Tight Budget? No Problem! Program Evaluation is Possible

Prepared by Jeanine Webber, M.S.W., Ph. D., RSW
Program Coordinator & Professor
BAA Criminal Justice Program
School of Social & Community Services
Goals of Session

✴ Review different program evaluation strategies
✴ Problem solve barriers to program evaluation
✴ Review Examples of program evaluation studies in “real world settings”
  • Quasi-Experimental - Bridging the Gender Gap
  • Qualitative - Safer Tomorrow’s Through Education & Play
  • Quantitative - National Day Reporting Centre Review
What Matters?
How do we know....... 

✴ if what we are doing is helping?

✴ if what we are doing is harmful?

✴ what needs to stay the same?

✴ what needs to change?

PROGRAM EVALUATION
Program Evaluation

- Ensure intervention is achieving desired result
- Helps to understand the change process
- Ethical responsibility
- Limited social/health care resources
- To identify areas for improvement
- To prevent using harmful interventions
- To develop the profession
- Gives credibility when applying for funding
Program Evaluation Methods

✴ “Ivory Tower” Efficacy Studies
  • homogenous sample
  • well funded, supervised, ideal work/treatment conditions
  • clear guidance on whether intervention responsible for change detected
  • results hard to replicate in “real world” settings

✴ “Real World” Effectiveness Studies
  • heterogenous samples
  • mixed results - less control over external factors
  • underfunded, overworked, staff
  • results easier to replicate in other “real world” settings
  • more informative to front line clinicians/workers
Research Question Dictates Method

✴ Why do clients not complete treatment, or period of supervision?
  • Qualitative – Focus groups – In-depth interviews
✴ Why do girls engage in social aggression?
  • Qualitative – Focus groups – In-depth interviews
✴ Does the intervention reduce problematic behaviour?
  • Quantitative - Random Control Trial/Quasi-Experimental - Mixed Methods
Important steps in intervention evaluation

✴ Establish specific treatment goals
✴ Identify the process that are expected to lead to change
✴ Select appropriate measurement tools
✴ Involve multiple assessment points and sources of information
✴ Data evaluation
Common Barriers to Research in Real World Settings

🌟 Limited Resources
  • Staff have high caseloads
  • Limited time to administer extra questionnaires
  • Limited Experience designing & implementing program evaluation
  • Funding Model does not fund evaluation

🌟 Sample Size

🌟 Threats to scientific rigour
Potential Solutions to Common Problems

✴ Submit grant proposals to fund evaluation
✴ Form alliance with University or other Research based Institute
  • Graduate students
  • Research design/Implementation consultation
  • Assistance with obtaining funding/grant proposals
  • Statistical/Data Interpretation consultations
  • Library resources/Librarian
✴ Research Course
✴ Have phrase on intake forms that acknowledges that data collected might be used for program evaluation research
Qualitative Study

A good study characterized by:

• Stakeholder consultation
• Quality data collection
  - natural observation
  - focus group
  - in-depth, semi-structured structured interview
  - document review
• Verification methods
  - independent coding for example
  - documentation log of decisions, procedures
  - Member checking
Safer Tomorrow’s Through Education & Play
Goals of the STEP Evaluation Project

✴ To identify the strengths of the S.T.E.P. Program
✴ To identify the areas for further development
✴ To document the experiences of S.T.E.P. participants to assist with future program funding applications
Methodology

- Semi-structured parallel focus groups with stakeholders:
  - Program Participants (middle school/high-school)
  - Parents
  - Volunteers
  - School Officials

- Verbatim transcripts were analyzed for common ideas and themes related to program strengths and weaknesses using a line by line approach

- Member checking was conducted with representatives from the parent, high-school and volunteer research participants
Program Strengths

★ Individual Flexible Approach:

“I kinda use it more for projects and stuff like that because um, I have trouble managing time.” - Student

“They actually formed a real strong connection to each other, a bond with each other and that also improved their grades.” - Parent

★ Academic Success:

“My teacher gave us this huge like take home test thing for math and then I did the work and like I wanted the tutor to be there to make sure I didn’t mess up the numbers... I ended up getting 100% on it and I didn’t actually get any help it was like watch my own mistakes.” -
Areas for Further Development

✴ **Communication:**
  - Lack of Clarity & Consistency Around Rules
  - Outreach & Marketing
  - Resources & Student Progress

✴ **Better Balance Between Academics and Structured Play Activities/Workshops:**
A good study characterized by……

- Comparison group
- Random assignment
- Treatment fidelity
- Multiple points of measurement
- Multiple informants including blind observation
- Multiple types of measurement
  - Observation
  - Standardized instruments (interview & questionnaires)
- Adequate sample size
- Ideal to include both quantitative & qualitative data collection
Bridging the Gender Gap

◆ Collaboration between York University & Child Development Institute

◆ Original Study Funded by Sick Kids Foundation & Trillium Foundation
  ◆ 1 extra Researcher & 1 extra PT front line worker hired

◆ Follow-Up Study Funded by York University

(Pepler, Walsh, Yuile, Levene, Vaughan, Jiang, Webber, 2010)
Methodology

Quasi-experimental program evaluation of Girls Connection Stop Now and Plan®

- 2 year study
- Stratified random assignment
  - Older and younger girls groups
  - Equal distribution of high severity score in each group
- Involved pre & post testing and compared to wait list control group
- Wait list control groups did receive treatment so no comparison group available after immediate post testing was completed
- Follow up conducted at 6 months, 12 months, and 18 months post treatment

(Pepler, Walsh Yuile, Levene Vaughan Jiang Webber., 2010)
Results....

Parents’ CBCL reports of girls’ significant decreased aggression including

• rule breaking
• conduct disorder

★ Girls’ reports of improved relationship quality with their parents

(Pepler,, Walsh, Yuile, Levene Vaughan, Jiang, Webber,, 2010)
Day Reporting Centre Evaluation Project

Principal Investigator: Sonya Spencer

Funder: Public Safety Canada

Duration: 14 months

National Study
- 10 sites entering data about clients (male & female)
  - client demographic information
  - client goals and progress
  - reasons for discharge
Jeanine Webber, M.S.W., Ph.D., RSW
Program Coordinator & Professor
BAA Criminal Justice Program
School of Social & Community Services
Humber College
jeanine.webber@humber.ca