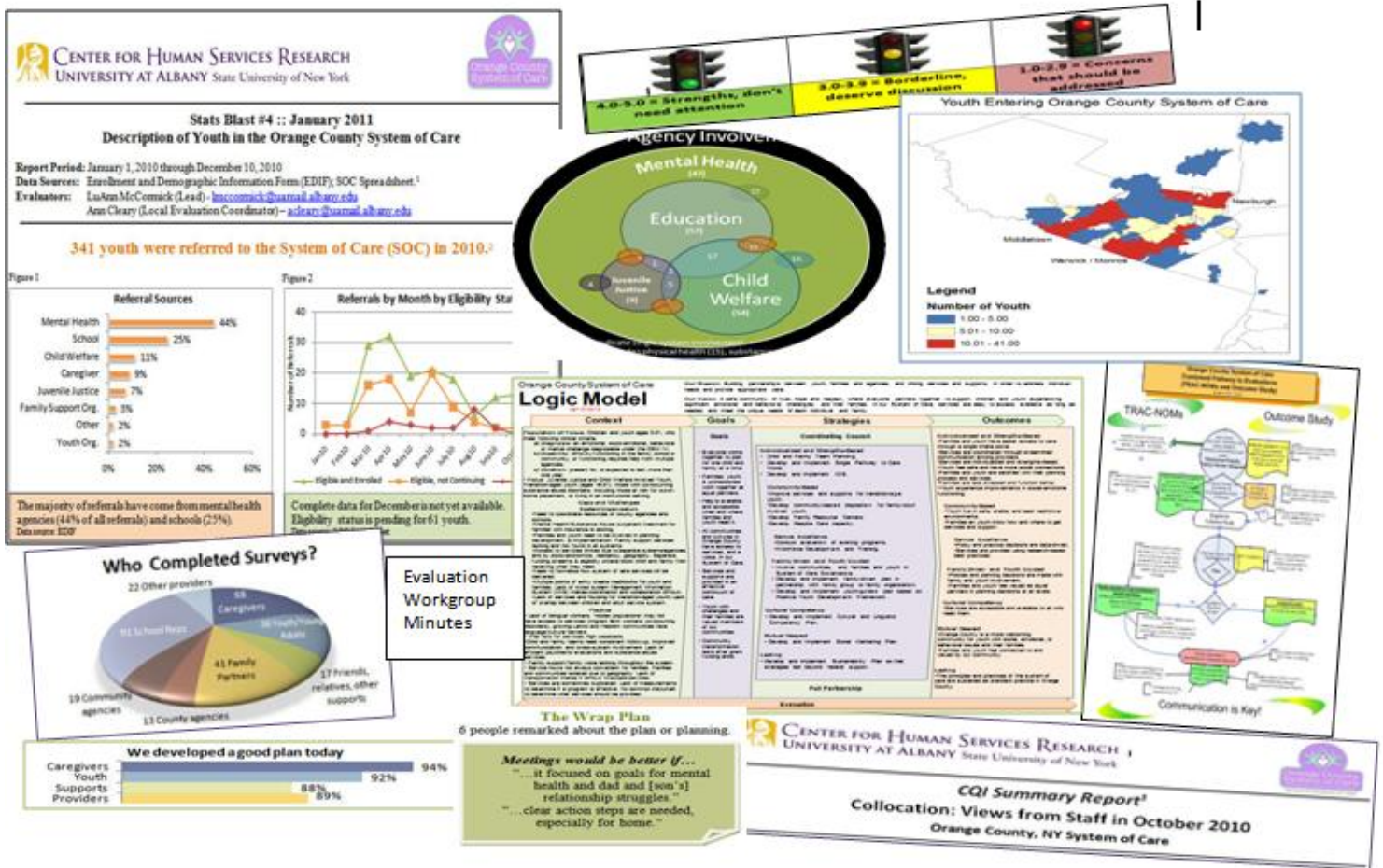


## Evaluation: A Key Partner for Your System of Care Continuous and Creative Data Reporting



### Getting Started:

- **Start your partnership early** – during the grant writing process, if possible. Get to know everyone involved in the system of care, from key staff to agency partners, from youth and families to the community at large.
- **Establish an evaluation workgroup/advisory group** as early as possible. Make it open and inviting to anyone and everyone. Involve them in meaningful work, such as revising consent language, from the very beginning.
- **Help develop the community logic model.** Use the Outcomes as a vehicle to explain the evaluation design and process. Use the logic model to develop a detailed evaluation design for both national and local evaluations. Keep the logic model “alive” by referring to it often and placing discussions within the context of the logic model.
- **Demonstrate the value of evaluation in all venues, starting early.** Conduct “quick & dirty” surveys to get the community and partners engaged in what the evaluation is all about (or could be). This can also demystify the evaluation process.

### Process: How We’ve Accomplished This:

- **Staffing model** – 2 full-time evaluators: Local Evaluation Coordinator (LEC) is located in the SOC community, Lead Evaluator is located at the sponsoring university research center about 2 hours away. Staffing model was designed out of geographic necessity, but we would consider this model again regardless of proximity. LEC is responsible for the longitudinal outcome study including the services and costs study; tracking and managing data; and implementing quality control measures.. The Lead Evaluator is responsible for designing and implementing local evaluation activities; data analysis, reporting and presentation; and overall project management. The LEC focuses on building and maintaining relationships with staff “on the ground” in order to have a good working knowledge of the service delivery model, establish trust among staff who provide data for the evaluation, and to serve as a local liaison to the Lead Evaluator. The LEC also coordinates the evaluation workgroup – setting the agenda, ordering lunch, writing and distributing minutes, and maintaining contact with workgroup members. The Lead Evaluator focuses on building relationships at the system level, providing ad hoc data to decision makers, preparing reports and making presentations to community groups.
- **Define “data” very broadly** – it’s not just boring numbers.

- **Be a continual resource** to the community, project leaders, and staff. Be constructive. Every finding – positive or negative – has a constructive purpose. Offer data/information from national data and other sources until local data becomes available.
- Reiterate the importance of “**data driven decision making**” and how the evaluation team can be the resource to provide the data.
- **Continuous Feedback Loop** – Get the information out to the community on a regular basis in various formats. Take the initiative to go outside the typical meeting circuit by finding relevant information to bring to youth groups, schools, parent groups, etc.
- **Be creative in your presentation**/display of information. Your evaluation workgroup can be very helpful in interpreting data and finding creative ways to report it. The social marketer can be helpful with this as well.

### **Barriers/Obstacles:**

- The evaluation, both national and local, can be overwhelming.
  - Have the evaluation workgroup help distill it into meaningful pieces.
  - Think about ways to make a large dataset meaningful to various audiences (e.g., pull out a couple of variables relevant to youth or tie evaluation data in with a social marketing campaign).
  - Choose a SOC principle and report data that draws on that principle.
  - Present findings from one instrument at a time.
- It’s challenging to make dry data interesting, especially for some of us research-types. Try to be participatory in presentations. Again, the evaluation workgroup can be helpful, especially if you’ve got youth and family members. Engage the local youth or parent group to help present data.

### **Sustainability/Funding Considerations:**

- The evaluation can be a valuable resource for sustainability efforts. Being a continuously accessible resource to project leadership can serve to sustain the initiative and lead to discussions of sustaining some of the evaluation components beyond the initiative.

### **Future Steps:**

- This system of care is in Year 3. We are just now beginning to have enough follow-up data to start reporting on intermediate outcomes. The community is eager for these findings and the evaluation team will be busy generating new reports and presentations.
- We are also in the process of developing new and interactive ways to present the data. This will involve the evaluation workgroup, youth group, and the parent advisory group.

### **Basic Community Information:**

- Orange County (NY) System of Care
- Montgomery, Orange County, New York
- Funded in 2008
- Children and youth age 5-21; juvenile justice and child welfare involved youth, transition-aged youth (ages 16-21), those with co-occurring substance abuse disorders, including those at risk for out-of-home placement, or living in an institutional setting.

### **Exemplar Details:**

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### **Key Tips/Strategies for Success:**

1. Build relationships early; sustain those relationships by being a continual, constructive resource to the project and the community.
2. Demystify the evaluation by defining data beyond “numbers.” Involve youth, families, and community members in helping to distill findings and develop creative presentation methods.
3. Consider a staffing model that clearly delineates the distinct roles and responsibilities required for the required national evaluation and the local evaluation components.

### **Additional Resources:**

- Another exemplary evaluation team: [www.kalamazoowrapsevaluation.org](http://www.kalamazoowrapsevaluation.org)
- Theory of Change/Logic Models – <http://logicmodel.fmhi.usf.edu/>
- Social Marketing, tips for evaluators and social marketers working together – [http://www.vancomm.com/srv\\_social\\_marketing.php](http://www.vancomm.com/srv_social_marketing.php)