Implementing, Evaluating and Sustaining a Parent Mentor Program: Lessons Learned

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Acknowledgements

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MENTOR PARENT PROGRAM

Dependency Advocacy Center

Santa Clara County, California
Functions of Recovery Support

LIASON
• Links participants to ancillary supports; identifies service gaps

TREATMENT BROKER
• Facilitates access to treatment by addressing barriers and identify local resources
• Monitors participant progress and compliance
• Enters case data

ADVISOR
• Educates community; garners local support
• Communicates with FDC team, staff and service providers
DEPENDENCY WELLNESS COURT (DWC)

- Started in 1998
- Judge, attorneys, Social Services, Dept. of Alcohol and Drug Services, attorneys.
- Voluntary program.
- Limited resources and few participants.
- Off the record, informal. Same judge for legal and drug court hearings (unless contested).
In 2007, received 5 year federal grant to expand drug court, Family Wellness Court

First Five matching funds.

Expanded partners from original drug court, including DAC and Mentor Parents, First Five, domestic violence/trauma specialist, CASA, and mental health.

The Oversight Committee met monthly, consisting of heads of all represented agencies on drug court team to address issues as they arose in drug court on a policy level.

Grant ended in 2012. Partners committed to continuing model, with strong judicial leadership
• Merged drug court from 1998 and federal grant drug court to one drug court, DWC, in 2012 when federal grant ended.
• Voluntary program.
• Separate drug court and legal hearings with different judicial officers (parallel model).
• 100-120 active parents at any given time.
• 2 full days per week.
• Challenges of evaluating DWC.
• Oversight Committee continues to meet on a regular basis.

DEPENDENCY WELLNESS COURT (DWC)

Today
- Peer mentoring program.
- Employees of parents' attorney firm (Dependency Advocacy Center).
- Communications with clients covered under attorney client privilege
- 5 mothers, 3 fathers
- Director and clinical supervisor
- Average caseload 25 clients
- Work 30 hours per week
• Committed to clean and sober lifestyle and raising healthy families.
• Successful graduate of dependency drug court.
• Successfully reunified with their children and had their dependency case dismissed.
• No pending criminal cases or charges.
• Willing to share their story.
• Recruit eligible parents into DWC
• Establish professional boundaries
• Provide only referrals or facilitate service delivery of court ordered programs and those directly related to recovery
• Provide support at drug court and legal hearings and throughout dependency court process
• Maintain confidential communications (protected under attorney client privilege)

• Participate in various trainings, including DFCS, CASA.
Role They Play in the System

- Integral part of committees where policy gets decided (Oversight)
- Educate new DWC team members
- Participate in trainings for DFCS (court report writing, engaging fathers), CASA (birth parent perspective, understanding addiction)
• Began as one volunteer for 5 hours a week, first drug court graduate.
• Dept. of Alcohol and Drug Services (DADS) first funder and focused on mothers.
• Mentors included in 2007 federal grant: 4 mentors (inc. 2 fathers) and one manager
• Dept. of Mental Health (DMH) then funded 2 more mentors in 2009
• Federal Evaluation - mentor program one of the most effective pieces of the drug court program
• Federal grant expired, Santa Clara Board of Supervisors (BOS) continued funding for Mentor Parent Program
• Current funding: 70% Board of Supervisors, 30% Behavioral Health Services Dept. for a total of $425,000/year.
EVALUATION - PARTNERED RESEARCH
The CW-PART is a collaborative project between School of Social Work at SJSU and local agencies working with children and families. Teams of students work under supervision of faculty to focus on research questions defined as priorities to local agencies. Development was funded through California Social Work Education Center.
Faculty leads work with agency to define research projects
Students complete research over academic year
Findings are provided to county through research summaries
Integrated into Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Program at SJSU
WHY THE PARTNERED MODEL?

• It provides learning opportunities for students
• Helps address questions of interest to the county/local agencies
• Supports capacity building
BENEFITS & CHALLENGES: AGENCY/COUNTY

BENEFITS

• Research projects are beneficial to county/agency planning and evaluation.
• Leverages resources in support of county initiatives and projects (e.g., faculty consultation).
• Minimizes potential burdens of accompany individual projects.

CHALLENGES

• Time investment (planning, providing data)
• Timing to fit academic year
BENEFITS & CHALLENGES: FACULTY

BENEFITS

- Effective strategy for teaching
- Meaningful projects
- Stronger relationships with partner agencies/practice

CHALLENGES

- Time investment (partners, students, logistics like IRB)
- Timing work to match student and county constraints
- Competing demands (e.g., publishable research)
BENEFITS & CHALLENGES: STUDENTS

**BENEFITS**
- Makes research more meaningful—research that contributes to the field.
- Greater possibility of sharing research findings.
- Opportunity for collaboration and developing relationships.
- More support and guidance from research lead faculty.
- Opportunity to learn from other student perspectives and their research findings.

**CHALLENGES**
- Conflicting schedules among service providers and students.
- Challenging to schedule multiple focus groups and interviews.
- Students may be at their field placement, class or job.
- Requires research team members to be very flexible.
CAPACITY BUILDING - CONSULTATION

- Assistance in development of logic model
- Problem-solving related to evaluation infrastructure and protocols
- Development and piloting of evaluation instruments for DAC/MPP
  - Client satisfaction survey
  - Self-sufficiency assessment
  - Development of DWC evaluation tools
THEORY: EXCERPTS FROM MPP “LOGIC MODEL”

**SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES**
- Engagement and retention in DWC
- Engagement in MPP support services
- Access to treatment and other services

**INTERIM OUTCOMES**
- Increased self-sufficiency in recovery, legal status, social support, and other life domains
- Engagement in self-help/recovery
- Abstention/reduction in substance abuse

**LONG-TERM OUTCOMES**
- Successful reunification at MPP program completion
- Reduction in recurrence of maltreatment/reduced days in foster care
- Long-term sobriety
ILLUSTRATION: MEASURING SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROJECT

- Identification of domains through focus groups with Mentor Parents
- Pilot adapted version of Self-Sufficiency Matrix
- Report back and feedback on challenges, and/or discoveries in administering the Self-Sufficiency Matrix
## Self-Sufficiency Matrix Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Sufficiency Domains</th>
<th>Baseline Scores</th>
<th>Post scores (12 months)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>1.55 (0.85)</td>
<td>3.47 (1.39)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>1.09 (0.39)</td>
<td>2.16 (1.29)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobility (transportation)</td>
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<td>2.69 (1.42)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>2.39 (1.09)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.02)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family/Social Relations</td>
<td>2.22 (1.04)</td>
<td>3.66 (1.07)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>1.87 (0.88)</td>
<td>3.71 (0.96)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting Skills</td>
<td>1.93 (1.08)</td>
<td>3.78 (0.94)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>2.84 (1.49)</td>
<td>3.77 (1.28)</td>
<td>&lt;.004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>2.38 (1.43)</td>
<td>4.56 (0.88)</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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RESEARCH/EVALUATION PROJECTS

• Evaluation of unique contribution of mentor parent program
  • Qualitative interviews/surveys with stakeholders
  • Client satisfaction and client engagement surveys
  • Client focus groups
• Evaluation of outcomes
  • Re-unification and re-entry
  • Increase self-sufficiency
• Website: https://sites.google.com/a/sjsu.edu/cw-part/
HIGHLIGHTS OF PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES

• Documentation of MPP impact on DWC engagement and increased self-sufficiency
• Documentation of relationship between MPP participation/contact hours and reunification
• Evaluation findings used in report to funders
• Parallel consultation to address data collection instruments and infrastructure with DWC; influencing practice in other therapeutic courts
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LESSONS LEARNED FOR SUSTAINING A MENTOR PARENT PROGRAM

- Create visibility with your mentors. What committees can they sit on? Who should they meet with? Where does policy get decided?
- Who can the mentors train? Social workers? Judges? Team members? Increases visibility of the program and establishes support from stakeholders.
- Evaluate your program. What do you want to measure? How will you measure it? What data do you need to collect? Who can help you obtain that data?
- Create mutually beneficial partnerships to sustain program. Which university/college/community college is near you? Is there a school of social work near you?
- Have both hard data to support your program and a mentor to publicly share their story: a winning combination for potential funders.
LESSONS LEARNED FOR RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

1. **Liaisons** in each system for managing the overall partnership, brokering resources, and serving as conduits between systems

2. **Support of leadership** in both the agency and university

3. A **structured process** for identification of research questions

4. **Multi-year projects centered on key county initiatives** are more feasible and meaningful than multiple smaller projects.

5. **Organizational assets are critical**, including faculty expertise, relevant courses in curriculum, adequate numbers of interns/students, funding for planning
LESSONS LEARNED FOR RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

6. Importance of orientation for students, field instructors, and other partners

7. Course assignments may require adaptation

8. Coordination is important to maximize the “team” experience

9. Flexibility and maintaining communication, through key identified liaisons are critical to problem solving about timing issues, data, and other challenges that may arise

10. Attending to the partnership and efforts to build social capital are as important as the research products.
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