

## Sharing Your Court's Successes: Practical Evaluation of Accountability Courts



**Kevin Baldwin, Ph.D.**  
**Sharon Johnson M.S.**  
Applied Research Services, Inc.  
Atlanta, GA

## What is Evaluation?

- The systematic collection & analysis of information (data), often for the purpose of making decisions.
- **eVALUEation** – “value is our middle name” – this implies that we are assigning worth to something

## Why Evaluate?

- To answer critical questions about the court
- To document the court's processes and demonstrate outcomes
- To assess Fidelity of Implementation
- To comply with funder's mandates
- To provide information and feedback for continuous quality improvement

## Presentation Outline

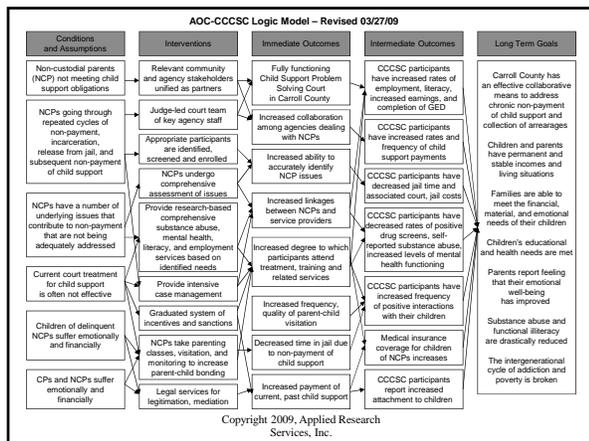
- **Process Evaluation** - the “who, what, where, when, how, and how much” associated with delivery of a program or initiative
- **Fidelity of Implementation** - the degree to which a program or initiative is delivered as designed
- **Outcome Evaluation** - the degree to which a program or initiative achieves its stated objectives – the “so what?” aspect
- **Cost Benefit Analysis** - the costs of your program and compares the costs (typically per participant) to the cost of not having the program

## Process Evaluation

- Helps us understand why a program was or was not successful
- Disappointing outcomes could be attributed to an array of issues such as poor program design, poor implementation, failure to reach your target audience, etc.
- Provides information for program replication

## Logic Model

- A logical model is a series of statements that link the problems your court is attempting to address (conditions), how it will address them (activities), and the expected results (immediate and intermediate outcomes, long-term goals).



## Process Evaluation

- Process evaluation provides a descriptive study of how your program was implemented and how it operates now
- It's concerned with history, current operations, participant progress, obstacles and overcoming impediments

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

### 11 Key Questions A Process Evaluation Should Answer

1. How was the program developed? (i.e. aims, why initial policy/process decisions were made)
2. What are the policies & procedures of the court? How have they changed over time & why? Include: selection criteria, point of referral in the CJ system, program requirements, sanctions

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

### 11 Key Questions A Process Evaluation Should Answer

3. Total eligible population for drug court? How are referrals & screenings conducted? How many referrals are rejected & why?
4. Participant characteristics: demographics, criminal histories, SA/MH problems?
5. Available treatment & type of treatment/services received?

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

### 11 Key Questions A Process Evaluation Should Answer

6. What happens to participants in drug court (i.e. treatment, drug testing, sanctions)?
7. Who are the staff & what are their responsibilities? Annual budget & funding sources?
8. What are the roles of the team – judge, prosecutor, attorneys, advisory board, etc.?

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

### 11 Key Questions A Process Evaluation Should Answer

9. What is the extent of collaboration with other agencies such as probation, parole, social services? What information is shared between agencies?
10. What local court conditions affect your court (caseloads, community attitudes)?

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

## 11 Key Questions A Process Evaluation Should Answer

11. How long do participants stay in drug court? Who drops out, at what point, and why? How many participants, with what characteristics, graduate from drug court?

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

## Sources of Data

- Meeting minutes
- Written mission statements, goals & objectives
- Funding proposals, grant applications
- Annual reports
- Media (i.e. newspaper articles)
- Caseload summaries

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

## Sources of Data

- Program documentation (i.e. eligibility criteria, program rules, roles/responsibilities of key agencies, graduated sanctions, phase requirements, participant contracts, promotional materials, budget documents)
- Interviews/focus groups with stakeholders, participants, etc.
- Surveys

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

## Sources of Data

- Automated data systems
  - Demographic data (DOB, sex, race, ethnicity)
  - Education (highest grade completed, degree earned)
  - Employment status (FT, PT, student, unemployed)
  - Housing status (stable, unstable, homeless)
  - Community support (family, faith community, tx community, work support)
  - Mental health history (diagnosis, treatment history - # inpatient & outpatient episodes, medication compliance)

## Sources of Data

- Substance abuse history (drug of choice, age began abuse, years of active substance abuse, # substance abuse treatment episodes)
- Offense History (age at first arrest, nature & type of charges, prior convictions, violent convictions, previous jail episodes, previous prison episodes, previous probation/parole episodes, current arrest/conviction – charges & sentence)

## Results

- Have all intended services been provided?
- Have the services been provided as intended?
- What services not currently provided should be added to the program?
- Did the program reach the intended "target" population?

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

## Results

- Did the program widen the “net” of defendants who were supervised by the court or who received CJ sanctions?
- What problems were encountered in program implementation, operation and performance?
- How were these problems resolved?

Roehl & Guertin, 2000

## The Importance of Fidelity

- You could have the most powerful intervention ever devised, but it is worthless if it is not delivered as its developers intended. For example, Excedrin® works wonders for headaches, but not when applied directly to the forehead.

## The Importance of Fidelity

- Your evaluation should explore whether your program has been implemented as designed
- Also, see how your implementation compares to the Ten Key Components for Drug Courts and our Georgia Standards for Accountability Courts

<https://www.ncirs.gov/pdf/files1/bja/205621.pdf>

## Outcome Evaluation

- Measures the program's influence on factors such as graduation, recidivism, abstinence, employment status, etc.
- Most useful when compared to a similar group of persons that did not receive programming (control or comparison group) – what outcomes would be expected without this program?

## Evaluation Data, cont.

- Evaluation has its own language, using words like benchmarks, indicators, and metrics to refer to data
- We also use phrases like “move the needle”, “benchmarking”, and “significance testing”

## Evaluation Data, cont.

- The data to be collected derive directly from the questions we are asking. It helps therefore to craft questions of a directional nature:
  - Do graduates have reduced (↓) rates of recidivism?
  - Do participants have increased (↑) employment skills?

### **Evaluation Data, cont.**

- We often cannot just report however that something increased or decreased. We need to say how much, and compared to whom. Therefore we need benchmarks and/or control and/or comparison groups.

### **Evaluation Data, cont.**

- Comparing our results to a benchmark would be to say that our participants had a 5% positive urinalysis rate, compared to the 25% rate observed in non-participants.

### **Evaluation Data, cont.**

- A comparison group is a group of people similar to our intervention sample, but receiving some other type of intervention. A control group is a group of people similar to our intervention sample, but receiving no intervention at all.

### **Outcome Measures**

- Your logic model will provide you with some obvious areas for outcome measurement
- Measure how well your program met its goals
- Your outcome measures come from your objectives – they indicate what you are trying to do
- They need to be measurable

### **Sample Data Sources**

- Official agency databases (i.e. GCIC, DFCS, hospital records)
- Drug test results
- Assessment results
- Treatment provider notes/reports
- Pre/post tests
- Interviews/focus groups with stakeholders, participants, etc.
- Surveys & other self-report data

### **Sources of Data**

- Automated data systems – combine process fields with:
  - Program participation data: date referred, date entered program, # court hearings attended, types of treatment completed (i.e. trauma group), # and nature of referrals made to other agencies/resources, Level of adaptive functioning (i.e. can live independently, requires supportive housing), degree of compliance with medication, date left program, program completion status (completed, did not complete, transferred, terminated) and reason for any other status but completed.

## Sources of Data

Outcome & performance measures: inpatient hospitalizations, crisis intervention episodes, ER visits, new arrests, new convictions, new violations of probation/parole, new jail admissions, new prison admissions, # failed drug tests

## Comparison Group

- You will need data on your comparison group to compare measures – take this into account when determining the outcomes you want to examine. How will you acquire the data you need from the comparison group?

## Evaluation Data Examples

- Outcome/performance data examples
  - Number of graduates
  - Number of re-arrests
  - Percentage who relapse
  - Number of subsequent DFCS cases
  - Number of subsequent hospitalizations
  - Number of subsequent ER admissions
  - Days clean

## Other Issues to Consider

- Timing & frequency of follow-up
- If your process includes post-participation interviews, focus groups or surveys, be sure you have personal information to improve odds of keeping up with participants after they have left the program
- Written consent for post-participation follow-up
- Respect the privacy & confidentiality of those with whom you are working

## Other Issues to Consider

- Federal laws (e.g., CFR 42, HIPPA) govern the use of substance abuse & health information – consider an IRB
- Respect and take into account the cultural, racial, ethnic and gender differences of your clients & their families
- Use results responsibly and ethically – don't go beyond the intended use of the measures

## Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Calculates the cost of a program vs. the cost of the outcome to come up with a cost-benefit ratio.
  - Example: A study reveals that participants of Drug Court A spend an average of 120 less days in jail than similar offenders that do not go through drug court.
    - Drug court participation to graduation = \$3,800
    - 1 jail day = \$45 x 120 days = \$5,400
    - Drug court savings = \$1,600

## Cost Benefit Analysis

- Cost Benefit Analysis data examples
  - Cost of treatment per participant
  - Cost of day in jail
  - Cost of foster care per child
  - Cost of adjudicating one felony drug offense
  - Cost of DFCS case investigation

## Evaluation Results

- Ultimately your stakeholders and funders will ask these questions:
  - Did it work? Was there an impact?
  - How well did it work? How much of an impact did you observe?
  - How does this impact compare with results of alternative models?

## Using Evaluation Findings

- Describe your court and it's participants
- Describe your court's processes and procedures
- Continually improve your court's functioning
- Document your impacts and outcomes (sustainability)

Questions?



**Kevin Baldwin, Ph.D.**

**Sharon Johnson, M.S.**

Applied Research Services, Inc.

404-881-1120 ext. 104

[kbaldwin@ars-corp.com](mailto:kbaldwin@ars-corp.com)

[scjohnson@ars-corp.com](mailto:scjohnson@ars-corp.com)

[www.ars-corp.com](http://www.ars-corp.com)

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Visit our web site at [www.ars-corp.com](http://www.ars-corp.com)  
or call (404) 881-1120

A screenshot of the Applied Research Services, Inc. website. The header includes the company name 'Applied Research Services, Inc.' and the tagline 'Turning Data Into Decisions'. A navigation menu on the left lists 'about us', 'contact us', 'staff', and 'products'. The main content area features a large, stylized graphic of a person's head and shoulders, overlaid with a grid pattern. Below this graphic are four small images: a person in a lab coat, a person in a hard hat, a person in a uniform, and a person in a uniform. The ARS logo is visible in the top right corner of the screenshot.