Section II: Implementing Practice Guidelines

Introduction · https://www.gmuace.org/appropriateness-statement-package/introduction/section-ii-implementing-practice-guidelines/

Over the past 20 years, community supervision departments have made strides to improve client outcomes by adopting evidence-based practices to reduce recidivism. As the field continues to evolve, agencies struggle to improve their mode of implementing these practices. To assist supervision organizations in using the appropriateness statements to shape their policies and practices, this collection contains several implementation considerations sections. These implementation considerations operate from the perspective that supervision is most effective when taking a rehabilitative and humanistic approach to assist clients in changing their lives. Specifically, the implementation considerations cover five categories of practices (contacts, compliance-based practices, treatment, motivations, other practices) that represent many of the traditional conditions used across supervision departments nationwide.

Successful implementation strategies include: effective training for staff, adequate support from supervisors, improving staff perceptions that they have a say in the policies and procedures of the workplace, and have some autonomy within their job tasks (Gethun et al., 2008). This is in part due to the amount of discretion that front-line officers have when they work with clients. Officers exercise their discretion when determining what supervision conditions are important to emphasize, how to respond to non-compliance, and what behaviors adequately symbolize client success (Taxman, 2013). Consequently, when staff are cynical about change or perceive there are not enough resources to implement change, they will resist the changes (Rudes et al., 2011; Schlager, 2008). This resistance can be passive, such as staff claiming a lack of knowledge about a new practice or not using it in real-life client interactions. Staff resistance can also be active such as staff acknowledging the new practice but openly professing the old way was better (Lerch et al., 2011).

The attitudes that staff hold about change are not static. Instead, they are shaped by the organization’s readiness to change and how the change is implemented (Lerch et al., 2011; Steiner et al., 2011). Organizational factors associated with organizational readiness include: organizational climate, staff commitment to the organization, and resource availability (Lerch et al., 2011).

Measuring organizational readiness allows administrators to understand the specific challenges that organization has when introducing new policies or practices. Addressing these challenges prepares an organization’s staff for the change process.

Once it is determined that a supervision organization is ready for a new policy or practice, it is recommended that they go through a systematic process to transfer the knowledge from theory into practice. Technology transfer is the process of taking science-based findings and moving the studied practice into general operations (Taxman & Belenko, 2011). Based on evidence, some factors that organizations should consider when preparing to transfer technology to their staff are:

- determining whether the rehabilitative or punitive nature of the innovation represents a departure from current and past organization culture
- developing several channels (formal and informal) of communication that provide a consistent message supporting the innovation
- determining the proper timing for implementing the innovation
- measuring and tracking changes in the social structure of the organization during the implementation process (Rogers, 2003; Taxman & Belenko, 2011)

The following implementation suggestions are based on the framework presented by Taxman (2013). In this framework, Taxman suggests that there are seven core strategies to making evidence-based practices stick in supervision organizations. These include:

Table 2

Definitions of Levels of Empirical Support

Strategy

Checklist of Advancing Implementation

1. Building capacity through a revised mission that focuses on aligning practices with the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model

- Revise the mission of the agency to focus on facilitating positive changes for clients and to build a workforce (i.e. probation supervisors and front-line officers) that is healthy and resilient
- Revise the goals and objective of the agency to better support the mission

2. Building capacity through organizational plan and structure that supports and sustains the implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs) and quality supervision

- Establish teams in the agency to review existing policy and revise to endorse and solidify support for EBPs.
- Establish a team to review practices related to quality supervision and use of different supervision interventions and compliance-based practices recognizing that most compliance-based practices do not have sufficient evidence to support wide-spread use. The goals should be to minimize the use of conditions of supervision while enhancing the effectiveness of supervision.
- Establish a team to develop and implement performance measures to monitor implementation using the notion that “what gets measured, gets done.”
- Ensure that staff receive the proper training, so they have the skills needed (i.e., engagement skills, motivational enhancement strategies, intervention techniques) to successfully implement changes.

3. Building capacity by planning for change in key areas (assessment tools, case planning, performance measures

- Implement standardized screening tools for risk assessment, mental health and substance use disorders, housing, antisocial values, antisocial peers, education and/or employment, and social supports
- When using risk assessment tools, agencies should implement practices that promote accuracy, fairness, and transparency when using the tools.
- Implement case planning that links needs to action steps
- Implement performance measures such as proportion of new intakes that are screened and assessed, proportion of individuals screened that have case management plans consistent with needs assessment, proportion of individuals that are referred to appropriate services, proportion of individuals that have conditions consistent to their case plans and needs, proportion of individuals that initiate services, proportion of individuals that are active in services for 90 days, proportion that successfully complete services, and proportion that continue into other services

4. Building resiliency through internal supports and through learning and practicing skills

- Implement routine coaching for staff to include feedback on interactions among officers and individuals on supervision within 48 hours of the interaction
- Implement pre-service training on skills in RNR practices, cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT), motivational enhancements, shared decision making, proactive case planning, proactive monitoring of cascade of services (i.e., screening, assessment, referral, initiate care, stay in care), unique considerations when working with special populations (i.e., young adults, general violence, substance use disorder, etc.), and navigating on-job barriers to implementation (i.e., resource limitations, client resistance, misalignment between supervision mission and court orders).
- Implement skill building sessions for staff as part of routine in-service training with required 32 hours a year (the typical supervision agency requirements for continuing education)
- Implement case reviews for difficult cases to help staff address individuals who are resistant, unmotivated, and disengaged
- Implement trauma informed care
- Provide staff with wellness and health as part of routine office practices

5. Build resiliency through improvements in work processes

- Communicate with front-line staff to understand the barriers to implementation that derive from the current work processes
- Streamline work processes to address barriers identified by staff to support change
- For every new practice, refine or revise at least two other practices
- Engage staff in discussion about refining work processes
- Establish means for staff to obtain credentials

6. Collaborating with agencies toward a common goal of improving client outcomes and promoting public safety

- Establish common mission of health and safety to ensure improvements in the quality of life for individuals under supervision to reduce recidivism and improve functionality
- Develop memorandum of agreement with other agencies such as behavioral health, housing, food security, transportation, employment, educational institutions and so on to provide ready, easy access to services
- Work with other agencies to understand probation and parole services

- Conduct cross-training with other agencies to ensure common mission and goals
- Establish relationships and lines of communication between agencies in order to properly track individuals' progress and coordinate support to enhance success.

7. Building resiliency by altering individual involvement in key decisions

- Adopt shared decision-making as standard practice where individuals on supervision and staff jointly make decisions about supervision processes (i.e., requirements included in case plans, how to address compliance issues, how to incentive behavior)
- Assist individuals on supervision in developing a future orientation with goals

Acknowledging that many departments have worked hard to implement some of these practices already, the intention of these appropriateness statements is to provide departments with a comprehensive vision of how they can supplement their current efforts to attain better outcomes. The seven core strategies covered above provide a general overview of what community corrections organizations can do to prepare themselves structurally for implementing change. The following pages also include more specific implementation considerations that take these seven core strategies and tailor them for use in particular types of supervision practices (e.g., compliance-based, treatment).

The first four strategies are structural—changes that are most effective when implemented as the foundation to introducing new changes. The final three strategies are able to address the specific considerations of the various practices. For instance, a supervision agency will have to consider these three strategies when attempting to reduce the number of compliance-based practices they use. As such, each of the following implementation considerations sections will be focused on the final three strategies presented above. These considerations are useful tools to help supervision organizations clarify what is needed to set themselves up for success when implementing new practices.

Similar Topics

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Treatment Implementation Considerations

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