

System Transformation: Would You Know It If You Saw It? Applied Evaluation Methodology: A Mechanism for Implementation And Evaluation

Authors/Presenters:

Arthur C. Evans Jr., Ph.D.
Director, Department of Behavioral Health and
Mental Retardation
City of Philadelphia
1101 Market Street, 7th Floor, ARA Tower
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Arthur.C.Evans@phila.gov

Astrid Beigel, Ph.D.
District Chief
County of Los Angeles, Department of Mental
Health
695 South Vermont Avenue, 8th Floor
Los Angeles, California
ABeigel@lacdmh.org

“System Transformation” has become the mantra in mental health since the release of the President’s New Freedom Commission Report. Unfortunately, the field has not put forward a measurable, operational definition of the meaning of transformation which is necessary to evaluate (1) whether transformation is actually occurring, (2) what the elements of the transformed system are and what that system looks like in operational reality and (3) whether the change -“transformation” in fact makes a difference in achieving and maintaining recovery for consumers and families.

This presentation is an extension of earlier work by the presenters (NASMHPD Conference, 2005). Specifically, based on practice and research findings, ten major crosscutting domains were previously identified as potentially significant in effecting system transformation at every level. These domains are (1) Leadership and Political Philosophy, (2) Financing, (3) Language and Communication, (4) Organizational and Program Development, (5) Education and Training, (6) Research and Evaluation, (7) Community and Environmental Influences, (8) Consumer and Family Participation, (9) Change Management and (10) Technology. Further, the domains are to be assessed in the context of Transformational Values and Principles such as Focus on Recovery/Resiliency, Reduction of Health Disparities, etc.

The present work carries the previous efforts to a new level. The Applied Evaluation Methodology (APM) is a well defined approach that provides a systematic means of assessment of various aspects of transformation and ultimately comparisons across systems. Specifically, the APM provides:

1. a means for determining what a transformed system looks like in operationally measurable terms, thus allowing for measurement to assess that the system structure is in fact different.
2. a strategy to determine if transformation is in fact occurring , i.e., it provides a methodology to measure system change - process
3. a methodology for measuring if transformation actually makes a difference in the ultimate goal of achieving recovery and maintaining the recovery over time- are people getting better and is the improvement sustained over time. – outcome

The APM will be described, with examples and approaches for improving system transformation implementation, assessment and ongoing change based on evaluation findings. The discussion will focus on how public and private providers, health plans, states, local jurisdictions etc., can use the APM to meet their needs.

As an integral part of the session active participation by the attendees is encouraged to discuss their own issues and concerns in the context of what they will have learned about the APM.