Designing Capacity-Building Supports to Promote Evidence-Based Programs in Community-Based Organizations Working with Underserved Populations

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What Is the Purpose of this Study?

- To use a community-based participatory research approach to design, deliver, and evaluate an intervention to build capacity in community-based organizations for the use of evidence-based programs.

- To examine how engagement with the intervention (after the initial workshop) impacts the use of evidence-based programs in practice settings.

What Is the Problem?

- Community-based organizations often do not have the needed staff capacity to use evidence-based programs. (Evidence-based programs are health interventions that have been formally tested and found to be effective in improving health outcomes.)

- Although the literature suggests that staff members need a range of supports (such as technical assistance or manuals) to be able to find, adapt, and implement evidence-based programs, it is not clear how best to design and deliver these supports.

What Are the Findings?

- A community-based participatory research partnership centered in Boston, Lawrence, and Worcester, Massachusetts, supported the design, delivery, and evaluation of a capacity-building intervention for practitioners in community-based organizations working with underserved communities.

- There was limited practitioner engagement with ongoing capacity-building supports offered after the workshop, which included a web portal and other resources, networking events, minigrants, and technical assistance.

- The use of additional capacity-building supports (particularly the web portal and minigrants) drove the use of an evidence-based program planning approach one year after the training.

Who Should Care Most?

- Researchers and funders should be aware that capacity-building interventions to support evidence-based programming are likely to have more impact if they include additional engagement opportunities beyond a workshop or static training. At the same time, practice constraints may make it difficult for staff of low-resource organizations to take full advantage of training opportunities.

- Leaders of community-based organizations should be aware that additional investment of staff time for ongoing training opportunities may yield greater impact for staff members.

Recommendations for Action

- Additional participatory research will be important to refine capacity-building interventions to fit both the needs and constraints of staff of community-based organizations as they find, adapt, and implement evidence-based programs.