

Minnesota Children's Summit 2005: Smart Policies, Strong Families
Monday, March 28, 2005
Practicing Family Impact Analysis
1:45-2:45 p.m.

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

- Family Impact Analysis “Ground Rules”
 - 6 principles, not all need to be done for process to be beneficial
 - Helps you focus on the facts of program.
 - Helps you see your own program more objectively.
 - You don't need to be an expert to use the checklist.
 - Diversity of discussion – informed in different arenas
 - Intent not to pass judgment on ECFE – to practice using the checklist
- ECFE Overview (handout)
 - Offered through community education systems
 - Parent with children birth through K
 - Parent as children's first and most important teacher
 - Several components
 - Voluntary- universal access based on sliding fee scale
- Checklist Overview
 - Principles based on functions a family has
 - 1 – family support and responsibilities
 - 2 – family membership and stability
 - 3 – family involvement and interdependence
 - 4 – family partnership and empowerment
 - 5 – family diversity
 - 6 – support for vulnerable families
- Particular principle to look at for ECFE?
 - #5 – but thinks #4 description is more like #5 title as talked about earlier.
- #4 Family Partnership and Empowerment
 - Any sub-questions with simple yes/no for ECFE?
 - How does the program define family? ECFE is encouraged to accept family's definition of family.
 - If parents/guardian not interested, could aunt/grandma bring child? They encourage whoever is doing direct parenting of child – case-by-case basis.
 - Neighbors have brought children.
 - Answers second to bottom sub-question- prevents families from being devalued – accepting all definitions of family.
 - A case where biological mom was incarcerated, aunt got to come with child.
 - More comments on devaluing families.
 - Important for facilitator to establish ground rules to make everyone comfortable.
 - More discussion of piece with aunt and incarcerated mom.
 - Is child able to handle stigma?

- Once aunt has revealed mom is incarcerated, group needs to support mom back into the program.
 - Where does this program fit with prison Moms and Dads? We're incarcerating more people and separating them from their children.
- What is language in statute regarding how families are defined?
 - Asking because how issues and participants influence policy requires knowledge of legal definition of family.
 - Statutory language – ECFE supporting children through parents, program defining “parent” as whoever brings child in.
 - 30 years ago when the program began families were more traditional, not as simple any more – do we need to re-define?
 - Do all care providers need benefit of ECFE?
 - For a long time we have dealt with how to get information from mom to dad – now also need to get it from dad to mom.
- Dilemma for families – spend 3 hours in parent education class or playing with children?
 - Does parenting support groups? Moms feel great when they go home, but they also have missed out on 3 hours with their kids.
- We're talking about delivery of services – programmatic discussion, not policy discussion.
 - Funding component – what institutions are imbedded and how does the money flow?
- We have to discuss diverse families – Moms and Dads working more – poor transport options – want them to come in with kids. Should we as a society build in options?
- e.g., people can go vote without taking sick time, go to teacher conferences – needs to start with non-profits & hopefully spread to corporations to change fabric of society.
- What are we paying for?
 - Could vary by community.
 - e.g., Minneapolis ECFE not been able to engage families of African descent – so paying for other people's children to receive services but not children who look like him.
 - What policies can develop partnerships between intermediate organizations to connect to all family and influence how money is directed?
 - Used ECFE for about 3 years 20 or so years ago – only person of color in her group.
 - If ECFE is not mandatory, people of color and other populations won't attend until the ball drops and they are made to go.
 - Don't see it as a proactive way of investing in kids & family – society has failed to help this segment of society to get involved and see importance.
- What is purpose? What are outcomes? Is it culturally applicable as well as accessible?
 - Legislators say ECFE doesn't reach families that need it.

- Similar comments on parent education, through Head Start being superficial. How do you get to everyone w/out it being superficial?
 - Funding streams are segregated. Policies don't support integration of services. Children in childcare everyday-can access kids there, but programs don't do this. In rural communities it works better, kids are more alike.
 - Hierarchy of needs – can't worry about parent education if you don't know where your next meal is coming from.
 - Things get planned without the people who will have the direct benefits.
- A good program- sense that organization is part of the community and one can trust people there.
 - Do policies as passed give enough flexibility to make programs work?
 - Is there inherent mistrust of people running program? Policies too strict/spelled out, can't really respond to needs.
 - What's law versus policy? We often don't know – need to strengthen information loop.
- So involved in day-to-day details, don't see self as a “policy” person, but we are all policymakers at some level.
- Families themselves must have great ideas for how to run program, how do you get their input? Advisory council – hard to get some families to be part of it.
- Some programs do a better job of it than others – was easier to get volunteers when there were more stay-at-home moms. Hard for programs not to “in-breed” because programs do self-selection – staff trying to overcome this, and need to hear from people who aren't coming. Need to be extraordinarily planful, most of us aren't good at it – we know what we know.
- Can' help not having your values and assumptions come with you at every step.
- Checklist helped her focus on the facts and step outside of her assumptions about program she's imbedded in.
- TANF/welfare money – 60 months window and work rules – what if “other activities” hours could be used to promote ECFE and other parent/family programs? How to get to people before the ball drops – get parents involved. Colorado giving people \$1000 to get married – what if we took that \$ and gave it to parents for coming to a year of parent education?
- Principle 1 – Should program provide incentives?
 - All programs think they provide incentives-but do clients/audience see them as incentives?
 - Need flexibility within program – what are we providing? Who are we reaching? What are barriers preventing us from reaching others?
- Maybe we need 3 hours of network TV. Reality TV for parent education.
- Any last comments?
 - Do these principles talk about funding? Not addressed directly, sort of an umbrella question.
 - At the U of WI extension, they've used the checklist with a couple of programs – good examples of how to use it with existing programs.
- A more conservative outlook is that businesses need less regulation so they can respond to market – why is it opposite for services?

