



Getting Started with Survivor-Centered Evaluation

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Learning Objectives

- *Establish a framework* for centering on survivors in all evaluation and improvement efforts
- Discuss *strengths and challenges* of survivor-centered evaluation and explore case studies of effective models that reflect survivor-centered values
- Develop strategies for *creating new tools*, as well as *adapting existing tools* to align with survivor-centered principles

Establishing a
Framework

Strengths &
Challenges

Exploring & Adapting
Instruments

Q & A



Why We Evaluate

- Continual Improvement
- Monitoring
- Research Evaluation
- Documenting Work → Promising Practices
- Building shared knowledge
- **Learning and improving in a way that honors and centers on the experiences of survivors, while acknowledging their expertise¹**

What is evidence? Evidence-based? Practice-based Evidence?



Guiding Principles

- **Trauma-Informed Care**
Clear expectations and goals with an honest acknowledgement of the difficulty of giving feedback; Validate and normalize; Acknowledge the courage and generosity of participants; Encourage self-care
- **Feminist Methodology**
“Reduces hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee, providing information and resources, and creating an emotionally supportive and compassionate setting.”⁴

“Evaluation is not benign.
Like any powerful tool that is misused, the wrong evaluation approach can do harm despite the intention to do good. The challenge, then, is to match the evaluation to the situation...”³

3: Patton, R. (2008). Utilization-focused evaluation. 4th Edition.

4: Campbell, R., et al. (2010). “What has it been like for you to talk with me today?” : The impact of participating in interview research on rape survivors. *Violence Against Women*, 16(1), 60-83.

Established Frameworks

- **Full-Frame Initiative⁵**
 - Five Domains of Wellbeing (social connectedness, stability, safety, mastery, meaningful access to relevant resources)
 - How do survivors define success for themselves (social and familial connection, achieving something for themselves)
- **Dialogues in Action⁶**
 - Getting to what matters
Know → Believe Do → Become Feel → Love
 - Getting at substantial and lasting changes in an individual because of their participation with programs or services

5: Full Frame Initiative (2015). Retrieved from <http://fullframeinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Five-Domains-of-Wellbeing-Overview.pdf>

6: Dialogues in Action (2015). *Getting to what matters*. Retrieved from <http://www.dialoguesinaction.com/>

Strengths Abound!

"And now, just the fact that you're asking how to improve. And you're asking how it felt for me. Nobody asks. That, to me, means the most. It's very helpful."

- Survivor in PWCL's 2014 Survivor-Led Evaluation⁷

- Learn more about impacts of our work
- Focus limited resources towards efforts that are most helpful to survivors
- Build evidence to present to community stakeholders and funders encouraging support

Challenges

A host of proven interventions may not add up to a proven whole.⁸

- Evaluation/Change is expensive & time intensive
- “Accountability”
- Co-Occurring \neq Interconnected
- Assumptions about success are “baked in”
- Silos in services & systems

Challenges

- Every survivor has unique needs and life circumstances, so universally positive outcomes are difficult to define
e.g. XX% of participants will leave their abusive relationship.
- Reaching participants who are anonymous or engage in very short-term services is especially difficult
- Handy means of defining aims (JARS)⁹:
 - Justice: promoting legal, economic, social justice
 - Autonomy: re-establishing survivors' right to self-determination
 - Restoration: restoring emotional well-being
 - Safety: enhancing physical *and* psychological safety

- **Process Evaluation**

- Satisfaction survey, # individuals served

- **Outcome Evaluation**

- Change in knowledge, attitude, skill, behavior, expectation, emotional status or life circumstance due to the service being provided⁹

- **Impact Evaluation**

- Lasting change; What would have happened without the program/participation?

- **Participatory Evaluation**

- Adaptive approach that allows those most affected by services to contribute to decisions about what is evaluated, how data is collected, what the data means, and how the findings will be shared and acted upon¹⁰



9: Sullivan, C.M. (2011). Evaluating domestic violence support service programs: Waste of time, necessary evil, or opportunity for growth? *Aggression & Violent Behavior*, 16(2011), 354-360.

10: Guijt, I. & Gaventa, J. (1998). Participatory monitoring and evaluation: Learning from change. *Institute of Development Studies Issue Brief*, (12). Retrieved from <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/PB12.pdf>

Accuracy & Reliability of Evidence

Of course you want accurate data, but my definition of accuracy may be that data is firmly grounded in the survivors' experience. A survey that's administered over the phone that has the exact same twenty questions in the exact same tone of voice, that is not reliable or accurate. And, more to the point, it is not respectful.¹¹

Aims

Goals / Objectives

Core Concepts

Key Indicators

Methods &
Sources

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Relevant
Time-based

Sample Aim Statement:

This participatory, survivor-centered evaluation will help our organization learn more about whether our services help survivors attain the outcomes that they identify as being important to them.

Aims *This evaluation will help PWCL deliver the best service, as defined by survivors. Survivors who participate in the project will have a healing and empowering experience.*

Goals / Objectives *Create standards for service delivery that are informed by the voices of survivors. Create an actionable plan for improvement that will include metrics, champions and timelines.*

Core Concepts *Accessible Services; Reliable Services; Quality Services; Effective Services; Effective Evaluation Tools & Processes; Culturally Responsive & Respectful Services; PWCL's Role in the System; System Coordination*

Key Indicators *Visibility; Reputation; Barriers to Access; Hold Time; Accuracy of Information*

Methods & Sources *Focus groups; Individual Interviews; Process Journals; Anonymous Feedback*

Common Outcome Measures

- The services provided by this program helped me make informed choices about my situation.
- After working with this agency, I have some new ideas about how to stay safe.
 - By working with PWCL, I gained new ideas of *how to increase safety* in my current situation.
- After working with this agency, I know more about resources that may be available, including how to access them.

Effective Survivor-Centered Instruments

- The advocate I worked with was knowledgeable about community resources.
- The advocate was concerned about the needs of all of my family members.
- I decided what needs and issues I wanted to work on with my advocate.
- The advocate focused on my strengths.
- The advocate I worked with helped me learn new skills or practice existing skills.
- I felt supported and encouraged by my advocate.
- The advocate I worked with helped me define and meet the goals I thought were important.
- I am more able to achieve goals I set for myself.

Effective Survivor-Centered Instruments

In thinking about how you were treated by [Agency] staff, do you feel that you were:

- ☐ Completely Respected
- ☐ Somewhat Respected
- ☐ Somewhat Disrespected
- ☐ Completely Disrespected

Because: _____

KEY: Give survivors an opportunity to define for themselves what respect looks like

Effective Survivor-Centered Instruments

How do we know our instruments reflect the interests and needs of survivors?

Survivor Advisory Boards

- Same principles apply (feminist methodology, empowerment-based, trauma-informed)
- Important to outline the reasons you are seeking feedback

Effective Survivor-Centered Instruments

Which of your strengths did the advocate help you identify for yourself? → What are the ways you draw on those strengths now? → In what ways has this transformed you into an advocate for yourself?

KEY: Embedding advocacy & empowerment opportunities

Effective Survivor-Centered Instruments

How was the support you received responsive to your situation? → In what ways has acting on your ideas helped you to develop self-trust?

What did you learn about DV/SA that changed your understanding of what you deserve in a relationship? → How has this information influenced the positive relationships you have today?

KEY: Getting to what matters (self-trust and self-worth) and starting to assess substantial change

Effective Survivor-Centered Instruments

Which of your strengths did the advocate help you identify for yourself? → What are the ways you draw on those strengths now? → In what ways has this transformed you into an advocate for yourself?

KEY: Supporting survivors in realizing and/or developing their strengths and assets (not replacing those with formal program goals)

Effective Survivor-Centered Instruments

Evaluation that is empowering
returns agency and control to the
survivor, so sharing the information
and *taking action in a meaningful
and intentional way is essential!*

Important Considerations

- **Protecting Safety & Confidentiality**
 - Gather only essential information
 - Collect and store data in a safe and secure manner
 - Take careful considerations in presenting info
- **Respect & Honesty**
 - Value survivors' time and expertise by asking only relevant questions (Test: Ask yourself "How will this information be used?")
 - Acknowledge the emotional nature of the conversation > Respond with kindness and compassion
 - Incorporate feminist methodology
 - Offer resources: emotional support, information & referral, safety planning

Important Considerations

- **Equity & Inclusion**
 - Amplify the voices of those who are historically marginalized, underserved or unserved
 - Make an extra effort to ensure that there is space for these participants and that the process is relevant and comfortable
- **Minimizing Barriers to Participation**
 - Recruitment materials: 1 page, easy to read
 - Compensation: gift cards, gas/transportation vouchers
 - Childcare

Creating Survivor-Centered Moments

It is always possible to listen to survivors!

When you listen to the little things that participants say and begin to systematically document these, you can begin to find meaning from anecdotes. Though the plural of anecdotes is not data, the meaning you draw from survivors' stories can point you to the key questions you should be asking when you someday undertake a full evaluation.

Thank you!

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