



MATHEMATICA
Policy Research

PRESENTATIONS

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Technical Assistance as a Bridge Between: Facilitating Cooperation, Learning, and Capacity-Building

Jean Knab

Since 2010, Mathematica has provided technical assistance (TA) to HHS’s 42 TPP grantees. The goal of this collaboration is to support grantees to conduct rigorous implementation and impact studies, report on study findings, and increase the evidence for ‘what works’ in preventing teen pregnancy. From this experience we have garnered a number of key lessons, especially with regard to how to build local capacity to conduct research on programs to promote adolescent sexual and reproductive health. This presentation discusses HHS’s purpose in supporting TA for grantees and how Mathematica conceptualized and evolved methods of providing TA in response to local and federal needs. We then provide an example of TA, explaining support for the design of impact and implementation analysis plans. We conclude with a set of lessons about the benefits of collaboration to support local capacity building and sustain gains in experience and skills for research of TPP programs.

Partnering with Community Health Centers on Evaluation: Lessons Learned from the Text4baby Evaluation

So O’Neil and Margo Rosenbach (Mathematica), Emily DeCoster and Sylvia Fisher (Health Resources and Services Administration)

Text4baby is a free text messaging service designed to improve maternal and child health. The Text4baby evaluation involved collaboration with community health centers (CHCs) throughout all stages of research, including survey respondent recruitment and data abstraction of electronic health records. With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, CHCs are important research partners because they are at the front lines in providing care to disadvantaged populations that previously lacked access to it. Our paper describes the participatory approach and iterative process we used to work with CHCs to integrate evaluation activities into their workflows and thereby increase their capacity for future research efforts. In addition, it discusses the lessons learned in partnering with CHCs. The Text4baby evaluation provides a model-of-practice approach to conducting other studies focused on the health care experiences of safety net populations and providers.

Using Qualitative Methods to Evaluate the Integration of Physical Health Care in Behavioral Health Agencies

Jonathan Brown, Angela Gerolamo, and Jung Kim

As communities work to integrate physical and behavioral health care services, providers and policymakers need to understand the implementation of these systems change efforts to inform their replication. Incorporating the perspectives of front-line staff and patients/consumers is critical but often absent from program evaluations. This evaluation examined the early implementation of a program that embedded nurses and trained staff in behavioral health agencies to address physical health concerns. Two rounds of interviews and focus groups with program leadership, nurses, case managers, peer specialists, and consumers identified several implementation challenges. These included initial role confusion, discomfort among consumers in discussing their physical health concerns with behavioral health staff, and lower than expected uptake of a web-based self-monitoring tool. The findings underscore the value of gathering information from front-line staff and consumers to inform ongoing program development and identified several practical challenges to conducting qualitative data collection in these settings.

Evaluating a Portfolio of Early Childhood Workforce Investments in Los Angeles County

Emily Moiduddin and Robert Santillano (Mathematica), and Namrata Mahajan (First 5 LA)

This presentation will describe the First 5 LA comprehensive professional development evaluation, a multi-method impact and implementation study of six distinct professional development (PD) programs for early educators. The study will document outcomes for each of the programs and use meta-analytic techniques to develop comprehensive impact estimates. This presentation has three purposes: (a) describe the funders' goals in supporting a diverse portfolio of PD programs and seeking to evaluate them in one large-scale study, (b) present key elements of the design, including a sequential matching algorithm to create a pool of early educators to use as a comparison group, and (c) describe the outcome of the matching process. Findings from this study can inform the early childhood field about effective approaches for promoting positive outcomes for early educators and the study design and findings can inform evaluators through lessons learned while evaluating the impact of a portfolio of investments.

Participant Satisfaction and Outcomes from Workforce Development Programs using Technology-Based Learning

Samina Sattar

This research uses administrative data for 14,968 participants from 20 grantees operating technology-based learning (TBL) programs and survey data on program satisfaction from 710 program participants to address the question, How are students in workforce training programs served by TBL programs? Findings show that TBL programs built learning communities to support a diverse set of participants, had high levels of program satisfaction, and produced positive education and employment outcomes. Programs provided flexibility in allowing participants to combine building workplace skills with other aspects of their lives and provided adequate support for using the technology needed to complete programs and balance the individualization of courses with the desire of participants to be part of a larger learning community. Still, challenges remain as students fit the typical gender, race, and age profile for students in online programs and did not break a "glass ceiling" for the low-skilled and unemployed.

Using Systems-based Evaluation to Improve the Sustainability and Effectiveness of Community Networks Addressing the Challenge of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Margaret Hargreaves

In 2013, the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Public Private Initiative (APPI) commissioned a systems-based evaluation to evaluate the work of community networks in five communities across the state of Washington to prevent and mitigate ACEs and to build resiliency in those communities. A systems-based evaluation design is needed to address the complex and dynamic nature of these cross-level, cross-sector community initiatives. This presentation describes the application of systems thinking in the APPI evaluation. The project includes: a vertical, "iceberg" systems-based conceptual framework; the integration of both retrospective and developmental evaluation approaches; the use of mixed qualitative and quantitative research methods; the inclusion of advanced qualitative analyses of interview data, time-series analyses of quantitative data; and social network analyses; and the integration of collaborative learning activities in the evaluation.

Evaluation of the National Science Foundation LSAMP Bridge to the Doctorate Fellowship

Clemencia Cosentino and Margaret Sullivan

This paper presents results of the impact evaluation of the Bridge to the Doctorate (BD) fellowship, an NSF initiative designed to increase the number of underrepresented minority students successfully completing doctoral degrees in STEM. To achieve this goal, BD provides the initial two years of support for graduate studies at the master's or doctoral level with the expectation that most students will continue on to Ph.D. programs.

To measure impacts we use a quasi-experimental design to compare outcomes for fellows to a matched sample of non-fellowship students in the same programs of study in the same universities. Using longitudinal, individual-level data, we study progress towards key educational milestones on the path to the Ph.D. —including completing master's degrees, enrolling in a Ph.D. program, entering the Ph.D. track, passing Ph.D. qualifying exams and attaining Ph.D. candidacy and completing a doctoral degree. We also assess time to degree.

A Network Analysis Approach to Evaluation

Margaret Hargreaves and Todd Honeycutt

Meg Hargreaves and Todd Honeycutt have been guiding the Network Analysis team in design work and discussion focused on examining the networks that support and interact with the AEA annual meeting. The team based its work in defining a system as “an interacting, interdependent network of actors working together to achieve a common goal.” Starting from a general question concerning the role of AEA’s formal and informal networks in the system bounded by the annual meeting, the team’s design work focused on key characteristics and functions of networks, such as TIGs, in shaping and influencing the conference experience.