



Program theory and logic model to address the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Social work and child welfare practitioners have long confronted the reality that child maltreatment and domestic violence often coexist within families. However, services for the victims of these types of family violence have been fragmented, forcing victims to go to multiple agencies for assistance. The purpose of this paper is to describe the program theory and logic model developed to guide evaluation of the St. Louis County Greenbook Collaboration to Address Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment, together with an assessment of the use of this approach as applied to a comprehensive community initiative. Both the program theory guiding the collaboration and the logic model developed from the program theory are described. Data are drawn from qualitative documents produced in conjunction with collaboration participants. The findings suggest that a program theory and logic model approach to program planning is difficult to develop with large collaborations. Such methods may not be useful to program stakeholders. Further, attempting to use a graphic to portray a program may do a disservice to the complex ways in which many of the strategies and outcomes overlap in a community-wide collaboration.

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Leaders of the community and its institutions should join together to establish responses to domestic violence and child maltreatment that offer meaningful help to families, including protections for all victims from physical harm; adequate social and economic supports for families; and access to services that are respectful, culturally relevant, and responsive to the unique strengths and concerns of families. Simultaneously, the community should hold violent perpetrators responsible for their abusive behavior and provide a variety of legal interventions and social services to stop this violence (Schechter & Edleson, 1999, p. 16).

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1. Introduction

Social work and child welfare practitioners have long confronted the reality that child maltreatment (CM) and domestic violence (DV) often coexist within families. However, services for the victims of these types of family violence have been fragmented, forcing victims to go to multiple agencies for assistance. In 1998, the National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) began to discuss more effective means for communities to respond to families in which domestic violence and child maltreatment overlap, and published *Effective Intervention in Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment Cases: Guidelines for Policy and Practice* (Schechter & Edleson, 1999). Commonly known as the Greenbook, due to its green cover, the recommendations provide a framework for communities to develop interventions and measure progress as they seek to improve their responses to families experiencing domestic violence and child maltreatment.

Shortly after the publication of the Greenbook, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services joined together to fund a national demonstration project to implement the recommendations. Proposals were solicited nationwide from communities hoping to bring about system changes outlined in the Greenbook. In 2001, the Family Court of St. Louis County, MO,

received grant funding as one of six demonstration sites to implement the St. Louis County Greenbook Initiative to Address Domestic Violence & Child Maltreatment (referred to herein as “the Initiative”). The three primary partners in the Initiative were the Family Court of St. Louis County; Missouri Department of Social Services-Children’s Division (DSS-CD); and the over 25 St. Louis area domestic violence service providers, including batterer intervention programs (BIPs).¹

The purpose of this paper is to describe the program theory and logic model developed to guide evaluation of the St. Louis County Initiative, together with an assessment of the use of this approach as applied to a community collaboration. As a community-based initiative with multiple partners, the Initiative can be considered part of the comprehensive community initiative (CCI) movement (Kubisch, Weiss, Schorr, & Connell, 1995). This paper adds to the literature on evaluation of CCIs by describing a program theory and logic model specifically applied to the co-occurrence of domestic violence² and child maltreatment. It is hoped this paper will facilitate program development and evaluation in other communities attempting to offer coordinated services for victims of child maltreatment and DV, and also be of interest to evaluators of CCIs addressing other social services issues.

2. Program theory and logic models

2.1. Program theory in comprehensive community initiatives

Program theory has been described as a program’s theory of change (Connell & Kubisch, 1998; Hernandez, 2000) or theory of action, in which causal linkages among the various components of a program are articulated (Funnell, 1997; also see Weiss, 1995). The logic model can be viewed as a visual depiction of the underlying program theory. The element that differentiates a logic model from models which begin with stated goals is that the program’s long-term goals are located at the end of the model, in agreement with the temporal reality of a program; i.e., one begins with a definition of the problem, then adds resources and activities, concluding with the desired outcome(s).

Development of the program theory and logic model through an iterative process with program stakeholders (program staff, board members, etc.) can facilitate dialogue between evaluators and stakeholders regarding the assumed linkages between conditions, services, and outcomes (Hernandez, 2000). McLaughlin and Jordan (1999) suggest stakeholders and program evaluators should agree on the definitions of program success and measures. In addition, stakeholders can assist evaluators in determining data sources to use for evaluation purposes. For example, a common evaluation measure of batterer intervention programs is offender recidivism, as evidenced by additional arrests for domestic violence. However, this measure requires access to arrest and prosecution data for both convicted and nonconvicted offenders. In Missouri, for example, information on nonconvicted offenders is unavailable to researchers. Stakeholder input may be useful in identifying alternative performance indicators when more direct measures are unavailable.

Existing research also suggests some limits to the use of logic models. Kaplan and Garrett (2005) describe how three community-based initiatives used logic models in their health-related services programs. Each of the three initiatives used the W.K.

Kellogg Foundation (2004) approach to logic model development. Kaplan and Garrett (2005) note many logic model proponents believe the process of developing a logic model forces participants to clarify program assumptions and goals. However, they found those benefits tended to accrue to coalitions that were already fairly strong and collaborative. They also found the process of identifying underlying assumptions was valuable to the two well-established community initiatives, but members of the weakest coalition were difficult to engage in the process. They suggest that collaboration in developing a logic model can be challenging for coalitions with a diverse group of organizations and individuals. For example, agencies attempting to collaborate will often have different philosophies, legal mandates, and levels of authority in responding to families in distress. Further, resistance may come from those who feel the logic model exercise is a distraction from program implementation. In addition, effectively using logic models requires training, time, and resources, all of which are often in limited supply for social service projects. Thus, the existing research is unclear regarding the usefulness of this approach with large community-based projects and initiatives.

2.2. Theory-driven evaluations of domestic violence programs

The earliest effort to describe program theory related to domestic violence programs was provided by Burt, Harrell, Newmark, Aron, and Jacobs (1997) for evaluating projects funded by S.T.O.P. Formula Grants funding under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). This publication details how to develop a logic model with the elements of background factors, program services and activities, external services/factors, immediate goals/outcomes, and longer-term goals/outcomes. More similar to the current paper, Adler (2002) describes a framework for modeling linkages among service systems for a coordinated community response (CCR) to domestic violence in Baltimore, MD. Adler presents two models: (1) a program theory model of a local DV program, and (2) a flow chart model of the CCR system, articulating how the five system components of the CCR interact with each other. While the program theory model specifies immediate, intermediate, and ultimate objectives for evaluation purposes, the CCR flow chart depicts a system, and thus, is not designed for evaluation purposes as such. However, Adler’s program theory model is the best domestic violence program theory model available to date.

Adler’s model of a local DV program includes *program components* such as residential services, counseling, legal services, etc.; *outputs* such as counseling referral and support groups; *immediate objectives* including intake, filing reports, and training volunteers; *intermediate objectives* such as helping victims navigate the judicial system; and finally, *ultimate objectives* of preventing system revictimization and changing society’s tolerance for DV. Adler then provides a comprehensive model of the entire CCR system, integrating the DV programs that provide crisis intervention, batterer intervention programs, the social services system, the judicial system, and the health care system. This model graphically portrays the linkages that theoretically exist between these five systems. She notes the challenge for a CCR or CCI in coordinating between systems with different priorities and with very different approaches to the problem of domestic violence, based on their differing “missions, legal obligations, procedures, and philosophies” (Adler, 2002, p. 209). Again, this model is not designed to guide evaluation. However, Adler includes a narrative table outlining the objectives of a theory-based process evaluation, detailing research objectives, measures, and data collection methods. She suggests evaluation of a CCR requires a multimethod approach, including both qualitative and quantitative data.

¹ During the years of the Initiative, there were up to 28 agencies involved, all of whom were members of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

² We think the term *intimate partner violence* is a more accurate description. However, since the *Greenbook* and the federal funders use the terms *domestic violence* and *victims*, we have opted to use those terms.

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