Developing SMART Performance Indicators

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Participant Outcomes

• Learn the features of high-quality performance indicators for accountability systems

• Identify ways that current performance indicators could be improved

• Identify activities needed to collect and analyze data on the performance indicators
Definition of a Performance Indicator in the Context of Performance Measurement

- **Performance measurement** is the *process* of collecting, analyzing, and/or reporting information regarding the performance of an individual, group, organization, system, or component.
  
  - A **performance indicator** is an aspect of performance measurement. Performance Indicators *evaluate the success* of an organization or of a particular activity in which it engages.
Examples

- At least 85% of early intervention providers participate in Child Outcomes Summary (COS) ratings training and follow-up.
- Data analyzed through the statewide data system will show 100% of family assessments were conducted using a state-identified tool (unless family declined).
- Review of family assessment protocols will show that family assessment is conducted using the chosen tool to fidelity.
- 86% of families were given a list of partner agencies whose services support the family’s knowledge and skills at IFSP meetings.
- 70% of eligible children receive 95% of planned services on IFSPs in a timely manner.
Intended Use of Performance Indicators

• Performance indicators serve as a red flag
• Good indicators give a sense of whether expected results are being achieved
• They do not answer questions about why results are or are not achieved
What Are the Benefits of Performance Indicators?

• Add clarity and focus
  – Can help prioritize activities
  – Can help limit or focus scope and cost of evaluation

• Move from global or abstract terms to specific, observable, and measurable statements

• Guide adjustments to data collection and implementation
Note of Caution

“data on indicators must be interpreted with caution. They are best used to point to results that need further exploration, rather than as definitive assessments of program success or failure.”

—Karen Horsch, 1997

SMART Goals are:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time bound
Harvard Family Research Center’s Criteria of a Good Indicator

• Aligned to the intended outcome and has value
• Defined in the same way over time
• Feasible processes for collecting the data
• The indicator provides sufficient information about a condition or result to convince both supporters and skeptics
• The indicator usually begins with words such as number of, percent of, ratio of, proportion of, mean, or similar phrases

Types of Performance Indicators

- **State**
  - e.g., State funds to support home visiting and skillful technical assistance and support to meet funding requirements

- **Implementing Agency**
  - e.g., Effective and supportive training and supervision for home visitors, efficiency measures, and implementation of evidence-based practices

- **Direct Service Provider**
  - e.g., Effective home visiting services for families

- **Family**
  - e.g., Access to community resources and access to the workforce

- **Child**
  - e.g., Federally reported child outcomes, state child-level standards, and infant mental health

Considerations

• How do the existing indicators relate to quality services?
• Do existing indicators lead to positive child and family outcomes?
• Do your performance indicators reflect the information needs of key decision makers (longer term for policy makers, shorter term process for implementers)?
• Do you have key indicators in your data system to identify the programs most in need of support?
• Did you use high-quality baseline data for setting targets and/or performance standards?
• Do you have different indicators to support decision-making?
Activity

• In your **small group** write down performance indicators from your performance management system.

• Discuss the indicator in relation to the criteria and considerations described in the slides.

• Identify a way(s) that your set of performance indicators could be improved.

• In the **large group** share one performance indicator and provide one way that you plan to make improvements.
Resources


• Implementation Guide: Results Based Accountability. Webpage available at http://raguide.org/

