Using Participatory Action Research to Implement a Results-Based Evaluation System

Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Programs
Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

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Background -1-

♦ Reorganization of Public Health Department in Los Angeles County, along with population and economic changes in the community, have increased the demand for MCAH program to do more effective work with fewer resources.

♦ New funding sources have mandated rigorous documentation of program outcomes to obtain and continue to receive funding.

Background -2-

♦ Need to develop methodologies that:
  – Assess the accomplishments of each individual program
  – Determine the collective impact of all MCAH programs on improving the health of women, children and families;
  – Create buy-in both from internal and external stakeholders of MCAH programs.
Objective

♦ To design a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) evaluation system using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method

Methods-1-

II. Overall Procedures
   A. Identify key stakeholders
   B. Create a MCAH Program Map
   C. Identify performance measures (PMs) for each program
   D. Identify headline PMs for MCAH
   E. Establish a mechanism to collect data to generate PMs and headline PMs
   F. Generate PM and headline PMs reports and disseminate information to key stakeholders
   G. Adjust program activity as needed based on PM reports
Methods-2-

A. Identify Key Stakeholders:

♦ Community Based Organizations (CBO’s)
♦ March of Dimes
♦ Proposition 10
♦ PAC/LAC
♦ DHS Health Assessment and Epidemiology Unit
♦ MCAH Program Staff including:
  Program Director, evaluators, planner, eight
  program mangers

Methods-3-

B. Create a MCAH Program Map

♦ Interviewed eight program managers to generate an up-to-date description of each program

♦ Used the above information to create one MCAH program map that outlines the common objectives, services, and activities shared by eight programs.
C. Identify Program Measures for Each Program

What is a performance measure?

Two-pronged Approach:
- Collaboration with the CBOs/CPSP providers providing services through our three perinatal health program (See next slide)
- Collaboration with internal MCAH program to select performance measures using the following three criteria from the RBA model:
  - proxy power, data power, communication power

Applying PAR to Identify PMs

♦ Met with CBOs and CPSP providers
♦ Discussed three major questions
  - 1. What are your program’s goals?
  - 2. What do you do in order to accomplish these goals?
  - 3. How will you know that your program is accomplishing these goals?

• PAR process triggered further discussion on how to improve quality of services
D. Identify Headline Performance Measures

What is a headline performance measure?

- Headline performance measures were chosen using the three criteria from the RBA model as well as a fourth criterion: the number of MCAH programs that use this PM.

Results

We identified:
- 47 performance measures
- 10 headline performance measures
Conclusion-1 - Challenges

♦ Mistrust and initial skepticism of the evaluation process by CBOs and MCAH program staff who did not perceive the data they were collecting to be valuable

Conclusion-2 - Challenges

♦ Internal MCAH Program staff’s and CBO program staff’s limited experience with evaluation terminology and methodology and evaluation staff’s limited knowledge about program activities created barriers in communication.
Conclusion-3-
Challenges

♦ Due to time constraints, we were not able to include program clients directly in this process. Program staff of the community based organizations represented the needs of clients.

Conclusion-4-
Lessons Learned

♦ Consideration
♦ Communication
♦ Collaboration
♦ Control (relinquish)
♦ Continuous Improvement