



Brief #2: Using Implementation Science to Improve Positive Supports

Jan. 25, 2024

Purpose of this brief

The purpose of this brief is to describe how positive supports and implementation science are related to addressing barriers to transition into the community from the hospital or other out-of-home placements. The Statue (Pursuant to Minnesota Laws Chapter 61, Section 82) related to this council states that the an action plan will be created recommending how to:

1. Improve regional capacity for acute care transitions, including examining the roles and experience of counties and Tribes in delivering services and identifying any conflicting and duplicative roles and responsibilities among health and human services agencies, counties, and Tribes,
2. Create a measurement and evaluation system as part of an overall statewide implementation science approach; and
3. Design statewide strategies that focus on addressing geographic, racial, and ethnic disparities.

What are positive supports?

Positive supports are practices that are proven to be effective using research that proves they work for most people and are implemented in a person-centered manner. Positive supports are driven by culturally responsive values and are monitored over time to make sure they are improving outcomes for people.

What is implementation science?

Researchers study how well a positive support works and then share the results with the community. To show that a practice is effective, research studies list the key elements that are needed to put a new practice in place. When there are enough examples of this practice showing that it improves quality of life and/or social or emotional skills, the practice is considered evidence-based.

The problem that family and caregivers, self-advocates, state leaders, and community members have is that these studies often do not show people how to adapt new practices into their

everyday routines and settings. If someone applies a practice that they found in a study but the key features stated in the research as important are not in place, then a positive support is not considered evidence based.

Implementation science was created to help family and caregivers, self-advocates, state leaders, and community partners adapt positive supports so that they are easy to implement and result in positive outcomes for people. Researchers reviewed the ways that people implement positive supports across behavioral health, education, and human services and looked for the ways in which people have been successful using positive supports in their own routines and settings. These researchers organized the information so that training in positive supports can be used in our everyday routines and settings. In other words, using implementation science helps close the gap between what we know and what we do.

Why use implementation science?

Using implementation science helps put changes in place that improve quality of life for people receiving services, prevent and/or reduce challenging behavior, increase cultural responsiveness, and decrease staff attrition and workers compensation. These outcomes result improved quality of life, cost savings for service providers, and a more positive climate for everyone in home and community settings.

Improve effectiveness and sustainability: It can take time to put positive supports in place in a way that makes a real changes for people. Scheduling a one-time workshop or training rarely results in significant change. In addition to teaching new practices, organizations need to adjust policies to support implementation, create coaching systems and ongoing learning opportunities, and collect data to guide practices. Implementation science is used to improve quality of life and other social outcomes related to positive support practices in the real-world settings. The ultimate goal is to improve the quality of health and human services by creating a plan for making changes over time.

Integrate culturally responsive practices: Organizations can improve cultural responsiveness and become more person-centered using implementation science. Trainings and workshops that focus on strategies for decreasing disparities, celebrating cultural differences, and developing awareness of how our cultural values influence our behavior is one step towards promoting cultural responsiveness.

Resources

[State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center \(SISEP\)](#)

[National Implementation Research Network \(NIRN\)](#)

- [Implementation Science Active Implementation Hub](#)

References

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