Selected Applications

- **Family to Family: Reconstructing Family Foster Care**
  The Annie E. Casey Foundation and child welfare agencies in 12 states

- **The Right Home for the Right Child**
  The Casey Family Program and the Massachusetts Department of Social Services

- **Making Connections**
  The Annie E. Casey Foundation and Local Learning Partnerships in 12 U.S. cities

- **Evaluation of the Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration in NC**
  Children’s Bureau/DHHS and State of North Carolina
The context for evaluating social interventions has changed . . .

**Federal Social Experiments**
- Federally directed efforts to find a solution to a national problem
- Unidimensional changes in technology—silver bullets
- Changes in the behavior of individuals apart from their families and communities
- Individuals as the unit of analysis
- Protect against contamination by the community

**Reform Initiatives**
- Community-based efforts in a devolved system
- Interventions that are multifaceted bundles of services and supports
- Outcomes for families and communities
- Individuals, families, and communities as units of analysis
- Explicitly incorporate community context in the intervention
We have seen the enemy and it is us!

Our reputations precede us — evaluation, as practiced by many university-based researchers and government contractors, has not been helpful to providers of human services and supports, nor has it helped alleviate the problems facing residents of disadvantaged communities.

- Poor working relationships with service providers and consumers are grounded in ownership issues that evaluators tend to ignore.

- Findings of “no effect” may be attributable to our methods rather than the intrinsic efficacy of particular interventions—too many outcome assessments are conducted prematurely and involve inconsistently implemented interventions.
Self-Evaluation As a Social Intervention Research Strategy
Self-Evaluation Seeks to Avoid

- An adversarial relationship between program staff and evaluators that reflects professional roots in auditing and **objective** research methods.

- Detached *scientists* seeking to isolate the effects of silver-bullet interventions on changes in the *behavior* of individuals.

  The reality is a complex bundle of supports and services that seeks to improve *outcomes* for individuals, their families, and communities.

- Producing after-the-fact *reports* telling you where you went wrong . . . two years ago!

- Something done *to* you rather than *with* you or *by* you.
Self-Evaluation...

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

"Evaluation is an ongoing process, rarely a definitive assessment."

- Assumes evaluation is most effective when it includes diverse perspectives:
  - Frontline staff
  - Analysts
  - IT staff
  - Consumers
  - Community partners
  - Managers and supervisors

- Provides technical expertise necessary to ensure defensibility and adaptability.
Self-Evaluation Enhances Evaluability

- Participants in the self-evaluation process clarify the intervention’s underlying values and theory of change.

- When program staff are more committed to interventions being tested, they are more likely to implement them consistently and less likely to subvert randomization.