

# Tight Budget? No Problem! Program Evaluation is Possible

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# 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:



## Quasi-Experimental.....

✦ 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<sup>®</sup>

- 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....

### R

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

## Contact Information

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