

Family Members as Evaluators: Preliminary Results of a Training Curriculum (and Evaluator Survey)

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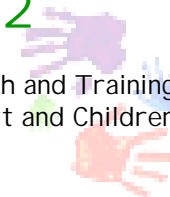
Research and Training Center on Family Support and
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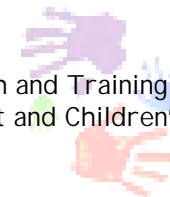
The World of Evaluation: How to Work In It

A skills training initiative for families
by the Federation of Families For Children's
Mental Health in partnership with family
friendly researchers
and evaluators.



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The World of Evaluation: How to Make It Yours

- COURSE I: How to Understand It
- COURSE II: How to work in It
- COURSE III: How to Lead it



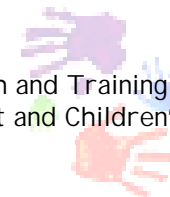
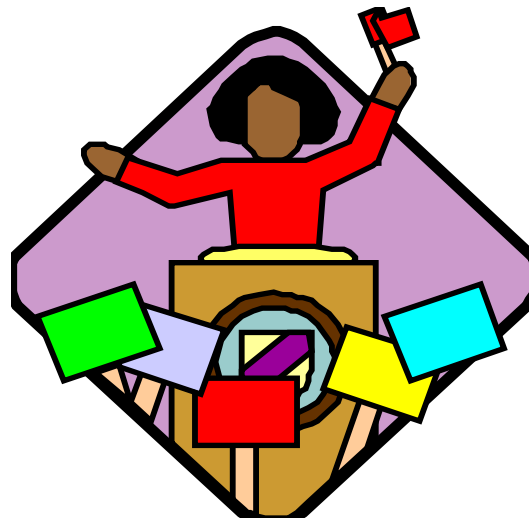
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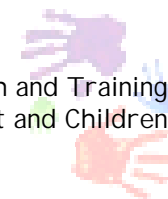
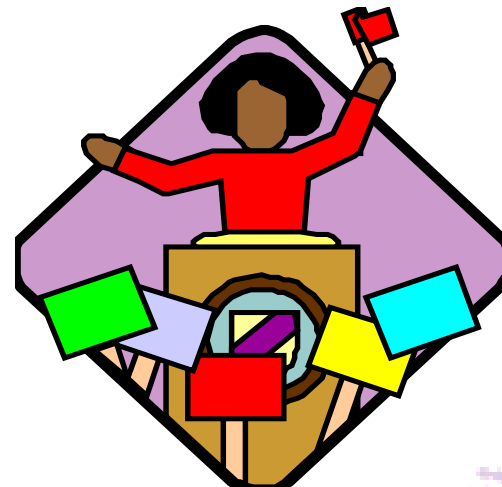
Goal of Course 1

- To prepare family members to use evaluation results for advocacy.



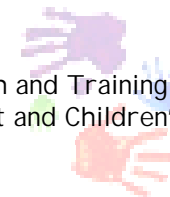
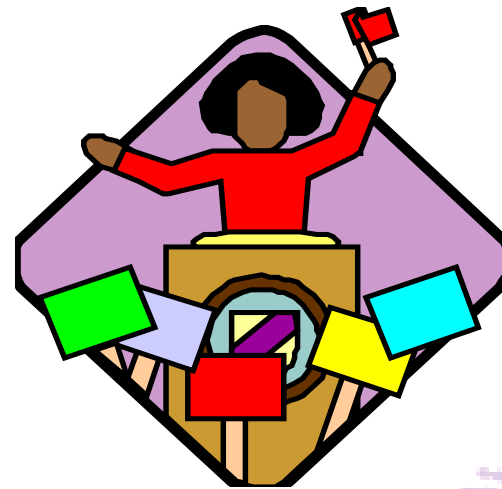
Goal of Course 2

- To prepare family members to be confident, active, and effective members of a research or evaluation team.



Goal of Course 3

- To prepare family members to direct and lead evaluation projects, partnering with formally trained researchers and evaluators for their technical expertise.



Design of the Course 1 Evaluation

- The evaluation design was created in collaboration with the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
- 24 of the 40 participants from the Course 1 trainings were interviewed by phone.
- Interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were conducted by RTC staff.



Design of the Course 1 Evaluation

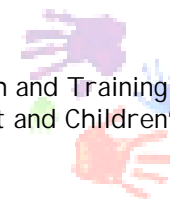


- The interview schedule contained questions about what they learned and how they were using the knowledge.
- Questions were both open-ended and scaled
- The scaled questions ranged from 1= a little to 5= a lot.



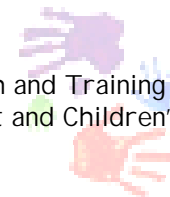
Involving Participants in Data Analysis

- Participants expressed interest and consistent with nature of the evaluation.
- Mailed narrative results + frequency tables + tip sheet to interested participants.
- Held two conference calls to discuss themes.
- Participants identified different examples as important but not different themes.

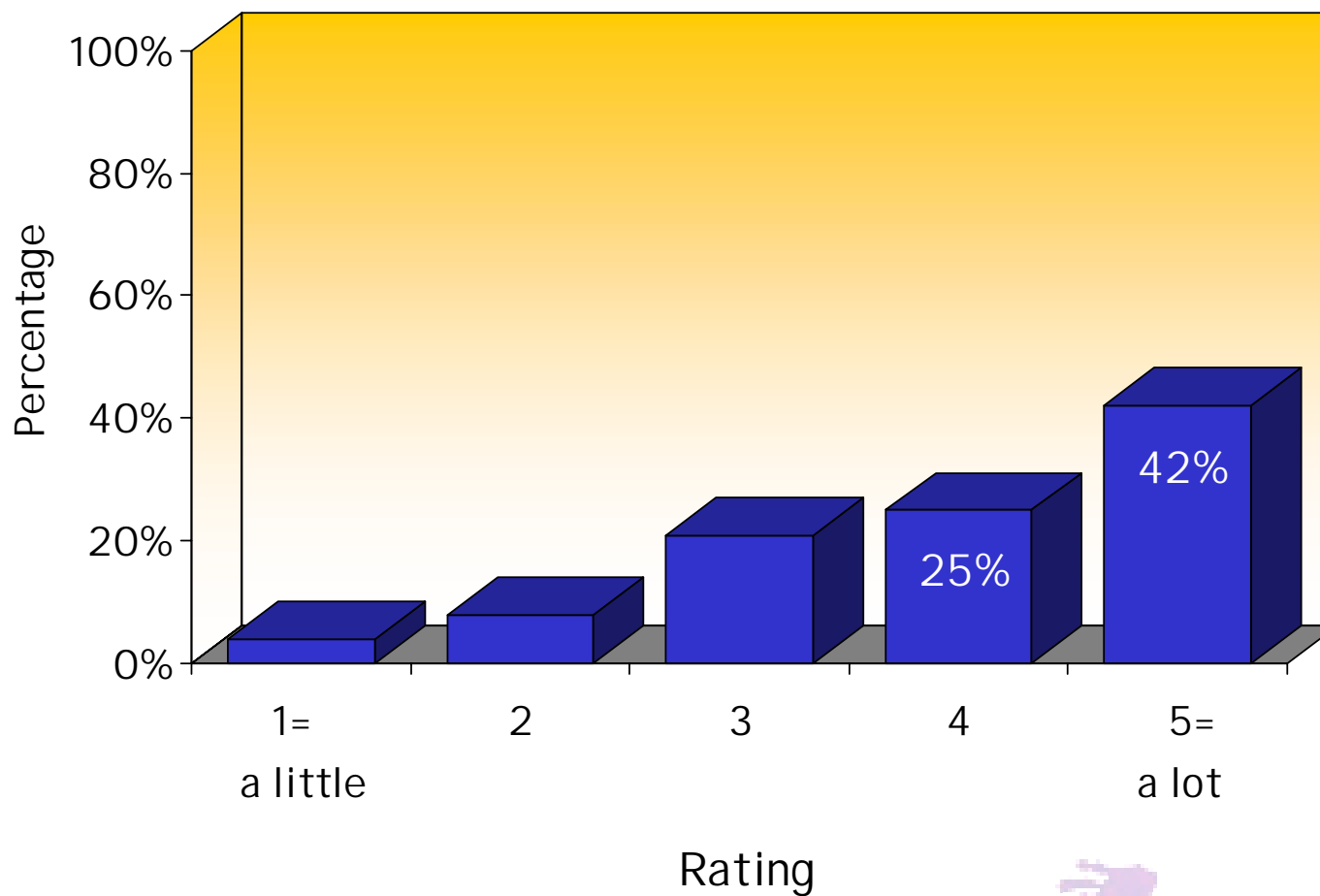


Overview of Findings

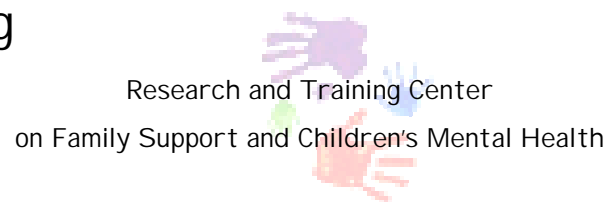
- Four Major Areas:
 1. Knowledge and skill about the evaluation process
 2. Ability to advocate
 3. Confidence about voicing opinions about evaluation
 4. Change in attitude about working with researchers and evaluators



Amount Learned about the Evaluation Process



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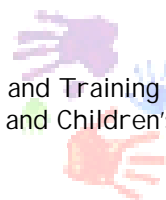


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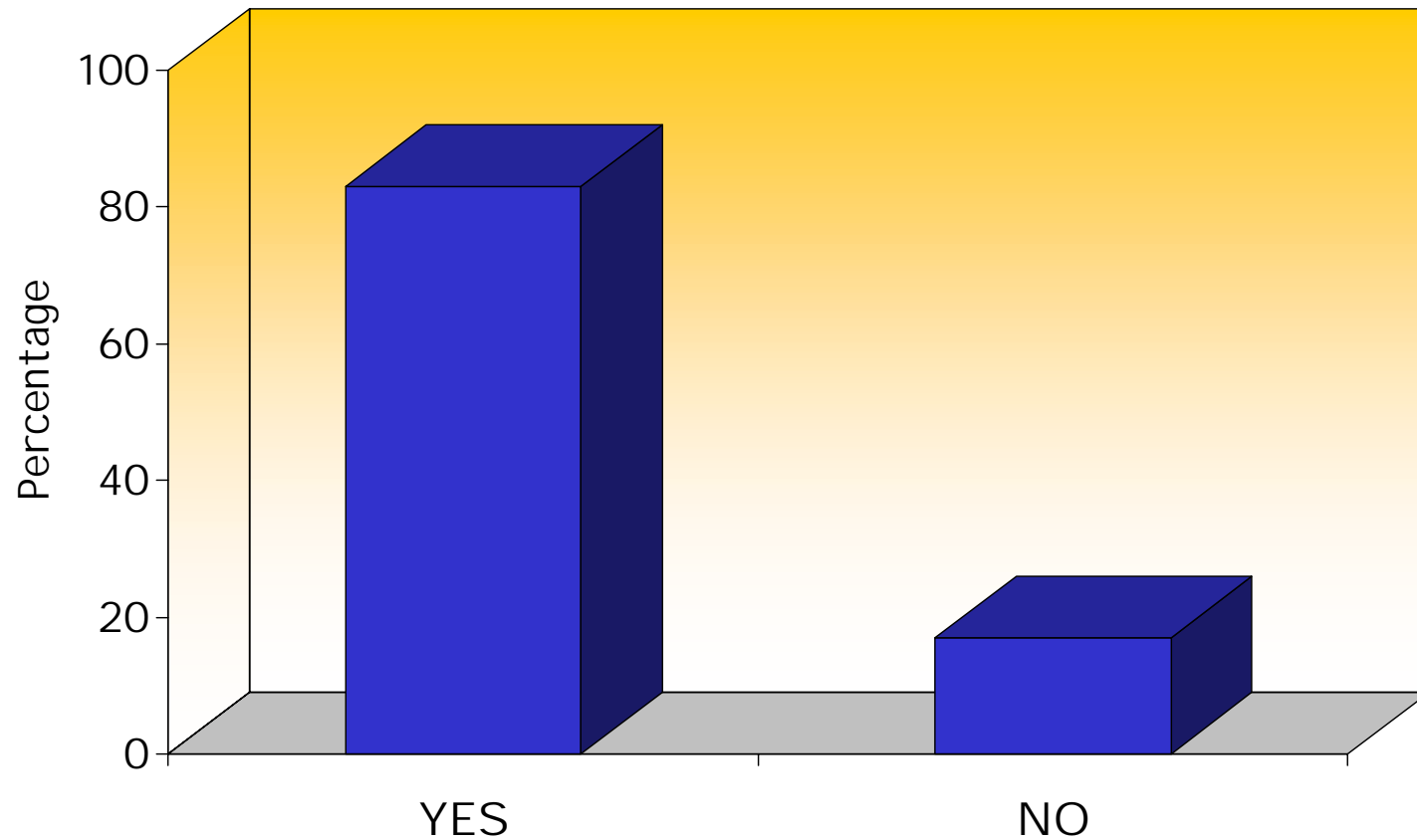
Major Themes: Knowledge and Skills

Knowledge and skills gained:

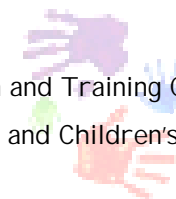
- Learned that evaluation should be driving a lot of things being done – it's important. Surprised at how useful it is.
- Learned how to look at articles and get the important information out of it and to judge the value of the information.
- Learned how to create charts so that they are effective. What to put together for different audiences.
- Learned how to ask questions and how evaluation relates to family members.



Affected Ability to Advocate



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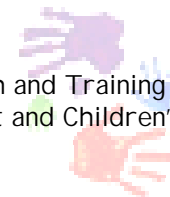


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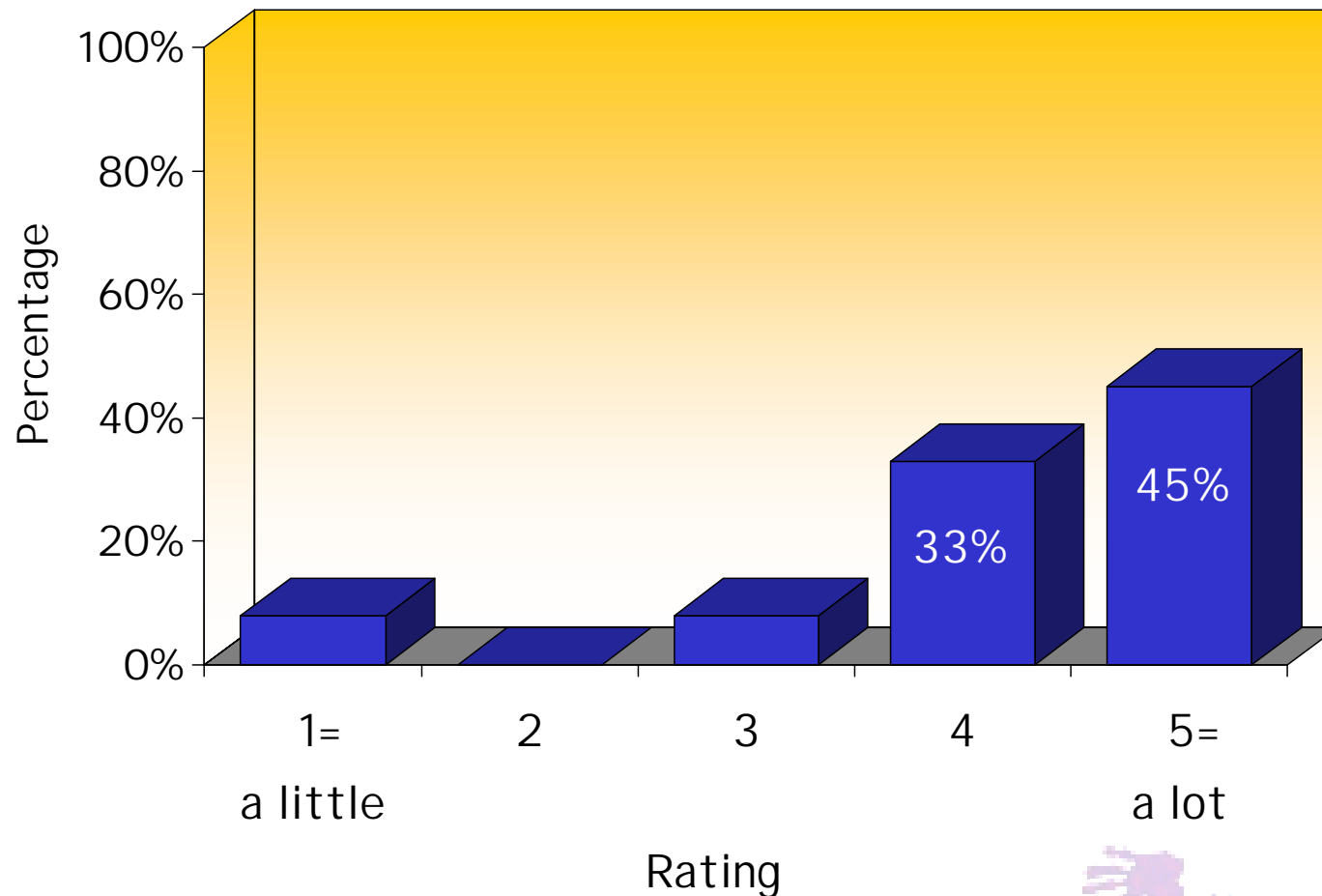
Major Themes: Advocacy

Affected Ability to Advocate:

- How to use evaluation data as a tool to empower families to be able to advocate for programs with politicians.
- How to voice her opinion about decisions that are being made. Knows where to get information she needs - can go to the state Capitol and speak to state representatives.
- How to review evaluation reports and advocate for more services or less services where services aren't helpful for families.
- Learned importance of evaluation for advocacy...providers and researchers value what she says more.

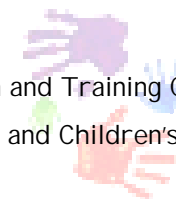


Change in participants confidence in voicing opinions about evaluation



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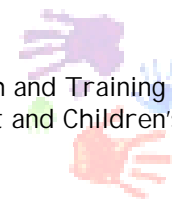
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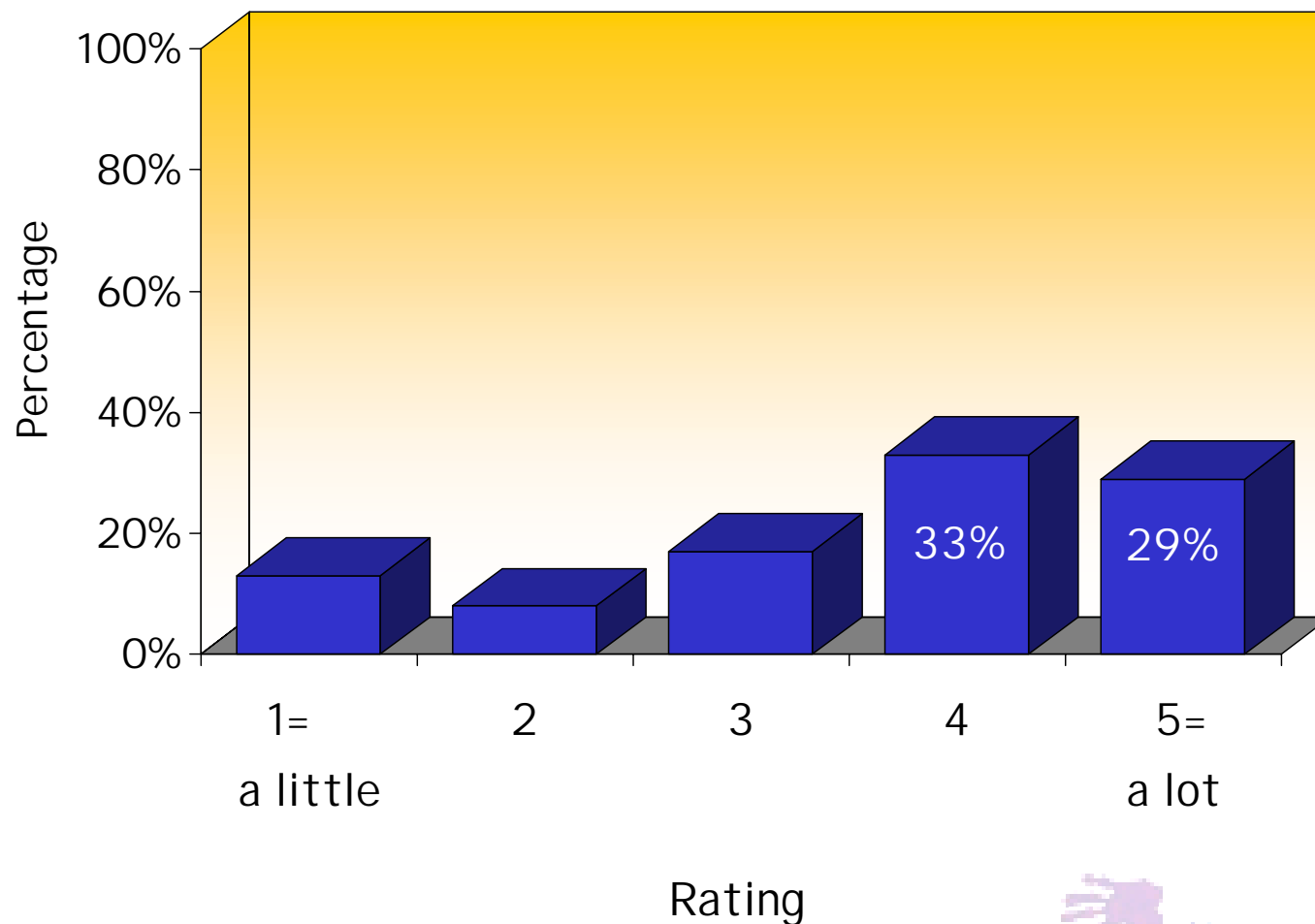
Major Themes: Confidence

Change in confidence in asking questions and voicing opinions about evaluation:

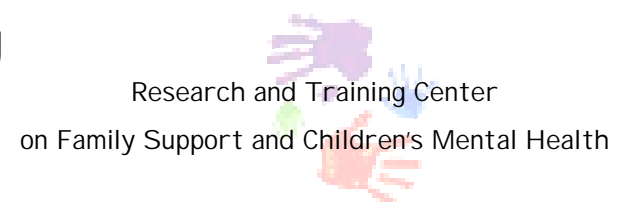
- Parents don't need to feel intimidated. The training made it easy to understand.
- May look daunting or scary but can take piece by piece and understand it. Don't have to be a Ph.D. or research scientist.
- Feels like she has more power and that she's at the table with everyone else.
- Feels more confident to talk to evaluators at their level and read reports and understand it and use it to her advantage.
- Now can talk boldly and ask questions.



Change in attitude about working with researchers or evaluators



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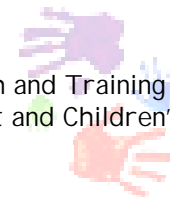


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Major Themes: Attitudes

Change in attitude about working with researchers or evaluators:

- Much more excited about working with evaluators.
- Didn't realize that family members need to start working with researchers.
- Seems less intimidating, they seem more human not just working with numbers and figure.
- Has become more vocal with evaluators.



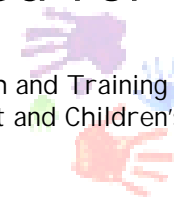
Preliminary Findings of Evaluator Survey (Based on 9 Interviews)

Purpose:

To identify strategies that promote collaborative relationships in evaluation teams.

Method:

1. Identified evaluators who are (or have been) working with family members on evaluation teams, through:
 - Nomination by key informants
 - Snowball sampling
2. Telephone interviews with open-ended qualitative questions
3. Transcribed interview notes and analyzed for themes



Multiple roles of family members on evaluation teams.

“Family members are on a continuum from volunteer advisory board members looking at questions or results and commenting on them to the other end of the spectrum... a family member as a research associate on the team, full-time and paid. In the middle I [have worked on evaluations] with family members who have helped to design, collect, interpret, and report data.”



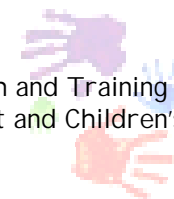
Evaluators were not trained to work with family members.



“This is very different from my training... Nothing about family involvement. Even in qualitative research there was an emphasis on objectivity. Nothing about partnering.”



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Institutional/system barriers to family involvement in evaluation teams



- Hiring based on “academic” qualifications.

“Experience as a parent doesn’t count. There are pay and equity problems.”

- Concerns about “objectivity”.

“The main issue is the perception of objectivity.”

“Providers tend to see her as a consumer and therefore irrational... Over time some are gaining respect as they work with her more.”



Institutional/system barriers (cont.):



- Getting adequate salaries.

“We say on one hand that we value families as much as the work of professionals, but we never pay them as much... it’s hard to pay them what they are worth.”

- Getting fast reimbursement of expenses.

“Family members can’t afford to put travel expenses on a credit card and need funds for child care.”



Institutional/system barriers (cont.):

- Scheduling challenges.

“Professionals have difficulty scheduling meetings around parents’ schedules.”

- Status differences.

“Another barrier is... getting parents treated with respect, trying to get respect, equalized. It’s still very hierarchical with parents at the bottom.”

“The team always accorded her high status, but the other systems didn’t do that.”



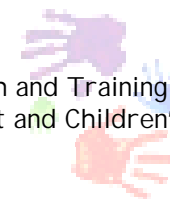
Other Barriers:

- Evaluators need to anticipate that family members may need to acquire technical skills to do the job.

“She was really helpful in the early stages, but when the data began to come in, after about 18 months, it became apparent that technical skills were needed and she had not learned them.”

- Conflict re: family members wanting to use preliminary data for advocacy

“One person who first had the job...frustration at seeing the data and not being able to be an advocate... need to accept a slower pace of change.”

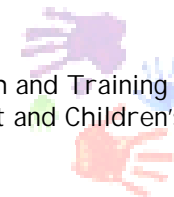


Other Barriers:

- Need to anticipate stress created by dissonance between advocate and evaluator roles.

“She could see problems, but couldn’t see how to fix them... I didn’t anticipate and help her to manage the stress... If I was doing it over, I would set up support on a regular basis to talk about stress and how to manage it.”

“We took a lot of the grunt work, entering data, elevated [the family member] to a higher status, but she needed to be a team member. It made her role less meaningful.”



Effective strategies for family members-evaluator collaboration:

- Providing on-the-job training and other training opportunities.

“Need to be able to meet family members where they’re at.”

“[Family member on the evaluation team] had to learn on the job because she had no training... That’s why the Federation trainings are so important. We paid for them to go because I didn’t have time to teach.”

“In retrospect, if we’d realized ahead of time, she could have taken courses along the way, so she’d have been ready for it.”



Effective strategies for family members-evaluator collaboration:

- Promoting a culture of mutual learning.

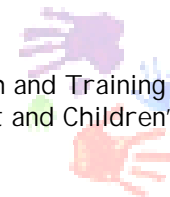
“Being open to learning in a bi-directional manner...learning from each other.”

- Open communication, especially about differences in perspectives.

“Importance of open communication... re: the frustrations on the project of working together.”

- Flexibility in scheduling

“We have a very flexible work environment... a culture of working 40 hours, but not specific hours.”



Implications:

- Training increased family members' knowledge and skills in evaluation.
- Training increased confidence to participate in evaluation.
- Training increased ability to use evaluation in advocacy.
- Professional curriculum for evaluators needs to include content on working with family members.
- Need opportunities for evaluators to learn from other evaluators and family members who have already worked together.

