Change and Implementation in Practice

Webinar Discussion and Activity Guide

Problem Exploration: Part 1

Child welfare agencies continually strive to achieve better outcomes by developing, implementing, and evaluating practices and programs. How can you be sure you are addressing the right problems to overcome challenges and achieve outcomes? This guide and recorded webinar are part of a collection of resources designed to help agencies use data to explore problems, identify root causes, and choose where to direct efforts to achieve their goals for change and improvement. Gather your team to watch the two-part recorded problem exploration webinars to learn about using data to clarify and explore problems and avoid common missteps when identifying reasons for poor performance. Then use this guide to practice skills, facilitate discussions, and lead your team to move learning into action.

Get Ready

Before viewing the webinars, prepare your team by sharing the "Change and Implementation in Practice: Problem Exploration" brief to build a common understanding of the key concepts and terms related to problem exploration and root cause analysis. Individuals can use the short problem exploration videos and workbook to think about each stage of problem exploration and prepare for team discussions. Ask group members to compare their experiences in planning or implementing something new with the process described in the brief. As a group, identify the benefits and challenges of investing time and using data to drive the problem exploration phase of managing change. Consider the benefits and challenges for the agency, for families and children, and for each team member.

Help your team connect to concepts by asking members to make notes as they watch the webinar:

◆ Have you used a structured process like this before to explore a problem?

◆ Think about a time when you needed to know more about a problem or issue—what did you do? How did you know when you had the answer or information you needed? If you could not find the answer or information you needed, what did you do about it?

◆ How have you used quantitative data (numerical data that measure) and qualitative data (narrative data that explore and provide context) in your work?

Dive In

Watch the recorded webinar "Part 1 – Looks Can Be Deceiving: Using Data to Explore Agency Performance." The webinar presents the first three steps in the problem exploration process. It describes why this process is so critical and introduces the key components of each step. Presenters explore: why a data plan is important; how the plan becomes the foundation for fully understanding problems, and which strategies to use when collecting and analyzing data to explore problems.

1. **Identify a problem.**
2. **Create a data plan to explore the problem.**
3. **Collect and analyze data.**
4. Identify possible contributing factors and root causes.
5. Explore and validate possible root causes.
6. Isolate the root cause(s) to address.

Pause the video while viewing the dataset under Asking the Right Research Questions to discuss with your team:

- What are your first questions about this data?
- What else would you want to know about this data?
- What are potential research questions that you might want to answer with this data?

Continue viewing and make note of other responses from webinar participants.

Talk About It

After viewing the webinar, allow your team members to reflect on their notes. Lead a conversation about exploring problems, creating a data plan, and analyzing data. Select questions to spark dialogue and move toward action.

- What was the biggest takeaway from the webinar?
- How have we used quantitative or qualitative data in our work?
- How have we used data, and what was the reason that we needed to use date?
- How can we better match the type of data and analysis we use to the questions we are trying to answer?
- What are our team's strengths or limitations in using data?
- Who should be at the table to further explore challenges?
- What types of roles should be represented?
- In your experience, which roles are most frequently omitted from the discussion?
- Consider the challenges our agency has faced in understanding and addressing problems. What information do we have about those problems?
- What can we do to learn from areas of strong performance?
- What knowledge, skills, experience, and expertise are needed to explore problems in our agency? Does our agency have what is needed, or would we benefit from engaging a Data Specialist from the Capacity Building Center for States (the Center) or another partner in this work?
- Why is the current practice not achieving the desired outcomes? What practices or lack of practices might contribute to the problem? How do you know this—what data do you have to support this?
- What other supports might be needed for full exploration of identified problems?
    - Additional knowledge and skill building?
    - Leadership buy-in and support?
    - Infrastructure?
    - Resources and partnerships?

Take the Next Step–Ask:

- What would it take to start the problem exploration process with our team?
- What next steps could our agency take to explore the problems more fully?
- What strategies can we use immediately to improve practice?

Sample Data Sources for Problem Exploration

Gain a clear understanding of problems in permanency, safety and risk assessments, family engagement, and service array by using data to "dig deeper" into problem areas. Use this job aid to identify data sources for problem exploration. What are the overall trends in your data? Are there differences by child or case characteristics? By office?

Data sources to help explore problems in permanency:	◆ Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) items under Permanency Outcome 1 ◆ CFSR Round 3 statewide data indicators related to Permanency Outcome 1 ◆ Stakeholder focus groups, surveys, or interviews ◆ Targeted case record and quality assurance (QA) reviews and other continuous quality improvement processes ◆ Management reports or administrative data from state information system ◆ Fidelity data and/or evaluation data from existing interventions ◆ Partner agency/court (Court Improvement Program) data ◆ Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data
Data sources to help explore problems in safety and risk assessments:	◆ CFSR Safety Outcomes 1 and 2, (all items, including Online Monitoring System detail) ◆ CFSR Round 3 statewide data indicators on safety ◆ Stakeholder focus groups, surveys, or interviews ◆ Targeted case record and quality assurance (QA) reviews and other continuous quality improvement processes ◆ Management reports or administrative data from state information system ◆ Fidelity data and/or evaluation data from existing interventions ◆ Statewide caseworker visit report for the Children's Bureau (CB) ◆ National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) data ◆ Data from completed assessment instruments
Data sources to help explore problems in family engagement and continuity of relationships:	◆ CFSR items for Permanency Outcome 2 and Well-Being Outcome 1, in particular (Note: Family engagement and continuity of relationships may impact all outcomes.) ◆ Stakeholder focus groups, surveys, or interviews ◆ Targeted case record and quality assurance (QA) reviews and other continuous quality improvement processes ◆ Management reports or administrative data from state information system ◆ Fidelity data and/or evaluation data from existing interventions ◆ Statewide caseworker visit report for CB
Data sources to help explore problems in service array:	◆ CFSR items on systemic factors (Items 29–30) ◆ Aggregate data from assessment or screening tools related to family service needs ◆ CFSR Onsite Review Instrument (Items 12, 16–18) ◆ Stakeholder focus groups, surveys, or interviews

- Targeted case record and quality assurance (QA) reviews and other continuous quality improvement processes
- Management reports or administrative data from state information system
- Fidelity data and/or evaluation data from existing interventions
- Results from completing the Center's "Service Array Data Inventory Sample Worksheet"
- Data from service providers and other family-serving agencies, possibly including Medicaid data