

The Duke Endowment: Child Advocacy Center Evaluation

Executive Summary

Submitted by:

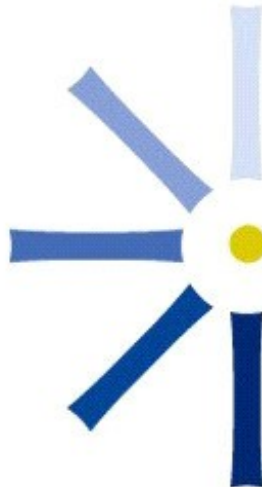
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Executive Summary

In 2004, The Duke Endowment (“TDE” or “the Endowment”) commenced its work with Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) in North and South Carolina. TDE promptly noticed that there was little agreement between CACs regarding outcomes, specifically:

- The primary focus of a CAC
- What constitutes a good outcome for a CAC
- How to measure outcomes

TDE recognized that if CACs were to be ongoing grantees of the Endowment’s Child Care Division, TDE needed a demonstration of what impact, if any, CACs had on the children and families they served. Innovation Network (InnoNet) began working with the CAC initiative in 2004 to design an evaluation process to meet the needs of TDE and the CACs.

Over the past three years, the Endowment has brought 32 CACs together with Innovation Network to participate in trainings and conversations around the evaluation of CACs. The evaluation team, along with tireless contributions from the CACs, has successfully developed a workable logic model, a common set of outcomes, and a set of standardized data collection instruments to be used across CACs.

This report summarizes the major milestones of this multi-year engagement, highlights findings from a process evaluation that was undertaken in the third year of the initiative, and emphasizes key learnings and recommendations.

Key Findings Summary

The findings from this process evaluation relate to five critical evaluation questions:

To what extent were the CACs satisfied with TDE’s and Innovation Network’s level and type of involvement? Overall, survey respondents and interviewees felt that The Duke Endowment’s and Innovation Network’s level of involvement was more than adequate. The highly participatory involvement of multiple stakeholders in this process increased the overall buy-in to the evaluation design. The collaborative

nature of the workshops helped to create a safe space for the CACs, the Endowment, and the evaluation team to share thoughts and ideas as the evaluation took shape.

Upon entering the process, what level of knowledge did the CACs have around evaluation?

Just over half of the CACs had moderate experience conducting evaluations prior to working with TDE, while a little over one-third had little to no experience. This discrepancy in evaluation knowledge and experience may have contributed to some frustration around the pace of the evaluation design.

How effective was the creation of the logic model? Nearly half of the CACs indicated that the logic model development process could be improved. Further analysis revealed that CAC satisfaction with this process was directly correlated to their level of evaluation experience—those with more evaluation experience felt the process was more effective than those with less experience.

How effective was the outcomes prioritization process? Approximately half of the CACs participating in the outcomes prioritization process felt that it was effective. Again, varying levels of evaluation experience played a role in this perception. Among the noted benefits of the process, CACs felt that it helped them get beyond reporting "just numbers to delve into the 'So what?'" question. Most of the CACs felt that although this process was challenging, it was worth the effort.

Has the data collection process been relevant to the CACs and their work? A great majority of the CACs indicated that they would be able to use the evaluation data to improve their services and better serve their clients. Many of the CACs felt that the data allowed them to learn more about the implementation of their services and address potential gaps. CACs are also learning to use evaluation data in grant requests to other funders.

In short, this effort marks a turning point in the ability of CACs to collect consistent data, contribute to the knowledge base of common outcomes, measure their impact, and improve their services.