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Does Your Agency Embrace Evidence-Based Management Practices? (Blog Post)

Posted on July 31, 2020

Child welfare agencies are encouraged to use evidence-based practices in all aspects of their work to try to improve outcomes for children and families. The child welfare field has made improvements in using data, research, and evaluation to inform practice and decision-making, but still has a ways to go. The primary goal of the Quality Improvement Center for Workforce Development (QIC-WD) is to build the evidence base regarding strategies to strengthen the child welfare workforce. One means of practicing evidence-based management for improving workforce outcomes is using workforce analytics. As part of the [Child Welfare Workforce Analytics Institute](#), the QIC-WD invited participants from the eight selected jurisdictions to do a brief self-assessment regarding evidence-based management. The assessment was adapted from the [Evidence-Based Management Assessment for Organizations](#) created by the [Center for Evidence-Based Management](#) (CEBMa). The assessment asked teams to consider 16 statements regarding workforce decisions and practices in their agency. A sample of the statements from the CEBMa assessment and their feedback for organizations are presented below.



1. **We believe it is important to adopt new and cutting-edge practices.**

Organizations that are more evidence-based are less likely to adopt new and cutting-edge practices.

Sometimes ‘cutting-edge’ or ‘leading-edge’ practices can turn out to be valuable and useful, but more often than not they simply represent the latest management fads and fashions that are ultimately of little value.

This question also relates to the ‘solution in search of a problem’ problem where organizations introduce new and exciting ‘cutting-edge’ practices without being clear about what the problem is they are trying to fix and so start to see the problem in relation to what it is claimed the new practice will fix.

2. **We make decisions by looking at what other organizations are doing, and how it's working for them.**

Organizations that are more evidence-based are less likely to copy what other organizations are doing.

In general, copying what other organizations do is regarded as an unhelpful decision making-practice because organizations are very different from each other and usually require specific and tailored solutions.

5. Before any decision is taken we systematically evaluate internal data to better understand the nature of the problem.

Organizations that are more evidence-based will make much use of critically evaluated internal data.

The use of internal data and making decisions is vital to evidence-based practice. This involves a process with interlinked stages including collecting the data, ensuring it is valid and reliable, analyzing and interpreting the data, communicating the data, making it accessible to managers and incorporating it into decisions.

Many organizations are good at some of these stages but it appears that few have the capacity and skills required to fully complete this process.

15. We systematically evaluate the effectiveness of new policies and practices we introduce.

Organizations that are more evidence based or more likely to evaluate new policies and practices.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of new policies and practices is essential to evidence-based practice without such evidence it is impossible to know whether an why new policies and practices are working, to what extent they are working, they have unintended negative consequences.

The QIC-WD encourages Institute participants, and other child welfare jurisdictions, to determine if they are using valid and reliable evidence to support their organization and to make informed organizational decisions. As such, the QIC-WD continues to work with the jurisdictions to show how the use of data and evidence-based management can inform their workforce decisions and address the challenges that plague so many child welfare agencies across the country.



To learn more about evidenced-based management, the paper, [Evidence-Based Management: The Basic Principles](#), explains evidence-based management and how it helps organizations make better decisions.