



Child Welfare
Virtual Expo 2019

Discussion Guide



The Child Welfare Virtual Expo 2019 brought together experts from around the country to discuss ongoing efforts to improve key child welfare outcomes for children, youth, and families. Panelists discussed the promotion of evidence-based policymaking, the need to evaluate effectiveness of services and programs in child welfare, and the importance of engaging staff at all levels within agencies in understanding and applying data and findings to improve practice. This on-demand learning experience is designed to expand on the live event and will help child welfare leaders and program managers take a deeper dive on these topics with their teams. To supplement the recorded sessions, this discussion guide includes reflection questions to enhance and deepen group discussion, considerations for use with other stakeholder groups, and an action-planning tool to help teams bring knowledge into action.

Choose Your Topic and Dive In

Managers can begin by thinking about what their teams need and which sessions best meet those needs. Does your team need a deeper understanding of evidence-based practice and how it relates to child welfare policy and practice? We have a session for that. Would your team benefit from learning about how to know what works? What makes a practice evidence based? What role do team members play in gathering, using, and applying data? How do they communicate about data to create a culture of learning? We have sessions that meet these needs, too.

This learning experience includes nine sessions that cover five key topics. Each topic includes the recorded session(s) and supplemental resources that the team can view and review in preparation for group discussion and action planning. For topics that include multiple sessions, managers can choose the session that best meets the team's goals or choose multiple sessions on the same topic to broaden the team's scope of discussion. Take a minute to choose the topic that best fits the needs of your team.



Effectiveness in Child Welfare: The session for this topic discusses how research, evaluation, and continuous quality improvement efforts help strengthen practice and increase effectiveness in child welfare. Choose this topic for a group or team that needs foundational knowledge and a broad understanding of collecting data and building evidence. Sessions on this topic:

- “Effectiveness in Child Welfare: Our Collective Investment in Improving the Lives of Children and Families”
- “Individual Perspective on Effectiveness in Child Welfare: A Conversation With Agency Leadership”
- “Individual Perspective on Effectiveness in Child Welfare: Through the Eyes of the Tribe”
- “Individual Perspective on Effectiveness in Child Welfare: Through the Court’s Lens”



How Do We Know What Works?: The sessions for this topic explore evidence, evidence-based practice, and the ways in which staff at all levels contribute to and consume data to inform practice. Choose one or both sessions for a team to understand evidence-based practice and data collection and the role of team members as contributors and consumers. Sessions on this topic include:

- “How Do We Know What Works? Challenges and Opportunities for Building Evidence for Leaders and Decision Makers”
- “How Do We Know What Works? Challenges and Opportunities for Building Evidence for Practitioners”



Becoming a Workforce of Everyday Scientists: The sessions for this topic explore how to become more effective “scientists” by gathering, using, and applying data in a systematic way to improve practice by seeding curiosity and generating innovative strategies. Choose one or more of these sessions for a team that needs to become more effective at motivating others, sparking curiosity, and generating innovative strategies. Sessions on this topic include:

- “Becoming a Workforce of Everyday Scientists: Frontline for Agencies and Tribes”
- “Becoming a Workforce of Everyday Scientists: Legal and Judicial Professionals”
- “Becoming a Workforce of Everyday Scientists: Leaders and Decision Makers in Agencies and Tribes”



The Power of Feedback: The sessions for this topic explore the importance of building capacity and skills to communicate effectively and consume data at all levels of the workforce and the critical ways in which frontline staff, children, youth, families, and stakeholders can be active contributors in building a more effective child welfare system. Choose one or both sessions with a group or team that needs to learn to provide and receive feedback and communicate effectively about data. Sessions on this topic include:

- “Using Data to Tell Our Story, Generate Feedback, and Promote Improvement”
- “The Power of Feedback: Being a Vocal Participant in the Process: Elevating the Voices of the Workforce, Children, Youth, Families, and Communities”



Maximizing Our Collective Impact: The session for this topic summarizes the themes of effectiveness in child welfare and moves knowledge into practice to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. Choose this session for a group or team that would benefit from understanding the big picture of collecting data, building evidence, and sparking interest at all levels of child welfare. Session on this topic:

- “Maximizing Our Collective Impact”

Getting to Know the What, So What, Now What? Model

Each key topic uses the What, So What, Now What model. “What” questions build a shared understanding of the topic. “So What” questions help team members explore their role and the role of others in collecting data and building evidence. “Now What” questions move ideas into action by examining how to use data and evidence-based practice to improve practice in the field.

This model will help a group or team build a shared understanding of the recorded session(s) the members watched and the supplemental material they read. The process of facilitated discussion helps the group identify common themes, spark new ideas, and collectively plan for next steps.

Getting Started

Ask the team to watch the recorded session and, if appropriate, read the supplemental materials prior to the group discussion. Ask the group members to listen for how this information relates to their work, the work of the agency, and/or how they interact with others in the agency. Ask the group to make note of salient points and questions that arise while watching and reading. Ask members to bring these notes to the group discussion.

Discussion

Depending on the size of the group, be prepared to break into smaller groups of five to seven. Each group should have paper and markers to record information and ideas. Each topic has a one-page guide designed to support teams as they move through the three questions.

Debriefing and Action Planning

Once the small groups have finished their discussion, bring the large group back together. Ask each group to report out on its What? and So What? responses. Identify and discuss common themes across the groups. Also remember to discuss outlier responses—these often include seeds of innovative ideas.

Collect the Now What? responses. These are the building blocks for moving knowledge into action. Use the action plan provided to identify next steps, person(s) responsible, and a date for follow-up.

Let's Dive In

This discussion guide includes a one-page guide for each topic to support managers as they prepare, engage, and plan with their teams. After you have chosen a topic, use the one-page topic guide to learn about preparing your team, facilitating a group discussion, and preparing to take action. Each one-page guide includes a description of the topic, session titles, additional groups that might benefit from the session(s), and questions tailored to the topic. The debrief questions will help the group identify themes and develop the group's action plan using the tool included with this guide.

Tips for Facilitating What? So What? Now What?

- When training a large group, break into smaller groups. This allows all participants an opportunity to contribute.
- Ask each group to discuss the reflection questions and select a notetaker.
- Make sure each person has had an opportunity to contribute to the discussion and respond to the questions.
- Bring the groups back together to report out. Identify common themes and “aha” moments.
- When discussing Now What? responses, collect any ideas to consider for an action plan.

For more information on how to use this model, see:

<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/9-what-so-what-now-what-w/>

Effectiveness in Child Welfare: Our Collective Investment in Improving the Lives of Children and Families



This opening plenary includes panelists representing legal, federal, agency, family, and tribal perspectives. They remind us that we are all part of a professional community, with the shared goal of becoming more effective—that is, better able to ensure that children are safe, in healthy and intact families, and thriving. Everyone has a role to play, and every role is critical to the overall effectiveness of the system. Using the Program Improvement Plan as an example, each panelist discusses his or her contribution to the overall effectiveness of a program or strategy.

Consider using this session with:

- Community stakeholders preparing to participate in strategic planning or program implementation
- New agency staff
- Agency staff whose work intersects with courts and/or tribal agencies

Preparing the Team

Ask the group to view the recorded session and read the supplemental resources prior to the group discussion. Ask team members to listen specifically for how this information relates to their everyday work. Ask them to write down significant takeaways and questions and bring these to the group discussion.

Facilitating Group Discussion

| | |
|------------------|--|
| WHAT? | What is your biggest takeaway from this plenary discussion? What role do you play in the overall effectiveness of a program or a strategy? |
| SO WHAT? | Considering your role within your agency, what impact does your role have, directly or indirectly, on other parts of the system? |
| NOW WHAT? | How is your role critical to the overall effectiveness of the agency? How can you (or your team) be most effective in implementing a program or strategy? |

Identifying Themes and Taking Action

Debrief with the group and discuss:

- What common themes emerged?
- What strategies were identified for improving practice? If working with community or court partners, what were the takeaways for effective partnership around data?
- What are the recommendations for support, such as additional training or access to specific data?
- What short-term actions can the group or individuals take in the next 3 months, 6 months?
- What are the long-term goals regarding the use of data and evidence-based practice?

These questions will help to organize and focus the feedback. See the “Now What Action Plan” (p. 10) to take these a step further and identify themes, strategies, recommendations, and short- and long-term goals. Identify who is taking the lead and how and when the group will follow up.

How Do We Know What Works?

 These two sessions introduce participants to what it means for a program or practice to be evidence based and for decisions to be data informed. All child welfare professionals have a role in collecting and using data to inform practice. Presenters discuss what questions child welfare professionals should ask about what works and what evidence and data are available to better understand what works.

Consider using these sessions with:

- Court Improvement Program representatives
- Community partners providing programs to children, youth, and families
- Supervisors and mid-level managers responsible for making data-informed decisions

Preparing the Team

Two sessions support this topic. As you prepare your team, select the session(s) you want team members to watch beforehand and, if appropriate, include supplemental reading. Ask team members to listen specifically for how this information relates to their everyday work. Ask them to write down significant takeaways and questions and bring these to the group discussion.

Facilitating Group Discussion

| | |
|------------------|---|
| WHAT? | Based on what you heard, how would you define “evidence based” as it relates to a program or practice? |
| SO WHAT? | Based on your role within your agency, how can you be a more informed consumer of data and evidence? Where can you find the data and evidence available to you? How can you use this in your everyday work? |
| NOW WHAT? | What opportunities do you have in your everyday work to contribute to the body of evidence related to effective practice? |

Identifying Themes and Taking Action

Debrief with the group and discuss:

- What common themes emerged?
- What strategies were identified for improving practice? If working with community or court partners, what were the takeaways for effective partnership around data?
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Becoming a Workforce of Everyday Scientists



Three sessions support this topic. Each session has a common theme of recognizing the role of all child welfare professionals as contributors to and consumers of data and evidence. Presenters challenge the notion that data collection and interpretation and evidence building are the purview of “others” and encourage child welfare professionals to be innovative in their practice by applying information and data to test strategies. Presenters also discuss ways of motivating others and staying curious.

Consider these sessions for:

- Supervisors who need to understand how to motivate staff to develop a hunger for data
- Senior leadership who need to better understand their role in motivating staff and setting an example
- Judicial partners interested gathering, using, and applying data to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families

Preparing the Team

Ask the group to view the session and read the supplemental resources prior to the group discussion. Ask team members to listen specifically for how this information relates to their everyday work. Ask them to write down significant takeaways and questions and bring these to the group discussion.

Facilitating Group Discussion

| | |
|------------------|---|
| WHAT? | How can you apply rapid cycle feedback loops such as Plan-Do-Study-Act in your everyday work with families, peers, or staff? |
| SO WHAT? | Presenters discussed the importance of staying curious in your work. What piques your curiosity? How does the idea of being an everyday scientist change your approach to your work? |
| NOW WHAT? | As a key informant of what is and is not working for children, youth, and families, how can your work contribute to systems-level change? |

Identifying Themes and Taking Action

Debrief with the group and discuss:

- What common themes emerged?
- What strategies were identified for improving practice? If working with community or court partners, what were the takeaways for effective partnership around data?
- What are the recommendations for support, such as additional training or access to specific data?
- What short-term actions can the group or individuals take in the next 3 months, 6 months?
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These questions will help to organize and focus the feedback. See the “Now What Action Plan” (p. 10) to take these a step further and identify themes, strategies, recommendations, and short- and long-term goals. Identify who is taking the lead and how and when the group will follow up.

The Power of Feedback



Two sessions support this topic. Data and evidence tell a story that needs to be communicated in clear and understandable ways to be useful for the child welfare workforce. These sessions provide examples of best and innovative practice in communication of data as a mechanism to support improvements and as a way to create a culture of learning. Presenters also discuss the importance of seeking diverse feedback from stakeholders, including families, youth, and community partners.

Consider using these sessions with:

- Frontline staff interested in understanding their role as important data sources and stewards of building accurate evidence
- Teams interested in supporting a culture of learning
- Managers and supervisors interested in communicating data through storytelling

Preparing the Team

Ask the group to view the session and read the supplemental resources prior to the group discussion. Ask team members to listen specifically for how this information relates to their everyday work. Ask them to write down significant takeaways and questions and bring these to the group discussion.

Facilitating Group Discussion

| | |
|------------------|---|
| WHAT? | How are data and evaluation results communicated within your organization? |
| SO WHAT? | What stories of success or challenges from your work can you contribute to add to the body of evidence about an evidence-based practice or program? What avenues are available within your agency to share your stories? |
| NOW WHAT? | How can you or your team provide more opportunities for children, youth, families, and communities to inform evaluation and improvement processes? |

Identifying Themes and Taking Action

Debrief with the group and discuss:

- What common themes emerged?
- What strategies were identified for improving practice? If working with community or court partners, what were the takeaways for effective partnership around data?
- What are the recommendations for support, such as additional training or access to specific data?
- What short-term actions can the group or individuals take in the next 3 months, 6 months?
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These questions will help to organize and focus the feedback. See the “Now What Action Plan” (p. 10) to take these a step further and identify themes, strategies, recommendations, and short- and long-term goals. Identify who is taking the lead and how and when the group will follow up.

Maximizing Our Collective Impact



This session ties together the topics discussed throughout the Virtual Expo and discusses the larger context within which to collect and utilize data. Presenters discuss what effectiveness means to them and provide examples from multiple perspectives.

Consider using this session with:

- Community partners implementing evidence-based programs and collecting data
- Senior leadership interested in improving the agency's work in building evidence and making data-informed decisions

Preparing the Team

Ask the group to view the session and read the supplemental resources prior to the group discussion. Ask team members to listen specifically for how this information relates to their everyday work. Ask them to write down significant takeaways and questions and bring these to the group discussion.

Facilitating Group Discussion

| | |
|------------------|--|
| WHAT? | In the session, presenters are asked, "What does effectiveness in child welfare mean to you?" How would you answer this question? |
| SO WHAT? | Why is your stewardship of accurate data collection important? |
| NOW WHAT? | As you have heard throughout the sessions, we all have a role to play in collecting and using data and evidence to improve practice. What are two ways you or your team can contribute to the body of evidence needed to improve services for children, youth, and families? |

Identifying Themes and Taking Action

Debrief with the group and discuss:

- What common themes emerged?
- What strategies were identified for improving practice? If working with community or court partners, what were the takeaways for effective partnership around data?
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- What short-term actions can the group or individuals take in the next 3 months, 6 months?
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These questions will help to organize and focus the feedback. See the "Now What Action Plan" (p. 10) to take these a step further and identify themes, strategies, recommendations, and short- and long-term goals. Identify who is taking the lead and how and when the group will follow up.



Action Plan – Now What?

Now that we have a deeper understanding of data and evidence-based practice, how can we apply what we have learned to become better consumers of and contributors to data and evidence-based practice? As a group, identify the next steps for the team. Identify who is taking the lead and how and when the group will follow up.

Session title: _____

1. What themes emerged from the team discussion?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2. In this session, what specific strategies resonated with the group based on the group's role within the agency? How can the team operationalize these strategies?

Strategies:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Operationalize:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lead: _____

Date of follow-up: _____

3. What recommendations does the group have for support, such as additional training or access to specific data?

Strategies:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lead: _____

Date of follow-up: _____

4. What short-term actions can the group or individuals take in the next 3 months, 6 months?

3 months:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6 months:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lead: _____

Date of follow-up: _____

5. What long-term goals can the group identify regarding the use of data and evidence-based practice?

Strategies:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lead: _____

Date of follow-up: _____