

Supporting Change in Child Welfare:

An Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance

A new Federal study reports on how training and technical assistance (T/TA) can support building capacity and sustainable change in child welfare organizations.

Background

Over 5 years, federally funded T/TA centers supported child welfare agencies and courts in 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and 46 Tribes and Tribal consortia in addressing a variety of organizational and systems changes. Their collective goal was to help child welfare systems improve practices and achieve better outcomes for children, youth, and families. Funded by the Children's Bureau, the evaluation of this T/TA effort considered:

- Types of services provided and their quality and perceived effectiveness
- Relationships that developed between providers and recipients of T/TA
- Collaboration among providers
- Outcomes, especially the degree to which T/TA contributed to changes in systems and capacity building in States and Tribes
- Implications for providers and recipients of T/TA
- Implications for the evaluation of T/TA

Study findings indicate promising practices for providers, recipients, and evaluators.

Training & Technical Assistance Definition

What is it?

- Consultation, problem solving, discussion
- Facilitation
- Sharing information
- Coaching
- Training
- Tool development
- Assessment
- Training of trainers
- Peer-to-peer networking

Who is it for?

- Administrative leadership
- Middle managers
- Training departments
- Tribal council or elders
- Supervisors
- Case workers
- Data managers/IT staff
- Partner organizations (e.g., mental health service providers)
- Legal and judicial professionals

How is it done?

- Face-to-face
- Web-based training
- Teleconference
- Short- or long-term duration

KEY FINDINGS



Recipients were most likely to access T/TA if a Federal monitoring report indicated areas for improvement or they had prior relationships with providers



Recipients were least likely to access T/TA if they did not feel their staff had the time to engage in services



Consultation, problem solving, and discussion were the most frequent types of T/TA provided



Child welfare directors reported that peer T/TA (where leaders of two child welfare systems share information and examples) was the most successful in meeting their needs



T/TA to build capacity within an organization most commonly focused on (1) better use and collection of data, and (2) the skills of leadership and supervisors



State leaders reported that Federal and other non-Federal T/TA contributed to 80% of the successful organizational and systems changes achieved over a 3-year period

About the Evaluation

The evaluation was designed to respond to a set of Children's Bureau questions about T/TA activities and how those activities affected systems change within child welfare. Data were collected by the cross-site evaluation team through:

- Interviews with State and Tribal child welfare directors
- Web-based surveys of T/TA recipients
- Case studies
- Interviews and focus groups with providers and Federal staff

Additional information was gathered by the T/TA centers, through:

- Semi-annual reports
- A web-based data system to track T/TA activities
- Final reports by local evaluators
- Children's Bureau guidance and memoranda

T/TA System

The Children's Bureau funded T/TA services to States, Tribes, and territories to better support child welfare organizational and systems change. The T/TA system included:

- Five regional Child Welfare Implementation Centers (ICs) that worked with selected jurisdictions on specific child welfare projects (referred to as implementation projects) and focused T/TA on the implementation and sustainability of systems change
- Ten National Child Welfare Resource Centers (NRCs) that shared expertise and provided services to States, Tribes, and territories in specific child welfare content areas
- A coordination center that supported increased coordination among the T/TA providers
- A virtual workspace that provided an infrastructure for improved communication about States, Tribes, and providers
- A web-based data system that permitted tracking of IC and NRC services

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Additional Resources

Report and Summary

- *Supporting Change in Child Welfare: An Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance*

Evaluation Briefs

- Using Data on Training and Technical Assistance for Evaluation and Management
- Collaboration Among T/TA Providers
- Evaluation of Implementation and Outcomes
- Evaluation Methodology

Tip Sheets for T/TA Providers and Recipients

- Getting the Most Out of T/TA
- Delivering Effective T/TA
- Supporting Systems Change in Child Welfare
- The Role of T/TA in Building a Child Welfare Agency's Capacity to Use Data

Evaluation briefs, tip sheets, and the report will be available on the Children's Bureau website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/capacity/cross-center-evaluation>.

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