ImProve Outcomes[sm]

toolkit

Measuring What Matters Most in Child and Youth Services

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ImProve Outcomes is a project of the New England Network for Child, Youth and Family Services and the Innovation Center's Planning and Evaluation Resource Center (PERC). PERC is a major collaborative initiative that supports, strengthens and expands emerging efforts to build the capacity of youth programs and communities. The information gathered here is the result of several years of research, needs assessments, pilot-site experimentation, and the collective information-management experience of dozens of human service professionals with extensive youth-service backgrounds.

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Section 1:
What is ImProve Outcomes?

Developing outcomes that make sense for youth-serving organizations

This toolkit is intended to help youth-service agencies design and implement information-management systems capable of handling program participant evaluation and assessment needs, ultimately leading to improved case management services. ImProve Outcomes is a system for identifying and organizing information that enables agencies to improve outcomes for participants by naming expectations and measuring the degree to which each program results in specific participant achievements. While the toolkit is designed for agencies that work with adolescents, other human service and non-profit agencies might also benefit from it.

ImProve Outcomes is a system that measures observable changes in participant attitudes, knowledge, behaviors, skills, status, or level of functioning. It measures incremental change by tracking participant achievements in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the ways participants benefit from services. Because most programs work with participants during a narrow window of time, providers seldom see participants achieve long-term goals (such as self-sufficiency, obtaining a college degree, etc). Nevertheless, these programs see participants make incremental, daily progress towards long-term goals. The ability to measure this incremental progress is vital - it enables agencies to support information compilation and analysis; explain how a program is impacting participants; identify innovative best practices; share their successes with the public; and more effectively leverage funding for a broad range of vital programs. The ImProve Outcomes system captures forward movement wherever and whenever it occurs, and thus puts our professional work and our participants' accomplishments in a more relevant, meaningful, and realistic context.

ImProve Outcomes Principles:

The components of ImProve Outcomes are grounded in the following principles.

- **Emphasize the positive**
  Measure achievement
  Track positive change in behavior and attitude
  Follow youth development principles
  Utilize resiliency and asset based counseling techniques

- **Measure change incrementally**
  Break complex concepts down to small steps
  Emphasize observable activity

- **Identify relevant objectives and outcomes**
  Measure progress toward those objectives and outcomes
  Create and use relevant information/data

- **Analyze, evaluate and improve**
  Use data to adjust participant treatment plans
  Use data to guide program development

This toolkit will help you:

- Learn how to identify outcomes by creating objectives and indicators using the ImProve Outcomes method.
- Understand the relationship between youth development principles and the benefits of creating meaningful objectives and outcomes.
- Assess the readiness of your program to undertake outcome development.
- Learn ways to engage staff in the outcome development process.
- Choose and implement a database.
- Understand project phases and cost considerations.

How to use this toolkit:

Although agencies can use this toolkit as a "stand-alone" resource, previous experience or complementary training in outcome measurement will enable you to apply these strategies to answer questions about complex programs, outcome language, and observation techniques. The Resource Section provides on-line links to a variety of resources for understanding outcome measures, youth development, and information systems management, including databases.

While templates are provided, it is important for direct care staff and administration to understand the construction of outcomes and, most importantly, how to develop objectives and indicators of success in order to utilize the resulting observation and testing techniques for measurement. There are an infinite number of participant outcomes that can be developed for any given program; even those programs that use the template examples will need to add and adjust to match their own program expectations and reflect appropriate participant achievements.

Use this toolkit as a training manual. The sections provide a context and training overview that is important to understand and share with staff. The activities are self explanatory and provide a progressive building of knowledge and practice prior to developing your own organization's participant outcomes.

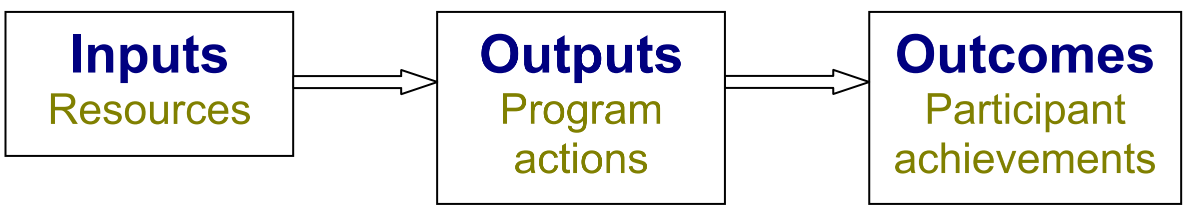
You will need to assess your organization or program's readiness to undertake the development of outcome measures and, more broadly, to develop an information management system. In Section V, activities are included that address staff resistance and help staff understand and embrace a positive, youth development approach in measuring outcomes.

ImProve Outcomes in Relation to other Logic Models

ImProve Outcomes is an extension of other logic models; it is a method of measuring program participant achievement. Logic models enable agencies to make their theory of change, or the steps to achieving their outcomes, explicit. **The ImProve Outcomes method makes the outcomes envisioned in logic models measurable in an agency's program setting**.

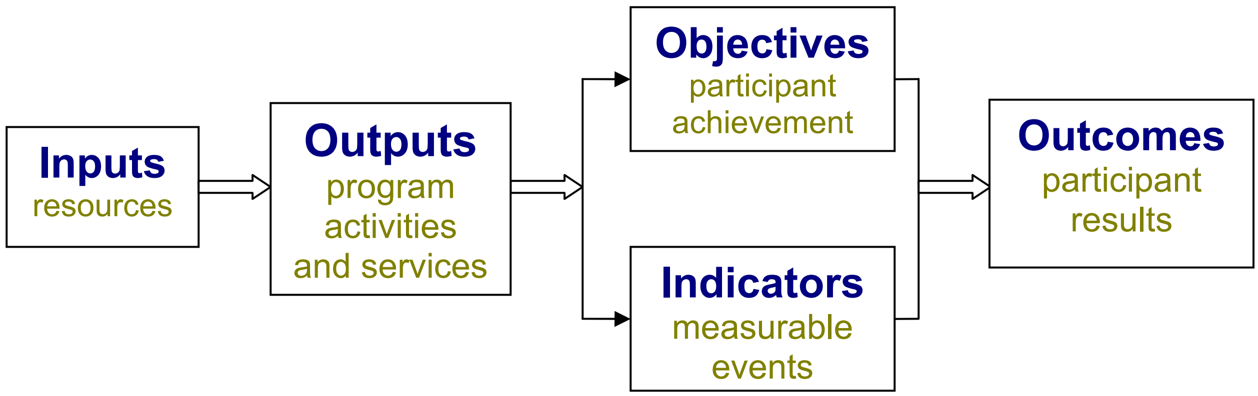
The basic logic model is a linear representation of how the actions of an agency produce the outcomes desired. Generally, there are three basic elements of logic models; inputs, outputs and outcomes. Inputs are the resources you need to provide your services. Outputs are specific actions or program activities provided which result in the outcomes. Outcomes are the program participant achievements brought about through provision of an agency's program activities.

Basic Logic Model



ImProve Outcomes adds an important step to the model by including objectives and measurable indicators. Indicators are the events which signify progress towards the achievement of participant focused objectives. The indicators make the measurement of the participant's achievement of objectives very concrete and they also allow you to measure the level of progress toward accomplishment of those objectives.

ImProve Outcomes Model



Aligning Outcomes and Indicators with Program Activities: Connection to the Logic Model

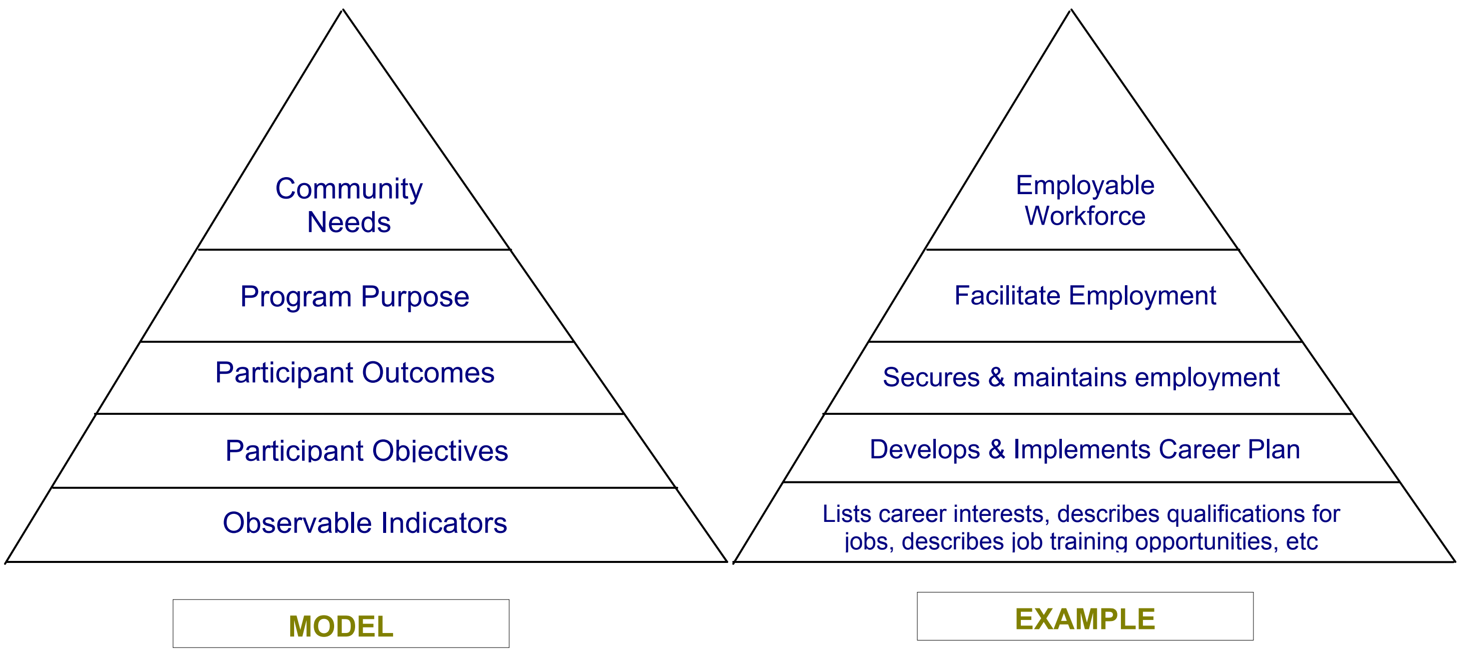
The ImProve Outcomes model is designed as a measurement tool. As such, it is best used with agency programs that have already been designed. Outcomes, objectives, and indicators are fundamental to the ImProve Outcomes model. Used together, these components can demonstrate, unequivocally, the degree to which services designed to meet the program purpose are resulting in expected participant changes or achievements.

In creating participant objectives and identifying indicators of success, the community need the program is designed to address must always be kept in mind, as the outcomes, objectives, and indicators must fall within the program's purpose. It does not make sense to write an outcome and create associated objectives and indicators related to a change that your program is not designed to address. For example, if your program provides employment or pre-employment preparation, having an outcome such as "finds stable housing" may be irrelevant as it is unlikely that your program will provide activities intended to have an impact on finding stable housing. This is not to say that gathering information about participants' success in obtaining housing would not be useful to an employment program for other purposes. It is important to emphasize the difference between developing relevant participant outcomes, which will demonstrate participant achievement or change directly attributable to program services, and gathering information that may be useful for other purposes, such as demographics or influencing factors. Such information is often useful in sorting and analyzing data and outcomes but may not need to be organized in the ImProve Outcomes format described in this toolkit.

From Community Need to Outcomes

The evolution of outcomes and indicators is driven by the identified community need the agency and its programs were established to address. The following triangular diagram graphically represents this link.

From Community Need to Outcomes and Indicators:
A Few-to-Many Pyramid



In a simplified example, an agency program focuses on one community need – an employable workforce. The program purpose is to meet that community need by facilitating employment. The program may have a few program outcomes geared toward achieving the program purpose (for example: program participants are expected to secure and maintain employment). The program will likely have a few more participant objectives for each program outcome (develops and implements a career plan, learns about the world of work.). Finally, the program will have several observable indicators used to measure progress toward achieving the participant objective (lists career interests, describes qualifications for jobs, describes job training opportunities, visits several potential employers, interviews people currently working in a field of interest, etc). Having several indicators allows programs to get a more accurate picture of participant achievement.

The "Few-to-Many" pyramid suggests how the development of outcomes and indicators evolves. Agencies address community needs, carried out by programs designed to address the need. They have one or two stated purposes. The programs develop a few outcomes that reflect the expected results of the program. Each program outcome, or expected result, will be stated in terms of objectives, which reflect and provide a way to measure movement toward meeting the program purpose. Each objective will have several indicators, each designed to measure incremental change and movement toward achievement of the objective.

Generally, each program focuses on meeting only a few or even one specific community need. Outcomes are the results, or changes we see in participants due to the delivery of program services or activities. Recording participant's progress toward objectives provides a direct reflection of how well agency programs are addressing the program purpose, and therefore affecting the identified community need. Indicators are used to measure and quantify achievement of the objective and thereby program purpose. Objectives can be used to evaluate the impact of services on an individual or group level and they facilitate the design of program changes aimed at impacting community needs more effectively.

Defining Outcomes, Objectives and Indicators

An ***objective*** indicates what we expect our participants to achieve as a result of our work with them – achievements that reflect a desired change in attitude, behavior, or knowledge that results in a positive change in living situation, educational attainment, or other life circumstances.

Objectives are measured by ***indicators*** which are observable, recorded events that tell us whether an objective has been partially or completely achieved.

Outcomes are the results, or the level to which participants accomplish their objectives.

Using the ImProve Outcomes method of tracking achievements incrementally, results can be reported in degree of achievement, on an individual and aggregated basis. An example:

Objective:	Learn about the world of work.
Indicators:	1. Observes three workplaces and interviews people who work in each place 2. Explains the duties responsibilities and benefits of three work places. 3. Identifies three careers s/he has an interest in and writes a brief descritive paper about each 4. Identifies positive characteristics that employers seek in an employee
Outcome:	If all four of these indicators have been achieved and observed, it can be stated with confidence that the outcome is that this participant has *learned about the world of work*. If the first two are completed, the objective would be partially attained and the outcome would reflect partial attainment of the objective, e.g. *50% achievement of learning about the world of work.* The aggregate outcome would be determined by combining the level of achievement of a particular group of participants.

Participant outcomes that are derived by measuring incremental change provide more meaningful information on program impact and participant progress. While most people make daily progress toward their overall goals, we seldom see them completely attain their goals in the narrow window of time in which we work with them. It is important to capture forward movement wherever and whenever it occurs, and thus put our professional work and participant's achievements in a more relevant and realistic context.

Note: *Participant outcomes* are distinctly different than *service outcomes,* which measure the services provided within a professional setting. A service outcome, for example, might be: "X number of participants received counseling services and emergency shelter." Although participant and service outcomes are distinctly different, as long as the service title is included in each individual participant record, a report that aggregates participant outcomes will also provide information about service outcomes.

Creating Participant Objectives and Indicators

Creating participant objectives and indicators involves several steps:

1. Aligning objectives with the services or programs provided to participants

2. Breaking large accomplishments down into small component parts and utilizing those components in the objectives and indicators we create. This is done effectively by identifying the step by step process people go through as they learn new skills. We call this "levels of learning mastery". The three levels we use in this model are knowledge, application and synthesis.

3. Agreeing upon observation criteria that staff can use to consistently identify success among the indicators that appear subjective in their measurement.

4. Ordering the objectives into categories of achievement (e.g. health and fitness, recreation) for efficiency in data collection and reporting

5. It is important to keep the final list of indicators short enough that it does not become burdensome, yet flexible enough to be relevant to most program participants' circumstances. Not every indicator needs to be relevant to every program participant.

Each step is reviewed and practiced in the sections that follow.

Activities:

Expectations of Participant Achievement and Observing Achievements

Time Needed: 20 minutes
Materials: Appendix A: Worksheet A
Instructions:

1. Complete Worksheet A. In Column A list the specific expectations you have for the participants in that program (which we will later turn into objectives and outcomes). See the sample below.
2. Fill in Column B by naming how you would determine that a participant is achieving the expectation. Ask yourself, "When someone is succeeding in our program (in this goal area), what do they look like or what will you see? What lets you know they are succeeding? List the behaviors or events staff are likely to observe. See sample below:

Program purpose: Job Readiness	
Column A **Participant Expectations**	**Column B** **Observation of Participant Achievement**
Participant is prepared to seek and maintain employment.	• Fills out sample applications for employment • Creates resume • Can identify the documentation necessary to obtain employment • Has possession of all documents required for employment • Attends mock interview and demonstrates appropriate attitude, dress and preparation. • Develops transportation plan for work • Follows up on employment leads, looks in paper weekly and travels to employer sites every two weeks • Demonstrates ability to write thank you letters after interview. • Develops a personal schedule conducive to seeking and maintaining employment • Implements a personal schedule conducive to seeking and maintaining employment

Components of Good Objectives and Indicators: Levels of Mastery and Keeping Them *SMART*

One of the most challenging aspects of creating outcomes, objectives and indicators involves breaking a large accomplishment into its small component parts. This process is critical because it allows you to capture and measure incremental progress toward the objective, rather than limiting the measurement to whether an objective is fully attained or not. For instance, although it may take youth more than a year to achieve their ultimate outcome of "maintaining employment," it is possible to measure real progress towards that goal by tracking the incremental steps that are taken leading up to that outcome. A complex outcome, such as obtaining and maintaining employment, happens over many stages including assessing employment readiness, learning about the world of work, preparing to seek and maintain employment, and improving ability to maintain employment. This concept is particularly relevant to measuring the progress of disadvantaged youth and young adults because they arrive in youth care with a variety of histories, abilities, and levels of preparedness. Measuring incremental progress enables us to capture real results: the movement and progress from arrival to departure from care.

Levels of Mastery

As people come into contact with new information, they first understand it and gradually apply it to a variety of tasks. (I first learn how to get a job, I find employment, and then I maintain employment). This represents a range of sophistication in learning, application, and synthesis of information. Objectives and indicators must represent the levels through which participants learn and master knowledge. Borrowing from *Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning and Levels of Mastery,* ImProve Outcomes utilizes three mastery levels to guide the creation of learning objectives and indicators of success. They are: 1) Knowledge/Comprehension; 2) Application; and 3) Synthesis.

Levels of Mastery Chart

Knowledge/Comprehension: Observation and recall of information, comprehension, interpretation, ability to describe in one's own words.

Activities that might indicate success: List, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, locate, recall, repeat, review, select, examine, tabulate, quote, locates, name who, when, where, etc.

Objective: "Knows how to apply for a job"

Indicators:
- *Locates* appropriate job openings in want ads
- *Describes* information required on a job application
- *Identifies* required documentation for employment

Application: Use information, data, methods, concepts, and theories to solve problems. Use acquired skills or knowledge to complete project or solve predictable or expected problems.

Activities that might indicate success: attends, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, show, examine, practice, schedule, use, write, modify, relate, change, classify, experiment, discover, plan, create, obtains, begins.

Objective: "Finds employment"

Indicators:
- *Completes* real application(s)
- *Attends* interview on time and dresses appropriately
- *Creates schedule that meets the requirements of new job*
- *Begins* working

Synthesis: Seeing patterns, organization of parts, and recognition of hidden meanings or implications, identification of components, using prior learning to solve new and perhaps unforeseen problems.

Activities that might indicate success: analyze, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, infer, plan, create, prepare, propose, set up, write, implement, construct, mediate, resolve, and negotiate.

Objective: "Able to maintain employment for three months or more"

Indicators:
- *Negotiates* and/or plans work schedule with employer
- *Implements* a comprehensive plan to be at work on time (personal schedule, trans, etc)
- *Resolves* conflict through discussion, negotiation and/or compromise

Here is an example of an application level objective that includes indicators from the same level (application) and the one level lower (knowledge)

Objective: Prepared to seek and maintain employment

Knowledge level indicators:

A. Identifies documentation necessary to obtain employment
B. Identifies information that will be required on a resume
C. Identifies three places where help wanted ads might be found

Application level indicators:

A. Creates resume
B. Creates and begins to implement schedule that allows ample time to seek and maintain employment
C. Follows up on employment leads, looks in paper daily, visits employer sites regularly

Here is an example that uses all three levels of indicators to measure a complex, synthesis level objective:

Objective: Youth saves money for an apartment deposit

Knowledge level indicators:
A. Visits bank
B. Explains difference between checking account and savings account

Application level indicators:
A. Creates a budget
B. Opens a savings account

Synthesis Level indicators:
A. Implements budget for three months
B Saves $2000 in savings account

A program's purpose is also a factor in determining expected mastery levels. The range must be appropriate to the relative complexity of the program's purpose. For example, long-term residential programs will have more complex achievement expectations than shorter term or more targeted programs such as crisis intervention or short-term emergency shelter programs.

Examples:

1. A long term residential program will have expectations that participants will become prepared for employment and perhaps even maintain employment for six months or more. These are very complex achievements that require learning and extensive application of that learning.

2. A short term emergency shelter will have more modest expectations, mostly focused on residents learning the rules of the shelter and applying them during their stay. It may be difficult for some participants to achieve this, but learning the rules and following them is unlikely to involve as many different aspects of the participants life as preparing for and maintaining employment for six months.

3. A Crisis Hotline may have expectations that callers will become calmer, more reasonable and perhaps be able to identify what the problem is in a way that may allow the hot line staff to help them through their crisis. This involves learning, and may be extremely difficult, but in that one hour or less of a hot line call we wouldn't expect the caller learn how to overcome all of the issues involved in their crisis. Simply gaining knowledge of relaxation techniques and applying them with staff support, and listing community supports relevant to their problems is a significant achievement for the caller.

Key points for devising objectives and indicators:

- Objectives are measured by their indicators
- Indicators must be observable on their own – thus the necessity of using active verbs in all indicators
- Objectives and indicators can take place at all three levels; the longer term or more complex the program, the greater number of higher-level objectives you will have.
- Objectives are measured by indicators that are the same level or lower in mastery, e.g. an application level objective should have a range of application and knowledge/comprehension level indicators, but should not have synthesis level indicators since they represent a higher level of mastery than the application level.
- Shorter-term programs are most likely to have knowledge level objectives.
- It is important to keep the final list of indicators short enough that it does not become burdensome, yet flexible enough to be relevant to most programs.

Keeping them SMART

Keep in mind the following criteria when you are determining *objectives and indicators:*

- Indicators should be activity or behavior-based. Use active verbs as you describe activities.
  Examples:
  Comes to meetings on time …
  Participates in weekly groups on ….
  Avoids friends who cannot …..
  Demonstrates skills in ….
  Cleans the …..

- Objectives and indicators should be **SMART**. Make them:

Specific: Indicators and objectives must be precise. Start with many objectives and indicators and then combine and refine them. Break large objectives or accomplishments into smaller stages of achievement.
(Note: If you find that an indicator seems to have lots of qualifying statements or stages associated with it, it could be that it will be more appropriate as an objective, or perhaps it should be broken down into a more comprehensive series of indicators.)

Measurable: Indicators must be clear and observable. Keep in mind that objectives themselves do not have to be measurable - the indicators are what make objectives measurable. Considered together, several indicators help measure the more subtle changes in behavior that may be reflected in an objective. For example:
Objective - “Ability to manage conflict without resorting to violence.”
Indicators – (Observable Behavior) “Uses conflict resolution techniques to resolve an issue” or “seeks staff support to avoid physical conflict," or “identifies feeling angry or frustrated in a timely way.”

Achievable: The scope of your indicators and objectives should be compatible with the nature and the time frame of your work. Make sure they are small enough to achieve in the expected time that you have to work with the participant. For instance, if your services are a three month employment preparation program, participants can’t be expected to “maintain employment for six months” or “complete a six month training program”. Likewise, if you provide emergency shelter, it would be unrealistic to expect participants to “obtain employment during their shelter stay” (although it would be fine to keep records of how many people did obtain or maintain employment while in your shelter, that is different from expecting them to do so).

Relevant: Your indicators and objectives must be relevant to the specific program.

Timely: Objective must have a built-in time frame for accomplishment. Some changes should occur “within six months of entering the program,” some “within a year.” Sometimes an objective is simply meant to be achieved sometime before the participant leaves the program. In such cases, it is helpful to acknowledge the general time frame.

Activities:

Creating Objectives and Indicators Test

Purpose: Practice identifying effective objectives and indicators by levels of mastery and SMART criteria.
Time needed: 20 minutes
Materials: Test (below); Appendix B: Objectives and Indicators Answer Sheet
Instructions:

1. Take the test that follows.
2. Compare and discuss answers. The Answer Sheet is found in Appendix B.

Creating Outcomes and Indicators Test

1. You work in an agency program providing a transitional living setting to 17 through 21 year old youths. One goal of your program is to ensure that youths have on-going support once they leave your program. Which objective would be most relevant to this agency program and the stated goal?
   a. Youth learns to manage personal finances
   b. Youth improves relationships with peers
   c. Youth develops community support network

2. Which of the following objectives reflects positive youth development principles?
   a. Youths will avoid conflict with peers
   b. Youths will not recidivate
   c. Youths practice independent living skills necessary to move into unsupervised living within six months

3. Which of the following reflects the use of observable, activity focused verbs?
   a. Creates a plan to engage in community supports
   b. Youth will improve self-esteem
   c. Learns skills necessary to develop a budget

4. Which of the following indicators does not meet the Specific part of the SMART criteria?
   a. Identifies personal skills, abilities, likes and dislikes related to work within one month
   b. Develops a career plan
   c. Lists career fields that match skills, abilities, likes and dislikes within three months

5. Which indicator reflects the knowledge level of mastery?
   a. Implements behavioral alternatives to physical violence
   b. Completes a job application
   c. Describes problem solving skills

6. Which indicator reflects the application level of mastery?
   a. Lists steps necessary to get a driver's license
   b. Calculates the money necessary to meet daily living expenses
   c. Prepares a budget

7. Which indicator reflects the synthesis level in Bloom's taxonomy?
   a. Analyzes the benefit of two different educational plans
   b. Lists educational opportunities available in the community
   c. Completes college applications

8. Which indicator DOES NOT clearly reflect movement toward achievement of the following objective? Objective: Youth and family plan to resolve conflict independently.
   a. Reviews conflict resolution skills
   b. Analyzes recreational opportunities in the community
   c. Implements problem solving techniques for managing conflict.

9. Which indicators are appropriate for the following objective? Objective: Plans a nutritious meal with supervision.
   a. Identifies resources available for meal planning, e.g. cookbooks, magazines, Internet etc.
   b. Uses a nutritional guide to plan a meal
   c. Creates a nutritious meal plan
   d. None of the above
   e. All of the above

10. Which of the following indicators requires discussion to clarify ranges of behavior required to measure achievement of the indicator?
    a. Behaves appropriately in groups
    b. Avoids substance abuse
    c. Implements problem solving techniques for managing conflict

Activity:

Practice Creating Objectives and Indicators

Purpose: Practice writing objectives and indicators.
Time needed: 30 to 45 minutes
Materials: Print out of the following examples
Appendix C
Appendix D: Blank worksheet
Flipchart

Instructions:

1. Write two objectives and at least two indicators of success for each of the objectives relevant to a program or program area with which you are familiar (e.g., a life skill category such as "domestic skills" or an agency program such as a job training program). Choose objectives that represent different levels of mastery in the program you are focusing on. Use Appendix D Worksheet. Draw upon ideas from the following examples and from Appendix C.
2. Make sure that the indicators are SMART and stated with active verbs that are behavior- or activity-based.
3. Post your answers. Piece together language from multiple answers that make a clear, concise objective for that goal.

Developing Consistent Observation Techniques

A frequently asked question is, "With so many of the indicators based on staff observations, how will we know that everyone is responding to the indicators in a similar way?" In order to increase the degree to which different staff are similarly interpreting program participant changes, staff need to agree on which program participant behaviors are indicative of success, including how the behavior must happen and/or how often the program participant must display a particular behavior. Once documented, this agreement creates a living, breathing set of criteria that can be used for reference and training in the future

Because the objectives and indicators are developed by a smaller designated team within the agency, the direct service staff members who will be observing behaviors and measuring indicators will focus on developing criteria for the indicators that are considered to be subjective or in need of clarification. Work on this process as a group.

Step by Step Development of Consistent Observation Techniques

1. Identify indicators that need clarification
2. For each indicator that requires clarification, brainstorm behaviors and activities that program participants are expected to accomplish that will indicate achievement of the indicator.
3. Refine the brainstormed list to a few key behaviors or activities that are absolutely required to indicate achievement of the indicator.
4. If appropriate, discuss how often or how many times the behaviors/activities must be demonstrated before staff members consider the indicator achieved.

Write a clarification statement or list of behaviors and activities required to state comfortably that the indicator has been achieved.

Let's start with an example of an objective and two indicators that may need to be standardized.

Example 1

Objective	Indicators
Youth develops community service network	1. Visits three community support programs such as United Way, Salvation Army, local food pantry, etc.
	2. Identifies personal community service goals

The first indicator," visits three community support programs" appears fairly objective and may not require further clarification; either the participant has visited three community support programs or not. The second indicator, "identifies personal community services goals," is more subjective so a process of clarification is necessary among staff members. Let's take a look at how we might clarify the indicator "Identifies personal community service goals":

Since a youth development approach stresses the importance of involving youth in setting their own community service goals, establishing goals is often the result of a series of conversations between a staff person and the program participant. Ideally, the program participant will set goals that she/he feels are relevant and important. Most staff would agree that program participants who say, "I want to get experience that will make me more employable," or "I want to give something back to the community," are indeed making progress toward goal setting in this area. However, what about the program participant who says, "I want to get my community service commitment over with?" Does that qualify as "identifying personal community service goals?" The staff need agree how this issue will be handled. Perhaps they would concur that goals such as "getting my community service commitment over with" are fine as long as some more "substantial" goals are also included. The important thing is that the staff team establishes and records the parameters or criteria for measuring whether or not the indicator has been achieved.

Using the example above to demonstrate the criteria clarification process, the brainstormed list for "Identifies personal community service goals" might look like this:

- Goals should not involved monetary or material compensation
- Youth should identify what they hope to get out of community service, i.e., personal gain.
- Youth must identify what the community gains through his/her community service project
- Community service goals must be achievable within other commitments the youth has
- Community services goals should also be in areas of career interest to the youth
- Identifies interests/likes/dislikes relevant to community service opportunities
- Identifies community services activities that meet the interests and likes
- Youth approaches community service goals from a positive perspective rather than as a task that must be completed because it is an expectation

The final outcome of this brainstorming process might produce the following clarification statement.

Indicator: Identifies personal community service goals

Clarification Statement: The program participant must meet with a counselor and identify personal community service goals that reflect his/her likes and interests and must identify potential personal and community gain as a result of the community service activity.

Example 2:

Objective	Indicators
Assess level of employment readiness	1. Completes intake form
	2. Attends meeting with counselor
	3. Identifies barriers to employment
	4. Identifies potential and available resources relevant to employment

First, identify which indicators require clarification. Unless team members think otherwise, indicators 1 and 2 are probably objective enough not to need further clarification. Indicator #3, "Identifies barriers to employment," is the first indicator on the list that requires some clarification. Some participants will understand this activity and put a lot of effort into identifying their barriers to employment and others may not put in the effort or understand it as well. We want to be sure that staff have similar understanding of what achieving this indicator means.

Clearly, not all program participants are going to identify everything on the following list, yet this list contains appropriate behaviors (plus additional program participant behaviors) that demonstrate to staff that this indicator has been met.

Staff brainstormed list: In the process of identifying barriers to employment, a program participant might anticipate or indicate:

- What clothes, supplies, tools or other materials he or she might need before joining a field that interests him/her.
- What transportation problems he or she might have, such as a lack of bus transportation at night, limited bus service to certain parts of town, the cost of taxicabs, etc.
- Scheduling that needs to be taken into account, such as personal school schedule, medical appointments or visits home, etc.
- Educational shortcomings - a need to complete high school or the GED, or specialized training
- Substance abuse problems
- A chaotic lifestyle, such as concern about being able to get up early in the morning

As a result of reviewing the brainstormed list and further discussion among the staff, a clarifying statement may be: Indicator: Identifies barriers to employment

Clarification Statement: The participant must have acknowledged substantial personal barriers or problems and identified any items they need in order to be prepared for employment. The participant's list of barriers must be written and reviewed with a counselor before the indicator can be marked as achieved.

Example 3:

Objective	**Indicators**
Family learns mediation skills	1. Demonstrates taking turns when speaking
	2. Expresses needs in a calm fashion
	3. Practices negotiating in therapy meetings
	4. Employs negotiation process at home without guidance

First, identify subjective indicator(s). In this case, let's look at #2.

Indicator #2, "Expresses needs in a calm fashion," requires a standardized staff agreement on the definition of "calm." Is shouting, swearing, or crying acceptable? If crying is okay, is crying hysterically or hyperventilating acceptable? A brief description of what calm looks like could be helpful, such as "moderate volume level, without shouting or swearing."

Brainstormed staff list:

- Speaks in an acceptable volume (not shouting or screaming)
- Speaks clearly
- Expresses feelings verbally
- Does not physically act out
- Not hyperventilating
- Not hysterical
- Responds to calming or relaxation techniques encouraged by counselor
- Takes a break and tries again if necessary

Indicator: Expresses needs in a calm fashion

Clarification Statement: Program participant can calm down (as needed) with staff assistance and clearly states what he/she needs without using a loud voice, becoming hysterical or threatening, or acting out physically.

Important points:

- Every indicator does not need to be relevant to every program participant
- Indicate the number of times a program participant must demonstrate a particular behavior to indicate success in completing the indicator.
- Use language that is readily understood by staff members who are observing program participants.

Note on establishing more discrete ranges: A function range scale is used to further discern the behaviors and attitudes participants pass through as they make progress toward a goal. This range, from low to high, helps staff approach the development of indicators and the criteria for indicators. A range is particularly helpful when it is necessary to measure very discrete behavior and attitude change. See Appendix E for further discernment of outcomes and indicators using a high-low range of discrete indicators.

Activity:

Standardizing Staff Observations

Purpose: Practice brainstorming the parameters or criteria that satisfy the completion of an indicator.
Time Needed: 30 - 45 minutes
Materials: Examples from Appendix C

Instructions:

1. Choose an objective and a corresponding set of indicators that everyone feels is relatively important, will apply to most of your participants, and is familiar to the staff (such as employment readiness, academic achievement, or physical health).
2. Pick an indicator that seems subjective and brainstorm a list of observations that would demonstrate that the indicator is being met.
3. Where appropriate, note how many times a participant must demonstrate that behavior to warrant achievement of the indicator.
4. Look at your list and describe in a clarifying statement what it will look like if the indicator had been met.
5. Complete a list on another indicator, such as Example 2, #4 above: "Identifies potential and available resources relevant to employment." Finish by revising, combining, adding or eliminating items.

Aligning Objectives and Indicators into Categories for Ease in Data Collection and Reporting

Ordering the objectives into categories for efficiency in collection and reporting is the important next step. Organizing objectives by participant achievement categories, rather than by program participation, is important in several ways:

1. In multi-service agencies, it allows the tracking of participant outcomes across programs and facilitates the assessment of efficiency and coordination between programs.
2. Most of the objectives you track will be achievements that cannot be reversed; for example, once a person learns about the world of work they usually will not need to learn it again, although they might refine and expand their knowledge over time
3. Information organization is important in order to facilitate access to the data, both for input and output. The categories suggested for residential programming in the sample below are similar to the way that many programs organize participant work plans (also known as Individual Service Plans, Independent Living Plans, etc). It makes sense to use a system of organization that is consistent with the way your program materials are organized.

When you have created many objectives for a series of programs in your multi-service agency, some are likely to be similar. You also may find that you have more objectives than you can manage. First, combine those that are similar, and then organize them by categories that you create based on what makes sense for your organization. Some of the most common categories and objective topics covered may include, but are not limited, to:

Categories of participant achievement	Objectives that might be included
Education/Academic	Academic participation, performance, milestones, goals
Employment/Career	Vocational training, employment search, preparation and maintenance
Mental Health	Personal growth, therapy, information about substance abuse, substance avoidance, risk reduction, personal safety, mediation, roommate relations, recreation (may be a separate category), art
Physical Health	Following medical advice, nutrition, hygiene and other self-care
Domestic Skills	Cooking, cleaning, laundry, creating an environment
Community Network	Local transportation, community service, extra-curricular activities, civic involvement
Leisure skills	Substance free activities, recreational and entertainment options, art

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Activities:

Categorizing Outcomes for Ease in Data Collection/Reporting

Purpose: To categorize objectives into areas of general participant achievement for ease in data collection and reporting

Time needed: 30 minutes

Materials: Lists of objectives
½ sheets (8 x 5.5 inches) blank cards
Markers

Instructions:

1. Summarize your objective (3-5 words) onto ½ sheets, one objective per ½ sheet. Write big and clearly with a marker.
2. On a large surface, spread out 10-12 cards (you can also tape them to a wall or place on a "sticky wall."*
3. Cluster the cards by similar activity of participant achievement. Add more cards and continue grouping.
4. When all cards are grouped, give each cluster a name that summarizes the participant achievement.

Section 4:
Analyze, Evaluate and Improve

The value of an outcome measurement project is the utilization of the data produced. In order to use data about the outcomes you are interested in tracking, you must ensure proper implementation of your outcome measurement system, as discussed above. If you are recording your measurements in a database, your use of data will be much easier. It is possible to use data recorded on paper, but it takes more time to organize the data for meaningful analysis. According to Rossi et al in "Evaluation A Systematic Approach," there are three ways evaluation data is used. Direct, or instrumental use, involves using evaluation to make changes to programs or policies. Conceptual utilization is using the evaluation results influence the way we think about issues in a more general manner or have an indirect impact on policies and programs. Persuasive utilization is when we use the results of an evaluation to impact a position (usually to support or refute a political position). Data collected from ImProve Outcomes objectives and indicators can be used in any of these ways.

Once you have collected data on you identified outcomes, you can look for trends and identify areas where improvement or change may be warranted. You can compare the data on your outcomes to those among various groups of people you serve, one individual to another, or an individual to a group. Your data may demonstrate peaks and valleys when looked at over time. These fluctuations in the level of achievement of your outcomes my highlight staff training needs, program development needs, changes in population, policy changes or other internal or external factors. These various forms of analysis will enable you to focus on program development, case management, and advocacy.

Data collected from ImProve Outcomes implementation will enable you to determine the effectiveness of your agency program in meeting your program goals. Are you impacting program participants in the way you expected? Are your agency programs effectively meeting the community need? Do you need to adjust the way your program services are offered? You may find that program participants are not meeting an expected change (outcome). You can gather information on program participants that will help you determine if the difficulty is due to staff capabilities, the types of people you are serving, program implementation issues or community factors. Regardless, an adjustment in the way your program functions or the services you provide might be in order. If you find that an individual is not meeting the same level of outcome achievement as the larger group, the treatment plan for that person might be adjusted to improve the likelihood that the individual will attain achievement.

ImProve Outcomes data will enable you to help stakeholders understand the needs your agency is addressing and how your programs are effectively meeting those needs. You will be more prepared to advocate for policy change and support on local, state, and federal levels because you will have concrete evidence in the form of the outcomes you have measured that demonstrates the effectiveness of your approach and how it is impacting the community need.

For example: Imagine talking to community members about the increase in your program participants' ability to effectively connect to community supports yet documenting a low number of connections to the community. This may reflect a lack of community providers, long waiting lists, insurance difficulties, or any number of other barriers. In this case you could demonstrate to community members that your program participants have the skills necessary to make community connections while other issues are preventing the connections from actually happening. You would be able to contribute to advocacy for financial support and planning to increase community providers and perhaps improve communication in the community.

Understanding youth development principles and addressing staff resistance to rigorous participant achievement data collection are two necessary activities to undertake in programs where these needs exist. The following activities will assist staffs understanding of youth development principles and how they relate to ImProve Outcomes and/or will diminish their resistance to project implementation.

Youth Development: Accentuate the Positive

Many of the principles of youth development are closely reflected in resiliency or asset-based counseling techniques. Objectives and subsequent outcomes are most in line with these approaches when they are stated in positive terms. It is important to create objectives that reflect the participant's capacity for positive change and forward movement, rather than their negative behaviors or needs. Youth development and resiliency-based philosophies advocate for a focus on assets, resources and positive changes brought about through the cooperative effort of program participants and agency staff. Such a focus will naturally result in positive statements about what program participants are expected to accomplish. Framing goals positively is desirable because:

- community stakeholders understand and respond to achievement;
- positive goals instill pride and dignity in program participants; and
- as program participants make progress, they increasingly become defined by their achievements rather than their deficits.

For more information on youth development, see Section 6: Resources. Also, the following websites explore the topic of youth development in considerable detail: National Youth Development Information Center at www.nydic.org; The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development at www.theinnovationcenter.org; and The National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth at www.ncfy.com/resource-yd.htm.

Activity:

Understanding Youth Development in the Context of Developing Outcomes and Indicators

Time needed: 45 minutes
Materials: Flip chart paper cut in half, markers, full flip chart paper, three flip chart stands
Handout: Appendix F: Youth Developmental Needs, Inputs and Resources

Instructions: Part 1 - Definitions

1. Mini lecture – explain the importance of creating positive outcome measures and indicators as described previously.

2. Say, "Let's start with a working definition of youth development."

3. Conduct a rapid-fire definition relay. To do this, give half-flip chart sheets to pairs of people and ask them to write their definition of youth development in 45 seconds. Ask them to leave space for inserts, sentence add-on's. When time is up, have them pass their sheet to another pair who will read it, add and delete words or phrases. (Some will create sentences).
4. After passing each definition between 2-4 times about the pairs, have everyone stop and post the definitions. Read each flipchart, adjust language as needed to clarify the meaning, and agree to key concepts that define youth development.

Instructions: Part 2 - Developmental Outcomes/Components of Youth Development

1. Say, "We need to distinguish what is important to be looking for in a young person's achievement and behavior. What should we be measuring? Think about what Youth Development looks like when you see it. What are the behaviors and things you observe?"

2. Record their answers on a flip chart. Move the group to agree that the behaviors listed are asset-based, positive attributes. If they are not behaviors, have them describe what that attribute looks like, e.g. 'kind' is observed by one who smiles, helps someone complete a task, says nice things to another, etc.

3. Pass out Appendix F and have the group read the sheet. Say "all of the youth developmental needs and outcomes – including one's sense of personal well being, connection, commitment, knowledge, skills and attitudes - are what we want to measure. Youth Development is about building, creating, and enhancing the development of a whole person. Working toward these developmental outcomes is the best strategy for achievement and problem solving. It is measuring forward movement and achievement and positive changes brought about by services, opportunities and the actions of staff.

Implementation Roadblocks
(and strategies for overcoming them)

Every new project has implementation obstacles and barriers to overcome. Barriers come in the form of irritants, assumptions, patterns, competing beliefs and behaviors, attitudes, and tangible obstacles, such as competing policies and procedures. Overcoming these obstacles requires proper planning and implementation. Before you begin to create a system to identify and organize participant outcome information, it is critical to talk to agency personnel and gather various perspectives on barriers to this work.

Activity:

Assessing Barriers to Systemic Participant Information Management

Purpose: Unearth real barriers to the development and use of participant outcomes, to allow staff the time to discuss and reflect on the changes required, and to involve staff in the change process.
Time needed: 30 minutes
Materials: Flip chart paper, markers for everyone

Instructions:

1. Title each of five flip chart pages with one of the following:
   - Technology and Support
   - Time
   - Anxiety About Change
   - Funding
   - Other

   Post the sheets around the room.

2. Explain that every effort to improve or change agency processes has roadblocks to smooth implementation and that the agency must develop a plan to fully address internal roadblocks. Roadblocks come in the form of irritants, assumptions, competing beliefs and behaviors, attitudes, and real obstacles, such as conflicting policies and procedures.

3. Instruct participants to write down under each of the topic headings the specific barriers they encounter or could imagine encountering. Spend about a minute at each flip chart. The 'Other' flipchart is for any other barrier they think of.

4. When the participants have finished writing down their thoughts, have five representatives read through the lists on their chart. One at a time, discuss the barriers.

5. Place a blank flipchart page next to each of the five lists. Have the participants organize into pairs at their table, and instruct each pair to write one or two strategies or solutions per flip chart to address any of the barriers listed. Have them come up and write their solutions on the blank 'solutions' flips.

6. Read and discuss the solutions as a whole group. Be prepared to share the ideas below: "Strategies for Overcoming Barriers."

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

Technology: A lack of 'adequate' technology is a commonly held belief of many human service agencies that they cannot develop effective database systems. In reality, most databases have minimal technological requirements and are often created with the knowledge that some people will be using older machines with older operating systems. While older machines will be slower, many are nonetheless capable of running databases. You will need to examine your current technological capacity and determine if it is adequate. If you have computers that are struggling to run Microsoft Word, or that have operating systems that predate Windows 98, you should consider upgrading your system. (Note: since software technology changes so fast, it is likely that by 2005 agencies can expect that Windows XP upgrades will be required for many applications.)

Technological support: Having a staff person that is responsible for maintaining the agency's technology is important. Depending on the size of the agency, this position could be a full-time job. The technical support person can be an in-house staff person or a reliable consultant. If you can manage it, an in-house technology support person is best: s/he will be able to do a more thorough job of managing hardware, installing upgrades, trouble-shooting problems, and making recommendations for purchases and maintenance. S/he can also be trained as a systems administrator for the new or upgraded database. In that capacity, your technology person can both provide support to staff members and help maintain the database. (Note: When hardware and networking are the primary concerns, this is called "IT" or information technology support. When database expertise is involved it is referred to as "MIS" or management information systems support.)

Time: Wouldn't it be nice to have a little more of it? Time is an important component of our work. We don't want to add another task to an already busy schedule. To this end, the ImProve Outcomes approach proposes integrating outcome measurement and data-entry into workers' current daily routine. The tools and scales enable workers to effectively and efficiently gauge participant performance and task completion. With practice, the measurement of outcomes and database use will become second nature, allowing the overall program to focus more time on the people being served.

Collecting, storing and analyzing data electronically will save significant time in generating reports. Your agency will also benefit from easy access to data for case management and treatment planning purposes.

Anxiety about change: While anxiety is a natural response to change, it needn't be crippling. One way to manage anxiety related to technological change is to involve staff in the process of identifying indicators and outcomes and using databases. Focus on the content of participant work rather than technology, and strongly convey the message that creating the capacity to do evaluation and assessment can improve the agency's overall work.

***Funding*:** Supporters, government agencies and other stakeholders want to see evidence that agencies are effective, and measuring outcomes is one of the few ways agencies can provide such proof. Investment in effective outcome-measurement and database technology can assist agencies in grantwriting and other fundraising efforts by making valuable information more readily accessible. To make the investment more palatable, some database companies allow financial payments over time. Improving information management systems is also grant-fundable and can be an attractive project for donors.

Involving Staff at All Levels

Creating outcomes, developing systems for collecting data, and learning to use the tools that facilitate data collection will be most useful to the organization if staff are involved in meaningful ways and have an overall understanding of the purpose of the project. It is important that youth workers and management staff have an investment in the process and contribute in ways that truly help to integrate information management into the agency's everyday work. A change in attitude about the importance of this work can be achieved if people at all levels of the organization are engaged in the project from the very beginning.

Staff are constantly observing and discussing their observations among themselves. This happens in formal supervision settings and even more often in casual conversations. Put those observations and conversations to work by establishing a context and structure for observing and recording change. Staff who are involved with program participants on a day-to-day basis are the best ones to identify and record changes in attitude, behavior and learning. The more subtle the change, the more important a day-to-day relationship becomes. For example, almost any staff person can document that a program participant has passed a GED, the type of GED test the youth passed, and by what margin. Yet, only staff close to that young person will be aware of the smaller shifts in mindset that made that accomplishment possible: the youth's change in attitude toward attending GED tutoring, or his or her new commitment to obtaining a

GED. If we are to capture incremental change in a meaningful way, we must put the power of these close staff-participant relationships to work for us.

Some suggestions on how to engage staff in this process are:

- Begin with ImProve Outcomes training. It will be helpful if team members understand how the outcomes, objectives and indicators are created, how they relate to each other and how they relate to the work.
- Collect feedback from staff about categorizing objectives so that the categories selected match programs operations and the way staff approach problems.
- Fully engage staff in the process of defining indicator ranges. Staff teams will need to review and define every subjective indicator. Teams will record the results of their efforts – a set of written definitions and ranges – in order to increase the effectiveness of data collected as well as the efficiency of future staff orientation and training.

Activities:

Staff involvement

Purpose: To determine all the important ways to involve staff in the development of an agency information system
Time needed: 20 minutes
Materials: Flipchart paper, markers
Instructions:

1. Write the following question on a flipchart: *What are all the ways to involve staff in the development of an information management system that is appropriate to and honors their daily work and is an effective use of their time?*
2. Brainstorm the answers and list them on a flipchart.
3. Discuss and prioritize your answers.
4. Create a plan for staff involvement by discussing what will be implemented, when it will occur, and who will take responsibility, and who should be involved.

Assessing Information Management and Database Readiness: Where You Are Now and Where You Need To Go

Before establishing a method for measuring outcomes and collecting information, it is important to do an information management assessment. This assessment will explore what information is currently being gathered, how it is being used, and how it is being compiled, stored and reported.

Assessing readiness at the start will help inform your decisions about both content and database options. While collecting data in paper files necessitates relatively simple collection methods, committing to a fully integrated software solution will allow significantly more complex information management and aggregate reporting. Your needs, program and agency size, budget, and readiness for data collection are all factors in deciding what collection method to choose.

Activity:

Information Management and Database Readiness Assessment

Purpose: To assist your program in getting ready to undertake all aspects of Participant Information Management
Time needed: 1 hour
Instructions: Complete the following worksheet and discuss with program staff and administrators.

Data Collection Readiness
1. What are the most pressing program or administrative needs in your program(s) that technology might address?
Your Answer:
Comments: ImProve Outcomes helps address many administrative and technology integration issues, but perhaps most significantly, it may help uncover issues you may not have realized previously. Implementing the content components of ImProve Outcomes can act as a test project for technological solutions you might be considering. This opportunity may help your agency make better decisions about technological choices. …
2. How successful have you been in integrating database tools into your record-keeping routine and what do you think might improve your system?
Your Answer:
Comments: Many agencies have had experience trying to use databases and other electronic means of managing information. Chances are, if you have tried, you learned a lot about real and potential problems with technology and people! ImProve Outcomes methods will help you organize information and identify the places where different kinds of information intersect. As in #4, doing this may improve your ability to make good long term technology decisions based on an integrated plan – a plan that considers both internal and external needs and minimized redundancy.

3. If you are not using a database to record and store information about your programs (e.g. to aid in program evaluation or reporting requirements), what are some of the barriers that have prevented your agency from doing so?
Your Answer:
Comment: We hope we have addressed some, if not all, of the barriers you are concerned about. We don't have all the answers, but at least you will know you are not alone! See Section II, pg 7 and the related activities.
4. Are you confident that someone will be available to help manage the hardware and software set-up tasks that will be required when you begin or expand your use of database technology? Is this resource available for consultation as you go through the process of organizing the information you want to gather and consider various database options?
Your Answer:
Comment: It will be necessary to plan for computer hardware maintenance. If it isn't clear who is responsible for this now, the issue must be resolved as part of this project. Options range from having a part-time person plus hired consultants when necessary, to having one or more qualified people on staff who can do most of the work themselves.

5. How many staff within the youth-service components of your agency use e-mail (internal or external) to communicate program information?
Your Answer:
Comment: No matter what technological solution you choose access to computers and the Internet will be required for most agency staff. The number and speed of Internet connections may vary depending on the type of database you choose, but electronic communication will undoubtedly be important.
6. In your view, what would a good evaluation program be like? What would it accomplish, and what would you ultimately hope to gain from your program evaluation efforts?
Your Answer:
Comment: This question is intended to get you thinking about what you want to know, and why, which is fundamental to an ImProve Outcomes project. Thinking about how you might use information will help you decide what you need to know, and implementing the content development portion of ImProve Outcomes will help, too.

Internal and External Data Integration Issues:

7. Describe some of the circumstances in which youth may be eligible for more than one program or service that you offer (i.e., independent living through HUD or HHS programs; emergency shelter through one program and counseling through another; and so on).

Your Answer:

Comment: Most of the information you collect relevant to outcomes should ultimately focus on the participant rather than the program. For example, a participant might be working on employment issues in two different programs, but it would be inefficient for their progress toward employment to be tracked by both programs; ideally each program would enter progress information into the same composite record. Knowing where the most likely crossovers will occur can help the team as you create and plan.

8. Are you able to identify unduplicated counts of participants and correlate services and outcomes with particular programs? If so, how is this accomplished? What are some of the obstacles you have encountered trying to sort this kind of data? What would make it easier? List examples.

Your Answer:

Comment: Most of the answers to these mixed funding and cross eligibility problems can be found by developing records that focus on participants rather than programs. It will make it easier to identify and assign the various eligibility criteria, report requirements and funding cycles involved in a way that includes the appropriate participant data in each report.

9. If you are currently participating in a formally integrated project with other agencies, and all partners must collect and evaluate data together, describe the way that information moves between agencies and the system you use to collect and evaluate the information. *(If you have more than one project that fits this description, provide separate details for each project.)*
Your answer:
Comment: Having an outline of the 'who, what and where' of the process may be helpful when you think about this component of your information management plan. We collect information for a variety of purposes, but one of the most difficult to manage is the exchange of information among formal partners or referral sources. If this is something your agency participates in, it will be helpful to identify the components of the process so that you can keep the confidentiality, data exchange formats, reporting requirements and other issues in mind as you create your information management plan.

Choosing and Implementing an Integrated Agency-Wide Database

Choosing a database is a difficult process. There are many new solutions available today, but few of them offer truly integrated solutions that do many tasks and reduce data redundancy. An effective way to select a database is to provide a data problem that you can use to "test" potential databases. Taking your categories of outcomes and indicators, ask database providers to demonstrate how they would manage data organized in this manner. Watch for flexibility and compatibility with your data entry and reporting needs. Once you find a database that provides the best information for your program, other factors come into play, such as cost, platform (Web vs. PC based), range of functions, and inclusion of other data management systems required by multiple funding sources.

Web-Based (ASP), PC-Based, or Build-Your-Own?

Web-based (ASP) databases: An ASP-type database is accessed via the Internet every time you use it. You rent access to the software that stores and sorts your data. Because ASP databases access the Internet every time you make modifications or work with information, the speed of your Internet connection is critical to smooth operation.

PC-based databases: In this case, you purchase software that is installed on your computers and store your data there. Some PC-based databases offer Internet bridge systems that enable users from two or more sites to "synch-up" their data regularly so that all sites have access to the same information.

Build-your-own databases: Building your own database requires either substantial in-house expertise or extensive use of outside consultants. Off-the-shelf database programs like Microsoft Access are readily available, but without extensive development assistance they are not easy to use for projects as complex as the ones being discussed here. With the exception of very small data management projects, building your own database is impractical.

The following chart briefly compares functionality, operating requirements, and some of the issues regarding two major methods of accessing database software.

Comparing Web-Based and PC- or Locally-Based Databases

	Web-based (ASP)	PC-based with bridge
Description	• Access via the Internet. • Each user usually has their own license (some ASP providers do concurrent licenses instead). • Data is stored off-site and accessed via the web, but always belongs to the agency. • Data is continuously updated. • You own no software.	• Data and software is on local machine (or network). • Internet bridging allows many sites to "sync-up" via the Internet whenever there are changes. • Data can be viewed without being connected to the Internet. • You buy the software and you own it.
Requirements	• High speed Internet preferred. • May require specific browsing software. • May require a minimum operating system, browser and memory.	• Ability to run specific software may require a minimum operating system, memory and hard drive space. • Some databases may require that additional software be installed on each machine.
Issues	• Critically important to have a contract that spells out how data will be transferred to you if the relationship ends, regardless of the circumstances. • User must be connected to the web to access and work with data. • Often runs slower than PC-based systems, especially with dial-up connections.	• May or may not work with both Mac and PC systems. • Some systems require specific software in addition to the database, such as Microsoft Access in the case of Access-based systems. Others, such as FoxPro-based systems, do not require any additional software. • Speed of operation depends on speed and condition of the local machine running the software.
Cost	• Cost is not a capital expense, it is a lease. • Cost is determined in large part by number of user licenses – each user, or person, is licensed. • Annual costs are calculated primarily by user licenses and an annual leasing cost (often expressed in a monthly fee) • Most cost-efficient in situations where there are fewer users and each has their own computer.	• Most of the expense is likely to be capitalized. • Cost is largely determined by number of computers running the software, or number of connections accessible to a network (each installation of the software must be licensed). • Annual fees are determined by number of software installations and are primarily for upgrades and support services. • Most efficient where there are many users who share computers.

Minimizing Redundant Data Entry

Direct-service agency executives identify redundant data-entry requirements as one of their most troubling administrative problems. Entering the same data over and over to satisfy the requirements of federal and state agencies – such as RHYMIS, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - leads to statistical errors, excess time and energy, reduced resources available for service delivery, and reduced morale among staff. There are solutions to this problem and, fortunately, progress is being made.

In the last few years there has been a dramatic improvement in the ability of database providers to convert and export data to different end-users. By using readily available database technology, agencies are able to enter data into a single database that then delivers it, in whatever form required, to as many different end-users as necessary. There are several platforms available (i.e., technological methods or programs) that allow electronic data interchange (EDI) to be performed between different vendor databases.

Some federal agencies and their database contractors also have made significant progress in streamlining information and data entry requirements. FYSB, which is part of the US Department of Health and Human Services, recently announced that agencies are free to use database providers (other than its RHYMIS contractor) to collect and transmit data in the required format. We expect that other database options for transmitting RHYMIS data will be available soon. HUD is currently working on developing data standards that may be adopted by all federal agencies that are involved with services to the homeless.

For more information on these developments, go to the HUD website page devoted to the RHYMIS issue: http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/.

Phases and Cost Factors of Program Implementation

The planning and implementation of an information management project can be broken down into distinct phases. This outline assumes that you are intending to take the project all the way to implementation in a database.

It is worth noting that many agencies have found the training and content development part of this process to have its own intrinsic value. Moreover, it can be implemented in the case management and program development realms without using a database.

Phase 1: Assessment and objective/outcome development

- **Assessment**
  a. What information is currently collected?
  b. How is it gathered, compiled and used?
  c. What do we want to know and why?
  d. Technological assessment

- **Training and initial organization**
  a. Getting grounded in youth development principles
  b. Understanding the agency mission and program-level goals
  c. Identifying objectives and indicators
  d. Reviewing, expanding, condensing and reframing
  e. Formatting objectives and indicators

- **Reassessment and refinement of information management organization**
  a. Expanding staff involvement
  b. Combining outcomes across programs
  c. Sorting information into categories (such as participant-specific objectives, monitored activities, and program-specific objectives)

Phase 2: Implementation and database development

- **Implementation**
  a. Choosing a database
  b. Setting up a database prior to implementation
  c. Training users and system administrators
  d. Going live (beginning to use your database to document real and permanent information)
  e. Follow-up (review of organization, language, database functionality, and information input patterns in the first 90 days after going live)

- **Database administrative and user training**
  a. Train system administrators
  b. Set up user security
  c. Train users
  d. Go live

Phase 3: Reporting and follow-up

- **Follow-up**
  a. Checking in with users as they input real data
  b. Helping develop reports during the first three months following going live

- **Reporting and analysis**
  a. Creating reports
  b. Using reports for accountability and assessment
  c. Making changes based on information and analysis

- **Subsequent years**
  a. Annual review
  b. Training new users
  c. Implementation for new programs, including developing outcomes and putting new material in the agency database

Balancing the Costs and Benefits

Purchasing a database, training staff, and developing new operating procedures are expensive endeavors. It is important to realize that in addition to purchasing software and devoting staff time to the initial training and development effort, the cost must also include the staff time and resources necessary to maintain a database, keep it up to date, and provide on-going training. Using a database will not save much time, if any, in direct-care services. Although it may take less time to do some of the tasks staff do now, and the fruits of their labor will be more accessible, recording information for outcomes-analysis generally requires a larger quantity of information be gathered than current expectations.

The greatest benefits of undertaking this process are:

- The ability to evaluate and make improvements to programs based on real information.
- Significant reduction in the amount of administrative time required to gather information for reports and grants.
- Tracking the efforts and results of direct-care staff and supervisors.
- Easy, one-source access by staff to integrated information about all of the agency's programs.
- Valuable information for advocacy and public relations.

- Readily available case management information about participant progress and issues, appropriately and effectively organized. For example, in the case of the youth who didn't clean his bathroom adequately, it would be very useful in both a functional and clinical sense to be able to find out quickly if the youth had ever demonstrated the ability to clean a bathroom in the past.
- The intrinsic value of the staff team co-creating operating procedures, goals, and priorities.

Cost factors:

How long it will take to introduce a comprehensive, integrated information management project and how much it will cost depends on numerous factors, including the number or variety of programs your agency offers, how active the agency leadership is in coordinating and implementing the project, the level of in-house expertise in content development and technology implementation, type of software used, and the number of users trained. Depending on the agency and the various types of programs offered, some databases will be more cost-efficient than others.

Cost Factors of Web-Based vs. PC-Based Databases

Web-Based (ASP)	PC-Based with Internet Bridge
• Cost is not a capital expense, it is a lease. • Cost is determined in large part by number of user licenses – each user (person) is licensed. • Annual costs are calculated primarily by user licenses and an annual leasing fee. • Most cost-efficient when there are fewer users and each has his/her own computer.	• Most of the expense is likely to be capitalized. • Cost is largely determined by the number of computers running the software, or number of connections accessible to a network (each point of access of the software is licensed). • Annual fees are determined by the number of software installations and covers upgrades and support services. • Most cost-efficient when there are many users who share computers

Technological and Database

Compumentor: Publisher of the *Database Planning Workbook*, available for download on-line at: http://www.compumentor.org/

Techfoundation: This site offers lots of interesting technological information for non-profits. http://www.techfoundation.org/

Database Providers:[1]

- **Mission Maestro is** a flexible PC-based program developed by Third Sector Systems (TSS) of Waterbury, VT. Go to http://www.thirdsectorsystems.com/
- **ServicePoint is** a web-based ASP database developed by Bowman Internet Systems, used by many HUD-funded programs. Go to http://www.servicept.com/
- **ETO** (Efforts to Outcomes) is a web-based ASP program developed by Social Solutions. Go to http://www.socialsolutionsonline.com/solutions.html
- **Octopi** is a PC-based program developed by Community Networks Corporation. Go to Octopi_Info@CNetworks.com
- **Awards** a web-based ASP developed by Foothold Technology that is priced primarily using a monthly fee. Go to http://footholdtechnology.com/products/
- **Evolv** is a web-based ASP developed by Defran Systems.
  Go to: http://www.defran.com/

Information about HUD data standards including HMIS Data and Technical Standards Final Notice –FR-4848-N-02 and other data integration issues:
http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/hmis/

Youth Development:

National Youth Development Information Center:
www.nydic.org/

The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development:
http://www.theinnovationcenter.org/

The Youth Development Training and Resource Center:
http://www.theconsultationcenter.org/ydtrc/home.htm/

The National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth:
www.ncfy.com/resource-yd.htm/

[1] These six database providers represent only a few from the hundreds that may be available.

Outcome Measurements:

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Online: This is a great life skills assessment program that can be accessed on the web at no cost. Training to make the most of this resource is available and worthwhile. http://www.caseylifeskills.org/

Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, State of Connecticut: Several excellent publications are available online, including *Assessing Outcomes in Youth Programs: A Practical Handbook, September 2001*. http://www.opm.state.ct.us/pdpd1/grants/JJAC/JJACPublications.htm

Developmental Leadership Network: On-line publishers of the *Success Measures Guidebook,* useful to community organizations, especially CDC, Housing and CAP type agencies: http://www.developmentleadership.net/smp/manual/toc.htm

Other Sites of Related Interest:

The McCormack Institute, Center for Social Policy: – this site has some excellent reports about the Homeless population in Massachusetts, based on four years of data collection using HMIS systems in emergency shelters in the Boston area. Information about several other ongoing and interesting projects as well. Based at UMass Boston: www.mccormack.umb.edu/csp/index.jsp

NEO-RHYMIS Home Page: information about the latest version of the FYSB sponsored runaway and homeless youth database, NEO-RHYMIS: http://extranet.acf.hhs.gov/rhymis

ImProve Outcomes contact:

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New England Network for Child, Youth and Family Services
(o) 802-658-9182
http://www.nenetwork.org/

Appendix A: Worksheet A

Program Purpose:	
A. Expectations of participant achievement	B. How do you know that participants are achieving these expectations?
1.	a. b. c.
2.	a. b. c.
3.	a. b. c.
4.	a. b. c.
5.	a. b. c.

Appendix B: Objectives and Indicators Test & Answer Sheet

1. **C. Youth develops community support network.** This outcome reflects the program's goal and the need to have a diversified community support network rather than simply focusing on improving peer relationships alone.
2. **C. Youths practice independent living skills necessary to move into unsupervised living within six months.** This response focuses on the positive achievement rather than negative behavior or avoidance of such behavior.
3. **A. Creates a plan to engage in community supports.** The creation of a plan demonstrates active work and can be measured through discussion with the youth about his/her plan or through a written plan submitted by the youth. Learning cannot be measured alone; a person must demonstrate some behavior to indicate learning (e.g. describes how to engage in community support). Likewise, improvement in self-esteem also requires indicators to demonstrate achievement.
4. **B. Develops career plan.** This response lacks specificity; there are steps involved in developing a career plan that are not addressed. Response B also lacks a clear time frame by which this indicator should be achieved. This response could be an objective with responses A and C being indicators.
5. **C. Describes problem solving skills.** The act of describing something reflects knowledge/comprehension of a subject. Responses A and B reflect application and synthesis of knowledge.
6. **B. Calculates the money necessary to meet daily living expenses.** This response reflects application of knowledge about the topic of budgeting. Response A is a knowledge level indicator while response C is a synthesis level indicator.
7. **A. Analyzes the benefit of two different educational plans.** This response reflects synthesis of knowledge where a person can apply prior learning to determine how well their course of action went. Response B reflects knowledge level and C application level.
8. **B. Analyzes recreational opportunities in the community.** This response does not have a clear connection to conflict resolution.
9. **E. All of the above.** Each of the indicators listed reflect steps necessary to meet the objective Plans a nutritious meal with supervision.
10. **A. Behaves appropriately in groups.** This response requires consensus among staff members as to the type of behavior considered to be appropriate in the group setting.

Appendix C: Objective/Indicator Sample Templates

C.1 Category: **Community Network** Date of this form: _______

Program Purpose

- Facilitate connection or reconnection between youth and the broader community in a positive way
- Facilitate youth developing functional support networks

Objectives	Progress Indicated By (Indicators)
1. Develops community service network	1. Visits three community support programs such as United Way, Salvation Army, local food pantry
	2. Identifies personal community service goals
	3. Participates in community service at for at least one hour
	4. Participates in community service for at least five hours
	5. Participates in community service for 20 hrs or more
	6. Completes an evaluation of his/her Community Service Experience
2. Develops community support network	1. Participates in extracurricular activity
	2. Shows interest by discussing extracurricular activity with others
	3. Expresses an interest in school and program policies and issues
	4. Involved with policy or activity planning group
	5. Improves skills involved with extracurricular activity
	6. Involved with a mentor

C.2: Category: **Employment/Career Development** Date of this form: _______

Program Purpose

- Increase job readiness of at-risk and homeless youth
- Improve networking capacity in community
- Develop and utilize a referral network
- Prepare youth for independence

Objectives	Progress Indicated By (Indicators)
1. Assess level of employment readiness	1. Completes intake form
	2. Attends meeting with counselor
	3. Identifies barriers to employment
	4. Identifies potential and available resources
	5. Creates list of skills, experiences (employment and other), and interests
2. Learns about the world of work.	1. Observes three workplaces and interviews people who work in each place
	2. Identifies three careers they have an interest in and writes a brief descritive paper about each
	3. Identifies positive characteristics that employers seek in an employee
	4. Can identify process of obtaining driver's license
	5. Investigates community service and/or volunteer opportunities
	6. Participates in one or more volunteer or other community service events
	7. Investigates apprenticeship opportunities/options

3. Prepared to seek and maintain employment	1. Fills out applications for employment
	2. Creates resume
	3. Can identify the documentation necessary to obtain employment
	4. Has possession of all the documents required to obtain employment
	5. Attends mock interview, demonstrating appropriate attitude, dress and preparation
	6. Creates and begins to implement schedule that allows ample time to seek and maintain employment
	7. Begins process to obtain driver's license
	8. Follows up on employment leads regularly, checks newspaper weekly
	9. Visits potential employer sites every two weeks
4. Improves ability to maintain employment	1. Identifies personal barriers to maintaining employment
	2. Develops and implements a plan to address barriers to maintaining employment
	3. Seeks help when he/she needs it for emotional and physical support relevant to employment retention
	4. Arranges transportation to and from work
	5. Schedules work in a practical way, avoiding conflicts that may prevent getting to work
5. Obtains and maintains employment	1. Obtains employment
	2. Maintains employment for one month
	3. Maintains employment for three months
	4. Avoids substance abuse
	5. Demonstrates ability to get up on time and maintain employment schedule

C.3 Category : **Mental Health** Date of this form: ________

Program Purpose

- Provide a safe emotional environment for youth
- Encourage youth to engage in activities that will promote mental health
- Provide an environment for youth that encourages appropriate relationships between peers and adults

Objectives	Progress Indicated By (Indicators)
1. Improves relationships with peers	1. Behaves appropriately in groups, i.e., does not put others down, is respectful of speakers, gives space to others, helps keep the group moving (for X period of time)
	2. Implements problem solving techniques for managing conflict
	3. Can identify the essential ingredients of friendship
	4. Participates in appropriate drug-free social function once a week for three months
	5. Can identify previous problems and success with peers
	6. Avoids relationships where drug use is a central component (for X period of time)
	7. Can identify components of a healthy romantic relationship
2. Improves relationships with adults	1. Seeks appropriate problem solving assistance/help from adults
	2. Creates anger management plan
	3. Implements anger management plan over 3 month period
	4. Responds positively to feedback from adults on at least one occassion
	5. Responds positively to feedback from adults several times over a one month period
	6. Takes an active role in his/her own case management planning

3. Maintains mental health	1. Schedules and attends mental health appointments with staff assistance
	2. Schedules and attends mental health appointments independently
	3. Talks with staff about changes in attitude and emotional state
	4. Describes how to be a friend
	5. Establishes appropriate friendships
	6. Avoids substance abuse
	7. Attends appropriate support group (e.g., ALANON, AA, etc)
4. Learns to manage anger and conflict effectively	1. Identifies problem-solving techniques/conflict resolution learned in mediation training
	2. Implements problem-solving techniques for managing conflict
	3. Seeks help from adults when necessary and appropriate
	4. Accepts responsibility for own actions
	5. Demonstrates ability to listen to others
	6. Expresses empathy for others

5. Reduces substance abuse	1. Reports reduction in subtance use
	2. Achieves clean drug tests for two months
	3. Comes to meetings on time and sober
	4. Does not exibit behavior indicative of subtance use for two months
	5. Does not exhibit behavior indicative of substance use for three months
6. Improves or maintains positive self-image.	1. Demonstrates increased social support network by accessing services, attending groups and social funcions
	2. Attends to medical needs
	3. Participates in healthy, sober, social events
	4. Develops a new interest
	5. Avoids substance abuse
	6. States that they feel better about who they are

C.4. Category: **Physical Health and Healthy Living Skills** Date of this form: ________

Program Purpose

- Help youth learn and practice healthy living skills
- Help youth maintain good health
- Help youth access medical care

Objectives	**Progress Indicated By (Indicators)**
1. Maintains physical health.	1. Schedules and attends medical appointments with staff assistance
	2. Schedules and attends medical appointments independently
	3. Has doctor, dentist and vision providers, and maintenance appointments are current within three months of entering program
	4. Reports knowing how to access emergency medical care and demonstrates such
	5. Demonstrates ability to exercise proper personal hygiene
	6. Follows through with medical advice
2. Maintains personal hygiene	1. Reviews personal hygiene routine with staff
	2. Dresses appropriately for school, groups, meetings, etc
	3. Does laundry regularly in a timely way
	4. Keeps laundry in appropriate containers at all times
	5. Owns devices and products required for adequate personal hygiene and identifies needs, i.e, shops for replacements, in a timely way

3. Learns nutrition skills	1. Indentifies components of a healthy diet and why eating well is important
	2. Helps staff plan meals
	3. Plans meal(s) on his/her own
	4. Helps staff with grocery shopping
	5. Shops for groceries on his/her own
	6. Prepares a well-balanced meal for self and three others
4. Learns knowledge and skills necessary to maintain reproductive health	1. Demonstrates knowledge of birth control options and issues
	2. Demonstrates knowledge of STDs, dangers, identification and avoidance
	3. Participates in peer-education project
	4. Schedules and attends appropriate medical appointments
	5. Demonstrates awareness of issues, problems and responsibilities that come with being a parent

C.5 Program: **Crisis Hotline** Date of this form: ________

Program Purpose:

- Provide immediate support to people in crisis via telephone
- Provide next step and planning support to people in crisis
- Provide the callers with referrals and information about community support.
- Provide access to counseling and other face-to-face intervention services

Objectives	Progress Indicated By (Indicators)
1. Caller calms down and actively participates in conversation regarding the situation.	1. Caller calmly describes the situation as evidenced by an even tone of voice, speaking at an appropriate rate and volume, and ability to describe the situation in an organized and logical manner.
	2. Caller improves communication and organization of thoughts as the conversation progresses.
	3. Caller demonstrates safety of him/herself and others by cleary describing safety plan.
	4. Caller identifies thoughts and and feelings connected to the crisis situation by the end of the telephone call.
2. Caller develops preliminary plans for change.	1. Caller identifies areas of strength and weakness within 15 to 30 minutes of the call.
	2. Caller prioritizes areas of weakness to work on.
	3. Caller works with the Crisis Intervention Counselor in developing alternative responses to the situation.
	4. Caller develops short and long term goals to work toward.
3. Caller learns about community support options and how to access them.	1. Caller decides which referral sources would meet their family's needs.
	2. Caller accepts a referral to a support agency with assistance from KIC Crisis Services Counselors.
	3. Caller identifies a variety of informal supports and develops a plan to access them.

C.6 Program: **Adolescent Emergency Shelter** Date of this form: __________

Program Purpose:
- Provide short term emergency and bridge shelter to adolescents
- Provide access to short term bridge school when necessary
- Provide short term counseling and life skill training to youth in shelter

Objectives	Progress Indicated By (Indicators)
1. Youth learns the structure of the program within one week.	1. Youth knows the rules of the program.
	2. Youth describes the daily schedule.
	3. Youth develops behavioral goals to work on while at KIC
	4. Youth explains the level system to new residents.
2. Youth participates in the program.	1. Youth attends school daily.
	2. Youth follows the daily schedule.
	3. Youth completes chores.
	4. Youth attends group daily.
	5. Youth meets with Primary Counselor daily.
3. Youth improves (or maintains) overall academic achievement.	1. Youth attends all classes daily
	2. Youth is prepared for classes by doing homework daily.
	3. Youth avoids school suspension.

4. Youth improves relationships with peers.	1. Youth defines conflict management.
	2. Youth practices conflict management with staff assistance in peer mediation.
	3. Youth initiates peer mediation on their own.
	4. Youth identifies behavior and attitudes that negatively impact peer relationships
	5. Youth decreases the need for mediation.
	6. Youth creates a plan to adjust behavior and attitude to enhance peer relationships.
	7. Youth develops an appropriate and positive relationship with at least one peer.
	8. Youth applies lessons learned to the larger populations of peer in school and the community.
5. Youth improves emotional functioning.	1. Youth demonstrates use of the language behind emotions.
	2. Youth identifies and expresses feelings to staff.
	3. Youth connects feelings with behavior.
	4. Youth responds to prompting by staff to use feelings language rather than behavior.
	5. Youth expresses (through various methods) feelings to staff.
	6. Youth initiates one-on-ones with staff to process their feelings.
6. Youth demonstrates an understanding of being part of a community.	1. Youth gives feedback to others in level review appropriately.
	2. Youth brings individual concerns to the community group.
	3. Youth identifies community problem(s) in an appropriate way.
	4. Youth actively engages in process of finding solutuions to community problems.

Appendix D: Objective/Indicator Forms

Program: ____ **Date of this form:** _____________

Program Purpose:

-
-
-

Objectives	Progress Indicated By (Indicators)
1.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
	7.
	8.
2.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
	7.
	8.

Page 2

3.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
	7.
	8.
4.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
	7.
	8.

Page 3

5.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
6.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
7 .	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.

Page 4

8.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
9.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.
10.	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
	5.
	6.

Appendix E: Developing Discrete Behavior Ranges on a High-Low Scale

A function range scale is used to further discern the behaviors and attitudes participants pass through as they make progress toward a goal. This range, from low to high, helps staff approach the development of indicators and the criteria for indicators. A range is particularly helpful when it is necessary to measure very discrete behavior and attitude change.

What follows are transition to independent living program range examples for emotional and concrete skills.

Ability to form positive relationships with peers

Low

- No eye contact
- Intolerable to all
- Frequently argues
- Manipulative
- Doesn't understand social cues
- Absence of responsibility in social interactions
- Poor boundaries, or lack of boundaries
- Unable to communicate feelings in peer group
- Unable to offer support or empathy to other youth

Medium

- Able to negotiate differences with mediation help from adults
- Aware of boundary issues and willing to discuss them
- Takes some responsibility for own actions
- Loyal to friends
- Able to identify friends and knows how to be a friend
- Gets into melodramatic situations and loses sight of autonomy

High

- Demonstrates appropriate boundaries
- Demonstrates peer leadership
- Empathizes with peers
- Takes responsibility for own actions
- Able to assess social situations effectively
- Demonstrates autonomy in relationships
- Communicates feelings in peer group setting
- Offers support and empathy to other youth

Ability to maintain clean and healthy domestic environment

Low

- Does not cook or clean
- Has no awareness of state of cleanliness
- Frequently requires re-inspection of apartment
- Orders fast food frequently
- Shops impulsively, without a plan

Medium

- Does domestic chores with staff support and encouragement
- Primarily uses pre-prepared foods (heat & serve)
- Cleans appropriately for weekly inspection
- Occasionally purchases healthy economical food (with staff support)
- Unlikely to comparison shop

High

- Keeps room and apartment clean without inspection
- Cooks meal using a recipe
- Creates and uses shopping list regularly
- Plans some meals ahead
- Shops for bargains

Ability to form positive relationships with adults
Low
- No ability to form positive relationships with adults
- Consistently demonstrates lack of trust in relationships with adults
- Engages in pattern of deceit with adults
- Avoids situations where social contact with adults might be high
- Encourages peers not to form positive relationships with adults
- Unable to communicate feelings to adults

Medium

- Occasionally demonstrates ability to build relationships with adults
- Occasionally able to trust and be honest with adults, but often unable to do so
- Occasionally communicates feelings effectively with adults, but not consistently
- Seeks consultation with adults about issues and problems at least once, but not consistently
- Occasionally responds positively to feedback from adults, especially if the adult is very thoughtful about the presentation.
- Can identify at least one adult they trust

High

- Consistently able to form positive relationships with adults
- Able to trust and be honest with adults
- Communicates feelings effectively with adults
- Seeks consultation with adults about issues and problems
- Responds positively to feedback from adults, including constructive criticism
- Can identify one or more adult as a mentor

In the first example, “Ability to form positive relationships with peers”, can be used for three purposes:

1. To translate the issue into an objective, such as “Increases ability to form positive relationships with peers.”
2. To use some of the “medium” range functions that show progress as knowledge and application level indicators of success toward the goal.
3. To use some of the “high” range behaviors as application and synthesis indicators.

Appendix F: Youth Developmental Needs, Inputs, Resources

Young people have basic needs critical to survival and healthy development. They are a sense of:

- Safety and structure;
- Belonging and membership;
- Self-worth and an ability to contribute;
- Independence and control over one's life;
- Closeness and several good relationships; and,
- Competence and mastery.

(*A New Vision: Promoting Youth Development*, Testimony of Karen Johnson Pittman, Director, Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, before the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, September 30, 1991)

Youth developmental needs (based on research), include the need for:

- Basic food and shelter,
- Supportive, caring relationships,
- Safe places, and
- Opportunities for growth.

Specific needs in these areas are influenced by current development (physical, cognitive and social), as well as individual characteristics and a broad set of background and contextual factors. Developmental needs are met within a social context and are influenced by the demands and supports provided by those contexts, such as the family, school, and community. *(Youth Development Programs and Outcomes: Final Report for the YMCA of the USA , Search Institute, 1996)*

Seven Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents (and their characteristics):

Need: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Characteristics include:

- changing hormone levels produce periods of boundless energy and lethargy
- desire to test new physical capabilities
- normal variation in onset of puberty, rate of growth
- vulnerability to injury due to rapid growth

Need: COMPETENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT
Characteristics include:

- desire for personal recognition
- desire for responsibility
- desire to succeed
- emergence of new interests, capabilities
- emerging racial/cultural identity
- emerging sexual identity
- "imaginary audience" self-consciousness
- need for approval from adults
- need for approval from peers
- somewhat shaky self-esteem
- vulnerability to adult expectations

Need: SELF-DEFINITION
Characteristics include:

- emerging gender identity
- emerging racial/cultural identity
- emerging sense of a personal future
- emotionalism, mood swings
- new body image
- new reactions from others
- onset of formal operations

Need: CREATIVE EXPRESSION
Characteristics include:

- desire to test new physical & mental capabilities
- emerging racial/cultural identity
- emerging sexual identity
- onset of formal operations

Need: POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS WITH PEERS AND ADULTS
Characteristics include:

- continued importance of parents and other adults
- "imaginary audience," self-consciousness
- increasing importance of peers
- maturing social skills
- need for approval from adults
- need for approval from peers
- search for models, heroes, and heroines

Need: STRUCTURE AND CLEAR LIMITS
Characteristics include:

- authoritarianism
- desire for autonomy
- desire to know and understand rules and limits
- increasing importance of peers
- lack of life experience
- need for continued adult guidance
- need for security
- onset of formal operations
- "personal fable," immunity to harm

Need: MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION
Characteristics include:

- desire for autonomy
- desire to be part of the "real" adult world
- desire for personal recognition
- desire for responsibility
- emerging gender identity
- emerging racial/cultural identity
- lack of life experience
- maturing social skills
- onset of formal operations
- readiness to make commitments to ideals, activities, and people

(***Our Children at Risk: Children and Youth Issues***, 1998, YMCA of the USA, 1998)

Fundamental resources: *America 's Promise* created a blueprint for success, a unified plan, calling on the public and private sectors to focus their time, talents, and treasures toward providing our nation's youth access to five fundamental resources:

- A caring adult, role model, or mentor;
- Safe places to learn and grow during non-school hours
- A healthy start;
- A marketable skill through effective education; and
- An opportunity for young people to "give back" through community service.

(***The Report To The Nation: America's Promise***, November 1997, The Alliance For Youth, Executive Summary)