Change and Implementation in Practice

Webinar Discussion and Activity Guide

Problem Exploration: Part 2

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?
- If so, were you able to identify a root cause?
- What challenges did you encounter?
- If you have not done this process, do you foresee for engaging in this process?

Dive In

Watch the recorded webinar, "Part 2 – Look Before You Leap: Using Data to Avoid Common Missteps When Asking, 'Why?'" This webinar explores the last three steps in the problem exploration process, which includes: 1) an explanation of multiple methods to identify possible contributing factors and root causes, 2) information on why validating root causes is important and on the data analysis strategies that can be used to support validation, and 3) the primary considerations to focus on when deciding which root causes the agency or team will address.

Pause the video after viewing the "Fishbone" diagram. Have your team practice identifying contributing factors using the following example statement: "Noncustodial fathers are not receiving services that meet their needs."

- What in your experience might be some other potential contributing factors?
- Try using the "5 Whys" method, repeatedly asking "why" to drill down into contributing factors to get to root causes. Keep asking "why" until there seem to be no new information or areas that the agency can address through policy, program, or practice changes.

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

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.

Talk About It

After viewing the webinar, allow your team time to reflect. Lead a conversation about identifying contributing factors and root causes, validating the root causes through data analysis, and deciding which root causes to address. Ask your team to debrief and select questions to spark dialogue and move towards action.

- What was the biggest takeaway from the webinar?
- Have we used a structured process like this before to explore a problem?
  - Did we succeed in identifying a root cause?
  - What challenges did we encounter?
- Who should be at the table to engage in root cause analysis?
- What types of roles should be represented?
- In your experience, which roles are most frequently omitted from the discussion?

For practice, select a problem related to permanency, safety and risk assessments, service array, or family engagement. Use the Five Whys method or Fishbone diagram to explore contributing factors or root causes that might be facilitating this problem. Consider:

- What events or factors led to the problem?
- What conditions allow the problem to occur?
- What other problems are related to the central problem?
- Will the problem persist if the agency corrects or eliminates one or more contributing factors?
- What data or research might validate our ideas about contributing factors and root causes?
- Once we have identified the root causes of our problem, what considerations should guide our decision about the cause(s) our team will address?
- How might we obtain consensus among stakeholders about the cause(s) to address?
- Are there factors external to our agency that affect the problem and its root causes?
- Are there internal agency factors that affect the problem and its root causes?
- Is there organizational and community support to address the root causes?

Take the Next Step—Ask:

- What would it take to start the root cause analysis process with our team?
- What next steps could our agency take to explore the root cause of problems?
- What strategies can we use immediately to improve practice?

This product was created by the Capacity Building Center for States under Contract No. HHSP233201400033C, funded by the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Suggested citation: Capacity Building Center for States. (2018). *Change and implementation in practice: Problem exploration part 2 webinar discussion and activity guide.* Washington, DC: Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services