

2011 STAM – CCPRC Meeting
Workshop D1
November 17, 2011, 10:15-11:45 am

Methodological Considerations for Research on Participants Receiving Integrated Services

Description

This workshop highlighted methodological challenges, provided illustrative examples, and discussed the implications of research in this area for policy. Panelists engaged the audience in discussion after brief paced presentations and discussion of methodological challenges in conducting research with participants (e.g., children, families, providers, and programs) receiving integrated or linked services from multiple sources. Examples included measuring and tracking the services received, accounting for multiple points of access, defining the “participant”/unit of analysis, using confidentiality/linking data, and developing analytical approaches.

The workshop highlighted examples with various types of service recipients, described the methodological implications of State and local policies in disentangling relationships among jointly funded services on recipients, and discussed the opportunities to address innovative research questions by studying integrated or linked data (e.g., about the added benefits of accessing multiple services rather than a single service.)

Facilitator

Gina Adams, Urban Institute

Presenters

Beth Rous, University of Kentucky
Diane Schilder, Education Development Center, Inc.
Barbara Goodson, Dillon-Goodson Research Associates

Discussant

Rena Hallam, University of Delaware

Scribe

Susan Drilea, National Center on Child Care Subsidy Innovation and Accountability

1. Documents in Session Folder

- “Methodological Considerations for Studies Conducting Research with Participants Receiving Integrated or Linked Services: Evaluation of *Project LAUNCH*,” Barbara Dillon Goodson
- “Methodological Considerations for Studies Conducting Research with Participants Receiving Integrated or Linked Services: *National Early Childhood Transition Research and Training Center*,” Beth Rous
- “Early Care and Education Collaboration: Methodological Issues,” Diane Schilder

2. Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Beth Rous
 - Over 5-7 years, Beth conducted 18 studies of 5 cohorts of children with special needs, investigating the movement of children from home-based care to prek. She has studied children's adjustment to new settings, adaptability to new settings, and outcomes, looking at contextual factors and key elements of the transition process. She has used nested HLM design for some of these analyses. Methodological challenges included defining variations in community definitions from State to State, documenting services received, defining dosage and intensity, recruiting families in times of high stress, and defining intervention and outcomes.

- **Summary of Presentation #2:** Diane Schilder
 - Diane discussed 3 studies: (1) Child Care/Head Start Partnership, (2) PreK Study, and (3) Closer Look: Secondary Analysis Study. These studies compared average ECERS-R scores. Methodological challenges included selecting the sample due to lack of unique identifiers; selecting an appropriate comparison group; determining the unit of analysis (program, classroom, teacher, or child level); defining intensity and duration of collaboration; and determining what outcomes to use. These studies raised questions of organizational capacity and its influence on resources.

- **Summary of Presentation #3:** Barbara Goodson
 - Barbara reported on Project Launch, which studied ways to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for healthy child development. The study investigated the effect of community-level indicators of child health and well-being, rather than changes for specific children receiving specific services. The analysis was conducted using a community-level, interrupted-time series method.
 - The study represents a shift in current research, looking at early childhood from a public health perspective and community systems approach, considering mental and emotional health's influence on early childhood learning. Methodological challenges included identifying population-level outcomes, using existing secondary data sources, finding appropriate comparison groups, low power (n=1), the lack of existing databases that measure child outcomes in early years, and the difficulty in moving population-level indicators.

- **Summary of Presentation #4:** Discussant: Rena Hallam
 - Methodological challenges encountered across these studies speak to the paradigm shift in recognizing that one single intervention doesn't exist without the influence of other system- and community-level influences. Common challenges include determining the unit of analysis (child, family, program, community); identifying intermediate outcomes, asking whether these are important, and questioning whether they are being conceptualized appropriately; and accessing existing data and integrating data as needed.

3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants: Future directions of research include:

- Moving from studying individual child-, family-, and provider-specific interventions to studying system-level and community-level interventions.
- Including the emotional and mental health status of children.
- Becoming increasingly complex as services are more integrated; determining source of change will become more difficult.
- Experiencing difficulty in measuring, controlling for intervention exposures within control groups; control groups don't function in a vacuum.
- Putting more emphasis on continuum of care, including the infant toddler years.
- Looking at intermediate outcomes.
- These directions will make decisions about how to spend limited research dollars more challenging.