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Independent Living Outcomes Evaluation Project

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Independent Living Outcomes Evaluation Project

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Overview
Centers for Independent Living have been using a needs-based reporting process to continue showing funding entities that their continued support is justified. Recently, the Office of Budget and Management has determined that U.S. Centers are not effectively proving that continued support is justified by current reporting practices. It has been determined that outcomes will need to be evident in future funding considerations.

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) was established to ensure that Centers meet the “core” program requirements to have the designation as a Center for Independent Living. NCIL has begun to initiate the process for conducting outcome evaluations by establishing the logic behind the program and the indicators that are most appropriate. They have provided three indicators that will need to be surveyed through participant self-reports. These are at least two increases in skills, knowledge, and resources over the first nine months of the last fiscal year. These were found to be very broad and vague.

This project developed specific examples of skills and resources for three example categories of ILST and developed recommendations for enhancing the creation of goals. It was important to develop indicators into a tiered structure for reinforcing those skills and resources into knowledge through an added educational component. Methodology was developed and necessary instrumentation and processes were designed for implementation. And, an informed consent was designed for any organization providing Independent Living Skills Training (ILST).

Literature Review
Much of the data that needs to be collected is related to a consumer’s goals.

- A connection between consumers and their goals is crucial for goal accomplishment.
- Goals must have importance to the individual,
- Goals need to be personal and fall in the consumer’s value-base,
- And, goals should be clear and concise.

There is evidence that is contrary to the recommended data collection methodology.

- It is important to ensure that a vulnerable population is fully informed with all relevant information before consenting to any type of research.
- It is imperative for the evaluation team to provide informed consent in person,
- Provide informed consent in necessary alternative formats, and
- Ensure that each participant can fully understand the information.

Considerations for reducing exclusionary criteria include transportation limitations.

- Methodology needs to be flexible and mobile
- It is important to maintain the IL Philosophy by excluding as few consumers as possible
- Consumers should have as much access as possible to participate in the direction of organizations providing their services.

| | Budgeting Example | Cooking Example |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Foundational Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Addition and subtraction •Use of calculator •Legible handwriting •Ability to write numbers •Ability to spell-out numbers •Location of banking institution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Reading level/ability •Math ability •Ability to measure ingredients •Ability to identify needs for recipes •List creating •Grocery shopping |
| Foundational Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Checking account •Pens •Calculator •Income •checkbook | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Access to assistive technology (if needed) •Pens/pencils •Cookbooks •Online recipes •Internet |
| Essential Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •communication skills to address tellers •verbalizes needs to appropriate titles of employees •maintains appropriate level of funds •deposits funds correctly •writes checks correctly •identifies the process of check writing- what happens when a check is given to a vendor •accurately registers all credits and debits in the appropriate place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use of kitchen appliances •Ability to know safe and appropriate use •Understands measurement and applies to recipes •Meal planning •Meal preparation •Safe and appropriate use of knives, scissors, and other sharp kitchen utensils |
| Essential Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Positive balance in checking account •Pens •Calculator •Checkbook | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pots and Pans •Measuring cups •Measuring spoons •Any needed item for successful meal preparation |
| Mastery Skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ability to read and understand banking statements •Balances checkbook and statements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ability to utilize recipes for meal preparation •Can identify needed ingredients •Combines measured ingredients for meal preparation •Uses nutritional recipes |
| Mastery Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Checking Account Balance Statement •Pens •Calculator •Checkbook register | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Maintaining a positive balance in savings or checking accounts •Ongoing shopping to purchase needed items •Generates a grocery list independently •Continues to apply appropriate safety, ingredients, and nutritious meal planning |
| Knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Banking layouts-kiosks and services provided •Teller role •Depositing of funds •Importance of maintaining a positive balance in checking account •Difference between savings and checking accounts •Check process once written •How skills and resources connect to successful maintenance of a checking account | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Able to identify the use and purpose of kitchen appliances •Understands first aid in case of injury •Identifies potential risks and identifies ways to ameliorate them •Understands the purpose of a fire extinguisher •Knows how to use a fire extinguisher •Knows where to find healthy recipes •Understand the importance of healthy eating •Etc... |

Foundational Objectives Example
Name: *John H. Doe* Month: *January, 2010*
Goal: To be able to independently maintain a checking account successfully.
Foundational Objective 1: Consumer will independently write numbers into written format 90% of attempts with IL staff.
Foundational Objective 2: Consumer will independently utilize a calculator correctly as a resource to show independence when needed at 90% of attempts with IL staff.

Results
The result of the effort put into this project was the completion of an easy to use, and an easy to implement, manual that provides the empirical rationale and all necessary documents and recommendations to structure, develop, and implement IL skills training to elicit outcomes for future reporting needs.

The manual provides the necessary program components necessary for developing the foundation in consumers to provide the needed feedback in an efficacious way. It provides an empirically supported informed consent, examples of a tiered-structure for indicators, and a questionnaire for conducting the outcomes evaluation.

The design for the initial evaluation would be: O→X→O

This design has been recommended to provide the organization early evidence of program fidelity and a comparison of consumer knowledge about goals, skills, and resources.

The design for ongoing evaluation is that of: X→O

This design allows for easy to implement annual evaluations. Organizations can enter data at each point to determine long-term changes in implementation and consumer abilities.

Recommendations
NCIL’s initial recommendations for conducting the evaluation of core programs for future reporting needs were vague and some ethical concerns were addressed.

1. The telephone interview with consumers was not viewed as appropriate for the population
2. Informed consent must be provided in person and with alternative formats available as needed
3. A reinforcement educational component provides consumer efficacy for eliciting feedback to evaluators
4. A tiered-structure can be implemented for skills and resources to be reinforced and connections to goals enhanced
5. Goals should be developed to ensure consumers know the skills and resources needed for goal accomplishment

Implications

- Empirical supports for recommendations are limited
- This project is the foundation to further add to the literature
- A pilot study needs to be developed and evaluated as a means to validate the design and methodology that is recommended
- Consumers will have their worth and self-determination increased
- Personal connections to goals will increase
- The tiered-structure of indicators and goals will increase efficacy and independence

References
References are available from the author upon request.