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This fact sheet summarizes key takeaways from *Bridging Research and Practice: A Handbook for Implementing Research-Informed Practices in Juvenile Probation*. The full report includes citations for the research summarized here.

Changing Practice in Juvenile Probation: Preparing for Change

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Overview

The knowledge base on how to improve public safety and outcomes for youth involved with juvenile justice system has expanded substantially. This fact sheet is part of a set of resources to help juvenile probation agencies and officers understand adolescent development, what works to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth involved in the juvenile justice system, and how to change practice in juvenile probation agencies. Reflecting the framework on the other side of this sheet, some of the resources focus on what frontline practices need to change and others focus on the administrative activities needed to support a change.

Assessing Organizational Readiness and Laying the Groundwork for Change

Researchers in the field of implementation science have studied how organizational change efforts succeed. They have focused on the key drivers of successful organizational practice: *staff competencies*, *organizational structures and processes*, *leadership strategies* (see the "administrative activities" box in figure 1), and the *cycle of continuous quality improvement* (represented by the arrows flowing around figure 1).

It also indicates that the process of successfully changing an organization, agency, or department typically takes two to four years. Two stages help organizations to become ready for the changes they will make – we refer to these stages as *exploration* and *preparation*. (See our Integrating and Sustaining for information about *implementing [or integrating] and sustaining the change phases*.)

Readying for Change: Exploration

In this stage, the agency or department is doing the following:

- assessing their mission and priorities
- seeking evidence on what kinds of strategies, approaches, and practices could help them better reach their desired outcomes
- investigating the appropriateness of those options for the populations they serve
- considering the feasibility of adopting the new practices

Readying for Change: Preparation

In this stage, the agency or department has determined the type of change it wants to make and is preparing to make that change by identifying administrative activities to support changes in the following areas:

Staff Competencies

- identifying competencies staff will need
- assessing current competencies of staff to determine supports needed
- determining options for professional development and their costs

Organizational Structures and Processes

- examining policies, procedures, and data systems to determine where changes will be needed to align old and new
- estimating the options, timelines, and costs for making those changes
- involving external partners in determining how and where policies and procedures outside the agency will need to be made

Leadership Strategies

- identifying all types of leaders within the agency and involving them
- collaborating with leaders to determine how they will convey the importance of the change and their commitment to it
- strategizing and anticipating potential challenges and identifying work-arounds
- examining options for using communication channels and feedback loops to fully engage staff in the process, monitor change, and track success
- identifying the supports leaders will need to be successful change-managers

Resources to Help You Assess Readiness

- Change Management Readiness Assessment Tools Overview (casey.org)
- Checklist to Assess Organizational Readiness for EIP Implementation (CARI)
- Organizational Readiness for Change Assessment (TCU ORC-SA)

If you have comments or questions about these materials, please contact Samantha Harvell at SHarvell@urban.org.
Full references for materials presented here may be found in the linked documents.

VISUALIZING THE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING LONG-TERM BEHAVIOR CHANGE IN YOUTH

An Agency Perspective on Implementing a Research-Informed Approach to Juvenile Probation

Contextual Factors

- System Organization
- External Stakeholders
- Judicial Dynamics
- Community Engagement
- Community Resources

Inputs

- Research on adolescent development
- Training and technical assistance materials
- Youth
- Supportive adults
- Caregivers
- Probation agency staff and resources

Continuous Quality Improvement

Administrative Activities to Support and Improve Quality and Sustain Change

Staff Competencies

- Identify needed knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors
- Communicate and assess competencies
- Support attainment of new competencies
- Recognize that learning new competencies takes time and active engagement (training alone is not enough)
- Revise job descriptions and align performance expectations

Organizational Structures and Processes

- Create multiple avenues supporting communication
- Engage staff from all levels
- Develop decision-support systems that facilitate data tracking and feedback loops
- Engage external stakeholders early and often
- Align policies and procedures with the new approach

Leadership Strategies

- Demonstrate commitment to the change
- Anticipate the time needed to make the changes
- Allocate resources to support the change
- Foster and generate staff enthusiasm
- Recognize the importance of supervisors as leaders
- Promote the change throughout the community

Continuous Quality Improvement

Change in Organizational Culture and Frontline Practices

- Assessment and structured decisionmaking
- Case planning
- Matching services and promoting positive youth development
- Promoting long-term behavior change
- Incentivizing success and implementing graduated responses

Outcomes

Probation Agency Outcomes

- Meaningful interactions with youth
- Reduced recidivism
- More efficient resource use

Community Outcomes

- Improved public safety
- More youth engaged in prosocial activities
- Stronger workforce

Family Outcomes

- Increased family engagement
- Improved communication, cohesion, and family functioning

Youth Outcomes

- More/healthier relationships with adults
- Improvements in critical life skills
- Increased engagement in prosocial activities
- Better critical thinking and impulse control
- Improved academic engagement and achievement
- Improved job readiness and employment
- Improved perceptions of legal authorities and legitimacy of law

Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous Quality Improvement

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