

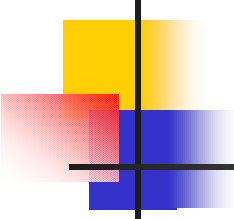


# **Evaluating Family Support Programs: Where Are We and Where Do We Need to Go?**

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# The Challenges of Evaluating FSPs

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- ✧ Family support takes many forms, with many different outcomes
  - ✧ Family support is flexible, responding to community needs
  - ✧ Family support funders often mandate different outcomes and evaluation
  - ✧ Services and support are seen as more important than data collection and analysis
  - ✧ Clients are sometimes reluctant to provide data
  - ✧ Agencies are also reluctant—especially on costs and dosage issues—the invisibility of the systems (e.g. EITC, 636 data)



# Key Points from Participants' Responses\*

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- ✍ **Some FSPs use outcomes; some only use outputs and service counts**
- ✍ **Instruments for measuring clients' progress are used in some FSPs**
- ✍ **Resources are often inadequate to evaluate outcomes and long-term impact**
- ✍ **Many FSPs are still in the early stages of building capacity**
- ✍ **Few FSPs have used data to seek policy changes**

\* (From attendees at LA conference)



# The debate on what to evaluate

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- ✍ ***Process*** is what is most important—faithful adherence to the principles of family support is what we should look for
- ✍ Involving residents and communities in evaluation is the new capacity we need most
- ✍ ***Results*** for families and communities is what is most important—who is being helped, and how much?
- ✍ The capacity we need most is the tools to determine *which* residents we are helping most and how they are doing over time



# The debate on where we are

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## The Good News

- ✍ FRCs have survived funding cuts and have adapted to new funding streams
- ✍ The strongest FRCs have developed evaluation tools that demonstrate success
- ✍ Community and resident involvement are expanding in some FRCs' evaluation efforts

## The Other News

- ✍ FRCs are marginal to the public systems, with token funding
- ✍ Most FRCs do not use adequate evaluation tools or analyze their long-term impact
- ✍ The principles of family support are being carried out categorically, with each system running its own family support efforts



# Policy Arenas

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Have we proven the need for a family support role—where is it in these separate policy initiatives?

- ✍ First 5/SR, preschool expansion and role of FSPs
- ✍ Prop 63 MHSA role for FSPs
- ✍ CWS differential role for FSPs
- ✍ Getting funded by these sources vs *presumptive partners* in legislation and guidelines