workers, our staff our families, to do the right thing? Next slide please.

So I wanted to present a couple of real-life case studies of our fellows. So length of stay is something that -- I'm sorry. So in the first round of fellows, one of the groups studied investigation timeliness.

So here in New Jersey, we - our policy has investigators complete investigations in 60 days. So we start that conversation by telling fellows that there are other states that have shorter timeframes. There are other states that have longer timeframes and there are some states that don't specify a timeframe for investigation time.

So we have them look at the statewide data and a look at patterns across the state, patterns within their county, because some counties have four or six local offices.

So we challenge them to look at how things look different in other places or what places look similar to them. So the transparency is really effective and we challenge them to remember and think about, if central office is only looking at the aggregate of their county, especially for this particular example.

You could see that the South office was the - the Hudson South office - was performing at the much higher rate than the Hudson North office over time. Next slide please.

So the fellows' next step, after doing a lot of the data analysis, was to talk to their staff into some interviews on - they have some roundtables and they had a few scenes emerge from these conversations about why investigation timeliness did not look so good in this particular office.

So people thought the workload was too high, that there were just too many investigations and not enough staff, that people - the office that was struggling with timeliness was completing more thorough investigations, that in doing more thorough investigations, that they were reducing placements.

And then some people thought that some supervisors were doing a better job conferencing in order to help timeliness along. So their first piece of analysis was looking at the number of intake staff, and they found that both offices actually had the same number of intake staff.

Next slide please. So then they looked at referral volume in the first three months of the year and they found that the South office actually had more and, remember, that's the office that was performing better - had more investigations, and therefore, a higher rate of referrals for staff person than the office that was struggling.

And our investigation, caseload standard is eight cases per month. So both offices are, in fact, under the investigation standard. Next slide please. So we teach fellows about leverage metrics. And when they looked at the worker and supervisory conferencing, they found that the South office was conferencing much more frequently than the North office was.

And again, you'd see that similar over in the percent of cases completed within 60 days that South was doing much better than North. So they really, as a result of this analysis, which sounds very simple, but if you think about staff making decisions on a local level, they do not have the time, and some of them don't have the skills or haven't been taught the skills to do this kind of analysis.

So they created a project where they were focusing on supervisory conferencing. And today, so this is now four years later after the fellows have done their projects, the North office is that 72% supervisory conferencing. The South is that 78%, and their investigation quality, both - or investigation timeliness, both offices are above 90%.

So both offices are performing much better than they were four years ago and, yes, a lot has changed but the fellows really push the idea of conferencing for quality and for timeliness. Next slide please.

So after the final presentations, the fellows - we had poster sessions where the fellows - create interactive rooms to present their data as well as their solution. So this is the project done by really, really spearheaded by one fellow who is in - not in a leadership role in her local office.

She deals primarily with external stakeholders. So you'll see this service cluster down in Patterson which is the southern part of the county which receives the most referrals and is the busiest town in Passaic County.

But there are a number of referrals that come from where the star is in the northern communities, and the second highest volume of referrals is this town, West Milford.

So this fellow wanted to create, or thought there was promise, because they were having trouble engaging fathers in their families - wanted to try to replicate a program that was really successful in working with fathers.

So in her analysis she found – if you'll go to the next slide – that in order to get to this fatherhood program, a family that lived in the northern part of the county actually had to travel outside of New Jersey into New York City, back into New Jersey, a 2-1/2 bus ride at about $20 a person.

So in order for that family to access services, it was incredibly inconvenient and we, you know, she said, "What if you, do this with two children?" "What if you do this if you're working or you're attending school?"

So the commissioner of the department was very taken by this map and asked this fellow to get her some data. So after the - weeks after the final presentation, the fellow, along with her facilitator, began to compile data for the commissioner because the commissioner said, “What if we could get a family success center that’s not in Patterson that causes them to travel 2-1/2, so closer to where they live?”

So the result of that is, on the next slide, with the data that the fellow provided to the commissioner, a request for proposal was issued just five months after the final presentation.

And just, you know, a week and a half ago, the family success center opened its doors. So the fellow in the front of this picture, in the black and white shirt, is the one who did this project and she’s there with all for other fellow alumni celebrating the opening along with our commissioner.

So this was really a success story for both the program, but far more importantly, the families of this community because this program, you do not have to be involved with child welfare services in order to access the service.

So this is something that anyone in the community could access that focuses on building protective factors around families in a number of different ways. Next slide please.

So this is the final case study of bright spots analysis and some real-time CQI, and this is how one of the expectations that we have, the fellows, to apply their skills immediately.

So this particular fellow who was in the most recent round oversees three investigative units. So during her monitoring of our case management system, she noticed that her unit's investigation timeliness numbers were not going in the direction she wanted.

They actually got worse over a three-month period. So once she learned some of the skills that you learned in fellows, she decided to dig a little deeper and do a little bit more analysis. Next slide please.

So just her three units brought her office, in November, down to the office in red to 66%. So she was able to see that that there were offices doing better and there were offices that weren't doing quite so well.

And she chose to apply one of the lessons learned from our seminar that people don't expect - people don't change when they hear what they're doing wrong. And she used a phrase, "When the heart and mind will follow."

So she reminded the staff in her office to think about waiting for a doctor to call with test results. That - we don't want to wait for doctors and our families shouldn't have to wait for us to make a decision on what's happening with their case, whether we're going to open it or close it or provide services.

So she was able to create concrete instructions, step-by-step guidance, and create a positive culture of peer pressure in her units that she supervised, and actually identified people who were doing well as the bright spots in her office.

She identified them publicly and they did not like it because people in her office were used to hearing what they were doing wrong rather what they were doing right.

So after she celebrated the bright spots -- next slide please -- they began to see measurable change. So they can wait until February to pat themselves on the back. When they had that jump in December, they began to celebrate. And then from there, they continued to celebrate. Next slide please.

So now not only is her particular tier of three supervisors doing well, but her entire office - so again, it was at 66% in November - is excelling out of the other offices in their area and now outperforming the state aggregate as well.

Next slide please. So some of the lessons that we’ve learned throughout the course of fellows, to begin to wrap this up, is that the coaching takes - is more time-consuming than we had originally planned.

The fellows, as I spoke on before, we did have to build in an extra day for their assignments so they could manage their day-to-day work as well as their fellows assignments.

One of the things that I’ve seen every year is that team and group work is new to many fellows. The applicants and the participants are usually the cream of the crop of the departments so they’re used to being the go-to in their office. They’re used to being the person who has the answers, who people seek out.

So now they’re in a room with 19 other people who are just like them and the teamwork dynamic can become challenging. So some of what we do is build seminars and we build into seminars throughout the program, things about how to work on a team, how to coach your peers to get them through this team dynamic struggle.

We do set limits on how much data to provide because, as they begin to build their skills, they want more and more. We do have to stop them and continually refocus them.

We also learned that sustainability takes time and that, you know, what we may think going into one year, as we get into the year, things change a little bit and we're still continually working to think of ways to sustain the program and to really capitalize on the skills of all of the alumni in the local offices.

Next slide please. So to reiterate, the early leadership buy-in was incredibly essential to the success. The applied work and having fellows do hands-on work is critical, as well as individual coaching.

We are fortunate enough to be a department that is very used to and accepts using live data and accepts transparency in our data. So that is invaluable and really it's intensity to the work that they do.

And we don't value quantitative over qualitative or vice versa. It's all equally important and it's emphasized throughout the sessions. So this idea of team competition has been a way to get the teams to want to do better than others but also respect the work that the others are doing to get to the ultimate goal of having a good project and that benefits the department.

So next slide please. I won't read point by point some of the overall impact but as a whole, this fear and distrust of data is gone. There is more of a focus on quality improvement at the ground level then there has been in years past and currently reviewing the applications for the next round.

And each year the applications get stronger and stronger and you could tell that the data has - and data-driven management and data-driven thinking has infused throughout the agency.

So the program is now embedded into the organization and it's supported through all levels, but especially at the top. And while the sharing of data can be a little bit scary at first, again, it creates a transparency and accountability that really lends to success.

So each class, the fellows leave with a greater appreciation of informed decision-making and they talk about the decisions that they make when they come back that lead to better practice for the children and families that we serve.

Next slide please. Such just quickly, this slide in the next slide are just examples of what a coaching session looks like. People are up. People are interacting. They use a variety of different materials to share their learning and to get their learning.

And the next slide after this is the example of our auditorium where we have our presentations and some of the poster session rooms and the way that they are presented.

So really, this year was another successful event and we're looking forward to the next round of fellows. Next slide. So I did include references with the invitation for the Webinar. There was a link to an article in Governing magazine talking a little bit about the Fellows program.

But our full evaluation of the first round is available by Action Research Partners, at the bottom and the IBM Center for the Business of Government also recently published a report about our Manage My Data Program if you'd like more information. And that is all that I have. So I think you very much for your time and they'll turn it back over to Joyce and her crew.

Joyce: Well, Abbie, I want to extend a huge thank you to you. What a fascinating program. And I suspect we're going to have a few questions from our attendees.

So many please open the phone lines or the chat feature to our attendees for the question and answer session? And, Kristy, I think you're going to manage this.

Kristy: Yes ma'am, so the operator will unmute the audience. And I will also read off the chat questions.

Coordinator: Thank you. At this time we will begin the question and answer session of the conference. To ask a question by the phones, please press star 1 and record your name clearly for question introduction. Again, star 1 and clearly record your name for question introductions. One moment, please, to see if we have questions from the phones.

Joyce: While we're waiting to see if any questions are submitted by phone, let me kick off where there are questions, please. There obviously is a huge investment in time but also in dollars. Abbie, and Amanda, which you have some budget metrics for the fellows program?

Amanda O'Reilly: We don't have that prepared for today.

Joyce: Okay.

Amanda O'Reilly: Certainly we can get something together and share it with you.

Joyce: Yes, if any state would like information relating to that particular issue, if you could just email me at Joyce@kassets.com, and I'll get it to Abbie and Amanda. So I don't know if there are any questions by phone but perhaps, Kristy, you could read some of the check questions.

Kristy: Sure. The next one we have is, if you did not have the performance measures related to your oversights, what have been hard to decide on an initial data measure that you have started with? Would you have been up - would it have been up to your staff or from outside - an outside consultant?

Amanda O'Reilly: So this is Amanda. You know, I think - you know, outside certainly of our Safe Measures performance management system, you know, we're all using AFCARS and NCANDS data as well, right, that all states are required to be, you know, publishing.

And so I think, at the very least, right, you can be looking at, you know, the cohorts of children that are either coming in through the NCANDS files in terms of abuse and neglect data or around some of the outcome data for kids in foster care through AFCARS, right.

So that could be a potential source of information. I think, you know, certainly, I think having the data accessible is a huge part of this and I think Safe Measures has been an invaluable tool for us to really springboard some of our learning, especially at the local level, because that's information that's really available to every worker in our system.

Abbie DiMeo: And most of the staff - so again, about, you know, 70% to 75% of participants, start in the child protection permanency arm of that department. So most of them, they do not think about the AFCARS and NCANDS data.

They do not think about the larger reporting that we do. So their day-to-day is in Safe Measures, but in fellows, we teach them to utilize safe measures better, but most of the data we have is pulled from our, you know, more standard reporting that we do outside of the creating a cohort specifically around the topic.

Amanda O'Reilly: I think another piece that Abbie kind of touched on briefly is the case record review that is also part of the fellows program, right, so in terms of developing a survey, learning how to read a case record and abstracting information of statistically significant representative sample of the population, right.

That's another way to collect some different pieces of information that may not be available through the AFCARS and NCANDS data or through other sources of quantitative data that's aggregated but really able to extract from the chart for the record, you know, whatever information is collected by the worker.

Kristy: Great, thank you. The next question is, was an outside group helped with the designing of your program?

Amanda O'Reilly: Yes, yes. There was a group here in New Jersey where they had experience working with us in the - with the department in the past. They were - we contractor with them to create the curriculum and to do some of that work after getting the grant from NCIC back in 2009.

And they were involved with the programs through the most recent round and we strategically, throughout the years, reduced their involvement and increased the capacity of the alumni.

I was a member of the first class of fellows. When I was sitting in a local office, and had been involved with the program every year, and eventually I became the succession plan to bring the program into the department.

So I sit now in the coordinator role, and last year we teamed with the consultants to really transfer all of the - their learning over to me to be able to fully run the program internally.

Kristy: Great. Thank you. The next question we have is, are you seeing a consistent level of interest in people wanting to become a fellow or an increase in applicants? And do you select on a first-come first-serve basis are you trying a wider geographic representation?

Amanda O’Reilly: That is a great question because I am in the middle of reviewing applications at the moment. Yes, we - so again, the first year there were 147 applicants for 100 spots. And as we shifted the program with 40 spots, the application date deadline closes tomorrow at close of business, and already I have about 65, 70 applications. And usually there’s a rush at the end.

Last year there were more than double the applications for spots available. So as people - you know, when the first read about the program, people did not know what to expect, did not know whether the commitment would be worth it.

So for the frontline staff, there are some that are genuinely lifelong learners and just want to absorb as much as they can from the department. There are some that see the promotability because so many of the participants have been promoted into various roles or, like I said, assumed different responsibilities once they graduated or even during the program.

So theirs is kind of twofold. But there’s absolutely continued interest and every - last summer when we were looking at applications, and again this summer, I have front-line workers and investigators, clerical staff, our case aids, lots of different people that in the organization want to participate in the program.

And the quality of applicants, I think, reflects the shift that the department has made because reviewing applications over the past few years, this particular crop of applications, people are using charts and data and talking about different reports in ways that they use data on a day-to-day basis.

So I see that reflected anecdotally in the applications. And the selection process, we developed a rubric. It is not done geographically. Because we have a very strong public union here, so there are some considerations to be made when there are different offices that use fellows as something for promotions.

We cannot limit, because we may need a fellow in a certain area, that person shouldn’t have more of an opportunity that someone sitting elsewhere. So the application process is based on - a little bit on some of their past CQI work.

But we asked them to talk about projects that they’ve gone through, ways that they’ve used data to improve outcomes. And we ask them for as many specific examples of possible. So it’s really heavily weighted towards the kinds of work that they’ve done in the interest that they show in fellows and how they plan to use the knowledge that they learned in fellows once they graduate and during the program.

Kristy: Thank you. The next chat question is, are there any other states with similar programs?

Abbie DiMeo: So I have talked to several other states that I think - so the group that we've worked with does work in other states at different levels. Maybe not a project this big. So there are a couple of counties in Pennsylvania that are doing a similar model.

There - I've talked to people from Tennessee, from New York. I've talked to people from different states and certainly at our presentations we have opened up for other states that are interested in seeing what it's all about, seeing what a presentation looks like in the kinds of things that, you know, staff are doing.

We have had other states come to watch the presentations. And certainly if anyone listening with be interested in doing that, you can contact me and Amanda and we could talk about that as we get closer in February and then again in June.

Kristy: All right, and at this time there are no other chat questions.

Joyce: Are there any questions by telephone?

Coordinator: At this time, I show no questions from the phones.

Joyce: Okay, I am wondering if perhaps you could share the actual fellow's applications that we could post to our Web site along with this Webinar. Is that possible?

Abbie DiMeo: Sure.

Joyce: Okay, if you would email that to me, I would appreciate it, Abbie.

Abbie DiMeo: Absolutely.

Joyce: Any more chat questions? We have a few minutes left, time for some more questions if there are any. Kristy?

Kristy: Just an appreciation of a great Webinar.

Joyce: Thank you very much. So let's, again, thank you, Abbie and Amanda. Like I said, to me, this was absolutely fascinating, so huge thank you.

Abbie DiMeo: Yes, thank you.

Joyce: Let's move, then, to our conclusion. If you would chan— advance the slide, Kristy, I would appreciate it. So we, again, hope that the information shared with you today was both very informative and valuable in your everyday work life.

As a reminder, please remember to register for the August Webinar once the announcement is released. Additionally, if you have any additional questions regarding today's topic, would like more information about any of our scheduled Webinars I would like to volunteer your state that the topic presenter, please do not hesitate to contact me at Joyce(kassets.com.

So once again, this Webinar has been recorded and will be made available online. When it is complete and posted, we will send a message via the

SACWIS manager's listserv with the link. So thank you for attending. Good bye.

Coordinator: This concludes today's conference. All participants may disconnect at this time. Thank you.

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