About Child Trends

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that improves the lives and prospects of children and youth by **conducting high-quality research** and **sharing the resulting knowledge** with practitioners and policymakers.

**We . . .**

1. take a whole child approach
2. study children in the real world
3. want children to flourish
4. value objectivity and rigor
5. pursue knowledge development *and* knowledge transfer

childtrends.org
Our Approach

Measure it

Share it

Understand it

Scale it

Prove it
Partners, Funders, Clients
Roadmap for Today’s Talk

What we already know...
• The importance of evidence and CASA’s research base

What’s happening on the ground...
• CASA’s data collection efforts

What’s next...
• How CASA can build a strong evidence base with evaluation
What we already know...
Evidence Matters.
What is evidence?

High

Experimental

Quasi-experimental

Evidence-informed, non-experimental

Low

Replicated Experimental
Why does evidence matter?

• For proving your value to funders
• For keeping your implicit promise to children
• For building the field
• For building the future
Evidence Matters
Lori Delale-O’Connor and Sarah Catherine Williams
CASA Volunteers Matter.
But, how do we know what we know about CASA?

... And how can we learn more?
Evidence on the benefits of having a CASA Volunteer

Having a CASA volunteer is associated with:

- Receipt of more services
- Greater likelihood of adoption
- Fewer placements
CASA’s research base
...and the need for more evidence

All research is not created equal

- Lower levels of rigor
- Comparable grouping and outcomes
- Performed in a piecemeal approach

Some outcomes are more relevant than others

- System outcomes
- Child outcomes

And this is where we come in!
Performance Measurement Project

Goals:

- Assess current network data collection and analysis
- Better understand and measure performance data
- Move toward developing an evidence base through program evaluation
Voices from the field

“Data is an essential part of the larger narrative about our children, but we don’t know what data will tell our story.”
What’s happening on the ground...
CASA programs...

• Collect A LOT of information
• Collect data using different systems/software
• Use data mainly for reporting requirements
• Have different data collection priorities
• Would like additional support
Data Matter.
What are beneficial areas for data collection?

- Permanency
- Placements
- Well-being
**Example of permanency outcome and measures**

**Outcome:** Reduce time in foster care to reunification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic</strong></td>
<td>The average number of months from most recent removal to reunification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate</strong></td>
<td>The number/percentage of children reunified with either birth parent in less than 12 months from the date of entry into care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong></td>
<td>The number/percentage of children who reentered care in less than 12 months from date of discharge to reunification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The network has spoken.

• CASA has an emerging evidence base
• Programs have different capacity levels
• Programs want to demonstrate effectiveness
• Programs want to improve programs and services
What’s Next?
Evaluation Matters.

(but it needs to be systematic)
Develop a national logic model.
Select performance measures.

National CASA will select measures that:

• Are related to CASA’s mission
• Consider burden
• Are timed appropriately

Simple and connected to the logic model!
Evaluate no program before its time.

Conduct Needs Assessment

Identify Your Population

Select Intervention, Develop Logic Model & Identify Indicators

Implement Program/Approach & Conduct Ongoing Performance Management

Conduct an Implementation Evaluation

Collect Data on Performance & Outcome Measures

Conduct a Quasi-Experimental Outcomes Evaluation

Conduct a Randomized-Controlled Impact Evaluation

Targeting
Evaluate no program before its time.

Conduct Needs Assessment

Identify Your Population

Select Intervention, Develop Logic Model & Identify Indicators

Implement Program/Approach & Conduct Ongoing Performance Management

Collect Data on Performance & Outcome Measures

Conduct an Implementation Evaluation

Conduct a Quasi-Experimental Outcomes Evaluation

Conduct a Randomized-Controlled Impact Evaluation
Concluding thoughts...

• There is a lot to feel good about!
• Opportunities abound
• Leads to sustainability
Children matter.
Contact information

Sarah Catherine Williams
E-mail: swilliams@childtrends.org

Lori Delale-O’Connor
E-mail: ldelale-oconnor@childtrends.org
Research in the Service of Children

www.childtrends.org