

Guidelines to Build Accountability into IMH Funded Programs

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to orient IMH applicants/grantees to the requirements of building accountability into IMH funded initiatives through documentation and, in some circumstances, evaluation. These guidelines pertain to IMH's Early Childhood Mental Health and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Grant Programs as well as Technical Assistance Grants over \$10,000.

Rationale

IMH is interested in promoting effective and responsive services. Good planning, followed by careful and accurate documentation of service provision and utilization including identification of indicators of success, are the first steps in making it possible for service providers and funders to learn from the work we do. To this end, IMH requires that all applicants outline a plan for collection, reporting and utilization of pertinent information throughout the proposed funding period. In addition, it is expected that applicants will consider indicators of success (short- term outcomes) as an integral part of their planning process. Measurement of these outcomes is not an IMH requirement.

Terminology

In order to create a common understanding of terminology between IMH and its applicants/grantees, please use the definitions listed below.

Framework- Sometimes called a logic model. For this purpose, this diagram will assist agencies to recognize the components necessary to meet programmatic goals.

Assumptions- The beliefs about the program and the way the program will work; principles guiding the program.

Examples: in-home service delivery is most effective in meeting the needs of families at risk of out of home placement of children

Activities- The services that the program undertakes in order to meet programmatic goals.

Examples: counseling sessions, mentoring sessions, field trips, parenting classes

Outputs- The number of above activities and number of participants in the activity. Does not document change in client.

Examples: number of skills-building sessions held, number of people mentored or counseled

Targets- The expected number of output units.

Examples: 200 parents (target) attend a counseling session (output), 80% of original clients complete a program

Indicators of success or outcomes- Indication of impacts/benefits/changes for participants during or after participation in the program. These are usually expressed in terms of changes in knowledge or skills (short-term) or behavior (long-term).

Examples: changes in knowledge about the impact of physical punishment on very young children (short-term), using modeled discipline techniques in the home (long-term)

Description

All applicants to the Early Childhood Mental Health, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Grant Programs and Technical Assistance grants over \$10,000 are required to document their program activities, the number of people participating in or using the activity or service and the indicators of success of the intervention. Indicators of success (short-term outcomes) need not be measured but should be considered as a part of the planning process.

A grantee may choose to measure outcomes (indicators of success) in addition to the IMH requirements. In this case, the outcome-based evaluation plan should be reflected in the proposal and results reported to IMH at designated intervals.

At the recommendation of the Board, select grantees will be offered assistance from the IMH Evaluation Consultant to refine their Accountability Framework.

Under certain conditions the Board will request that a grantee conduct a more rigorous outcome-based evaluation. In these circumstances, funding for evaluation as well as technical assistance will be provided.

Process

Review the grant application, this guide, the Accountability Framework template and Accountability Framework sample completely before drafting your accountability plan. It is important that the plan you describe in Section IID of the Grant Proposal Application and in the Accountability Framework align with the goals you set in Section IIC, Question 4.

Use the Accountability Framework to express your Accountability Plan. It relates the goals of your program to the outputs you will document as well as the indicators of success (short-term outcomes) you expect. This document must be

Guidelines to Build Accountability into IMH Funded Programs - 2 -

submitted as a part of your proposal.

Guidelines to Build Accountability into IMH Funded Programs

Should your agency choose to measure outcomes in addition to the information required by IMH, please contact the IMH office for an alternate framework template.

In order to reveal any unclear areas in your presentation, it is often helpful to have your plan reviewed by a person unfamiliar with your program prior to submission of your proposal.

If your proposal is funded, you will be advised of the status of your Accountability Plan in your award letter. It may be approved without change or technical assistance may be recommended. If modifications are required, they will become a part of the negotiated award agreement.

It is important to pilot all aspects of your Accountability Plan, including analysis, early in your implementation. This will allow your agency to make adjustments to your plan as necessary. The IMH Evaluation Consultant should be informed of any substantial changes to your plan.

All IMH grantees submit mid-year and year-end reports. The guidelines for these reports are currently in development. They will be forwarded to you as soon as they are complete. In future grant cycles, the reporting requirements will be included with the award letter.