

# The Role of T/TA in Building a Child Welfare Agency's Capacity To Use Data: A Case Study

From an Evaluation of T/TA in Child Welfare

Supporting Change  
in Child Welfare

An Evaluation of Training  
and Technical Assistance



## TIP SHEET 4

One way child welfare organizations can improve services and strengthen practice is by using data more effectively to manage cases and measure progress toward outcomes. In the 2015 report *Supporting Change in Child Welfare: An Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance*, one of the most frequently reported areas where training and technical assistance (T/TA) helped child welfare agencies in the last 3 years was in improving their ability to “manage by data.”

Managing by data means that child welfare professionals actively:

- 1 Identify program goals and link services and activities to expected results
- 2 Implement appropriate interventions and select measures to monitor the quality of implementation and intended outcomes of these interventions
- 3 Collect, analyze, and interpret data regularly
- 4 Refine program activities as necessary based on findings from these data

### New Jersey: A Case Study in Managing by Data

New Jersey implemented a project with support from a Children's Bureau-funded T/TA provider. Selecting consultants who had extensive knowledge of New Jersey's child welfare practice model and data system, the provider worked with the State to develop a program to improve the capability of child welfare workers at all levels to use data to manage and inform practice. T/TA was also a catalyst for enhancing continuous quality improvement processes by increasing the capacity of staff and offices to use data to understand issues, discover solutions, and make better decisions. Providers delivered intensive classroom training and coaching. Group activities allowed participants to work with agency data and apply the skills they were learning to address issues identified within the agency.

The report *Supporting Change in Child Welfare: An Evaluation of Training and Technical Assistance* includes results of case studies and telephone surveys of child welfare directors who reported on the capacity building changes that occurred in their States over the past 3 years and the results that were sustained. This tip sheet describes one example of how T/TA helped a child welfare system to more effectively understand and regularly use data. For more information, see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/capacity/cross-center-evaluation>.

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The State was ready to build its staff's knowledge and skills to effectively manage and use data. Some of the factors that contributed to the State's readiness for change included a history of managing change, a level of comfort monitoring data indicators, experience working with providers, and sufficient staff resources to allow staff time to attend training.

### Lessons Learned About Building an Agency's Capacity To Use Data From the Case Study

The following factors and activities can support an agency's capacity to use data:

- An organizational culture that values and facilitates a learning environment
- Organizational leadership and management that encourages staff to use data to better manage and inform practice
- A strong data system with readily available and accessible data
- A centralized data system that improves an organization's ability to embrace data as a management tool
- The development of logic models prior to implementing new initiatives that clearly identify the organization's activities, outputs, intended outcomes, and data indicators
- Pilot tests conducted prior to taking an initiative to scale

