Process Evaluation: A Crucial Piece of the Effective Intervention Puzzle

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Issues

♦ In response to federal program evaluation requirements, the California State Office of AIDS (OA) designed and implemented an innovative web-based data collection system for its HIV prevention providers.

♦ The goal of the Evaluating Local Interventions (ELI) system is for California’s HIV prevention providers to be able to systematically collect and assess client-based information critical to effectively prevent HIV infection and evaluate their programs.

♦ Though a basic form of evaluation, process evaluation is necessary to steer the planning, implementation, and management of interventions toward their goals and objectives. This is most easily accomplished through a web based system.

♦ The process began by conducting needs assessments across the State in collaboration with the University of California AIDS Research Program to define core measures that target program implementation and risk behavior.

♦ Data collection for various types of encounters were developed in conjunction with the system and are divided into intervention types. Providers collect information using these forms and then enter data into the ELI system via the Internet.

Description

♦ ELI Web Address http://www.dhs.ca.gov/aids/

♦ ELI front page and information:

Signed point for data entry and report generation:

Lessons Learned

1 From 2002 to 2003, a minimum of two individuals from each of the 61 local health jurisdictions (LHJs) in California were trained on the use of ELI. On-going training (co-developed by OA and UCSF) is currently provided every other month around the State. The one-day training consists of several workshops that cover the ELI forms, how to use the data effectively and hands-on computer training. The trainings begin with an ELI Feedback Forum that allows each participant to discuss their relationship to ELI and any specific questions they have.

2 Statewide implementation of ELI began July 1, 2002, and ELI-generated reports indicate that, as of January 22, 2004 there were 3,410 interventions defined with 1,015,226 client contacts recorded. This includes 804,175 from aggregate data collection sheets and 211,051 from client by client contacts.

3 The State of California’s 61 LHJs consist of 1,062 ELI users and subcontract to 201 community based organizations. The ELI system continues to evolve based on provider feedback. The quality of the data in the system has improved over the past year by provision of on-site technical assistance to agencies.

4 A key feature of ELI is the ability to instantly generate reports on the data. Currently there are 55 reports available with many more in production. Some examples are Age by Race by Gender, Interventions by Risk Category, and HIV Status by Gender and Drug Use.

ELI report screen:

Example ELI report:

Recommendations

♦ Community and LHJ participation in the development of ELI was crucial to its successful launch in July 2001.

♦ A critical part of the success of ELI was the inclusion of additional TA provision. The California Technical Assistance Project (CTAP), a program of the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at UCSF, provides evaluation and program development TA to all ELI users through trainings, on site TA, and a toll free warm line.

♦ Developing a flexible system that can be updated to meet the specific needs and on-going feedback of providers has been an essential feature of the ELI system.

♦ Providers were enthusiastic about the translation of several forms into Spanish.

♦ Training evaluations have been very positive and supportive of the ELI system, although suggestions have been made to create basic and advanced trainings to accommodate users with different levels of data/computer experience.

♦ Users have also requested additional training on ELI’s reporting features, including specific examples of how data could be used to evaluate programs. This feedback has provided great insight into both the data needs and data use capacity for agencies throughout the State. In response to this feedback an ELI Report Guide has been developed and the trainings for 2004 include a heavier focus on system reports.

♦ Next steps include integration of ELI with other process evaluation mechanisms used by the Office of AIDS, advanced system trainings, two-tiered technical assistance, in-depth quality assurance analysis, program enhancement, and ongoing maintenance.

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