Smart BJA Initiatives and the Role of the Research Partnership

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Welcome and Introductions

• Welcome & Overview of Council of State Governments Justice Center:
  – Sheila Tillman, Policy Analyst, CSG Justice Center

• Today’s Speakers:
  – Ed McGarrell, Ph.D., Professor, School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University
  – Faye Taxman, Ph.D., Professor in the Criminology, Law and Society Department, and Director of the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence! at George Mason University
National nonprofit, nonpartisan membership association of state government officials

 Represents all three branches of state government

 Provides practical advice informed by the best available evidence
Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program Funding

• Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA) Public Law 108-414 signed into law in 2004 with bipartisan support

• Authorized JMHCP: $50 million for criminal justice-mental health initiatives

• The MIOTCRA amended and reauthorized JMHCP for five years in 2008 (Public Law 108-416)

• In 2016, the 21st Century Cures Act amended and reauthorized the JMHCP program first created by MIOTCRA
Overview of JMHCP

The Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Program (JMHCP) supports innovative cross-system collaboration to improve responses and outcomes for individuals with mental illnesses or co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders who come into contact with the justice system.
National Reentry Resource Center

- Authorized by the passage of the Second Chance Act in April 2008
- Launched by the Council of State Governments in October 2009
- Administered in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice
- The NRRC has provided technical assistance to over 600 juvenile and adult reentry grantees since inception
Agenda

• Why Research Partnership?
  – Evidence-based Practice & Action Research
  – Evolution of the Action Research Model
  – The Role of the Research Partner

• How to Build an Effective Partnership

• Implementation
  – Lessons from Implementation Science
  – Applications

• Best Practices in Corrections

• Evaluation Challenges and Strategies
Smart Justice

Evidence-based practice – OJP includes two key dimensions*:

• Effectiveness – demonstrated by causal evidence, obtained through high quality evaluations
• Causal evidence – use of scientific methods to rule out, as much as possible, alternative explanations

*Justice Research and Statistics Association
Smart Justice

Action Research:
- Research that seeks to solve specific problems
- Typically conducted in a research-practice collaboration
Smart Justice

Implementation & Evaluation:

• Implementation – critical dimension of effectively addressing problem

• Evaluation
  – Are we implementing the EBP with fidelity to the model and appropriate intensity (process evaluation)
  – Are we having the desired impact on the problem/issue we are addressing? (outcome evaluation)
Smart Justice – Role of Research Partnership

- Action Research
- Evidence-Based Practice
- Implementation & Evaluation
- Basic Research
Smart Justice – Role of Research Partnership

- Action Research
- Evidence-Based Practice
- Implementation & Evaluation
- Basic Research
Why the Research Partnership?

Researchers, working with their CJ partners, can:

• Assess the problem
• Identify evidence-based strategies
• Assist with strategic planning of strategies
• Assess implementation
• Evaluate impact
Traditional Research Model

- Researchers were outsiders in problem-solving process
  - Not involved in problem identification
  - Observers, not participants, in program development and implementation
  - Involved only as independent evaluators of impact
Action Research Model

• Active, ongoing partnership between researchers and practitioner agencies
• Use research process to help solve local problems
  – Data collection to identify and understand problems
  – Strategic analysis to develop targeted interventions
  – Program monitoring and feedback for refinement
  – Assessment of impact
Evolution of Research Partnerships

- RSAT, Drug Courts, and Specialty Courts
- Supervision
- Reentry
- Co-Occurring Disorders
Common Ingredients

• Focused strategies/interventions
• Systematic problem solving process
  – Multi-agency working group
  – Problem solving model
  – CJ Agency - Researcher Partnership
Strategic Problem-Solving Model

Problem Analysis

Smart Suite Partnerships

Assessment & Feedback

Strategy

Implementation
Support Highly Focused Interventions

“There is strong research evidence that the more focused and specific the strategies of the police, the more they are tailored to the problems they seek to address, the more effective the [police] will be in controlling crime and disorder.”

Smart Supervision & Focused Interventions

• Effectively assess criminogenic risk & need
• Employ smart, tailored case planning and supervision strategies
• Use incentives, graduated sanctions to influence behavior
• Implement performance-driven personnel practices to reward reduced recidivism*

*Council of State Governments Justice Center
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The Research Partner

- Assists the team in gathering data, synthesizing information and evaluating strategies
- Is an extra set of eyes
- Is a neutral partner with unbiased perspectives
- Offers expertise in areas that are not necessarily available
Research Partner = Added value

- Problem analysis
- Identification of evidence-based strategies
- Ongoing monitoring and feedback
- Evaluation
Ongoing Assessment

• Component of Action Research

• Form of process evaluation
  – Are we doing what we said we would do?
  – Do we need to make mid-course corrections?
  – Provides a mechanism for holding our partnership accountable

• Critical for achieving desired outcomes
Researcher Responsibilities

• Answer questions raised by the department/agency/partnership
• Problem identification that is operationally relevant
• Initial inquiry, key questions that move to informed analysis
• Intervention development support
• Analysis, monitoring, and feedback
Researcher Skills

• Commitment to project and problem solving
• Knowledge of criminal justice system
• Ability to communicate and advise
• Ability to look at a problem creatively
• Familiarity with and valuing a broad array of research methodologies- qualitative and quantitative
• Willingness to work with unique characteristics of criminal justice data and non-traditional, creative research methodologies
• Ability to meet short timelines
Expectations of the Researcher

• Listen first, then talk
  – Especially when the partnership is starting
  – Know his/her role
  – Listen and value

• Start where the practitioners are, not where the academics are
  – Problem solving as a group may be new
  – Usefulness to all involved
Expectations of the Researcher

• Help practitioners stop and think
  – Ready, shoot, aim
  – Dealing with problems instead of responding to incidents
  – Validate and explain new ideas

• Understand the data phobia
  – Awareness of experience history
Expectations of the Researcher

• Put something good in your hands
  – Timely research findings
  – Audience
  – Brief from the bottom up

• Find a buddy
  – Informal and candid
  – Transparency in process and review
Expectations of the Agency

• Be active participants
• Make decisions informed by data
• Work together in true collaboration
• Educate and be an advocate for your department
• Include the RP in meetings
Expectations of the Agency

• Bring department concerns and perspectives to the team
• Share data and information
• Listen, respond, be flexible and creative
Obstacles

• History of data use and abuse
• History of difficult relationships
• Difficultly in measuring outcomes directly related to crime and criminal justice
• Capacity of agencies
  – Records not data
  – Data systems that are not integrated
Obstacles

• Money
  – Funding considerations usually shape the nature of the research that can be undertaken
• What is being investigated
  – May take time to clarify issues
• Time to design research
Obstacles

• Time to collect data
• Time to analyze
• What and how to report
  – Something good in my hand
  – Academic outlets
Questions to ask

- Are both parties being satisfied?
- Is the communications process open?
- Is the relationship capable of adapting to changing circumstances?
- How long will (or can) the relationship endure?
Suggestions for Successful Evaluation

• Plan early

• Jointly develop logic model, outputs, outcomes

• Ongoing assessment and feedback
Question & Answer Session
Thank You

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