SECTION 4A:
QUALITY OUTCOMES, TARGET POPULATION, AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS
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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
SECTION 4E: COACHING INITIATIVE EVALUATION
SECTION 4A: QUALITY OUTCOMES, TARGET POPULATION, AND ASSESSMENT TOOLS

SCENARIO
Andrea is leading an initiative that aims to assist ECE programs in handling the challenges presented by asthma in children. Her three coaches are experienced ECE staff with excellent additional training in working with children and families with chronic conditions. They have decided to target their initiative to programs with high reported numbers of children with asthma, compared to the county as a whole. They know how to assess both asthma rates among ECE sites, and individual management of the asthma within each family.

The three coaches have visited some sites in the community, and have received enthusiastic responses to the idea of coaching on this topic. They are reporting at a staff meeting: Susan says that Program A wants her to become engaged in the fight against a proposed additional lane for the freeway near the site. Sally says that Program B wants her to write up guidelines for parents on handling asthma with their children, and then to train the program staff in working with the parents. Sam says that Program C wants help in its relationship with the emergency room and the public health clinic where lots of families seek care. They also want clear guidance on what supplies they need in order to do good work with children with asthma, and want Sam to write procedures for the program to follow whenever a child has an asthma flare-up. All of these needs are relevant to childhood asthma, but Andrea worries that their efforts may become too diffuse.

PURPOSE
This section explains the importance of clearly specifying the coaching initiative’s intended impacts (outcomes) on child care quality.

THIS SECTION
- Explains the value of well-defined outcomes as the starting point for coaching initiative development.
- Discusses the importance of well-considered selection of the target population for coaching.
- Outlines the benefits of understanding and choosing assessment tools as part of the coaching initiative.
**RATIONALE**

**Outcomes**
Quality improvement initiatives like coaching can take place over the course of several months or even years. As such, a coaching initiative benefits from clearly articulated goals and observable, measurable outcomes that can be used to track its efficacy in improving quality and provider practices. Regardless of domain (early childhood mental health, curriculum, health & safety, etc.), client-driven coaching can touch on a wide range of topics which are related to overall quality improvement. While this flexible, responsive approach can be great impact, it also has the potential to wander far afield of the originally intended scope of coaching. Such diversions are not necessarily unproductive, but they may not be the most strategic use of resources and can drain the focus and energy needed to address fundamental issues.

Coaches who work within coaching initiatives that lack defined goals often struggle with prioritizing which of the myriad client issues should be included in the coaching work. Similarly, in the absence of clearly articulated goals, outcomes, and measures, clients can be confused as to the purpose of coaching. Without agreement on overall goals and specific indicators of progress, the coach and the client may struggle in determining whether adequate progress is being made, each party coming to conflicting conclusions. As one coach put it, “My client and I might have different perspectives on many things, but we have to have the same basic idea of ‘success’ or else we will keep going in circles. How can we know if we are on the right path if we don’t even agree on the destination?”

**Target Population**
A target population is selected based on the resources and/or needs of the community and the content capacity of your initiative. Once a target population has been determined, it can be valuable to double-check the viability of the intended outcomes within that specific population. For example, an agency with expertise in art education would not offer services to a community with completely different interests.

Ideally, coaching initiatives would have enough resources to serve all interested and eligible child care programs, but most coaching initiatives work with finite resources which limits the number of child care sites that can be served. While “rationing” can cause discomfort within a community, a transparent selection methodology can maintain an atmosphere of trust and understanding. As part of this effort, we recommend that your agency proactively determine and adhere to a clear, standardized client selection process.

**Assessment Tools**
The intent of providing coaching services to ECE professionals is generally to increase the quality of an ECE program. Regardless of a coaching initiative’s intended outcomes, participants, funders, administrators, and other stakeholders need a way to ascertain that the initiative’s strategies are effective at reaching those outcomes. One way to measure progress toward outcomes is through the use of standardized, validated tools.

The value of using a standardized assessment tool is multifold:

- Builds a common language among and across multiple ECE programs and professional development initiatives.
- Provides useful data to funders during funding consideration.
- Provides robust data for tracking coaching progress at individual ECE programs.
- When aggregated across coaching participants, provides robust data for tracking the coaching initiative’s overall impact on the target community.
- Enhances professional development within the ECE workforce by increasing familiarity with widely used tools.
STEPS

Outcomes

- Determination of outcomes
  - Aim to develop SMART outcomes (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound).
  - Consider ways to gather input from a variety of stakeholders including parents, potential clients, researchers, child care support agencies such as Resource and Referral (R&Rs), and experienced ECE coaches.
  - Prioritize potential outcomes based on impact on children, ability to effect sustained change, etc.
- To ensure understanding and promote use among all stakeholders, memorialize your intended outcomes by documenting them in clear, community-friendly formats.
- Plan for evaluation as you develop your outcomes.

Target Population

- Ideally, the process of selecting the target population should be guided by community-determined priorities and informed by a community needs assessment process. The results of such an assessment can illuminate needs within a specific community including:
  - Establishing which populations will benefit most from your coaching services. Consider
    - the types of child care programs: centers, licensed/unlicensed, family child care, child care centers, state-funded programs, federally funded programs, for-profit programs, etc.; and
    - the types of families/children served (infants and toddlers, children with special needs, low-income, ESL, etc.).
  - Of the populations that would be most positively impacted by investments in improving the quality of care, determining which are most interested in/available to participate in coaching.
  - Ascertaining whether your program has the necessary skills and reputation in the community to effectively reach out to and recruit clients from these populations.
- Document your rationale for determining your target population as well as your selection process. Be prepared to clearly articulate this to a variety of interested stakeholders.
  - Once you have established your outcomes and identified your target populations, cross-check and be sure that your proposed outcome is attainable and applicable for the targeted population.
STEPS

Selecting Assessment Tool(s)

Once you have decided on your initiative’s intended outcomes, consider the range of existing assessment tools to find the best fit with your initiative.

- Collect relevant assessment tools available for your review.
- Determine which tools, if any, have been standardized.
- Determine which tools, if any, have been validated (i.e., proven to accurately measure what it intends to measure).
- Gather feedback on the use of these tools.
  - Contact initiatives that have used/are using the tool(s) to learn what challenges and strengths the tool(s) have brought to their initiatives.
  - Review research literature for discussions of the power and potential limitations of these tools.
- Solicit input from community stakeholders on the use of these tools within their communities. Review the costs associated with using these tools. (Do they require use from an externally trained and validated assessor?)
- Ascertain what training coaching staff will need to administer the tools reliably.
- Explore how the data provided by the tool can be used to meaningfully inform ECE clients, funders, agency staff, and the broader community about the baseline status of ECE clients. Determine what change, if any, that corresponds to participation in coaching.
- Strategize ways to help ECE providers feel comfortable with and supportive of the use of standardized assessments.

An appropriate assessment tool may not always exist for the outcome you are trying to measure. In these instances, some professional development initiatives take on the challenge of developing their own assessment tool. While these tools do not provide all the benefits of a standardized, validated tool, they may provide a framework to think about the progress of coaching initiative participants.
SCENARIO

Susana has worked for several years in the training unit of a large County Office of Education. She has lots of experience in needs assessment for training, designing training, and choosing excellent trainers. She has written many budgets for workshops, ranging from half-day to full-week retreats. Her unit has recently received funding for ECE Coaching, and they are in the first quarter of implementing services. This afternoon, one of the coaches approached Susana with a request for funding for incentives for the staff and parents. The coach’s program is implementing a project to increase reading at home. It will track books and hours read and give prizes for participation. Susana did not write this item into the budget.

PURPOSE

This section outlines budget categories and suggests some unique resources that will be needed to support a coaching initiative.

THIS SECTION

- Provides a reminder of basic budget categories.
- Notes some unique budgeting challenges for coaching initiatives.

RATIONALE

A budget is an essential document for gaining funding and for assuring that a program can continue services throughout its planned life. Budgets for professional development initiatives vary based on the type of services offered, although some budget categories are consistent.

Along the continuum of professional development strategies, the most time-limited is a workshop and the most open-ended is ongoing coaching. Coaching requires a budget format and line items different from a workshop.
STEPS

- While the agency sponsoring the coaching initiative may have its own categories that a budget must fit, common categories include:
  - Personnel (staff or consultants)
  - Benefits
  - Space
  - Equipment
  - Office Supplies
  - Travel
  - Telecommunication
  - Contract Services
  - Staff and Client Training
  - Program Materials
  - Printing
  - Evaluation

- Within the categories, consider if you might need to include or adjust line items to fund the unique costs of coaching. Examples from the field include:
  - Assessment materials for the site
  - Certification costs for coaches
  - Larger food line items for ongoing meetings and celebrations
  - Third-party evaluators
  - Higher personnel costs because of:
    - a longer time frame (as compared to a workshop) staff turnover at the site, which might require more time from the coach
  - Incentives for clients and/or parents
  - Translation of materials
  - Substitute teachers/staff if your initiative covers that expense for a site
SECTION 4C: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SCENARIO

Pamela and Robert have worked as consultants for a few years and have recently been put in charge of organizing a coaching initiative in their area of expertise: teacher-child interaction. They are discussing difficult times that they've had as consultants in the past and what they'd like to avoid going forward. Pamela remembers a time when she consulted with a program for two months. Everything appeared to be going well, but then the director of the program complained to Pamela’s supervisor. The director had expected Pamela to ignore a variety of safety problems with the site building; when Pamela brought them up, the director replied, “That’s not what we’re here to work on.” Robert had a difficult experience once when, while in a meeting with a teacher, he noticed a classroom volunteer outside the door yanking a child’s arm. In response to his look of alarm, the teacher told him to ignore the matter because the child was a difficult one. Both consultants can remember situations when the program staff missed meetings and did not complete tasks when Pamela and Robert thought there had been full agreement about what needed to be done.

PURPOSE

This section outlines policies and procedures that should be in place before embarking on coaching any program.

THIS SECTION

- Discusses the value of creating a standardized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- Explains the essential components of an MOU.
- Covers issues of non-adherence to the MOU by the program.
- Discusses how to respond to program dissatisfaction with coach and/or coaching services.
RATIONALE

Establishing expectations and planning for difficult situations are essential for effective, smoothly run coaching services. Have these policies and procedures in place up front:

1. a standard MOU;
2. procedures for addressing the ECE program’s non-adherence to the MOU; and
3. procedures for addressing the ECE program’s dissatisfaction with the coaching services.

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)—An MOU outlines the services the coach will provide, the participation requirements for the client, and the consequences if either party fails to fulfill its part of the agreement. An MOU may include:
  - a brief Coaching Initiative Description, including the project’s purpose and goals;
  - a delineation of both the client’s and the coach’s roles and responsibilities;
  - a time line of services;
  - a description of any participant incentives (such as stipends) and how they will be disbursed;
  - if applicable, the details of client confidentiality and parent notification;
  - the coach’s reporting responsibilities to legal and regulatory agencies;
- Coaches are mandated reporters in the instance of an observation of child abuse. It is important to be clear with both the coaches in your program and the providers receiving your services about laws and regulations regarding mandatory reporting.
- ECE programs all operate under state and local regulations, which govern whether a program has a license. Coaches must be familiar with basic licensing regulations, and both the program and coach must understand that the coach cannot continue working in a program where licensing violations exist.
  - specific consequences for failure to uphold the agreement;
  - procedures to follow if the program is dissatisfied with the coaching services; and
  - a signature line for both parties (coaching agency and client) indicating that both have read, understood, and received a copy of the agreement.
- Non-adherence with the MOU on the part of the program—If adherence issues arise, the signed MOU should be the basis for any discussions and decisions regarding next steps and remediation.
- Dissatisfaction with coach and/or coaching services—Coaching work is complex and nuanced and circumstances are rarely black and white. Times will arise when coaches and clients disagree about a proposed plan of action or situation, and these differences of opinion can lead to an impasse in the coaching process. In such instances, it is critical to have clearly established procedures in place.
STEPs

Write a standard MOU to clarify what is expected of the agency providing coaching, and the program receiving services (sample MOU in section 6).

- Consider and document how the coach will respond to any suspicion of child abuse.
  - We advise that you seek legal counsel when determining your agency protocols regarding mandated reporting.
  - Determine what training and support your staff might need (one time or ongoing) as mandated reporters.
  - Resolve how you will ensure providers' informed consent with regard to the coach's mandated reporting status.
  - Determine what protocol will be followed if a coach knows of or suspects child abuse or neglect while acting in their role of a coach (communication channels, written documentation, legal requirements, etc.).
  - Decide whether your program be able to continue to provide services if a report is filed and/or if it is substantiated.
  - Determine the coach's role in the case of an ongoing investigation (e.g., linking staff and families to additional supports).

- Outline how the coach will respond to any observed licensing violations.

- Define what is meant by adherence to the MOU.
  - Determine how many missed appointments or meetings are allowable.
  - Consider where there is flexibility to make “exceptions or allowances” and where it is crucial that you maintain fidelity to the model.
  - Decide how you will work to resolve problems: meetings, support to clients as they develop solutions, verbal warnings, written warnings, etc.
  - Determine how your agency will follow up, after dealing with an issue of non-adherence, to ensure the agreed-upon next steps are being followed.

- Document all changes to the MOU.
  - Take special note of setting a precedent. If a program fails to follow the MOU and is granted an exception, recognize that other programs will likely ask for the same exception.

- Decide how you will respond to complaints from a program about a specific coach or the progress of the services.
  - With dissatisfaction, determine where the impasse lies. What are the specific issues of disagreement?
  - Ascertain who is currently involved in the situation (e.g., determine whether the issue involves just the coach and one client, or whether others, such as a program director or site administrator, are also involved).
  - Decide who needs to be involved (e.g., determine whether you need include someone with higher-level decision-making authority).

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
SECTION 4D: EFFECTIVE COACHES AND ADMINISTRATORS

SCENARIO

Alex, Tatiana, and Danielle all work for different school districts in a large rural county. Each of them is the only ECE coach in the separate districts and each is new to the work of coaching, though all have extensive experience as ECE teachers. They are part of a countywide coaching initiative, funded by a grant that aims to enhance early literacy. The administrator who wrote the grant application has since left the county; a brand-new administrator is trying to manage the initiative on top of her other work at the funding agency.

Neither Alex, Tatiana, nor Danielle received much training for their new roles, just some articles to read. When they come in from a challenging day of coaching, they don’t find anyone else at the district office who shares their experience. They’ve each mentioned their feelings of isolation to the administrator, but she is overwhelmed and does not seem able to help. Tatiana, however, has just heard about a once-a-month meeting of coaches in a neighboring county. She has requested permission to join these meetings, but the administrator says there is not enough travel money in the budget.

PURPOSE

This section discusses key issues to consider when hiring and managing coaching staff.

THIS SECTION

- Lists specific coaching competencies to look for when hiring coaching staff.
- Explains the importance of training and supporting coaches.
- Provides strategies to refine coaching skills and to maintain effective coaching practices.
- Outlines the support needs of administrators.

RATIONALE

Coaches are the heart of the initiative. It is important to carefully select people with the underlying disposition to function as coaches, to train them in the process and content of coaching, to support them through the coaching initiative, and to be aware of common pitfalls that can derail effective coaching.

As an intensive, adaptive intervention, coaching relies heavily upon an individual coach’s ability to be analytical yet empathetic, to set clear boundaries yet be approachable, and to be knowledgeable but open to new ideas and perspectives. Since formal coaching in ECE is relatively new, coaching initiatives often struggle to find experienced coaches with such skills to staff their initiative. Once hired, managers quickly realize that supporting coaches in their work requires a unique approach.

The person who manages coaches needs support, too. The manager must be able to maintain oversight of a variety of ECE programs receiving coaching services, and assist coaches in solving day-to-day challenges.
Hiring

The responsive nature of coaching—the ability to adapt to the specific, multifaceted needs of a provider within each program’s unique ecology—requires different skills from those applicable to professional development activities such as instructing a college course or workshop, mentoring, or leading individual or group training on the job.

Effective coaches are able to encompass the many support roles of relationship-based change. Regardless of the content area (e.g., literacy, social-emotional development, business practices), coaches may find themselves wearing many hats—often in the same coaching visit. In the course of a two hour visit a coach may be:

- a good listener: providing a nonjudgmental sounding board for the client’s frustrations and acknowledging the role of these emotions in the client’s work;
- an advisor: offering strategies that have proven successful in similar situations;
- a diagnostic technician: providing a perspective on how logistical factors may be impacting the issue under consideration;
- a discussion facilitator and mediator: assisting two or more staff to come to consensus on classroom/program practices;
- a trainer: providing specific theoretical and technical content and support to assimilate that content into work;
- a systems analyst: relating the specific issue being discussed to larger programmatic and community issues;
- a navigator: considering how a program’s philosophy and a provider’s own beliefs may conflict with the practices the coach is promoting, and carefully moving the Action Plan forward through possible blocks; and
- a cheerleader: encouraging and celebrating a provider’s individual efforts and achievements.

Training

People who come to ECE coaching will likely have some, but not all, of the knowledge, skills and attitudes required. Before beginning work with a program, each coach will need to be assessed to determine areas for development, and have the chance to “fill in the blanks” in order to attain full competency.

Many coaching initiatives report difficulty finding qualified staff who are well-versed in ECE theory and practice, experienced with the diversity of child care programs, and appropriate language and personality matches for the child care community. In response to these realities (as well as tight initiative time lines and limited personnel) coaching initiatives often hire experienced content experts (e.g., literacy, health and safety, socio-emotional development) who demonstrate strong interpersonal skills. The content expert then requires training on the coaching model.

Coaches benefit from receiving training on the specific work of a coach within ECE settings, and the way the coaching process functions to sustainably transform client practices. It can be difficult to find the time and resources for training that addresses the specific function of professional coaches in ECE, but it is worth the effort.
Refining
Each coaching assignment is different, and coaches will face different challenges each time. They will need time to reflect and adapt over the course of coaching each program. They will need the support of their managers as they work through the Action Plan for each program. They may need to research best practices in the content area, seek similar situations for clues on ways to proceed, and build the capacity within themselves to have difficult conversations. It is important to build reflection and ongoing learning time into the staffing budget.

Administrators
Because it includes leading coaching initiatives and supervising coaching staff, coaching administration and management can be truly engaging and provide a unique glimpse into the complex, fascinating realities of the diverse child care world. Just as effective coaches constantly reflect and adapt to respond to specific situations, coaching program managers often find themselves reexamining their models, methods, policies, and procedures in response to new situations.

This variability, while sometimes exhilarating, can also be exhausting; many managers and administrators feel that there is never a “slow period.” Caring, responsive administrators, just like coaches and child care providers, can be susceptible to becoming overwhelmed and eventually burning out. Planning for these challenges, and recognizing the value of time taken for nurturing the administrators, will pay dividends in the long run. When focused time is given to their own professional development, administrators can learn new field-tested techniques, hear new insights into specific issues, and debrief challenging situations with other administrators. Ultimately, they become better equipped to provide the essential emotional support necessary to lead intensive people-focused coaching initiatives.

STePS
Hiring
- Identify the traits, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that a prospective coach must bring to the job.
- Identify which knowledge, skills and attitudes—that can be trained—will be most critical to the successful implementation of your coaching initiative.
- If you are recruiting coaching staff, consider conducting a broad outreach to the community, colleges, and other social service agencies so you can increase your candidate pool and the likelihood of identifying potential coaches who have the right background and disposition for this work. Consider hiring staff who do not have much direct coaching experience but whose work performance demonstrates the essential competencies.
- Develop a hiring process that will help you screen potential coaches for the most critical skills (sample job description in section 6).

Training
- Coaches who are new to your coaching initiative will require frequent support through their first year of service. Put the following in place for them:
  - A written practice manual that clearly articulates
    - the coaching initiative’s goals and intended outcomes,
    - the measures used to track progress,
    - how data is gathered for these measures,
    - the coaching initiative’s overall philosophy and approach, and
    - specific directions on how to implement the initiative.
Opportunities to shadow veteran coaches to observe the model in action.
Opportunities to discuss what they observed.
Opportunities to practice the model while being observed by an experienced coach or supervisor.
A training plan in place that will build the skills of new coaches and enhance the skills of existing coaches. First 5 Alameda has been offering training for coaches for several years, and has published a manual on the subject.¹

**Refining**
- Ensure that coaches are provided with multiple means of ongoing support, including peer collaboration and individual supervision.
- Provide coaches with ongoing training and technical assistance with writing an effective Action Plan and leading a Facilitated Discussion.

**Administrators**
- Identify supports for your own administrative work. Look at both internal agency resources (such as supervisor support), but also intra-agency opportunities to share with colleagues engaged in similar coaching administration roles. Options include:
  - Opportunities for topic-specific, in-depth dialog on specific coaching initiative issues with colleagues from other coaching initiatives.
  - Periodic training and updates on emerging best practices in coaching initiatives and management.
  - Opportunities for peer-networking and support.

SECTION 4E: COACHING INITIATIVE EVALUATION

SCENARIO

Kara works for an agency that has received funding for nutrition-related coaching from the Peach Foundation, which aims to address the problem of childhood obesity. For the past 10 months, Kara has been working with two family child care providers. Each provider had different quality issues they were working on based on the results of their initial observations, assessments, and subsequent Action Plans. One provider was working on improving snack and meal quality and another on improving communication with parents around children’s eating patterns. At the end of the 10 months, Kara asked each provider to complete a brief, open-ended questionnaire about their reactions to and satisfaction with the coaching. These questions focused primarily on the perceived relationship between coach and provider. Was Kara qualified to provide assistance on their topic, and were the strategies she used effective? What didn’t work and what would they have liked to have been different?

After each provider completed the questionnaire, Kara presented the results to her supervisor. Both providers felt very positively about Kara and found the coaching to be useful. One provider said the only thing she would have preferred would have been for the coaching to continue for more than 10 months. Kara’s supervisor asked if Kara had observed any changes in meal or snack patterns, or in communications with parents. Kara said she hadn’t observed any of these situations so she couldn’t say.

Kara’s supervisor, the agency head, has a meeting scheduled with the Peach Foundation one week from now.

PURPOSE

This section will help you plan and carry out an evaluation of your coaching initiative.

THIS SECTION

- Explains the value of tracking the specific impacts of the coaching initiative on child care quality.
- Offers specific strategies on gathering feedback from various stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the coaching initiative.
- Discusses the role of evaluating the coaching initiative to refine existing strategies and develop new strategies for greater impact.
RATIONALE

Tracking Impacts
Coaching in ECE is intended to increase the quality of the ECE program. First 5 standards of quality, and those developed by state and national initiatives and research programs, require highly skilled and caring providers, safe and healthy settings and care practices, age-appropriate education, and positive interactions with parents and family caregivers. A coaching initiative will be designed to support quality improvements in one or more of these areas, but will target some specific aspect of a program’s practices.

Sometimes clients want to immediately evaluate how coaching improved the quality of a child care program. Our evaluation must look at both the big picture and at the targeted services offered by the coaching initiative.

In the big picture, it may take a relatively lengthy period of intervention to bring about sustained improvements in child care quality. With limited time and evaluation resources, is it realistic to expect to see overall improvements in quality? An evaluator would need to use quality-rating tools to evaluate “quality,” as well as whether better practices were put in place.

Evaluating services that change practices, which in turn affect quality, is more achievable. If the coaching focuses on improving providers’ health and safety practices or on improving provider–child interactions, it’s possible to measure change in those areas.

In order to gain insight from any evaluation, we must be clear on what we are trying to change, then accurately and reliably measure effects in that area. When evaluating coaching, it is important to choose evaluation strategies that measure the coaching’s impacts on the specific goals set out for the overall initiative. In a classroom training situation, a trainer might learn whether people enjoyed the learning and what knowledge they acquired, but it would be difficult to learn what changes in practice resulted from this knowledge. Coaching, however, is unique because it goes beyond content learning (knowledge), allowing evaluation of how providers apply or practice what they’ve learned from a content learning setting.

Strategies to Gather Feedback
The scenario at the start of this section illustrates how people often evaluate professional development activities by asking participants for their feelings about the activities. While this is important, it may not provide the information necessary to learn what knowledge participants gained and what changes resulted from the activity. You will notice the coach was unable to speak about the focus of the coaching—changes in meals or interactions—because she had not observed or even asked the participants for examples of changes they’d made.

Evaluations of professional development activities can occur across a range, which includes:

- Examining participants’ reactions to the activity.
- Gathering information about the acquisition of knowledge or changes in attitudes.
- Observing or learning about changes in behavior that result from the activity at the individual level.
- Documenting changes that take place at the organizational level.

Level 1 — Reactions
The first level of measurable change is provider reactions. Reactions include a provider’s personal reaction to an activity, such as satisfaction with material, presenters, or coach. Providers’ reactions to the training may be related to the qualifications of the coach, how experienced and knowledgeable the coach is, and the “fit” between the coach and the provider. Reactions may tell you less about how effective your coaching intervention is, but more about how well accepted the materials or coach may be. Reactions may also be important for the development of a strong relationship between coach and providers, leading to a greater likelihood that the provider will be motivated to implement and maintain in practice the information learned from the coaching.

Level 2 — Knowledge Gain and Attitude Change
The second level of measurable change is knowledge gain and attitude change. This level of change requires deeper evaluation and usually a longer period of coaching. For the evaluator to know what to measure at this level, it’s essential to make sure there are specific, articulated, measurable objectives for the coaching services being offered to each program.

Level 3 — Behavioral Change
The third level of measurable change is individual behavioral change. Linking Objective A (knowledge gained) to Objective B (corresponding change in practices) is generally the explicit focus of successful coaching interventions. In order to evaluate whether the coaching has successfully changed individual behavior, there should be a clear statement at the commencement of coaching services about the change in behavior you expect to see.

For example, the initiative might focus on health and safety practices, specifically on infection control. A behavioral objective might be an improvement in hand-washing practices. A useful evaluation would look for specific and realistic changes that can be observed within a defined time frame.

Level 4 — Organizational Change
The fourth level of measurable change is organizational change. An organization—even one as small as a family child care home—generally changes more slowly than an individual. Despite excellent coaching and demonstrated individual behavioral change, the organization itself might not respond as quickly. Organizational change will depend on the members of the organization, the organizational structure, and outside forces that affect how the organization operates.

Refining and developing new strategies.

Level 1 — Reactions
Evaluating reactions can provide useful information for modifying future choices in materials and for determining who to recruit, hire, and train to be coaches.

Level 2 — Knowledge Gain and Attitude Change
Evaluating knowledge gain and attitude change can provide helpful insight for modifying a coaching initiative’s content and methods. An administrator can consider whether the coach is presenting enough information to the ECE program staff and presenting it in a manner that the staff can easily understand. If staff attitudes are changing in the desired direction, it’s likely that the coach is listening to the staff and building from their current beliefs and attitudes to bring about subtle changes.

Level 3 – Behavioral Change
After knowledge and/or attitudes have been changed, coaching services recipients’ positive behavioral change will validate the methods used to support practice. If the desired behavioral change occurs, an administrator may want to duplicate the successful style of coaching in another program, with appropriate adaptations to the ecology of the new program.

Sometimes, however, the behavioral change doesn’t happen. In this case, the administrator will want to consider both the coaching itself and the environmental factors supporting or inhibiting the adoption of the desired behaviors.

Level 4 – Organizational Change
When seeking organizational change, evaluators will need to study the behavior of various individuals, policy statements, and feedback from the organization’s stakeholders. Coaching services designed to promote organizational change will likely be provided over an extended period of time.

Seeing some change at the organizational level, the administrator will want to identify the key factors that led to the change and plan to support those factors on an ongoing basis. The administrator will also want to be alert for behaviors or environments that could work against the desired change and be vigilant about minimizing opportunities for backsliding to “old ways.”

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION METHODS TO MEASURE CHANGE

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<th>Levels of change</th>
<th>Evaluation Methods</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction surveys Pre-, post-coaching retrospective surveys Interviews, focus groups Behavioral observations or vignettes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational Change</td>
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</table>
Planning for evaluation should be built into the coaching initiative from the beginning.

Clearly identify the changes you hope to see and design your evaluation to measure those changes. If possible, make the evaluation anonymous so that respondents don’t feel pressured to react positively to the coaching experience. If they have a positive relationship with the coach, they may feel pressured to report only positive experiences and be less likely to report what was less useful.

To Measure Reactions—It is standard to measure reactions using paper and pencil satisfaction questionnaires. These questionnaires usually ask providers to rate how they feel about a coach’s knowledge, presentation style, credentials, or qualifications. Sometimes the survey will ask the provider to write about something particularly liked about or learned from the experience, what was disliked about the experience, or what might be useful next time. The quality of the experience may depend on the provider's reactions to the coach’s characteristics.

To Measure Knowledge Gain or Attitude Change—It is common practice to assess this level of change during content learning, an educational experience where traditional testing of knowledge gained is the norm. In coaching, knowledge gain can be assessed through the use of pre- and post-coaching questionnaires on the content learning topic. To evaluate what they've learned, providers are often asked to respond to “knowledge-based” questions before they receive coaching, then asked the same questions after they've completed the experience. The expectation is that the provider will answer more questions correctly following coaching. Providers may also be asked to respond retrospectively (e.g., “now I know . . . which I didn’t know before”) when it’s not possible to conduct pre- and post-coaching assessments.

To Measure Individual or Organizational Change—The best way to measure changes in individual and organizational behavior is to conduct direct observations. Standard and validated tools such as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, the Environmental Rating Scales, and the Program Administration Scale, are observational tools designed to evaluate changes in practice and structure of ECE settings. However, the proper use of these tools also requires significant investment in resources, so evaluators frequently rely on self-reported changes in behavior using questionnaires or vignettes which describe specific situations. Providers’ responses can then give an idea of what providers might do in similar situations.

