An Action Plan for Preparing a Methodology for Assessing the Effectiveness of RCAB Programs for Child Protection and Abuse Prevention

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston

Contents

1. Introduction

    The Archdiocese of Boston is undertaking to prepare a methodology to assess the effectiveness of the Archdiocesan programs for child protection and abuse prevention. The study will focus on developing a methodology to measure the effectiveness of the various elements of its programs for child protection, including without limitation its new policies and procedures, training and education programs, cooperation with public agencies and law enforcement, and other programs that have been implemented and Archdiocesan offices that have been established or exist to ensure the protection of children.

    The focus of the measurement strategy will take several forms, attempting not only to assess the effectiveness of the safety education and training programs for adults and children in terms of knowledge retention or skill utilization, but also to gauge the effects of the programs implemented and other changes made by the Archdiocese. With a myriad of prevention and protection policies and procedures in place and being implemented, successfully gauging the effect with a single measurement instrument at a specific time is doubtful. In its work, the Effectiveness Subcommittee needs to look at the combined effects of the Archdiocese's efforts to keep children safe: programs and procedures designed to respond more quickly and efficiently to reports of abuse; stronger relationships with law enforcement and child protection agencies; increased awareness of how abuse occurs in our society; widespread training of tens of thousands of adults in the signs and symptoms of abuse and what to do if it is suspected or observed; and training of tens of thousands of children in safe/unsafe touch, boundary violations, and the rules to follow and the language to use if assaulted. To measure the effectiveness of these child protection efforts, what is required are methods to determine, for example, whether such child protection efforts have a) reduced the reported incidence of child abuse within the Archdiocese and b) equipped all adults and children with the educational tools and levels of awareness to avert, report, and/or cope with such abuse.

    Since the expertise for compliance and effectiveness measurement lies principally in academia and in the corporate world, the Archdiocese has undertaken an initiative to learn from both spheres of activity and engage them in the effort. The Office of Child Advocacy, Implementation and Oversight (OCAIO) has worked with several local colleges and universities that have volunteered to provide their expertise in helping to build a methodology and appropriate effectiveness assessment tools and mechanisms for process improvement. A corporate compliance officer from a Boston firm who has international experience has also volunteered to provide her expertise to the OCAIO on compliance strategy, audit mechanisms, and training and measurement best practices used in industry.

    Archdiocesan representatives have met several times with educators, researchers, and mathematicians from Boston College's Lynch School of Education, the MA Children's Trust Fund, and Regis College's Psychology and Social Work Departments to develop a framework for the effort. The National Center for

Missing and Exploited Children has also expressed a desire to partner with the Archdiocese in this effort.

An Effectiveness Assessment Subcommittee of the IOAC for the Office of Child Advocacy, Implementation and Oversight was established in December 2005. Its membership (see Section 2 below) includes local and national experts in child abuse prevention as well as experts drawn from higher education, child advocacy organizations, state government, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, private industry, and other relevant professions and agencies. Ultimately, the subcommittee will help the Archdiocese define the effort more fully, review available data, review prospective analysis methodologies, and help to develop and submit grant applications for the research that, if successful, will provide the funding necessary to provide faculty, staff, and graduate students to work with the Archdiocese in data collection and analysis.

2. Membership of the Effectiveness Subcommittee

Suzin Bartley, LICSW, Executive Director, MA Children's Trust Fund
Gary Calhoun, PhD, Assistant Professor, Graduate Department of Social
          Work, Bridgewater State College
MJ Doherty, PhD, Special Assistant to the President, Regis College;
          Chair, Implementation and Oversight Advisory Committee
Joan Cole Duffell, Director of Partnership Development, Committee for
          Children
David Finkelhor, PhD, Director, Crimes Against Children Research
          Institute, University of New Hampshire
Sheila Kelly; Deputy Director, Office of Child and Youth Protection, U.S.
          Conference of Catholic Bishops
Teresa Kettelkamp, Director, Office of Child and Youth Protection, U.S.
          Conference of Catholic Bishops
Sherry Jenkins Little, Esq., Assistant General Counsel & Corporate
          Responsibility (Compliance) Officer, Homesite Insurance Group
George Madaus, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Research Professor, Center for
          the Study of Testing Evaluation & Education Policy, Boston
          College
Michelle Montavon, PhD, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Teacher
          Education, Lynch School of Education, Boston College
Deacon Anthony P. Rizzuto, PhD, Director, Office of Child
          Advocacy, Implementation and Oversight
Paula Stahl, PhD, Executive Director, Children's Charter Inc., Trauma
          Clinic
Mary Walsh, PhD, Kearns Professor, Department of Counseling and
          Developmental Psychology, Lynch School of Education, Boston
          College
Donald Wertlieb, PhD, Professor of Child Development, Tufts University

3. Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the "safe environment" initiatives of the Archdiocese is one of primary prevention, *i.e.*, to create an environment in the parishes, schools, and institutions of the Archdiocese that, once in place, would serve to protect children by preventing child sexual abuse before it occurs (Bethea, 1999). A second, concurrent goal is that if a child in our care becomes the target of sexual abuse or exploitation, that he/she would have knowledge sufficient to distinguish safe from unsafe touching and relationships, and know what to do if unsafe touch occurs - including how and when to seek assistance from a trusted adult - and have the skills and language to report the abuse. A final goal is that, should child abuse or neglect be suspected, observed or disclosed to any clergy, employee, or adult volunteer of the Archdiocese, that he/she would possess the knowledge, information, and resources to ensure it is reported to the appropriate civil authorities according to the reporting laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as well as Church authorities.

Given this framework, the following questions (among others) arise from the preceding goals and help determine the development of effectiveness measurements:

Are children in the Archdiocese any safer now than they were before these new programs were put into place?

Is the Church community more capable of keeping children safe?

If they are safer, what were the primary factors that had the greatest effect?

If they are not safer, what factors lead to this conclusion and what remediation seems warranted?

How effective are the Archdiocese's existing compliance and audit efforts?

At the parish and school level, have there been shifts in public perception and trust concerning the Archdiocese -*i.e.*, do parents feel better about sending their children to the Catholic schools and parishes now that the "safe environment" programs have been put in place?

The Effectiveness Subcommittee will determine which of these questions (and perhaps others) can be assessed and will attempt to identify the best methodologies with which to assess them. The Effectiveness Subcommittee will also develop human resources, cost, and time estimates for the project along with potential funding resources (grants, Catholic philanthropies, etc.).

4. Data Available

Some data have been already been collected and are available for use in this effort. A listing of examples follows:

- Questionnaires to the schools about:
    i. Training of staff, employees, and volunteers
    ii. Parental involvement and training
    iii. Methods and frequency of contact with parents
    iv. Frequency of training with children
    v. Reactions of the parents, teachers, and children to the training
    vi. Whether children are learning/using the safety skills taught
    vii. Opt-out rates (data relating to children whose parents do not want them to participate in the safety classes)
    viii. The existence of an abuse reporting protocol
    ix. The number of abuse and neglect reports filed with DSS
    x. The number of CORI processed for clergy, staff, and volunteers

- Questionnaires to the parishes about:
    i. The existence of a CAP Team
    ii. Frequency and extent of training for clergy, employees, etc.
    iii. The need for new CAP Team members due to staff turnover
    iv. Distribution of informational materials on abuse and reporting
    v. Schedules for ongoing training
    vi. Training for children in religious education
    vii. The number of abuse and neglect reports filed with DSS
    viii. The number of CORI processed for clergy, staff, and volunteers

- Compliance data from the 2003, 2004, and 2005 USCCB Audit process
- Comprehensive analysis of the "Talking About Touching" program that includes interviews with clergy, principals, teachers, parents, and religious educators
- Process mapping documents relating the audit data to implementation of all aspects of the Policies and Procedures
- Data collected for the 2-year implementation assessment of the Policies and Procedures including interviews with department heads, pastors, religious educators, CAP Teams, investigators, abuse survivors, etc.

5. Prospective Methodologies

Several program evaluation strategies exist in the current literature regarding child abuse prevention. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, offers several articles on its National Child Protection Clearinghouse website that provide overviews of the current state of program evaluation as it is applied to the field of child abuse prevention,

the extent to which empirical evaluation has been used, and the degree to which programs have been shown to be effective.

For example, Adam M. Tomison (2000) describes multiple program evaluation types and methodologies with a variety of terms used to describe them. Under the general heading of "systems evaluation" - which is used widely in the program evaluation research literature (Pietrzak et al. 1990) - Tomison broadly categorizes effectiveness evaluations into three types: input evaluation; process or implementation evaluation; and outcome evaluation.

Input Evaluation

Input evaluations, in conjunction with process and outcome evaluations, are effectively an attempt to document precisely the elements of a successful program, or to identify possible flaws or omissions in an unsuccessful program (Pietrzak et al. 1990). Program inputs such as staffing, client characteristics, resource availability, and the role of any ancillary or support services are identified and assessed against the criteria of the community's service needs, service provider goals, best practice standards, and cost effectiveness (Pietrzak et al. 1990).

Process evaluation

Also known as *implementation* or *formative evaluation,* process evaluations are designed to investigate program integrity (Nixon 1997) by determining the extent to which a program is operating as intended via the assessment of ongoing program elements and the extent to which the target population is being served (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1995).

The aim is to assist service providers in identifying areas for change that can enhance service delivery. Usually such evaluations involve the collection of a detailed description of a program's operation and the general environment in which it operates, including the persons served, the services provided, and the costs involved (Schalock and Thornton 1988). Key questions are: Has the program or training been implemented as planned? Has the target population been accessed effectively? Have collaborative links with other programs or service providers been successfully established?

Outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluations, alternatively known as *impact* or *summative* evaluations, are designed to assess the extent to which a program or intervention affects participants on a set of specified outcomes, variables, or elements. That is, how has participation in the program affected participants' lives? Any change is assumed to result from participation in the program; the validity of this assumption is tested via comparison between samples in the target population

(that is, via the comparison of one or more 'treatment' groups with a 'no treatment' comparison) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1995). Such 'comparison-group research designs are essential in outcome evaluations' (Reynolds 1998:512). (Note: Potential difficulties in terms of conducting outcome evaluations in the Archdiocese are a) the lack of good baseline data and b) since the programs have been in place for a number of years, there is virtually no one who hasn't been exposed to one or more aspects of the programs, policies, or procedures).

To be successful, outcome evaluations require that a program is well-established and stable: "program development and outcome evaluation do not mix. If possible, programs should wait until their goals and methods are well-defined and established before initiating an outcome evaluation" (Ellwood 1988:313). The key question is: Are participants exhibiting the expected changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior?

Tomison continues by saying that comprehensive program evaluation requires the completion of input, process, and outcome evaluations - with input and process evaluations informing the latter (Schalock and Thornton 1988; Pietrzak et al. 1990). Although there is some acknowledgment of the importance of input and process evaluations for refining service delivery to meet the needs of the identified participant group (and to make processes transparent enough to enable replication), the predominant interest in program evaluations is centered on outcome evaluations and the demonstration of causal relationships between participation in a program and a reduction in social ills or the enhancement of health and well-being.

One of the immediate problems in conducting effectiveness research is the lack of experimental, laboratory-style control in which certain variables are kept constant and unvarying while the behavior of one or more dependent variables of interest is/are observed and measured. When an intervention is studied in a laboratory in this way, it is categorized as "efficacy" research. But this type of control simply does not exist when one is trying to conduct such measurement outside of the laboratory. Thus, "effectiveness" research attempts to evaluate interventions in real world (termed *in-situ*) conditions with actual service providers and service recipients.

Many international researchers report that, "in spite of the vast number of program evaluations that have been performed on a variety of child abuse prevention programs…very few rigorous evaluations have been done" (Fink and McCloskey 1990; Harrington and Dubowitz 1993; James 1994; Melton and Flood 1994; Tomison 1995; 1997a; 1997b; 1998; Chalk and King 1998). Similarly, the U.S. National Committee on the Assessment of Family Violence Interventions conducted a national survey of evaluations that took place over a 16 year period and issued a report for the U.S. National Research Council (Chalk and King, 1998) in which they, too, reported a "dearth of evidence on what works, for whom

and under what conditions" (Chalk and King, 1998). So, according to the evidence, it seems that there has been a general lack of rigorous, quality study in the field of child abuse prevention.

As complex, multi-level, community based interventions to prevent child abuse are implemented, as is the case in the Archdiocese of Boston, more comprehensive evaluative frameworks are required to assess their effect. A comprehensive evaluation requires the development of an understanding about how a program's structure influences the process of service delivery and how service delivery influences outcome. Such an evaluation will provide not only information on a program's level of effectiveness, but also on the *reasons* for its effectiveness (Pietrzak et al. 1990). Tomison proposes an emphasis on "developmental sequencing" (McBride, 1999) where effectiveness, rather than being a "one-shot" evaluation, is undertaken as a progressive series of analyses that build upon each other where equal emphasis is placed on input, process, and outcome evaluation. This systems-level model proposes that when used together, these methods can provide a comprehensive assessment of program performance that measures and reports on elements such as:

- the details of programmatic implementation and the services delivered
- user participation and satisfaction
- the effects on users in terms of skills learned and behavioral change
- the changes in the structure and organization of the institution hosting the program which reflect the viability of the program
- whether the program is adequately accessing the target populations
- the extent to which the program results in identifiable changes to the community, such as the increase or decrease of a social problem

In addition to input, process, and outcome evaluation, the effectiveness of the Archdiocese's compliance efforts will also need to be analyzed using industry compliance management models and best practices.

6. Tasks/Sequence/Products

Given the plethora of traditional as well as the prospective systems-level evaluative techniques described above, the tasks, sequence, and products of the Effectiveness Subcommittee are as follows:

- To continue the fundamental and primary work of identifying, framing, and prioritizing those research questions (see Section 3 above) that best serve to reveal the effectiveness of this effort
- To understand fully the details of the comprehensive implementation of safe environment programs, policies, and procedures in the Archdiocese to keep children safe and prevent abuse

- To review the available research methodologies and evaluation techniques represented in the psychosocial and medical literature, and to help derive a reasonable and achievable set of outcome variables to be measured
- To select, adapt, or create an effectiveness assessment and data collection methodology that will answer the questions addressed in the "Goals and Objectives" above (see Section 3)
- To determine the utility of hosting one or more conferences or forums to convene subject matter experts to discuss best practices and innovations in effectiveness measurement
- To determine the utility of conducting one or more regional focus groups to convene cross sections of the Catholic population to discuss their experiences and perceptions as consumers of the products of the intervention
- To assist in writing grant proposals for continued funding of the effectiveness assessment beyond its initial phases
- To determine a suitable strategy for a "pilot" analysis of selected elements
- To oversee the eventual data collection and analysis and participate in the creation of interim and final reports

7. <u>Budget</u>

   Initial OCAIO budget for FY06 - $100,000
   Projected budget for FY2007 – FY2009 will be determined as the scope of the effort unfolds and will be reported in the semiannual reports.

8. <u>Deliverables and Timeline</u>

   March 23, 2006 - First Meeting of the Subcommittee
   - Anticipate that the subcommittee will meet once per month
   - Subcommittee will update the IOAC on a quarterly basis
   - IOAC/OCAIO will update the Cardinal
   September 23, 2006 – First 6-month update
   March 23, 2007 – Second 6-month update
   September 23, 2007 – Third 6-month update
   March 31, 2008 – Publication, public release and distribution of the methodology

9. <u>Assignment of Responsibilities</u>

   1. IOAC – Provide oversight and assist in reviewing data and drafting all reports pertinent to the effort.
   2. Effectiveness Subcommittee – Select, adapt, or create a methodology for effectiveness assessment, determine the data to be collected, provide a Principle Investigator to the project, oversee the details of implementing the selected assessment methodology, assist in writing grant proposals to staff the assessment, and provide technical/scientific review of the data, its analysis and eventual recommendations.

3. RCAB – Provide initial funding for the effectiveness assessment, announce the effectiveness assessment effort, outline what is expected in terms of participation, and provide regular updates to the Church and external communities. Through the OCAIO, provide the conference center, material resources, and staff necessary for the planning meetings to take place; provide timely and accurate communication among subcommittee members, between the subcommittee and the IOAC, and between the subcommittee, the IOAC, and the Cardinal; draft the minutes of each meeting, and document the products of the various project phases; facilitate public release of the six month reports and the final report of the subcommittee, and make the final methodology available to other public and private entities.

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