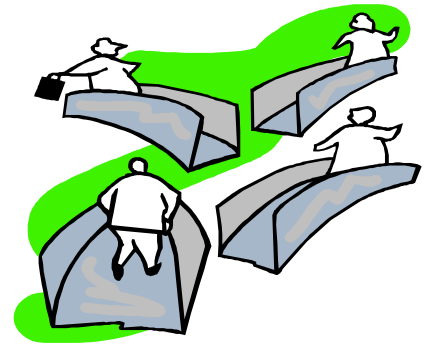


Handout 2

Phases of Implementation



Pre-Implementation

Pre-implementation consists of four key components: characteristics of the strategy, organizational characteristics, the environment, and communication issues.

Characteristics of the Strategy

Characteristics of the strategy can affect whether and how rapidly adoption occurs. These characteristics include the innovation's relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, flexibility, reversibility, risk, (cultural) appropriateness, and cost-efficiency.

Organizational Characteristics

Organizational characteristics often influence whether an innovation is adopted. This includes the organization's size, level of commitment and support from top management and workers for the innovation, decentralization, complexity, and degree of formalization. Another important characteristic includes the organizations history of working the target population, as well as the organizational resources required to deliver or facilitate delivery of culturally appropriate and responsive services.

Environment

Environmental characteristics include public opinion, outside forces, and federal agencies. Public opinion around an issue can influence the extent to which organizations perceive a need to adopt an innovation. Cultural appropriateness or community standards related to talking about certain issues may also influence adoption. Outside forces can hinder the actions of health and social service agencies. Federal agencies can also encourage the adoption of innovations by disseminating information or providing change agents to support the adoption decision.

Communication Issues

The way people communicate ideas about the innovation and how decisions are made within organizations are an important component in the pre-implementation phase. Clear communication is critical in this process. Information about the intervention must be "translated" into a format that is understandable and accessible to potential users. Make sure the exchange of information between the organization/providers and the clients/population, and internally among staff, happens in ways that promote cultural competence.

The type of communication and the nature of the decision making are also factors to consider. Informal communication might be more persuasive than formal communication. Research indicates that group decision making is more likely to lead to adoption than decision making by individuals. The use of an opinion leader or linking agent can enhance the effectiveness of the communication factors discussed above.

Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1997). *Science of Technology Transfer*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Behavioral Intervention Research Branch.

Implementation

During implementation people focus on several key issues following the decision to adopt an intervention. In this phase it is important to pay attention to the following issues: mobilizing support for the innovation; training; balancing fidelity and tailoring to fit local circumstances; and process evaluation.

Mobilizing Support for the Innovation

Support for the intervention among key administrators in the organization or key leaders in the community, is a critical factor in shaping events during this phase. Key leaders from the target populations should be brought to the table to create buy-in. Consider, as well, the target populations' beliefs about the relative importance of the issue addressed. It is important to also have at least one key administrator act as "champion" to improve the innovation's success.

Training

Adequate training is important during this phase, as overcoming resistance to implementation may not be possible if staff do not have the skills to implement an intervention. Training is also associated with whether staff implement interventions that have been chosen for adoption. Some evidence suggests that training may be correlated with the completeness and fidelity of implementation efforts. Trained staff may implement more of the key components of the intervention and do so in accordance with the guidelines provided by the developer. Consider also the diversity of existing staff members. Efforts should help to ensure staff and other service providers have the requisite attitudes, knowledge and skills needed for delivering culturally appropriate and responsive services.

Balancing Fidelity and Tailoring to Fit Local Circumstances

In the implementation phase, the process must provide for two-way communication and reinvention because knowledge is neither applicable across all contexts nor is it always complete. For instance interventions are expected to be culturally relevant for different populations. Keep in mind, though, that efforts must balance completeness and fidelity of implementation with the reinvention or tailoring of interventions to fit local circumstances.

Process Evaluation

Coupled with monitoring the completeness and fidelity of implementation, process evaluation can provide useful information for decision makers. The mechanisms and processes used for: a) long- and short-term policy, programmatic, and operational cultural competence planning that is informed by external and internal consumers; and b) systems and activities needed to proactively track and assess an organization's level of cultural appropriateness and responsiveness. Consider influences of participant satisfaction.

Maintenance

Change can be short lived if the one-time resources used to initiate a new intervention are withdrawn or if the organization or social system is tempted to redirect resources for the current intervention to another new challenge. Efforts to maintain the intervention should include technical assistance, administrative support, cost-effectiveness over time, and evaluation and feedback.

Technical Assistance

Technical assistance (TA) is an important component to ensure the continued implementation of the intervention. TA should also occur during the implementation phase. TA providers' should understand cultural considerations of the target population. TA providers' delivery or facilitation of clinical, public health, and health related services should be conducted in culturally appropriate and responsive manner.

Administrative Support

Securing the continued support of key administrative personnel is as important during maintenance as during implementation. Before the intervention becomes institutionalized in the new setting, resources will still be needed, as will help in implementing and tailoring the intervention.

Cost-Effectiveness over Time

Making decisions about how to spend limited dollars requires information on the costs associated with programs, the cost-effectiveness of various programs, as well as information on what programs are effective. Also consider costs and benefits of adapting strategies to be more culturally appropriate or responsive. Will the long-term benefits of the intervention be greater if the intervention is delivered in a culturally appropriate manner?

Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation is an important component during the maintenance phase. Process evaluation should continue during this phase because organizations and social systems are dynamic; changes in staff, changes in job duties, or changes in organizational priorities may all influence the extent to which an intervention continues to be implemented. To make sure that programming is reaching diverse populations, consider collecting data that might capture disparities in the delivery of services or programming. Monitor variations across and within populations—don't just compare one ethnic group to another or low wage earners to high wage earners. Instead, also look for variation within groups.

Outcome evaluations can be useful during this phase. An important caveat must be recognized when outcomes are evaluated without the rigorous controls used in research studies—potentially null or negative results may not be attributable to the intervention but to other factors that are unmeasured.