The In-Practice Tip Sheets are resources for juvenile drug court teams and are meant to provide operational steps to implementing the *16 Strategies in Practice*. This is not an exhaustive list of practice tips. Juvenile drug court teams are encouraged to use these Tip Sheets as a starting point as they strive to make program enhancements or operationalize the *16 Strategies*.

Monitoring and Evaluation

CASE STUDY: The Zee County court system has experienced a sharp increase in the number of youths referred for various charges related to substance use activity. For example, the docket is filled with charges of violation of probation, possession of drug paraphernalia, underage drinking, violation of school system's zero tolerance policy (mostly related to tobacco products on campus) and distribution of illegal substances, including prescription drugs. In addition, and suspected to be an ancillary correlation, is a rise in the number of various status offenses, such as: runaway, curfew violations, disobeying rules of household or academic failure due to violation of compensatory attendance regulations.

Solution-focused Tips to monitor and evaluate:

Tip No. 1: The JDC team should compile baseline data from a multi-disciplinary approach and focus on the identified issues.

- Compile information from the larger juvenile justice system, including, but not limited to: arrests, charges, detention, imprisonment, educational progress, employment rates, family stability, job skills and/or training opportunities, teen pregnancy rates, UA results, types of incentives and sanctions used, and various other information specific to geographic location.

- Acknowledge that the juvenile drug court team is undertaking a research project, which will require a commitment to participate in this social experiment.

Tip No. 2: The JDC planning team should incorporate monitoring and evaluation component before implementing the program.

- Discuss program expectations as a response to identified community issues.

- Identify everyone's role in the ongoing process with clear expectations of the tasks and responsibilities.

- Define how things will be different and how community issues will be changed with the implementation of an operational juvenile drug court.

- Have stakeholders and team members document their own individual strengths and weaknesses (i.e., is evaluation a part of their skill set), as well as areas of interest in the evaluation process.

- Prepare a timeline for identifying a target population to be served, the services to be provided, an evaluator to be hired, and all other expectations of what the program will look like.

- Address the following questions when looking at data and building an evaluation component:

  ○ What data is needed to show change?

  ○ Where will the data come from?

  ○ Is working with the court IT/IMS people to determine IT capacity a possibility?

  ○ Will the team hire an independent evaluator?

  ○ Will funding be necessary to utilize an independent evaluator?

  ○ Is there a local university the team can partner with to bring expertise or provide services?

  ○ What instruments are available for data collection?

- Include in monitoring and evaluation a mechanism for youth and family input; e.g. user survey or exit interviews

Tip No. 3: The JDC team should develop a mission statement that encapsulates expectations for success.

- Since no one program can fix all community problems, decide what the limits of the drug court should be.

- Determine wants/needs and how to get it so that the mission statement clearly defines what the program will do and what it will not do.

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- Be realistic about expectations; consider what team members are willing to do, what services can be provided, what level of support is already in place and what else needed to be successful.

- Define terms of evaluation processes so that everyone is speaking the same language.

4 **Tip No. 4:** The JDC team should devise a system for documentation of the program's process and procedure.

- Document team meetings with reports on what is discussed, what actions will be taken; follow up at the next meeting to determine whether the work is getting done.

- Foster the team approach by assigning specific tasks of monitoring and evaluation to all team members. For example, there will be team members well suited to develop participant surveys, to serve as resource monitors and/or to interface with service providers.

- Develop and maintain signed letters of agreement between the program and the named evaluator outlining the program's purpose, scope, method, providers, workplan and schedule.

- Continue regular team meetings with periodic updates from the evaluator and stakeholders so that there are no surprises.

- Establish a management information system (MIS) where all JDC program-specific documentation is placed and can be retrieved for reports.

5 **Tip No. 5:** The JDC team should collect and manage data to answer programmatic evaluation questions.

- Conduct process evaluations (which are different from outcome evaluations) and ask programmatic questions:

  ○ Are youth moving through phases in the anticipated timeframe?

  ○ Are the procedures set in place to refer youth to treatment working? Getting youth assessed faster/better?

  ○ Is having a school liaison doing what the team wants – increasing school connectedness?

  ○ How are the processes tested – validated pre and post scales?

- Implement a monitoring process that accurately reflects the day-to-day operations of the program; a well-defined process helps to identify needs for improvement and to provide for in-the-moment continuous improvement strategies.

- Refer back to the initial questions relevant to the identified issues; for example, are provided services working (e.g., family support groups, adolescent-based treatment, case planning)?

- Demonstrate the impact of both process and outcome evaluation goals. For example, family connectedness is increased because the JDC team implemented a family support group – how do we know this?

  ○ Process evaluation is data collected on number of family support groups held and attendance levels

  ○ Outcome evaluation is data collected from pre & post scales which show an increase in family connectedness

- Collect data along the way to avoid some of the common pitfalls in the long run, such as failure to document, mission creep, expecting a too-quick fix, and communication difficulties among all involved parties.

6 **Tip No. 6:** The JDC team should acknowledge that a juvenile drug court program is research in its most basic form.

- As a research endeavor, the juvenile drug court contributes to knowledge in the field by maintaining program integrity.

- Comparison among programs can provide the field with information from which to draw conclusions and provide for continuous improvement.

- Documentation of what works enables you

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to provide the field with evidence-based practice strategies.

• Maximize the contributions of all stakeholders, rather than relying solely on one evaluator to determine success; remember to express gratitude for the contributions of all stakeholders.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING: *How can a juvenile drug court monitor and evaluate its effectiveness using some of the TIPs discussed above?*

ANSWER: Begin collecting data from a variety of sources prior to implementing a juvenile drug court. Be sure to include a needs assessment, which will help to provide baseline data. Get everyone on the team, including all stakeholders, involved in developing expectations for success and a plan for meeting those expectations. Keep all this information available to all stakeholders. Once expectations for the program are set, identify the primary evaluator and give him/her access to program information. Develop the letters of agreement so that everyone knows his/her role in the program. Continue to look back at the initial questions asked making any corrections as the program evolves. Maintain the momentum! Recognize that there will be a difference in evaluation goals for all stakeholders. For example, clients (youth and his/her family) want help for a problem, sponsors want to know that their funds are being used appropriately, community members want to know that issues are being addressed, service providers will want confirmation that their services meet the program's needs and researchers and data collection experts want assurance that they are adequately capturing the program's successes and areas for improvement, giving recommendations for the future and providing the field with evidence based practice models. Results and final reports should be widely disseminated so that replication and/or continuation is likely to occur.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE(S):

• NCJFCJ's Juvenile Drug Court Information - http://www.ncjfcj.org/monitoring/evaluation.

• *Case Management for Substance Abuse Treatment: A Guide for Administrators* - www.samhsa.gov

• *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation, Wholey, Hatry and Newcomer* (editors), from Jossey-Bass.

• *Juvenile Drug Courts: Strategies in Practice* - Page 23

• PPCD Technical Issues Snapshot 2011 Creating Judicial Academic Partnerships: An Efficient Way to Leverage Resources for Evaluation - http://www.ncjfcj.org/sites/default/files/Judiciary-Academic%20TAB_Final_0.pdf

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