The Value of Our Practice:

How to Evaluate and Communicate Impact

Judith Rhodes, PhD, LMSW

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Advancing the Profession: Evolving Roles in School Social Work Practice

- How can we show the importance of school social work in academic settings/schools?
Workshop Purpose:

• Make program evaluation accessible

• Present evaluation designs that focus on stakeholder priorities

• Utilize available school system data

• Demonstrate impact of SSW practice
OVERVIEW

- Evaluation Knowledge Base
- Data Indicators
- Logic Model
- Evaluation Design
- Simple Analysis
1st - Questions to think about:

• What is the problem?
• What contributes to the problem?
• Who is affected?
• What are the consequences for students, families, schools, communities?
• Why is your practice important?
2nd - What Do You Know?

Best Practices and Interventions:

- State of the Knowledge
- Research
- Evidence-informed practice
- Theoretical frameworks

- What anchors do you have to show that your practice is trustworthy?
Anchors

• Programs and practices that address the problem

• Evidence that shows these programs and practices are effective
Goals and Objectives

• Goal = general intention
• Objective = outcomes that show achievement of goal

• What parts of the this problem will be impacted?

• How will this be measured?
S.M.A.R.T. + C.

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Timed
- Challenging
Specifics of Intervention

• What and who does it involve?
• How does it work?
• Why it works = What causes the change?
• Time constraints (develop/prepare/conduct)
• Cost of program in actual $ and resources
*Evaluation*

- Today evaluation and accountability are closely linked
- What are the goals that school districts are accountable for?
  - Test Scores
  - Graduation Rates
  - Disproportional Outcomes
  - What else?
Interventions in Schools

- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Positive Behavior Intervention Support/ PBIS
- Continuum of Interventions: Tier 1, 2, 3 of PBIS
- Other Examples?
Process & Outcome Evaluations

• **Process (formative)**
  - Documents activities or steps required to operate the intervention

• **Outcome or Impact (Summative)**
  - Documents the impact of the intervention
Outcome Evaluation

- Define intervention
- Identify desired and measurable outcomes
- Select empirically-based methods and tools to measure change
- Establish treatment and comparison groups
- Gather Data
- Analyze Data
BE STRATEGIC

Identify your audience/stakeholders

- Who are you trying to influence?
- What are their priorities?
- To whom will you present your findings?
- What goals are valuable to these individuals/groups?
Strategic Goals

**Identify your stakeholders’ goals**

- Which goals or priorities do your SSW services impact?

- Importance of face validity
School System GOALS

- Attain AYP
- Improve school climate
- Engage families
- Develop community partnerships
- Provide regular/special ed services
- Improve behavior/implement RTI & PBIS
- Increase Attendance
Data Elements

Identify Appropriate and Available Data

• What data is readily available for your use?
• Know established databases
• Know data elements
• Match elements to your practice
Common Data Elements

• Demographics
• Attendance
• Behavior: Suspension, Expulsion, Detention, classroom conduct
• High stakes test scores
• Grades
• Free/reduced lunch
• Special Education/accommodations
More Data Elements

- **Student characteristics**
  - Teen parents
  - Homeless
  - English Language Learners

- **Community Referrals**
  - Counseling
  - Child Protection
  - Juvenile Justice System
Other School/Community Data

- Afterschool programs
- Tutoring
- Community-based agencies
- Athletics
- Extracurricular programs
- Volunteering/Service Learning
- Other strength-based activities?
Standardized Instruments

- Most changes in cognition/affect can be measured. Most common are questionnaires with scaled response choices of 1 to 5.
- Select one tested among those in the same general age group and with other traits similar to your program recipients.
- Select tool with a .80 or higher reliability and validity quotient.
Select Indicators

• Match identified data indicators that measure desired progress or success of social work services

• Valid
• Demonstrate attainment of goals and objectives
More on Indicator Selection

• Accessibility
• Importance

• Select data elements that address one or more of stakeholders’ priorities that are clearly impacted by SSW services/intervention

• Collect
• Analyze
Helpful Hints

K.I.S.S.

• Keep It Simple and Straightforward
• Short Summaries – one page
• Make it Clear
• Use Edu-friendly language

Disseminate
The Utility of the Logic Model

• A depiction of a program showing what the program will do and what it is to accomplish
• A series of “if-then” relationships that, if implemented as intended, lead to the desired outcomes
• The core of program planning and evaluation
Simplest form

INPUTS → OUTPUTS → OUTCOMES
Where are you going and how will you know when you get there?

Yogi Berra said,

“If you don’t know where you are going, how are you gonna’ know when you get there?”
Many people say a logic model is a road map.
Assumptions

The beliefs we have about the program, the participants, and how the program will work. Includes ideas about:

- the problem or existing situation
- program operations
- expected outcomes and benefits
- the participants and how they learn, behave, their motivations
- resources
- staff
- external environment: influences
- the knowledge base
- etc.
Everyday example

HEADACHE

Situation

INPUTS

Get Medication

OUTPUTS

Take Medication

OUTCOMES

Recovery: Feel Better
Every day logic model: Family Vacation

Inputs:
- Family Members
- Budget
- Car
- Camping Equipment

Outputs:
- Drive to state park
- Set up camp
- Cook, play, talk, laugh, hike

Outcomes:
- Family members learn about each other; family bonds; family has a good time
Parent Education Program – Logic model

SITUATION: During a needs assessment, it was discovered parents reported difficulty dealing with children and felt stressed.

INPUTS
- Staff
- Money
- Partners
- Research

OUTPUTS
- Assess parent ed programs
- Design-deliver evidence-based program of 8 sessions
- Facilitate support groups
- Parents of 3-10 year olds attend

OUTCOMES
- Parents increase knowledge of child dev
- Parents better understanding their own parenting style
- Parents gain skills in new ways to parent
- Parents gain confidence in their abilities
- Parents identify appropriate actions to take
- Parents use effective parenting practices
- Reduced stress
- Improved child-parent relations
A bit more detail

**INPUTS**
- Program investments

**OUTPUTS**
- Activities
- Participation

**OUTCOMES**
- Short
- Medium
- Long-term

What we invest → What we do → Who we reach → What results

SO WHAT??
What is the VALUE?

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Fully detailed logic model

- Situation
  - Needs and assets
  - Symptoms versus problems
  - Stakeholder engagement

- Priorities
  - Consider:
    - Mission
    - Values
    - Mandates
    - Resources
    - Local dynamics
    - Collaborators
    - Competitors
    - Intended outcomes

- What we invest
  - Staff
  - Volunteers
  - Time
  - Money
  - Research base
  - Materials
  - Equipment
  - Technology
  - Partners

- What we do
  - Conduct workshops, meetups, deliver services
  - Develop products, curriculum, resources
  - Train
  - Provide counseling
  - Assess
  - Facilitate
  - Partner
  - Work with media

- Who we reach
  - Participants
  - Clients
  - Agencies
  - Decision-makers
  - Customers
  - Satisfaction

- What the short term results are
  - Learning
  - Awareness
  - Knowledge
  - Attitudes
  - Skills
  - Opinions
  - Aspirations
  - Motivations

- What the medium term results are
  - Action
  - Behavior
  - Practice
  - Decision-making
  - Policies
  - Social Action

- What the ultimate impact(s) is
  - Conditions
  - Social
  - Economic
  - Civic
  - Environmental

- Assumptions
- External Factors

- Evaluation
  - Focus - Collect Data - Analyze and Interpret - Report

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So, why bother?

• “This seems like a lot of work.”

• “Where in the world would I get all the information to put in a logic model?”

• “I’m a right brain type of person – this isn’t for me.”
Benefits of Logic Model:

• Provides a common language
• Helps differentiate between “what we do” and “results” --- outcomes
• Increases understanding about program
• Guides and helps focus work
• Leads to improved planning and management
• Increases intentionality and purpose
• Provides coherence across complex tasks, diverse environments
• Enhances teamwork
• Guides prioritization and allocation of resources
• Motivates staff
• Helps to identify important variables to measure; use evaluation resources wisely
• Increases resources, opportunities, recognition
• Supports replication
• Often is required!
Logic model in evaluation

Program Action

Inputs

Outputs
Activities Participation

Outcomes - Impact
Short Term Medium Term Long Term

What we invest
Staff Volunteers Time Money
Research base Materials Equipment Technology Partners

What we do
Conduct workshops, meetings Deliver services Develop products curriculum resources Train Provide counseling Assess Facilitate Partner Work with media

What the short term results are
Learning Awareness Knowledge Attitudes Skills Opinions Aspirations Motivations

Who we reach
Participants Clients Agencies Decision-makers Customers

What the medium term results are
Action Behavior Practice Decision-making Policies Social Action

What the ultimate impact(s) is
Conditions Social Economic Civic Environmental

Situation
Needs and assets Symptoms versus problems Stakeholder engagement

Priorities
Consider Mission Vision Values Mandates Resources Local dynamics Collaborations Competitors Intended outcomes

Assumptions

External Factors

Evaluation

What do you want to know?
How will you know it?

EVALUATION: check and verify

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Logic Model helps with Evaluation

• Provides the program description that guides our evaluation process

  • Helps us match evaluation to the program
  • Helps us know what and when to measure
    • Are you interested in process and/or outcomes?

  • Helps us focus on key, important information
    • Prioritize: where will we spend our limited evaluation resources?
    • What do we really need to know?
Parent Education Example: Evaluation questions, indicators

**EVALUATION QUESTIONS**
- What amount of $ and time were invested?
- How many sessions were held? How effectively? 
- Who/how many attended/did not attend? Did they attend all sessions? Supports groups?
- To what extent did knowledge and skills increase? For whom? Why? What else happened?
- To what extent did behaviors change? For whom? Why? What else happened?
- To what extent is stress reduced? To what extent are relations improved?

**INDICATORS**
- # Staff 
- $ used 
- # partners 
- # Sessions held 
- Quality criteria 
- #,% attended per session 
- Certificate of completion 
- #,% demonstrating increased knowledge/skills 
- Types of additional outcomes 
- #,% demonstrating changes 
- Types of changes 
- #,% demonstrating improvements 
- Types of improvements

Parents increase knowledge of child dev
Parents better understand their own parenting style
Parents gain skills in new ways to parent
Parents gain confidence in their abilities
Parents identify appropriate actions to take
Parents use effective parenting practices

Reduced stress
Improved child-parent relations
Strong families

Parents of 3-10 year olds
Develop parented curriculum
Deliver series of 8 interactive sessions
Facilitate support groups

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Activity

• Design a Logic Model

• Assumptions

• Select Indicators
# Data collection plan

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<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Data collection</th>
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Evaluation Design

Most Common & Feasible Designs:

1. Single group: pretest & posttest
2. Two groups: non-randomized with pretest & posttest
3. Time-series: with multiple points of measurement
Evaluation Design

1. Single group: pretest & posttest

   O X O

   Weakest but most common
Evaluation Design

2. Two groups: non-randomized with pretest & posttest

O X O
O O O

Stronger but less feasible
Evaluation Design

3. Time-series: with multiple points of measurement

O O X O X O X O O

Moderately strong and feasible
Easy Analysis

Results represented by:

• reporting raw numbers/frequencies

• calculating percentages

In 1 group: pretest/posttest

In 2 groups: differences between groups
School Engagement Example

• At pretest the average attendance of children was 77%

• At posttest the average attendance was 91%, or increase of 14%
School Phobia Example

- At pretest, the average score on a psychosocial test for anxiety was 71
- At posttest, the average score was 58, or decrease of 14%
Remember to Consider

- Audiences and priorities change
- Datasets change
- Be flexible
- Evaluation is dynamic
Show Impact!

Outcome objectives identified changes that closely reflect the goal of the program.

Outcome objectives identified a measurable degree of change.

These changes provide evidence of social work practice’s value to children and schools.
References


• University of Wisconsin, Extension, Cooperative Extension, Program Development and Evaluation. “Logic Models”
Contact information

• Judith Rhodes
• 223 Huey P. Long Field House
• Baton Rouge, LA 70803

• Judith.Rhodes@ACSSW.org

• Phone: 224-578-4948