The Family Networks Implementation Study

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The Family Networks Implementation Study: Questions & Methods

What structures, processes, and conditions influence the implementation of Family Networks?
(1) What needs to happen over the next 6 to 12 months?
(2) What has worked so far, i.e., in the past 6 to 12 months?
(3) How do we keep our eye on what's happening?

STUDY OVERVIEW

Building Research Partnerships

The partnership between MA/DSS and UMMS is the foundation of the Family Networks Implementation Study. The benefits of active stakeholder involvement are numerous, including increased buy-in to the study process, assistance in identifying key outcomes, and the proliferation of study results (Kaufman et al., 2006).

- Shared Project Management – The study is co-managed by MA/DSS and UMMS project lead.
- Creation of a Study Design Team (SDT) – The SDT includes representatives from MA/DSS and UMMS working together to determine the study framework, sampling, research methods, measures, and analyses.
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The Research Questions

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STUDY DESIGN & METHODS

To identify change domains

Concept Mapping

Concept mapping is a participatory approach to organizing the ideas of a large group that combines qualitative methods, e.g., brainstorming with quantitative methods, e.g., multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis. Comprehensive maps are generated that visually display relationships. Four focus groups were conducted in the Summer of 2007 with a purposeful sample of MA/DSS social workers and supervisors, family advocates, providers, and the SAT. Focus group participants transformed items related to change, sorted them into conceptual groups, and rated them for importance and feasibility. The results and feedback from participants will determine study change domains, and will inform further data collection procedures.

To identify criteria for successful change

Most Significant Change Technique

The most significant change (MSC) technique is a form of participatory monitoring that can be used to assess the process of program implementation (Dart & Davies, 2005). Change stories are systematically collected and reviewed by stakeholders group to determine key domains for success and to identify the most significant change stories. The results are continually fed back to stakeholders in iterative feedback loops.

To elaborate the key ingredients of change

In-Depth Interviewing and Case Studies

In-depth interviews will be conducted with relevant stakeholders regarding a subset of most significant change stories, to gather detailed information about factors contributing to change, i.e., the key ingredients that facilitate change. Studies will be conducted that elaborate these key ingredients.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

Findings from the Family Networks Implementation Study will inform MA/DSS strategic planning, system refinements, and the Family Networks outcomes evaluation. Continuous quality improvement strategies, drawn from study findings, will be relevant and useful to other Massachusetts DPYRS agencies with similar service delivery systems and agendas. Project action and product development will be informed by the national dialogue regarding systems transformation in child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

MA/DSS has 29 Area Offices located in 6 regions, 76,004 consumers (1,102 are children < 18 years of age, 5,132 children and youth in placement) and approximately 3,400 employees (FY2007, 3rd quarter).

FAMILY NETWORKS

Family Networks is a comprehensive system transformation initiative to improve and integrate traditional case management services across the Commonwealth into local systems of care for children, youth and families served by the child welfare system. The Family Networks Implementation Study is a partnership between MA/DSS and UMMS, is a two-year study of the process of implementing systems of care that began in January 2007, and will continue through December 2008.

WHAT IS IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH?

Implementation research is the study of strategies to promote the translation and adoption of research findings into routine practice (Stokes & Nettleton, 2006). Purposes of innovations acknowledge the difficulty overcoming barriers to implementation, including increased buy-in to the study process, assistance in identifying key outcomes, and the proliferation of study results (Kaufman et al., 2006).

Implementation Study vs Outcomes Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Study</th>
<th>Outcomes Study</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions: What does it mean to “implement” a change? What is needed to help achieve the goal? Uncover initial conditions, the key ingredients that facilitate change. Case studies will be developed that elaborate the most significant change stories. Change stories solicited in identified domains from relevant stakeholders.</td>
<td>Data ANALYSED</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are the impact of “implementing” or being “implemented” across the Commonwealth into local systems of care for children, youth, and families?</td>
<td>Participants INTERVIEWED, Concept Maps, Key Criteria, Change Domains, &amp; Relevant Stakeholders</td>
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Implementation research focuses on questions like (Werner, 2004):
- What is happening?
- Is it expected or desired?
- Why is it happening as it is?
- What needs to happen over the next 6 to 12 months?
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Implementation parameters are not fully specified from the beginning. Study changes evolve in response to feedback during the study, in iterative process of refinement.

Researchers acknowledge they are not solely objective. Their observations & interpretations are part of the data they provide feedback to.

Most family study data starts moving going, when you start to collect data, to test a hypothesis about the context.

Typically requires vision methods & data, i.e., qualitative & quantitative. May be used uncontrolled interviews, with study participants, in-depth interviews, focus groups, monitoring of intervention processes, pre- & post-tests, benchmarks, etc. 0-100 participants, 0-1000 people trained, 0-1000 people participating.

Products may be produced at the end of the study. To reflect back, study participants, the effectiveness (or lack) of an intervention, for others, what variables, what circumstances, etc.

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