

Changing the Tire While the Car is Moving: Implementing Significant Practice Change

Using an Implementation Science Framework

Center for Advanced Studies
in Child Welfare

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Project

Background

Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs) are used by the Children's Bureau to assess the performance of state child welfare agencies' efforts at achieving positive child and family outcomes. A 2001 CFSR indicated that child welfare agencies needed to improve family assessment and service provision. This led to the development of the Comprehensive Family Assessment (CFA) Guidelines and the funding of five state sites through a Children's Bureau Demonstration Grant to examine and improve their comprehensive assessment process.

A Partnership between the Ramsey County Community Human Services Department and the University of Minnesota

Ramsey County was chosen as one of five sites and is partnering with the University of Minnesota on a five year project to develop, evaluate, and disseminate a new model of comprehensive family assessment. The model was developed in collaboration with community members, cultural consultants, cooperating agencies, and a program consultant. External evaluators at the University of Minnesota conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the practice model and implementation process.

Comprehensive Family Assessment (CFA)

An Assessment Model

The project provided evidence-based knowledge about the emerging role of comprehensive assessment in child welfare. The CFA was studied to determine its association with family engagement and inclusion of fathers, worker-family visits, and case planning and service delivery – all of which are known to lead to better outcomes for families involved in child welfare.



Comprehensive Family Assessment Guidelines (Scheene, 2005)

1. Review of existing documentation
2. Meet with the family
3. Interview children
4. Meet with staff of other agencies
5. Obtain specialized assessments
6. Make judgments & decisions: Link Comprehensive Family Assessment to service plan development
7. Document information
8. Conduct ongoing assessment of progress and needs
9. Disseminate information to family & other providers and update the service plan
10. Reassess prior to case closure

Lessons Learned in Implementing CFA Practice

Organizational

- Ensure organizational commitment and administrative buy-in
- Assess "fit" between CFA and organization's mission and goals
- Prepare the agency for change (communication plan, establishing CFA purveyors, appropriating necessary CFA vendors for service provision)
- Note the value in evaluation and use of data to inform practice changes as they relate to CFA
- Establish a team that includes all departments that will be touched by CFA practice implementation, including alterations of CFA practice at all levels
- Incorporate additional agency initiatives and changes into CFA practice model
- Communicate and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to CFA practice at all levels within agency

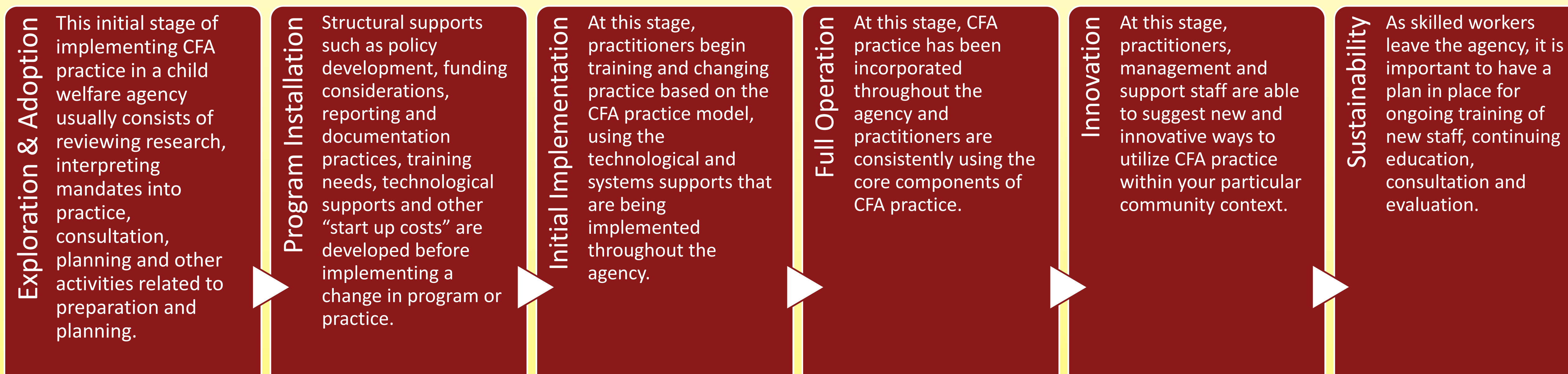
Programmatic

- Include staff and service recipients in the implementation of CFA practice model development and implementation plan
- Utilize a communication plan to disseminate information continuously and consistently
- Consider a step-wise approach to implementing CFA practice
- Recognize and prepare for the critical role of supervision under CFA
- Train and re-train CFA model with all levels of child protection staff
- Provide ongoing support and consultation for staff
- Create opportunities for internal CFA training experts
- Consider essential staff qualifications as they relate to the CFA practice model

Evaluation

- Consider agency and outside evaluator partnership
- Conduct a needs assessment to determine agency "fit" for CFA practice
- Develop a rigorous evaluation plan, with mindfulness for flexibility
- Assess practice outcomes *prior to* as well as *after* CFA implementation
- Conduct on-going fidelity assessments which are critical to informing CFA training and model revision, and to understanding adherence to CFA practice
- Utilize evaluation findings to support innovation and CFA practice expansion
- Communicate between evaluators, administrators, and key stakeholders (including front-line workers) about evaluation activities and findings
- Plan for internal, on-going evaluation to ensure CFA practice sustainability

National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) as Applied to CFA



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