

the Baby TALK Learning Group:

An innovative training approach for implementing Model Fidelity assessment tools in early childhood Home Visiting programs

Objectives

- Use the learning group training model to implement sound model fidelity assessment in the field
- Employ Baby TALK core concepts as a parallel process to engage programs in the same manner as we engage families in our work
- Refine, increase accuracy, and implement a model fidelity assessment tool in collaboration with professionals using the model
- Clearly articulate core model components through assessment questions designed to measure true implementation of the model
- Include professional development in the process:
 - o Foster greater confidence in professionals to accurately implement an assessment tool
 - o Increase content knowledge around supporting parent/child relationships
 - o Enhance professional self-awareness

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Methods

- Participants included a stratified group of 16 Baby TALK Birth to Three home visiting programs across the state of Illinois
- Programs were trained and implemented the model fidelity assessment tool with program staff in the context of a series of three learning groups over a 6 month period
- The Learning Group model incorporated:
 - o Training
 - o Technical assistance
 - o Reflective supervision
 - o Active participant feedback
 - o Peer to peer support

Process

- Baby TALK learning group leaders facilitated discussion of the tool in 3 sections and collected and incorporated feedback directly into the tool
- Program supervisors facilitated the self-assessment process with program staff and provided feedback to the learning groups
- Entry/exit surveys and individual interviews assessed understanding and competencies related to:
 - o The Baby TALK model
 - o Implementation of the tool
 - o The self-assessment tool
 - o Supervisors' implementation of the tool, as reported by staff

Results

- As designed, the groups were:
 - o Supportive
 - o Educational
 - o Most importantly INFORMATIVE for Baby TALK learning group leaders
- The tool was strengthened by refining wording, providing clarifications, and coming to a common understanding of the meaning of each self-assessment question
- Professionals valued the opportunity to discuss common themes of model fidelity, both challenges and successes
- Isolated professionals have a strong need for on-going networking and support in a unique way
- Program managers valued thinking together about engaging staff in the self-assessment process
- Programs were fully engaged and committed but the demands of programming sometimes made it challenging for professionals to participate

Conclusion

Everyone wants to succeed!

- o Professionals desire to understand expectations, find time to reflect, make program improvements
- o Beyond training, this type of technical assistance is crucial for quality programming and highest quality services for families

Relationship-based support is crucial to success

- o Engendering strong relationships and using strengths-based approach are instrumental in self-assessment being both a positive experience as well as a learning experience for program improvement
- o The Baby TALK concepts to "come alongside" professionals, employ reflective practices, and treat professionals as the experts of their programs allows programs to contribute valuable input throughout this type of training process
- o Just as we are culturally sensitive in our work with families, models need to be culturally sensitive in creating a tool that has meaning for the diversity of programs and level of experience in using the model
- o Model fidelity assessment requires thoughtfulness and time, so it is critical to implement this process with programs when they have the capacity to fully participate

The model can easily be adapted for other training purposes

- o The underlying strength of the model is concurrent education with supportive reflection and immediate problem-solving opportunities
- o Participant feedback built in to the approach provides opportunities to improve training materials in order to further promote accuracy during the implementation process