

State Plan Development
Evaluation Webinar
March 10, 2011

Sheryl: Thank you, guys, for being on the call today. This is Sheryl Matney, TA Contract Manager. We know that everyone is in the full swing of trying to develop state plans, and wanted to present you the opportunity to receive technical assistance on the section dealing with the evaluation plan that you will need to include in your state plan this year.

We are very, very pleased and very lucky to have Dr. Chris Smith with us. Chris currently is the director of the Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore. I had the pleasure of meeting Chris when I was with the council recently as we were working on state plan development. And as you guys know, Chris has just a ton of experience in evaluation, technical assistance, quality improvement projects, lots of history. And I think you guys are going to be well pleased with the information he brings with himself today.

Chris: Thank you, everybody, for your patience with all this. And good afternoon. It's just certainly an honor to be here. I've been working with some great folks here in Maryland around everything from planning and any evaluation and outcomes. And it's always rewarding to have some good conversations about some of the basics basically of thinking.

I have been doing program evaluation and continuous improvement for a lot of years. And I find that teaching and talking about this stuff can be rewarding, but it can also be kind of frustrating at times. So hopefully today won't be that.

I can tell you that there are sort of two things that we're not going to do today. First you're not going to come out of here as trained evaluators. I hope that's not your goal. That's certainly not something we can accomplish in a short webinar. I think the other thing that we're not going to do is we're not going to go through and cover the evaluation plan that's already included in the DD document that you all have at your disposal. That would be quite redundant and a waste of your time.

So if you could go to the next slide, please. So what I tried to do is to think through what might be useful goals for today. So what I want to do is just, in some very basic ways today, talk about types of evaluation, some of the functions of evaluation, some different data types that we all use—and I think often we forget that we use this data every day, but we do—some capacity issues that I think come up when we all think about improving our capacity to do evaluations. There are some things that we need to think about that I've seen come up over and over again over the years. I think I'll try to cover some considerations for evaluation and implementation and, hopefully, talk a little bit about the relationship evaluation, so your DD council planning process. One of the things that I've

found over the years is that often we separate the evaluation, the continuous improvement, from planning, and really they ought to be an integrated process.

Hopefully you can all see the next slide. And, please, somebody have the courage to sign on and tell us to slow down or you can't see it, if that's the case. The first thing I wanted to do is to talk just a little bit today about two types of evaluation. And there are many, many types of evaluation. And if you're an evaluator, I apologize for making this too simplistic. I was trying to think about how I could sort of arrive at some things that might make sense. And I think the first thing is we know what quantitative evaluation is. And often we're asked as providers, and certainly DD councils are major providers of both funding and services around the country, and we're sort of asked to count things: the number of consumers and activities and materials produced. Sometimes it's a matter of a change in performance relative to knowledge or skills or behaviors. Sometimes we're actually just counting dollars and costs, and sometimes we're actually counting the numbers of consumers served. So those are just some examples of ways of quantifying both the things that we do and the things that we achieve, the costs of those things, and sometimes the target population.

Next slide, please. So another way of thinking about evaluation is to think about qualitative evaluation. And these are not nearly as neatly separated as you might think. But broadly speaking, a qualitative evaluation is sort of looking at the content or the quality or the relevance of what we're doing, the attitudes or the achievements of the consumer. So rather than just counting how many people we've served, we've asked them about their perceptions [indiscernible].

The other thing is, sometimes we like to think about the quality of the resources. So if we were having folks work on literacy materials or some new dissemination, we might think about how well are those materials being perceived and are they working.

I think the other thing is, often we – another qualitative strategy has to do with the efficiency of our strategies, do the people in our community think we're being successful. Not just do we think we are; do they think the program staff are trained properly? What activities are we doing that our consumers and stakeholders think are working? So those are sort of qualitative ways. And you can quantify the perception. So let's say you do surveys about those perceptions. You can quantify that so there's a little bit of a mix there. But the bottom line is that it's more about the quality of what we do rather than just the numbers of the things that we do.

So those are sort of the two broad categories for thinking about the types of evaluation that we do, generally speaking. So as you're thinking about your evaluation plan, hopefully that will help.

Broadly speaking, I sort of came up with three functions of evaluation. And I'll probably think we undertake these things all the time without even documenting it. I know the people here in Maryland did, because I've served with them on committees a million times, and they're always thinking this way. One has to do with documenting our

processes. And so the notion is that, if we're going to document what we do, it's called "formative evaluation." So we're trying to use our data and our information to inform our activities and to help us to continuously form and reform our activities around data. Often we're measuring what happens and when and by whom and where and all those other things. So that's sort of just documenting the what of what we do.

A second function is to document the value of what we do. So sometimes we get into things like return on investment, cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis. And these are somewhat technical, but often very useful in formative strategies for getting at the value of our processes.

And then the last but not least, as you all know, documenting the outcomes of the impact of what we do. So those are sort of the three broad functions of evaluation that I think are probably most relevant to your planning and your evaluation strategies. And again, you could do that quantitatively or qualitatively.

I also started thinking about logic models and the kinds of information that we often collect. And I looked back at the DD Council planning documents and some of the other things that I've done over the years and basically came up with five broad categories of information that we most often collect.

And I'll start at the bottom of the list, if you can sort of move it down, which is outcomes. So often I think there's a lot of pressure nowadays to really focus in on statements that allow us to measure the impact or the outcome of our work. And I don't think that's going to go away. I think the focus is rightly here. But I think sometimes we forget to collect other information that helps us to understand why or how we arrived at those outcomes. And that's the other four things on the list.

So the first one has to do with target population. So I think often we're collecting information about who we serve. So characteristics, demographics, race, ethnicity, location, urban/rural, ability/disability status, languages, all of those things are sort of characteristics of who we serve. And I'm here to tell you, if you're not collecting data on that and you don't track that kind of stuff, you can often miss really important trends.

I've been working with some folks in Kansas for about 10 years to put together some tracking mechanisms, and it's getting really interesting. We just learned that in the most recent census data and some other data we were collecting that over 40% of the counties in Kansas now qualify as frontier counties, which means they have fewer than seven people per square mile, but they often have intense resource needs. So the issue is, if you're tracking that stuff, you can kind of get a sense of what are the needs and how to allocate resources to meet the needs.

A second issue has to do with inputs. And I think we often have a budget, but I think sometimes we forget to actually reflect on how those budgets are actually used to actually create certain outcomes. So how do we spend our money? How do we allocate our

resources? How do we use our technology and our people and our facilities both on our own and in partnership with others?

A third type of data has to do with activities. That is to say, what is it we do? So DD councils are very different types of animals. So the DD council I've been working with her is very busy planning and allocating and measuring changes around all kinds of things that they've established are priorities. But a lot of the work has to do with both funding and then TA around advocacy and legislative efforts. That's really different than folks who are doing direct services or literacy work or early childhood care and so forth. So the issue is, we've got to know what it is that we do.

And a final category has to do with outputs. And so these are the things that we make. And I know our DD council here funds things that are related to actual tangible outputs, whether it be curriculum or websites. But these are the tangible things we can sort of wrap our hands around, put our hands on and so on. So these are the five categories of data that I think you would most often be collecting data on or be most often asked to report on.

So the reason I wanted to look at these is because I think that it's not just about data; it's about what questions do we answer with the data. So these questions to me are fairly simple. Who do we serve? What does it cost to do what we do? What do we do as part of our daily work? What do we make or create? And what are the results of our achievements of our work? So if you think about it, it's not just about the data. It's about answering strategic questions so that on a regular basis you can sort of have this, what I call the "elevator speech," that you guys have that. But I always think, if somebody stops me on elevator and says, "What is it you do?" then I can answer those five questions between floors one and three.

And I think sometimes it's hard to do. We have very, very complicated organizations. We often all are involved in lots and lots of different kinds of things. So being able to sort of boil all that data down into answering those five questions, I think, helps to make evaluation a little bit more manageable and a little bit more meaningful in our lives.

So there are some related activities that I wanted to point out that you, I'm sure, have encountered along the way, and they have to do with things like logic models. And I'm sure you'll see from the questions and the data sets I just mentioned, bills are always included in logic models. Needs assessments, you guys are busy in the process of doing that right now. Strategic plans, you're in the middle of doing that. And often you're in the middle of doing collaborative evaluations. We're in the process of doing ours at the u-said [ph]. We're collaborating with our DD council here and some other partners to share data, and I think that's the way it ought to happen. If I had my way, we'd have just one needs assessment for the entire state of Maryland and stop wasting some of our resources. But we'll get there. We have a great relationship with some of our partners, but it's hard, because everybody has their own evaluation and planning process that they undertake.

So let me talk a minute about how this sort of relates to your planning document. And so I went back and looked at your planning document that I'm sure you're all either have finished or are working on right now. And things like target population, those are heavily embedded in Section 3. The costs are, of course, your budget. But, of course, you could break those things out. Activities, outputs and outcomes are all about Section 4. So all of this stuff that I've just talked about is fairly, I think, obvious and relevant to the planning documents that you guys are heavily invested in right now and busily working on.

I wanted to take a minute to talk about capacity issues. One of the things that's happened over the years as I've worked with organizations to provide TA around evaluation, I've learned that there are some things that pop up over and over again that I just want you to think about as you – because I know what's going to happen is you're all thoughtful people, you're going to get off this and hopefully you're going to pick up at least one or two things you're going to want to try to take back and work. And, unfortunately, I think, that often can be very stressful, and we all are busy. And I think part of this is it's a capacity issue.

So the first thing for me is people. We're all working in the people business. And evaluators are probably among the most sensitive to this issue, that as soon as we start collecting data and doing evaluation, it's a new stress, it's a new cost. Data can be not always easy to understand. Not everybody's trained to interpret and analyze it and report data. So I think often the first capacity is just do you have the people who are interested and skilled and motivated to do evaluation. And if you don't, then you probably need to figure out how to get there.

The next issue has to do with knowledge. I mean, even if you have people who are motivated and skilled, evaluation is a fairly technical field, and if you want to do it right, there are some things that you probably want to invest in over times in terms of increasing your organizations knowledge around – it's not just skill. I mean, there are a whole bunch of sort of knowledge banks around, quantitative and qualitative evaluation that are important to sort of pick up.

A third item that's highly related to the first two is technology. And most of the evaluation issues nowadays are actually not people – I mean, are not technology issues, but people issues. We have a lot of technology now that allows us to do some pretty amazing stuff even just with simple spreadsheets and data sets that allow us to be fairly sophisticated in the kind of data we collect and share and use for our strategic planning. So the issue is how do we use that technology and how do we find the people and get the knowledge so that we can use it effectively. Because the technology nowadays is just not that expensive, unless you have an organization that's spread across lots and lots of counties or states or regions and you have some distance issues.

The fourth issue, and certainly not the most insignificant, is funding. If you think about increasing things like people, knowledge and technology, none of it's free. I did a small time series study with an organization in Kansas, and I think just kind of an informal way we figured that they probably spent between 10% and 20% of their time collecting,

analyzing and reporting data, and most of it they didn't use. They were just required to report. So the first thing is to just understand that most evaluation is just not funded on its own. Everybody's expected to do it, but often finding the money to do it is not so – that's where partners comes in it. Often you can find folks like u-saids and universities and community colleges and consultants and others who are doing these things, either nationally or in your geographic region, who can partner with you to provide you the people, the knowledge, the technology, or some of the funding.

I was at a meeting recently with a local really, really large foundation, and we were talking about a particular project. And as this project officer got a sense of the kind of data work that was going on just to report the data that he was seeing on an annual basis, he just kind of – you could see the light bulb came on, and he said, "Wow. I had no idea it took that much time and energy to collect this data." And he said, "And we don't even pay you to do that." And I said, "Yeah, but you could." And what was interesting was his comment was, "You're right. We could actually fund the project and then we could fund an evaluation." And I said, "That would be great." So I think funders are often cognizant and ready to hear sort of a realistic assessment of the cost associated with evaluation. We just have to be prepared to help them know what that is.

Then I think the issue is having a plan for integrating all of those. So as you think about evaluation in your organization, I think one of the issues is to figure out a plan, know what our strengths are and our weaknesses relative to evaluation, and then how are we going to get to where we need to be in terms of people, knowledge, technology, funding and partners so that we can do a good job?

Thank you for taking care of the slides, by the way. This makes it so I don't even have to monitor my keyboard. So it turns to the capacity solutions. So one of the issues has to do with capacity solutions. So as I just mentioned, have a plan. Sometimes my wife makes fun of me for having plans for everything. But I think sometimes when you get into this issue of something new, like evaluation, something that can involve people and feelings and money and knowledge and technology, it's important to not just sort of jump in without some kind of a plan.

I do think it's important to not depend too heavily on external resources. And it's not that I wouldn't like to have everybody's funding for my organization to do that. But the truth is that organizations do best when they have a lot of capacity on their own. So figuring out how to build your own internal capacity around people and so forth is a really good issue. So having that plan and then building it internally is great. Sometimes you have to build external capacity as well.

So I mentioned earlier partnering with u-saids, higher education consultants. There are a lot of non-profits who have evaluators and researchers on staff who are more than happy to share some of their expertise. Sometimes it might cost you a little bit to get started, but often it's a lot cheaper than hiring several fulltime staff to do this.

I was talking with one of our state directors not long ago, and this person mentioned to me that they had four data programmers, and if this person went to all four of them and asked them for summaries of all of their data regarding the statewide services, this person's comment was it felt like they get four different responses. And I think the issue is just to figure out how to have a plan and how are you going to arrive at one single set of data that answers those critical questions we talked about earlier.

And last but not least, and I think this is probably for me the most important issue of the day, structuring time for reflection. So each organization needs to figure out how do we find time. Because we all have committees and meetings that are just driving us nuts, and emails and so on. So how do we find time to actually use the data that we're collecting? And I don't mean just so that you can write up your plan, but to actually continuously reflect on what it is you do at all levels of the organization so that everybody across your organization, from frontline staff to highest level management, has some time as a group to think through the impact of what you do and what your achieving. I think it makes our work meaningful. And I think very, very few human service organizations are good at doing that. We're all just way too busy.

So take a deep breath and let's talk for a minute about evaluating your DD council achievements. And we talked about a little bit of this so far. Let's start with outcomes. And I talked with Cheryl and Jennifer and Rita and some others about this issue, and some of it has to do with – I think we all have some different language around what's an outcome, what's a goal, what's an objective, what's an indicator, and so on. So let me just give you my take on this, and then you can argue with Cheryl and everyone else about whether or not I'm write.

So the first issue is, what's an outcome? And for me it's simple. It's the end-state or the global goal, the global thing that you're trying to achieve. So in some cases it might be everybody lives an inclusive life. Well, that's an outcome. You may not be able to do everything that's [indiscernible] your agency to achieve that outcome, but you're going to do some certain things as a small subset of activities to achieve that outcome in concert with many other agencies in your state. And that's the issue, is to try to figure out what's that broader context. The [indiscernible] outcome is just the end-state. Kids are in school and ready to learn. Everybody has a house. Everybody lives in an inclusive community and thought. But those are broad, not measurable, motivating statements about the end-state of a person's life.

A goal, however, is something that you hope to do to achieve the outcome, and that's where I think we begin to get things measurable. And you have some excellent examples of goal statements in the DD framework that you get. And I looked at some of those, and I think that's just a great set of examples.

The objectives are measurable strategies that relate to accomplishing the goals. And I have some examples here we'll cover in just a second. And then indicators are how are you going to know you've achieved your objective. And that sort of gets to how are you

actually going to count something. Is it an increase, a decrease, is it the number, is it the percent, and all of those other ways of measuring things.

So let's go to the example. So one of the things that's come up a lot here in Maryland, and I think it's come up in many states, is housing. So I just use some examples to write an outcome, a goal, a set of three objectives and three indicators related to housing so that I could demonstrate how this all sort of plays out. And hopefully this will all make sense. So the outcome for this is all persons with developmental disabilities have affordable, accessible housing. Now, you notice there's nothing measurable about that. It doesn't talk about an increase or a decrease and so forth. However, the goal does. So the goal for this particular DD council would be to increase by 20% the available number of accessible home or rental units for persons with developmental disabilities. So now we're looking at a goal that's clearly related to the outcome. Now, it's not everything you could do to achieve the outcome, but it's clearly related to it. It's something that the DD council thinks they can do, so it's realistic. And it's measurable. It doesn't have a timeframe, but it does have a number to it.

So the three objectives are – well, the first one is to partner with funders to increase by 20% the tax abatements for new housing development. The indicator for that, that it's how we're going to measure it, the increase in the number of dollars available for tax abatements for housing. So you simply have the beginning number, the end number and the difference is whether or not you increased or not.

Objective two is to partner with developers to increase by 50% the actual use of tax abatements. And again, the indicator is the increase in the percent of available tax abatements that are actually used by developers. So you notice that the first objective is about making more money available. The second objective has to do with actually using that money in a meaningful way.

And the third objective has to do with to partner with funders and developers to disseminate information regarding new housing. The indicator here is the number of informational document processes disseminated. So this is one of those output kind of indicators. You notice that the first two indicators are not outputs. So we have an outcome which is not measurable, but it clearly motivates and moves the DD council to achieve something they think is worthwhile. The goal is measurable, each objective clearly relates to achieving the goal, and each objective has at least one indicator that specifically outlines how that's going to be counted. So nobody should be confused about how we're going to measure success.

Okay. Next slide. So if you could just – yeah. I hope everybody can see the first two rows there. So I wanted to take a minute and talk about looking closely at your success. Sometimes – so what I did on the left-hand side, you'll see Objective 1 and Objective 2. And across the top you'll see “Starting” and then “Not Successful” and “Successful.” What I wanted to do is to show you an example of how sometimes we can succeed at one objective and not succeed at another, all under the auspices of the same goal. If you succeed at one objective, it sometimes influences your capacity to succeed at the other.

This was a little bit complicated, but hang with me here, because it has some relevance to your work in the coming weeks and months.

So Objective 1, increasing the tax abatements. That is increasing the total number of dollars. So I assumed we're starting with \$10 million, and we're going to assume that that's not successful for the time being. But Objective 2, let's say it is successful. Okay. Look in the third row down, second cell over, you'll see that if we increase by 50% the use of the tax abatements, we'll actually make use of seven and a half million dollars instead of five million dollars. However, in the next box over on the bottom, if Objective 1 is successful and we increase by 20% the numbers of dollars available, that goes from \$10 million to \$12 million, and now that 75% mark is \$9 million instead of seven and a half.

So my point is, again, as we're thinking about objectives and measuring things, we have to keep in mind that all of our successes are often interrelated. It's important to sort of be able to take that time to reflect on if we didn't achieve one, why not, if we achieved one or more, how did we get there and what were the things that allowed us to achieve success. For instance, the success of Objective 1 increases the number of dollars. Well, maybe in a tough economy it's really hard to get new tax abatements through the legislature. On the other hand, in a tough economy it might be really easy, with good dissemination, to help folks to be aware of the resources they actually have already and get them to use them. Those are really, really different strategies and different issues around success, and it's important to think about just those kinds of numbers, and it's the reason that the outcome isn't the only piece of information to consider.

So how did you get there? Well, I suspect that Kathy and Brian and my folks here at the DD council would think about their advocacy and legislative efforts and whether or not they were able to convince folks to help with funding, tax incentives versus how do we get folks like developers and housing folks to actually use those. And those are two really different groups of people. They require two different sets of partnerships.

So anyway, my point is just to say as you're writing your outcomes and your goals and your objectives and your indicators, make sure that you think ahead to this issue of how do they relate to each other in terms of our success. Are they going to build on each other? Are they going to require that we have different sets of partnerships and resources to make sure that we succeed?

So next slide, please. So I'm sort of beginning to wind down, and then we'll have time for some questions and answers, and I'll talk about some resources. But I wanted to talk a little bit about considerations for program evaluation as you implement it. So I mentioned earlier reflecting regularly on answers to all the questions. So when you think about reflecting, you don't want to just think about the question of did we accomplish our outcomes. You want to think about all of the other questions: who do we serve, what did it cost, what did we do, and what did we achieve. Those are all related to each other.

And I remember working with a school system in Lawrence, Kansas, and many years ago they had a couple teachers who were really good with working with students on the autism spectrum. And it was a really, really informal set of skills. They didn't have a program yet, and the schools weren't really monitoring their target population, that is to say that the kids who were coming into the school. But by word of mouth, pretty soon folks figured out that this school was doing a great job with kids this age, they had some behavior ADA skills and so. And so pretty soon, five years later, they went from having three or four kids to 75 kids. And they were really caught off guard. They didn't have classroom and other resources allocated. And I think the issue is, how do we continuously monitor all of those categories of data so that we can stay in touch.

I think it's important to get lots of interpretations from different groups to ensure you don't miss anything. One of the things that our DD council does a great job of here is getting a lot of input. So we have a very active sets of folks who are verbal and are not afraid to express their opinions about what that data means. And it's a very empowering process. I watched a policy council for a Head Start organization, made up mostly of parents without any formal education, who, over the course of two years looking at data, became very sophisticated, asking for more information that was very targeted at answering certain questions. So I think getting more interpretations is not about just missing stuff, it's about really giving back to people their own data. And I think it's important.

Continuous improvement doesn't just mean continuous change. So I'll preach on this for just a second, and that is to say, when we're thinking about continuous, it doesn't mean we change what we do all the time. One of the things that really drives people nuts is when they get a new outcome every day or a new indicator every day or a new form every day. And I encourage folks, if you're going to start at consumer satisfaction survey or staff survey, or any kind of data collection tool like that, that you start with the intent that you're going to do it for a period of time, usually three to five years, collect data around the strength and weakness of the tool itself, and then at a specified time make your changes and fixes and start all over again so that you have some continuity of data. Otherwise the data from year to year just really begins to look weird, and people get really nuts with the changes in the data system. So if you're going to start doing evaluation and you're going to work with your partners, don't let them talk you into a lot of changes all the time, because it will make folks nuts.

When I was working with the Head Start system in Kansas, one of the groups had really high turnover rates in many of their centers when they were center-based systems. And one of the issues as they did follow-up surveys was that a lot of the folks were coming out of institutions of higher ed and really, really unprepared to do data. They thought they were going to be a teacher or a direct service provider or a [indiscernible], whatever. But they were spending eight hours a week doing data. And so I think this issue is really important. Don't do a lot of changes.

Another final comment, I guess, is don't expect improvement to be linear. A lot of the data that I look at around all kinds of outcomes, whether it be changes in knowledge or

skills or beliefs or attitudes or satisfaction data, improvement is almost never linear. It is reasonable to expect it to improve over time. If you look at 10 data points, you would assume to have a general slope upwards. But often for many agencies, depending upon how often folks enter and leave your system, it's fairly reasonable to see some changes in that data over time.

So [indiscernible] get educated about what we expect, and that means having a baseline, taking some of your data, inspecting it, looking to see what's the past five years been like, and that kind of helps us to get a sense of what our expectations might be in terms of realistic improvement.

I think the last comment here is to create regular summaries that could be used to create ongoing reporting. So one of the things that I do for my organization and with many others that I work with as a consultant is to figure out how to consolidate your work. So if I'm going to do a quarterly report, I'm going to have a spreadsheet or a data system that creates that report so I don't have to write the report. I think often we sort of get caught up in first we'll do the data entry and then we'll do the DNL [ph], I'll write this report, and then three six months later or six months later we turn around and do the same thing over again. And technology nowadays allows us to really make money of those steps irrelevant. So sometimes you just have to have folks who can come in and help you figure that stuff out. But I've worked with organizations who have really made most of those steps automated, so that if they have a regular report, whether it be a board document or whatever, that as long as you have a data system, you can make that linked to your reports. And as long as your data is updated, so is your report. So the issue is to just make things as automated as possible and as regular as possible.

I also wanted to just talk for a minute about some additional resources. I've talked about a lot of stuff that's not too technical, but we can go into a lot more detail in future webinars. And certainly I will pass on my contact information to Cheryl and others, and feel free to pass out this and other resources. But there's a fabulous website for the American Evaluation Association at www.eval.org. It's a great link for just basic resources. It's a great association for evaluators. You can find evaluators who do work on that site. If you get on their listserv you can get catalogs for books and resources and so on.

The other websites that I've listed are just websites that have good information around everything from logic models to continuous improvement cycles and so on. So I would encourage you to look at those links. And again, we can send this [indiscernible] out to all of you electronically. You can click on that link. You can go and visit and see what – I just think there are some great resources out there around evaluation, so don't demand on the minor stuff we've talked about today to be all that for you.

The last slide has to do with three additional resources. Two of them are books. And I've already talked about the organization, the AEA. But the two books that I've listed are just basic program evaluation books. One's an introduction. It's an introduction book, but it has a lot of really, really conceptual information that allows you to think

about evaluation in a comprehensive way. The other one is *The Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, which is a set of standard – I think it's in it's, I don't know, seventh edition or eighth edition now. It gets updated very frequently, and it's a great book to have if you just want to have some good, solid ways to think about program evaluation.

So to sort of sum things up, today we've talked about quantitative and qualitative evaluation. We've talked about the kinds of ways that we do evaluation, the kinds of data we collect, a variety of capacity issues that I think either do affect all of you or will affect all of you as you start to do more and more evaluation of your own services. And I know that all the federal offices are going to be looking at increasing both the pressure and the capacity to do good evaluation and have solid accountability. And, obviously, the relationship of this material to your DD council planning I hope is clear, although I didn't spend a lot of time on that today. But I'm certainly happy to do more of this with all of you in future webinars or, as I said, to talk to any of you through email and phone providing further TA.

So, Sheryl, did you want to be able to take some questions from folks?

Sheryl: We do. We do have this call opportunity until 4:30 Eastern time. So does anybody have any questions for Chris?

Sheryl: It is star-6 to un-mute your line, and it will take just a moment to get queued back in to have voice capability.

Female: I just have a question. I just want to clarify, when you were talking about outcomes versus goals, for our use of kind of that terminology as we're writing our plans, we're actually then defining our goals, and nowhere in the plan do we discuss what we called "outcomes" in this presentation. Or am I reading that wrong?

Sheryl: You mean the template itself?

Female: Right.

Sheryl: Correct. The template itself, I think, probably for having the outcome in your mind, which may translate to kind of a vision statement for that particular goal.

Chris: Yeah.

Sheryl: But, yes, you're talking about – that kind of thing is not reflective in the template, but you may want to use it in your working document at the council level.

Female: Okay.

Chris: That's a really good question. I actually wanted to put some concrete examples in here, because I think we often all use these words and phrases in different ways, and I think it can be very confusing. I think most people just want to know what do you expect

of me to write. And the reason I actually put the outcome in there as something that's not necessarily measurable is I think – for instance, in one of the other states I'm working with right now in the early childhood system, they're working on five separate comprehensive state data sets. Everybody has a complete different set of language around this stuff. So I'm just trying to get everybody to get on the same page around what's an outcome. So some of the folks at the table now in that state are talking about outcomes, but when they say "outcome," they're really talking about an indicator. They're talking about what's the measurable thing.

And from my perspective, when you read the outcome, the impact evaluation, the outcome evaluation literature, it's really what's the big finger shooting for, and then what's the thing that moves you or motivates you as a council to be involved in that particular area, whether it's housing or transportation or access to early childhood care, whatever the thing might be. From my perspective, that's sort of the big thing. And whether you call it an "outcome" or a "vision" or whatever, it's not really a measurable thing. But your goals and your objectives and your indicators are driven toward that. So what I was trying to say was that there's a driving force between these goals. What's that driving force? And I think if you can articulate that, you can really quickly get at the three or four things that you're really trying to achieve. Otherwise the goals and objectives become too numerous.

Female: Sheryl?

Sheryl: Yes, ma'am.

Female: One question. When we talk program evaluation, what do we actually mean? Are we talking evaluation of our plan, evaluation of our projects, something different? Define "program evaluation."

Sheryl: Well, I believe for these purposes – and, Rita, if I mis-state this, please feel free to jump right in there. Program evaluation, if you were asking me, I would say anything there's council [spends their] allotment on. Because you still have the consumer satisfaction piece. It is a part of it. So I think it's anything that the council touches and it's the council program, which does include council-initiated activities, which may include sub-grants, subcontract project, activities, all of the above.

Chris: Sheryl, so we actually spent some time talking about this. Thank you for asking the question. What I tried to do today was to outline information material that would be relevant to whichever you were trying to do. So we understood that, if you're doing some things in-house, you'd want to be able to evaluate that. If you're providing grants to non-profits and other folks in your state to accomplish part of your goal, then you want to be able to evaluate that. And we understand that those non-profits and those other partners of yours need to have the same skills and the same capacity to do their own evaluation. And that's another TA piece we talked about, that we often give resources and money to folks who don't, and then we expect them to articulate goals and outcomes

and objectives and indicators and sustainability plans and all those things, and they haven't a clue how to do that.

So we totally realized coming into this, that what we tried to do today was to prepare information that would be relevant to either you or the folks that you're helping to fund so that everybody could take this and make some connections and partner with some folks, get some additional resources and maybe in the coming years do a better job of evaluating both their work and the work they're funding.

Female: Sheryl, I have a question.

Sheryl: Sure.

Female: Our council likes to do training and conferences and send people to learning opportunities, and I realize that sometimes we just think of those as a stepping stone to the real goal or the real objective that we're trying to get at. But how would you advise us, Chris, to help council members or help the staff figure out how to measure that type of opportunity?

Chris: Great question. So I think, generally speaking, I would say that when all of us undertake training or TA, we're trying to accomplish one of three things. Either we're trying to change values, or we're trying to change skills, or we're trying to change knowledge. And so sometimes these three things often don't go together. So we can do a lot of advocacy and legislation and training or TA and perhaps change values or belief systems, but then that not translate into knowledge. And so we can then work on knowledge, but that may not translate into change in behavior.

So often I think I encourage folks to think about investing in things that we have a target for. So is this particular training or TA or informational thing or professional development focused on changing values, skills and knowledge, or behavior, and then figure out how to measure those things. And I think it's a good idea to have sort of a bucket of money or resources allocated to all three, because I think all three are really important. But they don't always happen at the same time. I mean, sometimes, as we all know, we have to work on underpinning values and belief systems before they're willing to work on skills. And they'll work on their skills for a while and may see some change and their behavior begins to change and so on. Did that help?

Female: Well, I guess a little bit. But it's really – I struggle with how to measure – if you spend \$30,000 a conference, then how do you measure any outcome from that? I tell my people there is no outcome, you can't do it. That's a tough one.

Chris: Right. So I guess it comes back to the three things I just mentioned. So if you can do some pre-test/post-test around either the values or the skills and the knowledge you're trying to change or the behaviors you're trying to change, you can do some observations to measure those things and try to get pre-test/post-test. The other thing that you can do is you can actually do a reflective post-test, and this is something that's sort of

become more popular over the last decade. Which is to say once you send somebody like to a leadership conference or to an educational opportunity, then the issue is when they come back, you ask them about a certain set of things around their values, their beliefs or skills. But you ask them to reflect on where were you before you went, where are you now. And the difference is the impact or the outcome of that.

Female: What about like surveys six months or a year out to see if behaviors have actually changed?

Chris: Certainly that's one way to do it, as long as you trust the people's opinions. Obviously there's sort of a credibility issue whenever you're thinking about reflection, so it's always nice to be able to actually observe. So if there's a way to collect either observational data or proxy data, there might be a piece of database you can reflect.

So here a DD council is interested in – I've got to think of a good example of this – something that might be reflected in – oh, seclusion and restraint, and that's the important topic for people. Then let's say you invest in sending a whole bunch of folks who are now really bad actors and they're committing a lot of heinous things around seclusion and restraint, you send them to some training, and the issue is – the proxy measure is are the seclusion and restraint numbers going down.

Female: Okay.

Female: I have two questions. We can download this presentation, right?

Sheryl: Absolutely.

Female: Okay. This is my other question. In Ohio we're trying to kind of be creative with our projects, and so we kind of have a goal. Now, we didn't have an outcome statement. We've had that in times past, but we didn't do one this time. We just did a goal. And then we did the scope and intent with the idea that without – because objective appeared to be too prescriptive. And so we wanted the grantee, if we tell you this is the goal at the end, that we want this done, and then give you a little background about our thinking about why we're funding this project, then you develop for us how you're going to reach it, and so you give us back your objectives. Is that backwards or off or what?

Chris: Are you asking me or Sheryl?

Female: Either one who could answer.

Chris: Okay. Sheryl, I have an opinion. Would you have one?

Sheryl: Why don't you give us your opinion?

Chris: Okay. So my rather uneducated opinion about that question, which I think is brilliant, would be something like this. I think what you've clearly done is you've

articulated an objective. You just haven't written it down. So I think your objective is to empower or help organizations to build their own capacity around articulating objectives and doing their own evaluation. And you're doing that. You're just not writing it down.

Female: Wow.

Chris: And so what you're doing is you're basically say to them, "Now, tell us what it is you're going to do and how you're going to measure it." And then they're going to do that, and they're going to build their capacity both around providing that service you're funding as well as evaluating how well they did. But I think you clearly have an objective there. You just haven't articulated it.

Female: Carolyn wants to know, Sheryl – Carolyn Knight's in my office. So what do you think, too?

Sheryl: I think that I'm going to have to put my head together with ADD and, really, I'm going to do a follow-conversation with ADD about the expectation when councils really want to – Fatika, let me make sure I understand. You guys want to put money out in the realm of like a request for proposal or a call for investment. You know that you want it to be maybe in a specific area for maybe a specific goal like employment-related activities so that people with developmental disabilities have jobs. You don't necessarily know what the strategy is going to be to help you get to that objective which will get you to the goal, right?

Fatika: Right.

Sheryl: Okay. And you want your council to be able to further develop that as the years progress, depending on what's going on in the state and where you think you can make the greatest inroads.

Fatika: Yeah. Because if we keep it open, then they could be more creative and more innovative. If we are very prescriptive, we tie their hands, so we think.

Sheryl: Right. And I will – how about I do this? I'm going to put that as a key follow up, and I'm going to have some conversations with ADD about what their expectation for the goal section when councils want to do some of that set aside.

Fatika: Thank you so much.

Sheryl: You're welcome.

Chris: Thank you. Great question.

Fatika: Thank you, Dr. Chris.

Lynne: Sheryl, this is Lynne in Virginia.

Sheryl: Hey, Lynne.

Lynne: Hi. I just wanted to answer that. I think what people are probably maybe getting concerned about is that the councils have some projects they do, like a YLF or a PIP, and you do the same thing every year and you know what's going to happen. You know what all your implementation activities are. But in Virginia, our RFPs are not prescriptive either. We have a definite objective and we have outcomes that we want. We don't know what the strategies are. Again, we want the grantees to be creative. They're the ones with all the experience on the ground. We want them to tell us how they're going to do it. But the question is that, then when we go to do our state plan and we know, well, here's an objective and we know we want to do a grant do this, of course we know when we're going to release the RFP, but we don't know anything else other than when we do that and when the grant will start. And so I'm thinking that's probably .

Sheryl: Well, and in that case then we know that you have the opportunity to open up that plan every year August 15th amendments are due. The strategies would not be a substantive change to the plan. That's where you can go in and you can actually make the – you can start telling your funding source where the – exactly what your strategy is going to be.

Lynne: But we're not going to know that this August, so we're going to have a lot of objectives where we have very few implementation activities.

Sheryl: But the implementation activity, though, would be to release an RFP, yeah, to make those decisions. Then you'll go in during the open time and make the additional information available.

Lynne: Yeah, okay. I just, yeah, kind of wanted confirmation from ADD that that's what they expect.

Sheryl: Yeah. We're going to put out some additional information specific to the requests for proposal, call for investment arena, because we know we have a large group of councils that do that.

Lynne: Okay, great. Thank you.

Sheryl: You're welcome.

Female: I'm just curious. This is the first five-year plan I'll be working on with the council. And in terms of how it maps to PPR evaluation and tracking, I know there is a portion of the PPR where we can say are we on our way to accomplishing our goals. Then there's the other portion to kind of track how we're doing in terms of our objectives. Am I mapping those terms correctly.

Sheryl: You are. But remember, you're . . .

Female: So you're sure that where we define those objectives, kind of our opportunity to track those and show you the evaluation for those, comes in the PPR?

Cheryl: You will develop your performance targets.

Female: Okay.

Sheryl: Okay? So as you're writing what your expectations are, I think – you're not asking about the old school, last year's PPR performance targets, right?

Female: Right.

Sheryl: Okay. Yeah. Wow. ADD, I've got to ask you guys to weigh in on this. What is your expectation with regard to the PPR as councils are developing their indicators?

Rita: I'm going to answer on behalf of Sarah, who is apparently out for the next two weeks. So if I'm wrong, then I'll let you know when she comes back in two weeks. But as far as I know, the expectation and how it correlates – one second and I'll pull up the [indiscernible]. In a PPR, we're expecting that you in the area format just give us a general idea of how do you know that you're on target or meeting your goals.

Female: Okay.

Female: So you're just giving us that. And that is backed up by your own evaluation plans and processes.

Sheryl: Has everybody had the opportunity to check out the State Plan Resource Development Guide updated 2011 with the sample evaluation plan?

Chris: I did.

Sheryl: Okay. If you did – Chris, is that you that said, "I did"?

Chris: Yes.

Sheryl: Okay. So in the sample we actually built it so that you would be identifying what kinds of evaluation strategies you guys would be using and tied it back to the objective which then tied it back to the goal, and then you could make the determination whether you are making progress towards the goal. And if not, you're still going to be responsible for telling your funding source what were the barriers, or, if you had great success, what helped you achieve that great success.

Karen: Sheryl, this is Karen in Vermont. I have a question about this. Are we assuming that the performance measures that we currently use are not going to be used for the next PPR?

Cheryl: Correct.

Karen: And are we all going to have our own indicators that aren't going to be able to be collated across councils?

Sheryl: Well, currently there is an ADD work group that exists and is going to be working towards redefining or redeveloping performance targets in that reporting mechanism so that it better aligns with the new state plan template.

Karen: It seems like there's going to be a period of time where we're not going to have performance measures that we're all using, but we're going to be putting out grants and we're going to be doing projects, but we're not going to be collecting . . .

Karen: . . . the new ones aren't in place and the old ones aren't being used.

Sheryl: No. You have a responsibility in the planning process to identify what you believe your outcomes will be. You are now in control and telling your funding source what you expect as a result.

Lynne: Cheryl, this is Lynn. The GPRA measures, are they gone, too?

Cheryl: No, they are not. They are firmly in place, from my understanding.

Lynne: Oh, okay. Thank you.

Sheryl: You're going to get some more information on this as we roll it forward. But know when you're developing these goals and objectives, because they're measurable, like the example Chris gave with this housing, you're looking for – ADD is looking for you guys to be able to identify what you believe your results will be. It may not be in the format that you're used to. You might not see an EM-08, but you may expect three policy changes. Maybe that's what you want to work towards.

Lynne: Right. Okay. Thank you.

Chris: So, Sheryl, one of the things I wanted to mention, too, was that it's really interesting how this issue of performance measures comes up all the time. And so the issue with that for me as an evaluation are sort of two broad benchmarks we all think about. One has to do with how are we doing compared to our own history, and the other has to do with how are we doing compared to everyone else. So all of us as people think about – whether it's our weight, our performance in a sport, whatever, how is our own performance relative to our past. And then we can look around the rest of the world and see how is our performance compared to everyone else. And so I think one of the issues is that ADD and everyone else is sort of going through this issue of trying to hand over some of the responsibility for accountability and measurement to local councils so that they're doing more measuring their own performance against their own history as

opposed to sort of this national set of measures which may or may not have relevance to each state.

Female: I'd like to ask a question about that. Because we weren't comparing ourselves to each other with the performance measures currently used. We were collating them so we could report out – I'm not saying it worked the best, but it was a way to report out. It'd be something like using the national core indicators and surveying how are people doing in your state using the same questions you might use in another state. So it makes it more difficult for ADD to say what, let's say, employment impacts are if there's not an indicator that we all collect that's sort of similar that we could collate.

Chris: Sure. Well, I think to be able to categorize what folks are achieving into broad categories of outcomes makes a lot of sense for just that reason. I think the difficulty lies in interpretation. So when you have everybody doing reportedly the same thing, but we know that locally it's all being implemented in a different way, then I think you have problems with sort of interpreting what the data means. But I agree. I think having broad categories of outcomes towards which we're all sort of reporting, I think, makes sense. The issue is each state has its own issues that by definition they're trying to assess and deal with in their own unique way, and that's the hard part. And we just had to do the same thing. We have our own nearest [ph] data system that we put our data into, and it's all supposed to be sort of aggregated and reported and used for funding. But the truth is that every u-said does different things. When we call a training here may be very different than a training in Kansas or Missouri or Alaska. It's not supposed to be, but it often is. Great questions. Anybody else? I really appreciated the time, Sheryl. Thanks for the offer to do some of the . . .

Sheryl: Thank you so much, Chris. We appreciate you giving time for prepping and just being a great collaborative partner. And I know Maryland's very lucky to have you in their state. This PDF will be on the ITAC website by 4:30 our time. And you will be able to see it under "State Plan Resources." And the transcript for this call will be available probably by Tuesday of next week. So if you have people that missed the call or you're interested in hearing the conversation again, you'll be able to see it on the ITAC website as well. I hope you guys have a terrific rest of the week. And if you have any questions, you guys know where to find me and the friendly Feds at ADD.

Chris: Thanks everybody. And, Rita, I'm just going to stay on the line.

Rita: All right. And on behalf of ADD, I definitely want to say thank you, thank you, thank you to Sheryl and Dr. Smith.

[Overlapping conversations]

Chris: Good luck with all the work.

[Meeting Concluded]