


Agency and University Collaboration for Program Evaluation



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Why collaborate?

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- Mutual Benefits for both parties
- Common Goals
 - improving services
 - prevention

University Researchers



- Practical contributions practitioners make to the research process
- Offer insight into what the findings of research mean
- Source of generating research ideas
- Opportunity for publication of research

Agency



- Important when applying for grants; provides data that is often needed
- Provides data for program evaluation and program planning
- Provides information on what kinds of services are needed
- Documents need for services
- Presents diverse points of view


Agency: improve services

- | validate specific approaches to assist in working with clients
- | identify “best practices”
- | measures effectiveness
- | measures participant satisfaction with services provided
- | helps practitioners simply do their job better


This project



- The research methodology and surveys were developed with very close collaboration between practitioners and researchers.
- Data was obtained every two weeks following several groups
- The groups were cognitive behavioral, with a focus on increasing batterers' accountability for their behavior.
- Members were typically court-ordered for 26 weeks of intervention.

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- used data from 82 group members and 17 of their therapists
 - investigated which group processes (such as confrontation, empathy, and didactics) were most salient
 - and which processes they assessed as most effective in facilitating changes in abusive behavior.
 - Accountability
 - Risk assessments

Members were recruited during group intake sessions.



- All data were completely confidential and protected by a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality.
- Members received their choice of McDonalds, Home Depot or Marshall Fields coupons as rewards for participating.

Benefits to University Researchers



- Contributed to the knowledge base to end violence in interpersonal relationships
- Assisted us in making our research practical
- Assisted us in connecting with the community
- Research, study and write about something to which we were committed
- Assisted us in seeing practitioners' viewpoints

Benefits to FSI



- Agency received information and feedback on services provided
- Agency staff were able to use the information to more effectively work with clients
- Agency was also present their evaluation effort to their funding sources
- Received feedback from clients

Benefits to FSI continued



- Intellectual stimulation, helped prevented burnout, less isolating
- Helped one to look outside of agency
- The collaboration included a monetary compensation to the agency for a staff member to recruit participants into the research study.
- Funds were also provided to thank therapists for their time and effort

Who Initiates?



- | Research initiated often by grants
- | Agency or Practitioner initiated
- | Informal discussions
- | Networking
- | Collaboration
- | Long process

Collaboration Needs



- Researchers
- Service Providers
- Clients

Challenges/Barriers of Partnering:



- | Agency personnel and university personnel often perform distinct tasks and come from very different organizational cultures
- Conflict of interests—practical applied findings versus valued by academic community
- Different perspective, assumptions and types of training
- Lack of trust--previous history of research projects, may view of researchers as arrogant and negative past experiences

Challenges/Barriers of Partnering continued

- Perceived greater subjectivity of service providers versus greater objectivity of researchers
- Researchers' lack of knowledge of of the "real world of clients and providers
- Researchers have unrealistically high expectations for practitioner participation
- Researchers' lack of identification with what practitioners' need

Challenges/Barriers of Partnering continued



- Lack of follow through by researchers—sharing the findings
- Ethical concerns—concern of the confidentiality of participants, informed consent, coercive tactics, safety of clients
- Use of inexperienced or inadequately supervised student researchers

Challenges/Barriers of Partnering continued




- Very time consuming for agency and university (takes away from clients)
- Funding
- Varied levels of interest in research project between project staff and administrators
- Quality of the data collected
- Recruitment of diverse group of participants; careful consideration of language used in the research studies to reflect cultural competence

Challenges/Barriers of Partnering for project



- Felt we were not trusted by some staff
- Resistance from some staff
- Had little control over the recruitment of clients to the study--concern over numbers
- Had little control over the data collection process--concern about the quality of the data
- Meeting agency needs for outcome data with limited budget

Challenges/Barriers of Partnering for FSI



- Time consuming
- Resistance from some staff
- Coordination between sites and staff

Steps Involved in Coordinating An Evaluation Effort

- | Researchers need to explain what they are doing and why
 - how will help agency and clients
 - how research will be used
 - show passion and commitment
 - explain in manner that demonstrates commitment

Steps Involved in Coordinating An Evaluation Effort continued

- | Agency needs to be comfortable with the credentials of researchers
 - prior research
 - references
 - past experiences
 - previous published work

Steps Involved in Coordinating An Evaluation Effort continued



- | Practitioners and researchers mutually involved in conceptualization of the research
- | Development of survey instruments—discuss what this process was like
- | Ethics and safety issues
- | Dissemination of findings (publicity, articles, presentations)
- | Can have a Memorandum of Understanding

Key elements to a successful partnership



- | clear, common and compatible goals
- | continual and consistent open dialogue
- | flexibility & openness from both researchers and agency
- | keep partners informed: joint decision making
- | willingness to alter strategies that do not work

Key elements to a successful partnership continued



- | researchers' concern for the effect the research is having on practitioners
- | carefully weighing of the time commitment versus value of the research
- | demonstrate concern for clients, researchers need to view clients as people versus data
- | timely, ongoing, useful feedback on results of research

Key elements to a successful partnership continued



- Careful use of students in research project
- Willingness to continue working together
- Researchers must be proactive in maintaining collaborative relationship
- Spend time together in community projects which allows to see each other as people and develop trust