



Training and technical assistance (T/TA) is a means of building capacity by improving the ability of individuals, teams, organizations, networks, or communities to create measurable and sustainable results. T/TA services are complex, and the contexts in which they are delivered can vary widely. T/TA can also take many forms and require different levels of intensity and customization. For example, T/TA with one child welfare agency might include tailored coaching during multiple site visits over several years, while T/TA with another could involve a series of conference calls with a group of its peers to share information and resources. All of this potential variation makes measuring the delivery and effectiveness of T/TA particularly challenging.

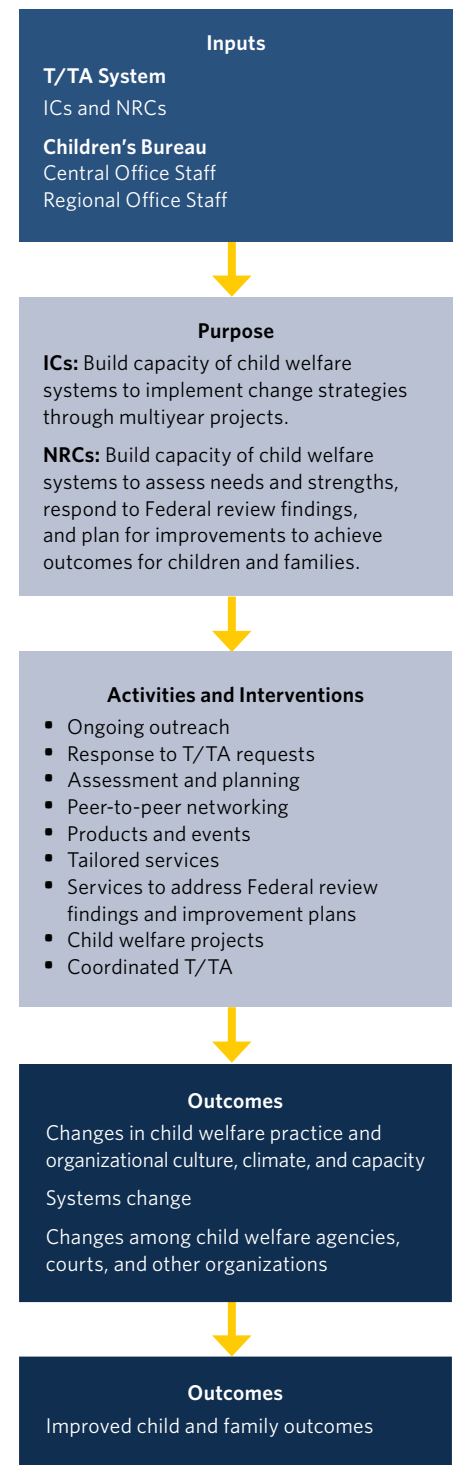
The 2015 report *Supporting Change in Child Welfare: An Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance* answers questions regarding the use of T/TA by States, Tribes, and territories; the quality of these services; the relationships between providers and recipients; the collaboration among providers; and the outcomes of T/TA (see Children’s Bureau T/TA System and Evaluation). Specifically, evaluators gathered information about whether and how T/TA supported child welfare organizational and systems change, fostered knowledge development about promising and effective practices in transforming organizations and systems, and promoted the dissemination and utilization of evidence-informed and evidence-based practices. The framework for the evaluation is provided in Figure 1.

Children’s Bureau T/TA System and Evaluation

Beginning in Federal fiscal year (FY) 2009, the Children’s Bureau expanded, coordinated, and re-oriented its network of child welfare training and technical assistance (T/TA). Ten **National Child Welfare Resource Centers (NRCs)** shared expertise and provided services to States, Tribes, and territories in specific child welfare content areas, and five regional **Child Welfare Implementation Centers (ICs)** worked with selected jurisdictions on specific child welfare projects (referred to as implementation projects) and focused T/TA on implementation and sustainability of systems change. A coordination center, web-based data system, and a virtual workspace to improve communication among providers supported this T/TA system.

The Children’s Bureau also funded a 5-year evaluation of the T/TA system: *Supporting Change in Child Welfare: An Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance*.

Figure 1. Framework for Evaluation





This brief describes the different methods used to collect qualitative and quantitative longitudinal data. It indicates the respondents for each of the datasets. It also highlights an innovative approach of drawing upon multiple data sources to answer questions about the use of T/TA, its quality, and impact.

Evaluation Data Sources and Data Collection Methods

The evaluation used a mixed-method, longitudinal approach to evaluate the T/TA providers and their services. Multiple data collection strategies captured quantitative and qualitative data to address key evaluation questions. Some data were collected directly by the evaluation team, whereas other data were provided by centers and their local evaluators.

Data collected by the evaluation team:

- **Telephone Surveys with Child Welfare Directors from All States and a Sample of Tribes and Territories.** Surveys with State child welfare directors (or their designees) were conducted using a census of all 50 States, and the District of Columbia, as well as a sample of Tribes and territories. The surveys captured directors' perceptions and perspectives about service utilization and the contributions of T/TA to specific organizational and systems changes. Surveys with child welfare directors were conducted at 18-month intervals between fall 2010 and summer 2013. Seventy-four directors from States, Tribes, and territories were included in each of the survey administrations. Across the three administrations, the response rate was 91 percent for States and 49 percent for Tribes and territories, resulting in an overall response rate of 79 percent.

- **Web Surveys of T/TA Recipients.** Every 6 months, evaluators gathered information about the quality of services using an electronic survey administered to a sample of recipients. The target population for these surveys consisted of all recipients of IC or NRC services during FY 2010 through FY 2013. Evaluators used a stratified sample design, defined by the cross-classification of two dichotomous variables: (1) type of provider (IC vs. NRC) and (2) delivery mode (onsite vs. offsite). To assist with respondent recall, samples were drawn from activities that occurred within the previous 3 months for onsite activities and within the previous 6 weeks for offsite activities. The overall response rate for the web survey of recipients was 38 percent.
- **Web Surveys of IC and NRC Directors.** The web surveys of center directors gathered information on the nature and quality of relationships and interactions among the providers, their level of collaboration and coordination, and the degree to which they transferred knowledge and information. Directors were asked to consult with their staff and together develop one integrated response to the survey instrument, with only one survey per provider. Each organization had equal weight in the analysis. The baseline survey was administered in FY 2010, and a follow-up survey was administered in FY 2012. The response rate for ICs and NRCs across both administrations was 100 percent.

- **Telephone Interviews and Focus Groups with IC and NRC Directors and Federal Staff.**

Evaluators conducted semistructured telephone interviews and focus groups with center directors and Federal staff annually. Qualitative data were captured on various themes, including the relationships between T/TA providers and recipients, provider responses to changes in roles and responsibilities within the T/TA system, ways jurisdictions made use of available T/TA, and the barriers providers encountered in helping jurisdictions make changes to their organizations and systems.

- **Case Studies in Five Jurisdictions.** Longitudinal case studies were conducted with four States and one Tribe. Case studies provided information on how jurisdictions used T/TA and why services may or may not have been useful in helping them achieve their goals. All the jurisdictions selected by evaluators as case study sites were engaged in a longitudinal systems change initiative that had the potential to be an exemplar of change and were receiving T/TA from multiple providers. Case studies involved multiple data collection activities over a 3-year period, including open-ended interviews with individuals, focus groups or group interviews, direct observation of meetings, and a review of documentation and archival records. Two-person evaluation teams made 3- to 5-day site visits to each of the five participating jurisdictions in FYs 2011 and 2013. In FY 2012, evaluators conducted telephone interviews with key stakeholders in the jurisdictions and with relevant T/TA providers and Federal staff.

Data provided by T/TA providers and local evaluators:

- **Web-based T/TA Tracking System.** This management information system tracked data on the amount, types, and characteristics of activities and services provided by ICs and NRCs. Providers entered information into the system, including when activities were conducted, which provider(s) delivered services, and how many hours of direct contact jurisdictions received. Providers also entered narrative descriptions of the services and recorded information about the recipients.
- **IC Final Project Reports.** At the end of each implementation project, local IC evaluators submitted a final project report that provided an overview of the jurisdiction, the intervention implemented, and the project goals. The report summarized process and outcome evaluation findings, the capacity of the jurisdiction to implement other interventions, the organizational and systems outcomes, and child and family outcomes.
- **NRC Outcome Reports.** At the end of the grant period, NRC local evaluators submitted reports using a common template that outlined center-specific evaluation findings, which focused on the types of services provided, the capacity-building outcomes achieved, and the measures used to assess these outcomes.
- **Semiannual Reports.** All the centers submitted progress reports twice yearly to the Children's Bureau using a common reporting template. Evaluators used semiannual reports as a supplemental data source to better understand the additional IC and NRC activities that did not involve the direct provision of T/TA, such as outreach, collaboration with other providers, and product development.

Use of Multiple Data Sources and the Triangulation of Data

The evaluation used multiple data sources and informants, enabling data to be triangulated to examine key evaluation areas. Table 1 shows the primary evaluation areas and the data sources for each.

Table 1. Evaluation Areas and Data Sources

Evaluation Areas	Data Sources
Use of T/TA by States, Tribes, and territories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web-based T/TA tracking system
Quality of T/TA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web surveys of T/TA recipients Telephone surveys with child welfare directors Case studies in five jurisdictions
Quality of relationships between T/TA providers and jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephone surveys with child welfare directors Telephone interviews and focus groups with IC and NRC directors and Federal staff Case studies in five jurisdictions
Interactions among providers, information sharing, and collaborative T/TA services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Web surveys of IC and NRC directors Web-based T/TA tracking system Telephone interviews and focus groups with IC and NRC directors and Federal staff
Outcomes of T/TA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IC final project reports, NRC outcome reports Telephone surveys with child welfare directors Case studies in five jurisdictions

Lessons Learned About Methodological Approaches to Evaluating T/TA

There are inherent difficulties in evaluating T/TA and assessing its contributions to achieving organizational and systems change. The advantages and limitations of the current study included:

- Measuring T/TA Quantity and Quality.** The current study considered multiple domains of quality and identified a method for quantifying and characterizing the units of T/TA received by jurisdictions. The evaluation did not measure, the jurisdictions' response to the services it received, or assess the fidelity of the approaches used across providers.
- Tracking Data over Time.** Data on key evaluation areas were tracked over time in order to monitor changes in outcomes. Given the amount of time needed to achieve organizational or systems change, however, the ability to adequately assess long-term impact or sustainability during the time period available for evaluation was limited.
- Measuring Change.** Data collected by the evaluation team and local evaluation efforts relied primarily on respondent perceptions of change rather than measures of actual change at the organizational, systems, or practice level. For example, many local NRC evaluations relied on perceived changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills rather than more rigorous methods of assessment.

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