The Desmond Hotel
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September 13-14, 2004
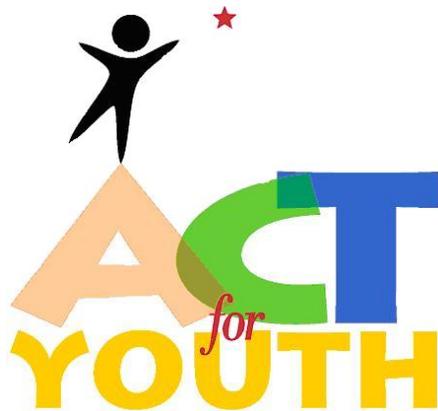
Background

The New York State Youth Development Indicators Symposium was held in Albany, NY on September 13-14, 2004. Co--sponsored by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services and the ACT for Youth Centers for Excellence, the Symposium provided a forum for an in-depth discussion on the current state of the art in measuring positive youth development and well-being. Experts from within and outside of New York State were invited to participate to share their experiences in making strength-based youth development indicators accessible and usable by federal and state agencies, communities and programs.

The Symposium built upon the work carried out by the New York State Youth Development Team (http://www.nyspartnersforchildren.org/teen.htm) which has been developing a list of core indicators to supplement New York Touchstones (Kids Count) data. The intent of this effort is to promote the use of youth development indicators across state agencies for planning and evaluation purposes.

The stated objectives of the Symposium included the following:

1) To develop list of core indicators and measures of youth development from the Youth Development Team Youth Development Outcomes Workgroup's larger list.

2) To operationalize core indicators and identify examples of tools that are effective in measuring indicators.

3) To identify examples of successful use in policy, funding, program evaluation, planning.

4) To identify concrete steps that can be taken in New York to support use of core indicators.

A total of 50 individuals participated in the event including presenters from New York State represented Albany, Monroe, Oswego, Erie, Rockland and Westchester Counties. Out of state presenters representing Maine, Vermont, and Connecticut, and two presenters provided federal and national perspectives. These presentations are summarized in this document and when available, links are provided for more complete information, including PowerPoint slides.

A unique feature of the Symposium was the inclusion of a Concept Mapping activity which helped the group review a list of YD outcome indicators and systematically cluster, prioritize, and assess their importance for use. The process of the activity and results are described below.

This report tries to capture what went on during the symposium by summarizing the main points, issues, comments and questions raised during the course of the 2-day discussion.

Monday, September 13

Welcome/Introduction

Larry Pasti, of the Office of Children and Family Services, set the stage by welcoming the participants and providing a context for the Symposium noting that capturing the healthy side of youth has become increasingly important for the field. The symposium was organized around presentations from panelists who discussed what has worked and what has been a challenge in their work around using strength-based youth development indicators. Small group discussions were built into the agenda to follow the panel presentations in order to delve into issues in more depth. Larry noted the rich variety of people present from the federal, state and local levels and asked each participant to briefly introduce him/herself. Larry introduced Sally Herrick, from OCFS who reported that a meeting was held in May sponsored by the Federal Office of Health and Human Services that focused on measuring YD indicators. Although there was great interest in this issue across the state, only three people from New York (due to HHS size limitations) were allowed to attend this national meeting, which stimulated the idea for hosting our own event on this topic. Sally urged us to make sure that we also discuss what *does not* work as we think about how to make YD indicators accessible in our communities. Larry concluded the introductions by stating that New York has an active YD team that struggles with conceptual and measurement issues. We need to bring the list of YD indicators to a smaller set that is more practical, feasible, and useful. Hopefully, the concept mapping activity we are doing as part of the Symposium will move us in this direction.

Overview Current NYS Activity

Touchstones/KWIC – Deborah Benson, New York State Council on Children and Families

The Council on Children and Families (CCF) is composed of 13 commissioners of health education and human services. In 1995, the CCF and Governor Pataki's office met to discuss the Kids Count data and realized that we needed a set of goals and objectives. In 1997, Family Support America issued a RFP for technical assistance and training for agendas around family support. NYS was selected,Touchstones was adopted and NYS began to focus on promotional indicators, rather than deficit based approaches. The framework for NYS Touchstones is organized according to the following six life areas:

1. Economic security	4. Citizenship
2. Physical and emotional health	5. Family
3. Education	6. Community

Since 1997, Annie E. Casey has been funding CCF to publish (Kids Count) Touchstones data. In 1998, the Federal government encouraged states to develop and/or advance indicators work. It was difficult to get the states to reduce the information for the data book. This data book became KWIC which went online last December and can be found at www.nyskwic.org. This highly interactive website has a mapping component and won a Best of the Web award. Overall in NYS, there has been a gradual shift toward talking about things that promote healthy behaviors.
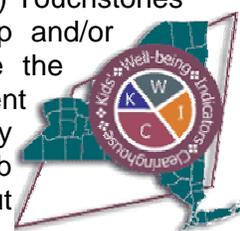
YD Outcomes Group – Mike Surko, Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Clinic

Mike is chair of the YD outcomes work group that is part of the YD team that was established at the end of 2002. This group was charged with developing a set of YD indicators that would complement Touchstones data. A continual challenge has been moving beyond problem focused outcomes and moving toward healthy indicators. The work group knew that they wanted to promote the use of similar YD indicators across state agencies and make the

information available to those who wanted the information at the local and community level. The intended use of the indicators was for: grant writing (both by funders and contractors), program evaluation, community and statewide planning. Another challenge the work group faced was understanding how the indicators would be used, which led the group to focus on the outcomes side. A possible use of the indicators was creating a YD outcome monitoring system in sync with national initiatives. The steps taken included conducting an inventory of existing YD outcome and indicator sets (i.e. Search and CTC) including survey and state indicators. These sets were then organized by Touchstones life areas and rated by YD team members and national experts. A short list was then developed based upon the content and measurability ratings. Some of the challenges included:

- A wide variety of end users, some not known
- New data collection was required for most YD outcomes (not already collected by existing systems)
- Numerous well-being indicators, but not be distinctively YD (i.e. Not strength or asset based)
- Differing and evolving definitions of YD

There were also several "next steps" that were identified including:

- Concept mapping by symposium participants, program providers, and focus groups across NYS to obtain information regarding:
  - What current YD information is collected?
  - What are the expectations/requirements (i.e. for funders)?
  - Report back to youth, schools, parents, communities and how
  - List of preferred outcomes to track
- Creation of a short indicator list (about 15 items) that ensures that state-level monitoring is in sync with national initiatives
- Creation of population or program indicators (separate lists of indicators)
- Defining an age range

Concept Mapping Overview – Janis Whitlock, Cornell University

Concept Mapping was developed by Bill Trochim, Professor in Policy, Analysis, and Management at Cornell University and is a process that can be used to help a group describe its ideas on any topic of interest and represent these ideas visually in the form of a map. (For more information: http://www.conceptsystems.com/ConceptMapping/basics.cfm). The resulting maps show the individual statements in two-dimensional (x,y) space with more similar statements located nearer each other. There are several benefits associated with concept mapping including that it uses information from individuals to identify group shared vision, represents ideas pictorially, encourages teamwork, facilitates group decision making, can be useful for planning and action, and provides both rigor and credibility. The purpose of this gathering is to hash out the definitions and to examine the appropriateness of these YD indicators.

Concept mapping generally involves the following steps:

1. Identify issue
2. Generate ideas (brainstorm)
3. Structure ideas (sort)
4. Compute maps
   a. Clustered into similar ideas
   b. Statistically computed using multi-dimensional scaling (MDS)

   c. In our maps, there are some indicators that are right on top of each other because everyone put them in the same pile. Statements that were never sorted together appeared visually as far apart as possible

   d. Each of the points represents a statement

  5. Interpret maps

   a. Need to determine the best number of clusters for your project

   b. When ratings are applied, you can see which clusters/individual indicators are considered most important

   c. You can look at clusters/ratings by different demographics.

  6. Utilize maps

In this case, participants were sent the indicators in advance as the "statements" and asked to sort them. Today we will continue this process by asking you to rate the statements you sorted. Janis emphasized that the maps generated so far are a first step. After the rating process today, we will be able to generate a set of maps that will hopefully be of value in identifying which of these indicators are the most valuable and useful.

Overview Federal Perspective/Interest – Junius Scott

At the federal level, some areas of focus have remained pretty constant for the past few administrations:

1. An interest in supporting PYD (Positive Youth Development)
2. The idea of outcomes for children, youth, and families. It is important to understand the relationship of interventions that improve outcomes.

Many states and the federal government have policies in place that support PYD, but it is the practice that becomes the all important driving force. We have involved young people in the planning process. If you work with youth and examine the things that positively impact them, they are happy and ready to talk with you about them. Junius noted that there is continued federal support for the great work that NYS is doing around PYD and child welfare improvements.

Definitions, Theory/Principles, & Deficits/Strengths – Larry Pasti

For the purposes of this Symposium's conversations we are proposing use of the following definitions:

Definitions
- Results and indicators are about the well being of WHOLE POPULATIONS for Communities-Cities-Counties-States-Nations.
- Performance Measures are about the well being of CLIENT POPULATIONS for Programs-Agencies-Services Systems.
- Result or Outcome - A condition of well-being for children, adults, families or communities. Child born healthy, children succeeding in school, safe communities, clean environment, prosperous economy.
- Indicator or Benchmark - A measure which helps quantify the achievement of a result. Rate of low-birth weight babies, rate of high school graduation, crime rate, air quality index, unemployment rate.
- Performance Measure - A measure of how well a program, agency or service system is working. Three types: 1) How much did we do? 2) How well did we do it? 3) Is anyone better off? = Customer Results

These are not universal but are suggested to facilitate understanding during our conversations.

It is important to remember what we know about youth development from the research. The seminal report in 2002 by the National Academy of Sciences, *Community Programs that Promote Youth Development*, tells us the current assessment of assets young people need and characteristics of settings that promote young people acquiring those assets. As we move to measure assets, thriving behavior, competencies, or protective factors, it will be important to remember the logic model of youth development. Part of that theory is that youth acquire these over time from a variety of sources (family, school, programs, community, etc.). Program level assessment is important but we also need to look at how this will effect young people over their lifetime.

The YDT Outcomes Workgroup, as well as others delivering into this work have had many a discussion about whether the focus should just be on positive measures or indicators. Looking at strengths does not simply mean "flipping" the measures of deficits. For this Symposium we are asking us not to focus on the "either/or" of looking at strengths and deficits. For many reasons it is important to measure both. The focus here is how to better measure assets and competencies, with entering into the debate of the relative value of including deficit measures in larger discussions.

Thus, we hope that this helps set the stage for our conversations now while also recognizing that this work is constantly evolving.

Lunch Break

Population Based Data (national, state, county)
Panelists: Maine – Nancy Birkhimer/Michel Lahti; NYS Rockland County – Linda McMullan

Questions for Panelists

> 1. What key areas did you choose to measure?
> 2. Why were those chosen (conceptual alignment with youth development, availability)?
> 3. What are some successful examples of use (policy, planning, funding, etc.)?
> 4. Barriers and how they overcame them.

Maine – Nancy Birkhimer

Maine Marks is an initiative of Maine's Children's Cabinet and includes a set of social indicators that reflect the well-being of Maine children. Their website can be found at www.mainemarks.org. Beginning in 1999, the commissioners developed a number of initiatives. The first set of indicators can already be found at the above website and the second publication will be posted soon.

Q: What key areas did you measure?

A: The indicators focus on individual, family, community, and school/education. For example, for the outcome "children and youth are respected, safe, and nurtured in their communities" an indicator may be the percentage of families involved in activities with their children.

Q: Why were they chosen?

A: The committee was rather large and included stakeholders from the state government, university, and NGO's. They chose indicators at different stages of development. Choices were made based on the following set of criteria:

- Enduring importance to child health
- Implications for policy or action
- Outcome oriented
- Relevance to policy makers, state agency, and community leaders
- Readily understandable
- Goal driven (what should we track versus what can we track)
- Consistent with measurement and reporting standards from other sources
- Representative of the larger population, not just one group
- Consistent data source (can be measured in the same way over time)
- Balance between traditional (deficits) and promotional (assets) indicators

Q: Successful examples of use?

A: It helped to identify the need for new initiatives such as efforts to better serve young adults so they stay in Maine. It also helped to identify program and additional information needs such as an expanded set of measures on school readiness. Additionally, it provided initial trend data and comparison data with national indicators. It has been used in planning by local communities and youth sites.

Q: Barriers and how they overcame them?

A: The lack of previous data on some indicators led to the funding of a state-wide phone survey to collect the missing data. The lack of data at the county or sub-state level and national benchmarking has not yet been addressed. The goal is to create one instrument that incorporates the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Communities that Care, Search, and Maine Marks. The non-variability of promotional measures is another issue. This could mean that the measure is not sensitive enough or that there is little variation from year to year. The gap between the cabinet level vision and program use is still quite large. However, it is slowly being adopted by more state programs. For example, the Department of Corrections is using more promotional measures in their re-entry program. There is the continued challenge of making Maine Marks meaningfully different from Kids Count. Ownership and accountability should be with the state agencies. The project was not funded for the last two years. Now that the new contract is in place they are working to regain visibility and momentum.

Q: Has there been a way to work with non-profits?

A: In Maine, Kids Count is an advocacy tool. Since Maine Marks is owned by the executive branch it has more clout. Many of the indicators do overlap so there is the potential for the two to come together. For now, they have different roles. Kids Count is not a mandate in the way Maine Marks hopes to become.

NYS: Rockland County – Linda McMullan

Initially there were six departments, but now there are seven including: Health and Mental Health, Probation, Youth Bureau, Rockland Alliance for Prevention, and Department of Planning and Social Services. They hoped to achieve centralization and focus on why indicators are important. They also hoped to increase dialogue and get buy-in from multiple stakeholders. This resulted in two products that can be found in the binder:

1. "Focus on Children, Youth and Families of Rockland" is based on the Touchstones format. The creators felt that using a document and structure that spoke to interagency collaboration would be a good strategy.
2. "The Changing Face" looked at some of the issues (particularly diversity) that came out once they promoted the data. They were also looking to develop an interactive database similar to KWIC, however, they needed sub-county data in order to make it meaningful for grant writers.

The project had several goals including the desire to create a reliable data source, include data that would be comparable over time, and include unambiguous data. Since the data was being published in a newspaper, they had to ensure that they did not overwhelm people with too much information or replicate other data sources. The information was used to inform the public, problem solve and make funding decisions, assist in evaluating programs, gauge where various departments are, and to determine priority areas.

There were also several barriers that the program faced including a lack of positive measures and a source from which to obtain them. The PRIDE Survey has been used three times in the last eight years by most of the school districts. The survey acted as the basis for determining that much of tobacco prevention work happening in the county has really been effective. However, the survey does not include a str ong component for protective factors. Schools are reluctant to switch to another instrument only to have to switch yet again in the future. The language promotion also tends to vary from one state agency to the next. For example, some agencies use Communities That Care while others use the Search Institute's developmental assets. Schools are also reluctant to compare districts out of fear that their deficits will be out in the public. Yet another barrier is translating indicators into programs. How do you attribute any real accomplishments at the community level to what the program is doing ? The intent is to have next year's database include more measures.

Q: What resources did you use to conduct the surveys?

A (Maine): Used existing data sources (i.e. Search) and also had some flexible funding from Children's Cabinet which allowed them to expand the telephone surveys.

A (Rockland County): Did not have the ability to do a large-scale survey but tried to go through the schools to get a measure of youth involvement in after-school activities. Unfortunately, they were not able to get it through the school system.

Q: How large is Rockland County?

A (Rockland County): About 250,000 people.

Q: Are they single item measures or scales?

A: A few are scaled (i.e. promotional items) but many are single items.

Q: Did you do pilot testing? Would it be ready to use elsewhere?

A: Used questions/concepts that are being used nationally.

Q: You mentioned the PRIDE Survey. Why did the school let you do that?

A (Rockland): There was a "history" , but now there has been a change in the administration. CTC is more family intrusive, so there was a concern about asking those types of questions. The PRIDE Survey is more about individual behavior (i.e. is your school safe, are people carrying guns).

Q: Have there been any barriers overcoming consent issues due to legal requirements?

A (Rockland): None so far in Rockland County
A (Maine): IRB issues have been more stringent than FERPA.

Q: How was information used to make funding decisions in Rockland County?

A: When departments review decisions for programs, they must have a series of outcomes. Information that they submit on what they expected versus what they actually accomplished is used to make decisions. Not all programs have been required to report outcomes yet, but they know that this is coming down the line.

Q: Do all of the schools do any instrument consistently?

A: Five out of six schools do the PRIDE Survey and one does the Rocky Mountain instrument. There was talk about using the CTC measure but there was reluctance to give up something that's been working even though it does not capture all of the information.
Comment: A successful approach in Monroe County involved working with schools to show them ways to use the data positively.

Q: How did they get around consent issues in Maine with the phone survey?

A: They did get parental permission but they did have trouble reaching the households.

Table Talk Activity: 3 Possible Questions:

1. How do you connect aligning outcomes with indicators?
2. Prioritization regarding funding, policies, legislative changes?
3. How do we do marketing and public sharing?

Table 1:
Discussed four factors that might effect how we integrate data from all levels (i.e. state, county, local) including: funding sources, identification of common ground, and looking at using data that show common themes.

Table 2:
The discussion included coordinating interagency collaborations. How do you get someone who is neutral enough to coordinate it as opposed to someone who is tied to an agency and might have an agenda? They also discussed getting promotional factors to be tied into the education process itself and making it more of a project that can be integrated into the curriculum. They were also concerned that youth were not part of the process of selecting indicators and suggested that concept mapping could be done with youth at a YD forum. A concern was raised about how honest kids are in the classroom setting versus an anonymous computer setting.

Table 3:
Monroe County has done a great job of collecting data from a number of different sources. They have also done a lot of training on evaluation with youth serving agencies, yet there does not seem to be much movement at the community level. Is it a saturation issue, incompetence of agency staff, ineffectiveness of program models, are they doing them to fidelity? Or is it an issue of staff turnover? How do you make sense of the data and make changes in a positive direction considering all of these variables?

Table 4:
This group discussed the balance between program outcomes that are required by funding agencies versus what you see as protective factor outcomes. How do you balance funders

requirements for reports versus what research claims is important to measure? The group also discussed marketing methods and the fact that oftentimes data are collected in schools, yet what we are really trying to measure is what happens in the community as a whole, not just the school. How does the community get hold of the information?

Table 5:
This group discussed the possibility of trying to get the Commissioner to sign off on school surveys so that local level school administrators feel safer. They also discussed that schools want aggregate data as well as school specific data; however, they often do not want others to have access to the school specific data. This group also revisited Mike Surko's presentation and discussed our goals for this symposium.

Comment: In Monroe County, they were able to get schools to share data with the community. Prior to releasing any information, the parents were asked to answer questions about their own child (i.e. does your child smoke). They than compared parents beliefs next to kids' recordings of their behavior and presented the findings at a community forum. Differences were so significant that community conversation was generated and parents in other school districts wanted to try doing something similar.

Table 6:
This group focused on the marketing and public sharing question and discussed the challenge of moving from a deficit-based to an asset-based perspective. Access to parents and schools is often difficult. They also discussed how to use the internet as a resource. For example, www.turningpoint.org is a space where curricula and best practices are uploaded.

Table 7:
This group reached the consensus that this whole movement is still in its infancy. We need to concentrate on indicators that systems can focus on to show how YD has an impact. There is so much data, so we need to focus on the most actionable items.

Table 8:
This group focused on how to utilize the core set of indicators for funding purposes. It would be useful for state agencies to find a common language. Rather than doing evaluations at a local level, we should take it up to the state level a bit.

Community Level Data
Panelists: NYS: Erie County – Sue Morisson, NYS: Oswego County – Kathy Fenlon, Vermont – David Murphey

Questions for Panelists:

1. What were the sources of data (tools for collecting) (sub county) for indicators (population based), surveys, and resources?
2. Which tools/sources provided best data in the easiest mode?
3. What are examples of successful use?

NYS: Erie County – Sue Morisson

Sources of data for indicators included the Search Institute Survey, the READY tool, Project 540: Youth Dialogues, the State of the Family, and Child in Erie County Report. They chose the 40 developmental asset framework because it was more user-friendly and it had already been used in the community. One challenge, in the past some schools had used the Search Institute's method but had not shared their results. Others had never utilized the Search method

due to a lack of funding. Therefore, it took some time to align everyone. The Search Survey was given to 8th and 11th graders through the schools. School access was facilitated by the relationship between ACT and Erie 1 BOCES. Some schools expressed concerns regarding the reporting of school level data, so the results were only disseminated in aggregate form and were not individually reported without the schools' permission. A great deal of training and technical assistance was necessary in the first two years of the project. They eventually achieved 100% participation and collected data on over 20,000 young people. The results of the survey can be found in the binder. Several public events were held to discuss the data and schools were offered assistance in analyzing their results and planning for dissemination.

The Search Survey data helped to identify needs. A panel of youth were convened and asked what the indicators meant to them and which ones they believed were important. The focus areas that were identified included: other adult relationships, caring neighborhood, caring school climate, adult role models, community values youth, youth as resources, and planning and decision making. They also started using the READY tool at about the same time and identified the following focus areas: development and maintenance of caring adult relationships, basic social skills, decision-making process, and constructive use of leisure time. There are currently 75 youth serving agencies using the READY tool. The goal for ACT is to programmatically support agencies that are using this tool as a way to promote organizational change. The data from these sources helps to direct the allocation of funding and helps funders to identify outcomes to assess.

Project 540 is a civic engagement process launched in over 10 schools on a pilot project basis. Over 5,000 youth have been trained as facilitators of dialogue. The results of the project indicate that youth want a safe, caring community and school environment, a voice and a vote at the building, district, and community level, and adult/youth partnerships and support in finding solutions to pressing school/community problems. They were also able to successfully lobby for the inclusion of positive indicators in the State of the County Report: Outcomes and Indicators. Some of the common community indicators that were identified across systems include: safe, caring schools and communities; another caring adult; adult role models; planning and decision making; youth valued by the community; and constructive use of time.

Some of the challenges associated with this project included difficulty in accessing, analyzing, collecting and tracking data over time; the high costs associated with administering the Search Survey; time constraints; and distribution issues. The indicators have now been written into the Blueprint for Change and will be systematically tracked. The READY tool will be given at least once yearly and progress will be tracked by funding sources and the ACT partnership. In addition, the Search Survey will be given again in three years.

NYS: Oswego County – Kathy Fenlon

The CTC survey was given to all students in grades 7-12 in all of the schools in the county. It was promised that the superintendents owned the district level data and the county owned the aggregate data. A tremendous amount of data was collected and while it was easy to access specific data it was much more difficult to understand the bigger picture. They are currently using the Oswego County "Risk Indicator Checklist" to organize and examine areas of success and areas in need of improvement.

Based on the results of the survey, they began using an "all call" process where every time there was a funding opportunity available, they would convene all of the agencies to discuss who would be the lead agency, who would provide services, who would take responsibility for writing the grant, etc. This helped to reduce competition amongst agencies and also helped them avoid applying for funds in areas that had not been identified as problem areas.

Vermont – David Murphey

The Community Profiles is a compendium of social indicators (health, education, safety, economic well being, etc.) that is published annually by the community. The community is defined as a region served by a school supervisory union (typical population of 10,000). Indicators are organized under ten areas (see handout) and span the entire life cycle. They have up to 10 years of data collected for each indicator which allows them to compare the county and state to established goals. At least six of the outcomes that they assess have positive indicators. Many of the indicators for the ten outcomes come from the YRBS data. They have also used the Search Survey, however, it is time consuming and expensive so they have tried to incorporate YD indicators in other assessments. Asset measures included in the Vermont YRBS for the first time in 2001 were:

  ➢ Grades in school
  ➢ Parents talk with students about school
  ➢ Participation in youth programs
  ➢ Volunteering in the community
  ➢ Students help decide what goes on in school
  ➢ Young person is valued by the community

Vermont analyzed their YRBS data and measured the relationship of six risk behaviors (alcohol use, ever had sex, marijuana use, physical fighting, cigarette smoking, binge drinking, and planned suicide) to the number of assets (0-6). They found that the percent of youth reporting a particular behavior declined as the number of assets reported increased. Also, healthy behaviors increased with the number of assets (i.e. wear safety belt, aerobic exercise, and wear bike helmet).

Q: Give an example of school-based asset initiatives in Erie County.

A: One school district convened a variety of community representatives to present the data and to strategize on how to effectively utilize the information.

Q: How do you balance just looking for funding based on needs, as opposed to also looking for funding to sustain programs that are already in existence where there does not seem to be that high of a need?

A: For example, the rate of teen pregnancy in Oswego County had declined. However, when they looked at the risk factors for teen pregnancy, they realized that they were still high and so they continued to look for funding.

Comment: In Monroe County and surrounding areas, they have been looking at clinical outcomes and how to integrate them in YD. Another example, Vermont has been able to use VCHIP data integrated with YD efforts among the clinical provider group.

Q: Has Erie County received feedback from youth as to their priorities?

A: They have sat down with about 20 youth to get their feedback. One of the main issues that came up in an affluent neighborhood was that they did not feel safe in their school and that bullying was a major problem.

Q: Who convened Project 540 in Erie County?

A: Erie 1 BOCES

Q: In Vermont, how can you tell which direction the correlation of risk behaviors and assets is going?

A: It is true that all of the data is correlations so you cannot tell whether smoking is driving the decrease in assets or if decreased assets are driving smoking. They did do some multivariate analyses and included some SES predictors such as mother's educational level, gender, etc. When controlling for these, the number of assets were still highly correlated.

Q: In Erie County, are there any significant differences between the City of Buffalo and the suburbs?

A: They did not notice any differences between the county versus the city.

Q: Is anyone looking at physiological correlations to behavior (i.e. caffeine intake and behavior)?

A: Gary Evans at Cornell is looking at how the stress of poverty has affected young people. Additionally, at the National Development Research Institute (NDRI), Dr. Gwadz has been doing some studies around trauma and stress.

Comment: Some longitudinal data are also available (i.e. Search Institute, Health Rocks). Also, we need to be mindful of cultural implications and SES/class for assets. For example, getting A's could be construed as a very "white middle class" expectation. It may also be interesting to do some case studies with youth who have high assets but still have high levels of risk behavior engagement.

Comment: How much are these means to an end? How much is it that we are trying to improve assets in order to decrease risk behaviors versus trying to help youth grow into healthy adults. We need to be mindful that there are dual messages out there.

Comment: As funders we need to shift our approach. Many funding streams are still very deficit based.

Concept Mapping Rating Activity – Janis Whitlock

Participants were asked to rate the indicators they had sorted prior to coming to the meeting by importance, actionabilty and marketability. She acknowledged that the idea of importance is vague, in part because there as such a broad mix of people present that work at the state, community, and program level.

Tuesday, September 14

Program Level Data
Panelists: NYS: Monroe County – Chris Dandino/Jonathan Klein, NYS: Westchester County – Bill Carter, Connecticut – Valerie LaMotte

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Questions for Panelists

1. What components of youth development did you choose to measure?
2. What tools did you use? Were they successful?
3. What are examples of successful use of data collected?

NYS: Monroe County – Chris Dandino

Monroe County experienced difficulty finding a way to measure prevention and YD. There was recognition of shared outcomes and they were able to come up with a list of the 10 most commonly shared outcomes. Monroe County wanted to have something that was easy to use and administer and that would be useful to the program. They identified 7 instruments and had 10 outcomes and 52 indicators by the fourth session.

NYS: Monroe County – Jonathan Klein

Jon Klein provided an overview to tract development of a YD outcome measure, the Ready Tool. Initially, their instrument consisted of 168 questions and took 90 minutes to complete. The reading level was too high and it took too much time to complete which diminished its feasibility in the field. They went back to the agencies and asked them what they needed to know in order to improve the quality of their program. They eventually reduced the list to 4 indicators including basic social skills, caring adult relationships, decision making, and constructive use of leisure time. They then went back to other instruments to find questions that measured those constructs. The draft instrument was piloted with 48 youth along with cognitive interviews in order to test the validity of the measure. The measure was at a fourth grade reading level and took 11 minutes to complete.

When they field tested the measure they found that it was easier for the older adolescents to complete and more difficult for youth under age 14. Youth who were more attached to their program did better on the measure. Slight revisions were made to the instrument so that it included 40 questions and took 10 to 15 minutes to complete. One of the advantages of the measure is that it can be personalized for individual programs. Training modules, scoring templates, and software were developed to accompany the measure. The measure was disseminated in Rochester and was used with about 1100 youth. Alaska, Hawaii, Oswego, and Erie County also used the measure.

Programs used the data in a variety of ways including for internal quality improvement of programs, discussing goals with staff, identifying differences across units, and reviewing the curriculum. It also allowed agencies to identify PYD as an outcome. They discouraged people from doing pre/post tests in the same year, but encouraged them to implement the measure annually and look at change over time.

There are modest fees associated with the program based on the level of technical assistance and travel needed. The READY toolkit comes with the instrument, analysis program, manual, and user agreement. The score report provides a grade breakdown by construct. The constructs are then broken down into specific items.

Connecticut – Valerie LaMotte

Valerie's work primarily funds juvenile justice programs and these are typically short-term grants. There is a constant conflict between being a trustee and overburdening grantees. Connecticut Health and Human Services has funding for YD and YD outcomes. Instead of going to programs, these went to the University of Connecticut and asked them to develop indicators. They developed a handbook (see manual) that helped bring program people up to speed on positive outcomes and helped to explain complex evaluations. Getting the University of Connecticut researchers to pare down the indicators was difficult. They eventually developed 7 PYD outcomes that could be tied to impacts. The tools are free and they are in the process of updating the measure now. Page 3 of the handout shows some of the common outcomes.

One of the challenges was difficulty in collecting process data. Many of the programs are after school drop-in centers and it is very difficult to even obtain attendance data. It is also difficult to plan for the next funding cycle when you do not yet have the results of the evaluation from the previous cycle. The project, however, helped to change the views held by both police and young people. Initially, the evaluation found no changes, however, once the youth were separated by personal adjustment levels, improvements could be seen.

In connection with the University of Connecticut, they developed a survey to measure supportive relationships, safety, challenging activities, and meaningful involvement/roles. The goals were to survey the youth on the constructs and then provide programs that can deliver the necessary results. The programs received evaluation data: tables of comparisons with significant differences highlighted, as well as comparisons of youth across programs. The youth and the staff from the YD center reviewed the results with the state and developed a way for the program to improve.

Some of the concerns included timeliness, difficulty understanding the results, the issue of improvement, fear of burdening grantees with evaluation results, and attributing results to the project.

NYS: Westchester County– Bill Carter

Westchester County wanted to have an evaluation that would be useful in making funding decisions, but that would also be useful to programs when they sought other funding. They brought together many agencies to discuss the importance of funding and developed long, cumbersome evaluation tools to evaluate behavioral outcome changes. Trying to find one instrument to assess the great variety of programs was impossible. All of their funded programs tried to evaluate efforts but people did not have the time, staff, or necessary technical assistance to use the tool.

The feedback that they received from the agencies was that the research project did not benefit the programs and did not do anything to improve the relationship between funders and grantees. Territorial issues made the programs reluctant to do the evaluations and the grantees did not feel as though the measure was addressing the right issues. The instrument was also culturally insensitive. Kids did not want to be honest with role models that they respected because it would reveal their "more negative side". There was not enough buy-in and the evaluations needed to be more user friendly.

They decided to do away with the old evaluation tool with the exception of the COPS programs whose funders required that they continue using the measure. They have since found that the measure is much more manageable with a smaller number of programs. A pilot run of the measure may have highlighted that fact. They are now using a monthly statistics form, qualitative narrative and some best practices models. One of the best things that they have

done is to create regional, localized planning groups, most of which are using the CTC model. Local people are realizing the importance of evaluation on their own without having the county mandate it. Now, they are a more helpful organization (i.e. they provide technical assistance), rather than a punitive one. Schools districts had not wanted to use the previous tool because they felt that it was too invasive. However, they do buy into the CTC model.

They are now measuring several positive youth outcomes including: youth leadership, self-esteem, decision making, and career development. They are also looking at the level of turnover as an indication of success. They are also now negotiating with youthservice.net who has developed software to more easily collect data across programs and also allows for personalization of the instrument. Carter pointed out that we need to be realistic with expectations: the focus at many programs is not on changing youth behaviors, but rather on ensuring that they live to adulthood. Safety is the number one concern. We have to be careful as evaluators that we develop tools that take into account how young people grow older and the communities in which they grow older.

Q: What would you say, given some of these broad constructs, when program people ask you how many of these outcomes can be attributed to my program?

A (Valerie): A pre/post test is supposed to show that the program made a difference but the quality of the evaluation is an issue. It is expensive and time consuming to do the evaluation well. You need to keep in mind that you cannot take something that is shown to be "tried and true" and simply plop it in somewhere.

A (Chris): As funders, we understand that there is not one tool for everything. If you really want to know what a program is doing, then you need to know what outcomes you are focusing on. If they do not meet this measure, then the tool will not work for you. Do the activities that you are doing give you the outcomes that you expect?   READY does not replace community data, YRBS, etc. Programs still want to control their own data and see it before everyone else does.

Q: What ages is the READY tool appropriate for?

A: It is used for ages 13 and up. The data is not as good/reliable? for younger kids. The material is copyrighted. The collective owners made it their goal to have it be useful and accessible to people. The costs cover technical assistance and training.

Q: Do you see potential for other counties to get involved and do aggregate state-wide data?

A: They thought about having networks of programs using this. Concerns include the costs of merging data and running a summary report. It depends on whether there are programs/funders who would find that useful. Counties do not seem to care as much about aggregate data.

Q: How useful is the data and how do programs use the data to improve? How does knowing where you are help you improve?

A: The United Way is looking at how you do technical assistance when a program is not doing well. First, they will look at what is happening in the program. Second, they look at the model, and third they look at the structure and consistency. Programs are then encouraged to connect with other similar programs who may be able to provide guidance.

Concept Mapping – Janis Whitlock

Results: The top rated clusters were: 1) positive climates outside the home, 2) positive family connections, and 3) positive life outlook. Within clusters, there is an indication that some individual indicators were ranked as very important. Janis showed how the rates differed

between men and women, as an example of the type of demographic/sub analyses that can be done with this software program. There was a comment on how the physical health measures were ranked very low. There was also some discussion of how the lines of the cluster boundaries need to be reexamined and some points may need to be reassigned.

Q: How might we use this?

A: Some people suggested that the parameters were too vague (importance, actionable, marketable) and that the rating statement needs to be rewritten. There could be two different goals, one that looks at outcomes for everybody and one that looks at the level of disparity among young people. Some expressed difficulty with the term "actionable" since some of the indicators are hard to change (i.e. peers with pro-social norms). It is important to remember that it is not only youth behavior that can be changed, but also family and the community. Every one of these areas is open for interpretation. This provides a map that could lead to a variety of next steps. This is not intended to be a strategic planning conference, but the YD team could use this in the future. If we do this activity again or if we ask other people to do this we could rate concepts/indicators in a simpler way. It is also possible to do multiple kinds of rating dimensions. People generally expressed a willingness to do the rates again.

There was a comment that the indicators need to be expanded. The issue of subjective self-reporting was also raised and a suggestion was made to triangulate the data. Another option would be to rate the clusters first, and then rate the items within the clusters. Results of the concept mapping activity can be found at http://www.actforyouth.net/.

Child Trends – Lina Guzman

Child Trends is a non-profit research organization that works on improving the lives of children and families. They monitor and develop indicators of child, youth, and family well-being. The Child Trends databank contains more than 85 key indicators that provide national trends and subgroup comparisons. This list is continually updated and expanded. It is available online and provides links to state, local, and international estimates. The general model of YD goes from needs to resources to outcomes. Outcomes have been ignored due to a focus of attention on resources. Key areas of YD include educational achievement/cognitive attainment, health/safety, and social/emotional development. They examine both the positive and the negative aspects of these domains. The indicators can be used for multiple purposes including description, monitoring, setting goals, accountability, and evaluation (though they cannot attribute causality with cross-sectional data).

There are also several state level indicators. These include the YRBS (www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs), the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) (www.urban.org/Content/research/), the Current Population Survey (www.bls.census.gov/cps), the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (www.nces.ed/gov/naep), and the American Communities Survey.

The following is a list of indicators and some possible sources:

- School engagement (NSAF)
- Advanced course-taking (NAEP)
- Nutrition (YRBS)
- Health status (NSAF)
- Dental Care (SLAITS)

- Volunteering (NSAF)
- Positive behavioral scale (YRBS)

The National Survey of Children's Health surveys over 100,000 children and includes contextual variables, as well as learning processes. There has also been some progress on PYD indicators. They are measurable, concise measures and they have survived psychometric analysis. Some of these indicators include: positive parent/child relationship interaction, empathy, sleep, and religious attendance. Other promising indicators include: generosity, character, spirituality, and civic engagement. Further information can be found at www.childtrends.org and www.childtrendsdatabank.org.

Conclusion/General Discussion/Next Steps

It was helpful to identify clusters and get the ratings. We will be able to find items that represent the clusters of concepts.

What are some of your take-aways?

- It is important to think of how evaluation can be helpful to those working on the lines. Evaluation is good for funding, but it can also be helpful for those doing the work.
- This has made me think about reducing the amount of reporting we require of our grantees – all of that is taking away from their programs.
- Self-assessment is important and valuable.
- We need to move toward giving incarcerated youth the skills they need and move away from simply trying to control them. How do you develop state-wide indicators that would help and individual worker take steps forward?

What other kinds of training or opportunities would be useful?

- There needs to be more conversations on how evaluations are used.
- The research community should publicly identify the reasonable expectations for evaluations.
- Putting in accountability measures that are not about pulling funding would be useful.
- Funding needs to be more developmentally progressive. There should be a move toward rewarding organizational capability.
- Many funding models are based on need. We need to refocus the funding efforts so that they are more reward based and less need based.

One of the things that people liked about the organization of the symposium was the time given for group discussions. They would have liked to have had more opportunities for break out sessions/activities.

Post Script

As a follow-up to the Symposium, we have continued to gather more data using the concept mapping process. We have expanded our sample to include practitioners and youth. Ultimately we will be able to compare the maps and clusters of these two groups with policy makers, who primarily attended the Symposium. These results will be posted on the Upstate Center of Excellence website (www.actforyouth.net) when available.