

REPORT SUMMARY

Central New York Practice Research Network Conference Project: Final Project Report

Date: September 2003

Authors: Elaine Wolf and Susan Adair

Report Summary

The Central New York Practice Research Network (PRN) held a conference, *Strengthening Partnerships: Changing Systems Through Research & Practice*, on November 21, 2002, in Cazenovia, New York, to bring together researchers from multiple disciplines, policy makers, and treatment and prevention professionals in the field of alcoholism and substance abuse and related social problems. The purpose of the conference was to promote and develop better working relationships among practitioners and researchers and to identify research topics and funding opportunities that will inform and improve practice for treatment and prevention services. A summary of the conference proceedings can be found on the web in pdf format at either www.communityalternatives.org/publications/publications.html or www.ireta.org/attc/.

Importance of the Project

In April 2002, members of the Central New York PRN proposed a one-day conference, to be held in the autumn, intending for it to jump-start collaborations among local researchers, policy makers, and practitioners. They felt that, although the PRN offered an opportunity for such collaborations to develop, efforts to build the organization had at least temporarily eclipsed the group's intended focus of building collaborative relationships. This event would promote the Central New York PRN and showcase its existence and purpose to researchers in multiple disciplines and practitioners working in a variety of settings, thus enhancing the PRN's ability to achieve its goal of furthering local collaborative relationships.

Specifically, the purposes of the conference were to promote and develop better working relationships among practitioners and researchers and to identify research topics and funding opportunities that can inform and improve practice for treatment and prevention services. These goals were to be achieved by exploring the processes and requirements of initiating and implementing collaborative research projects; encouraging research ideas that emerge from practice experiences; facilitating the formation of specific research project partnerships; and providing opportunities for networking across fields of practice and research. Speakers, luncheon, and small discussion groups allowed for the dissemination of information, reflection, and networking.

Organizational Background

The New York State Practice Improvement Collaborative (PIC) is a consortium of state policy makers, community-based alcoholism and substance abuse treatment and prevention providers, and researchers from academic and other institutions. The Practice Research Collaborative (PRC) is the state-wide advisory group of the PIC. Each of the eight regional Practice Research Networks (PRNs) in New York State are represented at the PRC to ensure the articulation and incorporation of regional issues into the statewide practice research agenda. The PIC's goals are to improve clinical outcomes in alcohol and substance abuse treatment and prevention programs through the use of evidence-based practices; improve the conduct of research through practitioner involvement; and influence policy as it affects research and practice at the local, state, and national levels.

The Day's Events

Fifty nine practitioners and researchers from across Central New York attended the conference. Morning and afternoon speakers provided a range of perspectives on the collaborative process. The day's two overarching goals (facilitating the building of researcher/practitioner relationships and the implementation of collaborative projects) were reflected in the organization of morning and afternoon breakout sessions. The morning discussion groups addressed three specific issues related to building researcher/practitioner relationships: initiating and navigating the collaborative research process, identifying areas of research that would benefit from research/practitioner partnerships, and training needs. The afternoon discussion groups addressed three practical issues of implementing collaborative projects: designing research that is relevant to practice and policy, funding issues related to the development of collaborative research partnerships, and using research findings to inform practice and policy.

The conference concluded with a plenary session in which attendees identified ways in which the Central New York PRN might implement a process of networking and developing ideas for collaborative research. The *Conference Report* presents the Central New York PRN's experience with, and vision of, the collaborative process.

Themes Emerging from Discussion Groups

The small-group discussions revealed a range of experience with collaborative relationships. Although some conference participants reported that they had collaboration experience, most expressed a great deal of confusion over what they perceive to be a haphazard system of funding and opportunities for collaboration between researchers and practitioners. While practitioners and researchers alike identified a substantial number of ideas for research topics, any initiation of collaborative relationships between researchers and practitioners seems to rest primarily with researchers. Practitioners are interested in research findings and how those findings can inform their practice but due to time constraints are less able to initiate the process. Once a collaborative process is begun, however, practitioners seem willing to participate albeit with some concerns about issues of control over the intervention and the additional demands that the process puts on staff members. Finally, participants expressed a desire for trainings on the collaborative process and integrating research findings into practice.

Attendees who participated in the concluding, plenary, session identified ways in which the PRN could further strengthen its ability to achieve its goals. These included regularly scheduling

speakers from practice and research to address PRN business meetings; constructing case studies of effective collaborations; developing a systematic means of translating current research findings into accessible language; and developing linkages with insurers and soliciting their support for research-based practice.

Sponsorship

The conference was primarily funded by the New York State Practice Improvement Collaborative (NYS PIC), a joint project of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers (ASAP) of New York, funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT). The conference was co-sponsored by Northeast Addiction Technology Transfer Center (NeATTC), a CSAT project managed by the Institute for Research Education and Practice in the Addictions; the Zurenda Fund, School of Social Work, College of Human Services and Health Professions, Syracuse University; Department of Sociology, Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs, Syracuse University; and the Center for Policy Research, Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs, Syracuse University. The conference project was administered by the Center for Community Alternatives (CCA), a private, not-for-profit agency providing direct services to professionals and clients in the criminal and juvenile justice and related human services systems.

The Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) is a leader in the field of community-based alternatives to incarceration. Through pioneering services as well as the innovative research, policy analysis and training of its Justice Strategies division, CCA fosters individual transformation, reduces reliance on incarceration and advocates for more responsive juvenile and criminal justice policies.

**115 E. Jefferson Street, Suite 300
Syracuse, NY 13202
(315) 422-5638**

**39 W. 19th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10011
(212) 691-1911**

www.communityalternatives.org