

Sustainability Issues and Evidence Based Interventions

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SSHS requires sites to implement evidence based interventions and practices wherever possible, as a means to improving the effectiveness of prevention and intervention services. Bringing “science”, in the form of research based approaches, to “service”, e.g. services delivered by teachers, mental health workers and others, has traditionally been approached as a passive process: diffusion and dissemination of information was supposed to result in practitioners changing their practice. But research on the effects of training and other efforts to support the diffusion of evidence based interventions shows that training alone has very little effect; and that a combination of supports around the actual interventions are what makes for sustained and effective intervention. National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) suggests these factors:

1) Staff selection

Sustainability: often there is no actual selection, e.g. all 5th grade teachers; but there is staff turnover to plan for

2) Pre-service and in-service training

New staff has to be oriented; continuing staff need booster sessions. Who organizes this/contains it within ongoing professional development

3) Ongoing coaching and consultation, supported by administrators

Often these functions are carried out by grant-funded staff. Short of sustaining these positions, strategies include building implementation teams that exist within other structures, e.g. curriculum departments, or teaching teams, where problem solving and discussion of classroom issues is the norm

4) Staff performance appraisal (application of training; fidelity of implementation)

Again, observing staff and giving feedback on fidelity of implementation is often achieved through grant funding, either the local evaluator or project staff. Building level staff, either administrators or lead implementers, can sustain these activities, with help from the local evaluator or project staff to systematize collecting and reviewing this data

5) Decision support data systems (CQI; fidelity; outcomes)

Similar to #4, evaluator and project staff can build systems for implementers to easily collect basic implementation data (how many lessons, how many classrooms, fidelity, etc.), but someone on the building level needs to lead review and use of the data

6) Leadership and systems change approach from administrators

Administrators have to support these factors, e.g., identification of new staff, ongoing professional development, staff taking on coaching roles, collecting and reviewing implementation data, and institutionalize these activities through policy change

7) Alignment of external systems to provide supports

Administrators need to protect the various resources (\$\$ for new training or curricula; staff professional development time; facilities and equipment needed; structure of schedules) needed for continued implementation