

Community-Based Accountability In the Child Welfare System

The Promise of Partnership: Communities, Family Support, and Child Protection

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Be Clear About Underlying Values and Their Implications

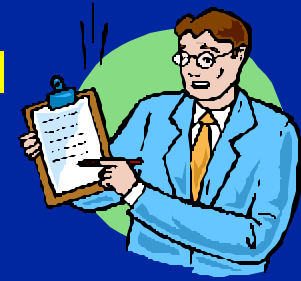
- Every child deserves a family.
 - *Family to Family*
- Kids do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in neighborhoods connected to strong economic opportunities, services and supports, and social networks.
 - *Making Connections*

Be Specific About Key Outcomes

- Keep children safe while avoiding out-of-home placement
- Use the least restrictive placement appropriate to the child's needs, the interests and capabilities of the family, and community resources —
 - ✓ Maintain attachments to family, friends, and schoolmates
 - ✓ Maintain neighborhood and/or community attachments
 - ✓ Place with families
- Provide stable care while in custody
- Require the shortest length of stay appropriate to the strengths and needs of the child and family, and resources in the community
- Achieve permanency for *all* children and youth through reunification, adoption, guardianship, or other legally secure relationships
- Maintain safety and well-being of children *after* permanent placement

Be Aware of the Broader Context of Performance Measurement in Child Welfare

- “Report card” comparisons of states based on federal Child and Family Service Reviews



- An emerging consensus on key outcomes is undermined by outmoded federal reporting requirements

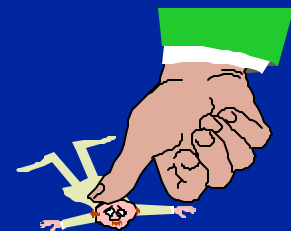


Safety, Permanence, and Well-being

- Federal reporting requirements focus mostly on the children who have the worst experiences in the system



- Something done *to* communities rather than *with* them or *by* them

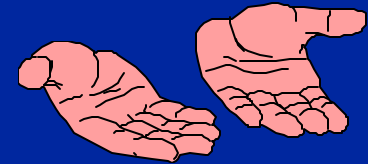


Some Premises of Community-Based Accountability in Child Welfare

- Community-based governance is more responsive and responsible.



- The child welfare agency *shares* authority and responsibility with the community

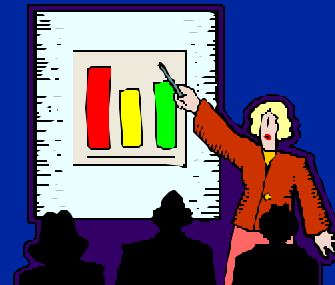


- Must concern outcomes, not merely procedural compliance



- New “bottom lines”

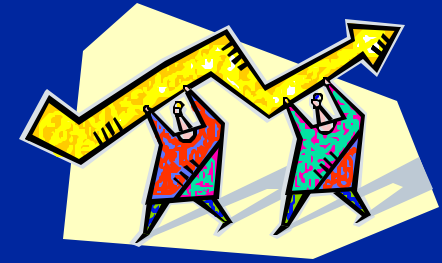
- ✓ Child safety, permanence, & well-being
- ✓ Family outcomes
- ✓ Community outcomes



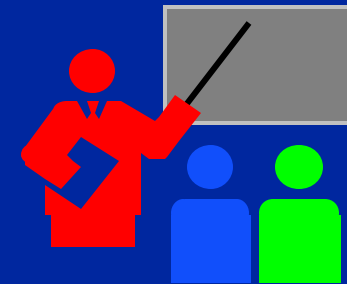
Accountability Grounded in Self-Evaluation

- Seeks to create a flow of information to support mid-course corrections and continuous improvements in outcomes

Evaluation is a process, not a report.



- Without authority over policy and control of resources, producers and consumers of evaluative information merely engage in academic exercises.



- Evaluation is not auditing.

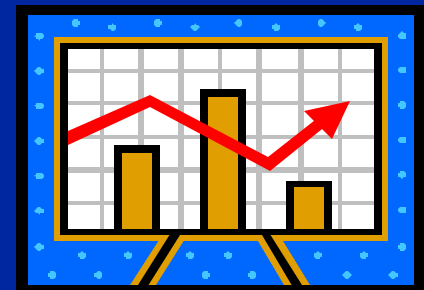
You can be honest . . . but ineffective.

Data Requirements in Self-Evaluation

- Use longitudinal data to track *every* child's experiences



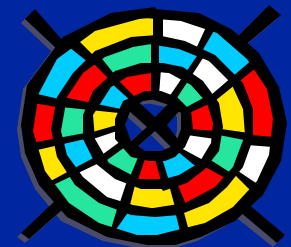
- Present data in ways that highlight changes in performance



- Link placement data with abuse & neglect reports to address pre- and post-placement safety issues



- Use GIS technology to monitor neighborhood impact

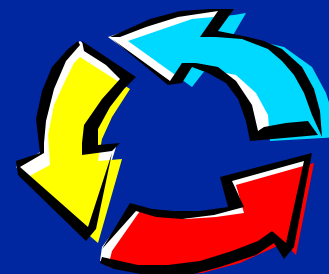


Obstacles to Self-Evaluation

- Child welfare managers' failure to assert that self-evaluation is part of the "real work" of the agency.



- Shifting the focus to reports or monitoring *systems* rather than maintaining a commitment to an ongoing interactive process among diverse participants.



- Difficulty hiring and retaining staff who have analytic and data management skills.

