Making your Collaborative Justice Court a Success: Evaluation Fundamentals

October 29, 2019

Gregory Robinson, Ph.D.
gregory.robinson@cox.net
Monica Parran
mparran@alameda.courts.ca.gov

California Association of Collaborative Courts Annual Conference 2019

Learning Objectives

- Develop a shared evaluation vocabulary
- Identify the core participant, court process, treatment, and outcome data elements that will serve as the building blocks for your Drug Court evaluation
- Become familiar with alternative approaches to data storage and management
- Understand the use of data in evaluator/ court management partnerships to inform program improvement, document outcomes, and to support sustainability

Evaluation Defined:

"Program Evaluation is the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/ or to inform decisions about future programming" (Patton, 1997).

The Evaluation Process

Evaluation refers to a <u>Research Purpose</u> rather than to a specific research method.

Many data collection methods are used, e.g. assessment and screening results, surveys, focus groups, observations, case management notes, & treatment reports.

So, Why Evaluate Your Project?

- Adhere to Best Practice Standard 10

- Better allocation of resources

- Improve program performance

- Validate that your interventions had the intended effects

- Compile lessons learned to inform the field

- Contribute to sustainability

- Identify reasons for project failure

- Because the RFA/ RFP requires it

Three Prerequisite Conditions to Evaluate any Program

- First, <u>goals</u> that are ambitious but realistic must be clearly described, and <u>measurable</u> <u>program</u> <u>objectives</u> must be specified.

- Second, a <u>linkage</u> must be specified between program activities and program objectives. This linkage is referred to as "program logic" or "theory of change".

- Third, <u>quantifiable</u> <u>performance</u> <u>measures</u> must be developed at the outset of the program that will demonstrate the extent to which a program is meeting its objectives.

Goals and Objectives

- Goal: A broad, ambitious statement.
  - The desired result of achieving multiple outcome objectives.

- Outcome Objectives: State the results one hopes to obtain by intervention activities.
  - Refer to changes in the lives and circumstances or conditions in an area targeted by project activities.

- Process or Implementation Objectives: Describe the accomplishment of project activities.
  - Refer to project outputs

Outcome Objectives

- Specify:
  - Who or what is expected to change or benefit
  - What and how much change or benefit is expected
  - Where the change will occur
  - When the change will occur
- Good Outcome Objectives:
  - Refer to phenomena that are observable and measurable
  - Are achievable/ reachable
  - Are important/ meaningful

SMART Objectives

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-oriented
- Realistic
- Time Specific

Early Evaluator and Stakeholder Involvement

- Early evaluator involvement strengthens program design and project planning

- Let the evaluation cycle begin by engaging stakeholders

  - Stakeholders include funders, court coordinators, treatment staff, members of the Drug Court team, collaborating partners, and persons served or affected by the project (Include project supporters and critics)

  - Failure to engage stakeholders increases the probability that findings may be ignored, criticized, or resisted because the evaluation did not address their concerns or values

Setting the Stage: A Hierarchy of Evaluation Intensity

Evaluation is a progressive, or tiered activity

- First Stage of Evaluation Intensity: Fiscal and Programmatic Monitoring

  - Did the program achieve its administrative objectives?

  - Were the services/ materials proposed actually developed?

Hierarchy of Evaluation Intensity

- Second Stage of Evaluation Intensity: Process Evaluation

    - Good Program Description

    - Program Coverage

    - Program Delivery

    - Assess Progress toward Achieving Outcomes

Hierarchy of Evaluation Intensity

- Third Stage of Evaluation Intensity: Summative or Impact Evaluation

  - Rigorous methods and research designs that support causal attributions

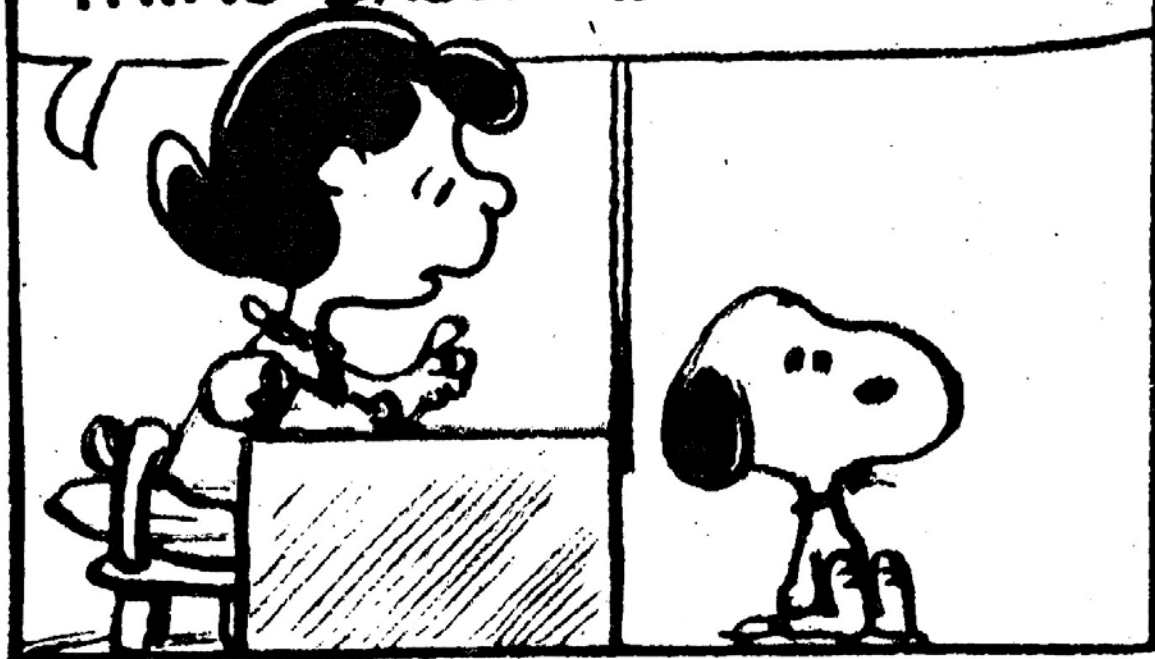# Formative vs. Summative Evaluation

- ## Formative Evaluation
  - Design and development testing to maximize the success of an intervention

- ## Summative Evaluation
  - Assesses the overall worth or merit of a program

Evaluation Emphasis

- Program Improvement
  - The place to begin
- Outcome Evaluation
  - When your court is operationally "tuned up," and adheres to most of the best practice standards
- Sustainability

Data Collection Building Blocks: Program Description

- Policies and procedures
- Steering Committee/ Work Group agendas
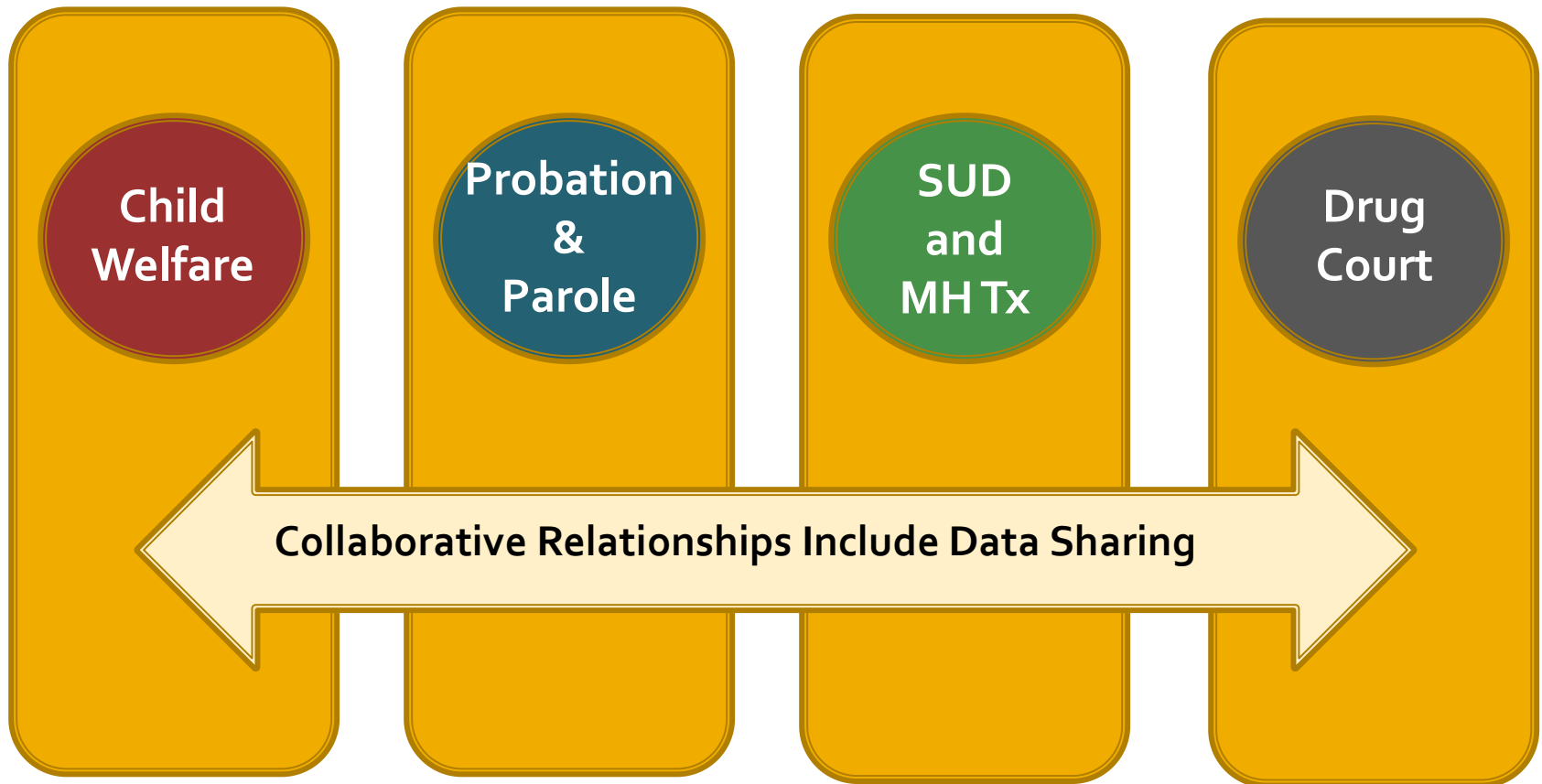- Staff meeting agendas and notes

Data Collection Building Blocks: Program Coverage

- Individual
  - Intake assessments and screens document criminogenic risks and treatment needs, get strengths & assets from intake interviews
  - Charges and convictions
- Population
  - Participant demographics and other measures enable comparisons with county populations: arrests, probation & parole revocations, child removals to foster care

Data Collection Building Blocks: Program Implementation

- Court Process
  - Phase advancement, Graduation, Terminations
  - Drug Court status hearing attendance
  - UA Test Results
  - Sanctions and Incentives
  - Referral to/ participation in ancillary services
  - Treatment plans/ goal attainment
  - Drug Court team and court assessments

Data Collection Building Blocks: Cross-System Data Sharing

Data Collection Building Blocks: Outcome Measures & Follow-Up

- Program retention and graduation
- New charges or arrests (during & following program)
- Recovery maintenance/ aftercare

Data Collection

- Conduct an inventory of available data, including court records, assessments & screens, case management information, and data that may be available from contracted and collaborative partners.

CSAT GPRA Client Outcome Measure

- **Domains:** Planned services, demographics, military family and deployment, drug and alcohol use, family and living conditions; education, employment and income; crime and criminal justice status; mental and physical health problems and treatment/ recovery; social connectedness

BJA Drug Court Performance Measurement Tool

- **Participant-Level Domains:** Screening and Program Intake, Individual Demographics (Race) by eligibility and enrollment, Risk Assessment, Number Receiving Services, Program Completion and Judicial Interaction, Alcohol and Substance Involvement, Court and Criminal Involvement (recidivism), Narrative Responses

Evaluation Reporting

- Language, format, and content tailored to the information consumer and purpose of the report
  - Data Dashboards
  - Funders
  - Ad hoc reports

Data Format, Maintenance, & Storage

- Shared Database on the Court Server

- Database on the Cloud

- Proprietary Drug Court Case Management Data Collection Systems

- Buffalo Management Information System (MIS)

Participant Confidentiality & Consent

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- 42 CFR Part 2, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records
- Research vs. Evaluation