Systems Change Approaches

Updated November 2021

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Consultants should familiarize themselves with different systemschange approaches; four approaches to review are: *System of Care, SAMHSA's Theory of Change, ImplementationScience* and the *5-why Process* principles and techniques.

System of Care

System of Care is defined as "a *spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and youthwith or at risk for mental health or other challenges and their families, that is organized into a coordinated network, builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth, and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs, in order tohelp them to function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life*".[1] This spectrum of effective services also includes residential interventions.

This **System of Care** definition is then supported by the following core strategies that are identified as critical for implementing, sustaining, and expanding Oversight Agency efforts:[2]

A. **Implementing Policy, Regulatory, and Partnership Changes -** System changes directed at infusing and "institutionalizing" the system of care approach into the larger service system
II. **Developing or Expanding Services and Supports Based on the System of and Framework Approach** System changes to implement and sustain a broad array of home- and community-based services and supportsthat are individualized, coordinated, family driven, youth guided, and culturally and linguistically competent
III. **Creating or Improving Financing Strategies**—System changes to create or improve financing mechanismsand use funding sources more strategically to support system of care infrastructure and services
IV. **Providing Training, Technical Assistance, and Workforce Development**—System changes to develop askilled workforce to provide services and supports within a system of care framework
V. **Generating Support through Strategic Communications**—Strategies to generate the support of high-levelpolicy makers and key constituencies and stakeholders for system of care expansion

These core strategies align closely with those identified by the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities who note that *successful system change is achieved through the intentional alignment of practice, policy, fiscal/budgetary and regulatory issues across all stakeholders and systems as noted below*.[3]

Practice Lever: The day to day practices across all key players in the system that need to be maintained or changed (education, courts, providers, etc.)

Fiscal/Budget Lever: The alignment of all current system funding across key partners that is or is not supporting our future vision

Policy Lever:
- **Big P:** Laws, ordinances, legislation that supports or is in conflict with system vision.
- **Little P:** Organizationally-created policies of intersecting systems that are or are not aligned to system vision

Regulatory Lever: Rules and requirements across the entire ecosystem that need to be changed or maintained

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[1] **"Toolkit for Expanding the System of Care Approach"**, National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, May 2015, page 3, available at: https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/Toolkit_SOC.pdf

[2] **"Toolkit for Expanding the System of Care Approach"**, National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, May 2015, page 9, available at: https://gucchd.georgetown.edu/products/Toolkit_SOC.pdf

[3] Adapted from Susan Dreyfus presentations, Alliance of Strong Families and Communities, available at: http://www.alliance1.org

SAMHSA Theory of Change

SAMHSA's Theory of Change "creates a framework and process for identifying, developing, and implementing strategies to yield specific outcomes and ultimately influence system change". By utilizing this framework "SAMHSA identifies and organizes strategies, tasks, and activities essential to achieving comprehensive system change in behavioral health services". [4]

It takes a range of factors to facilitate the efficacious implementation of promising and evidence-based practices. SAMHSA's Theory of Change framework becomes the lens "through which it operationalizes its mission to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities". This framework is organized into **five phases**: Innovation, Translation, Dissemination, Implementation, and Wide-Scale Adoption, and "each phase encompasses a range of strategies, activities, programs, and tasks, which pave the way toward strategic and evidence-based behavioral health system change".[5]

The chart below lists the range of activities in the SAMHSA Theory of Change framework. [6]

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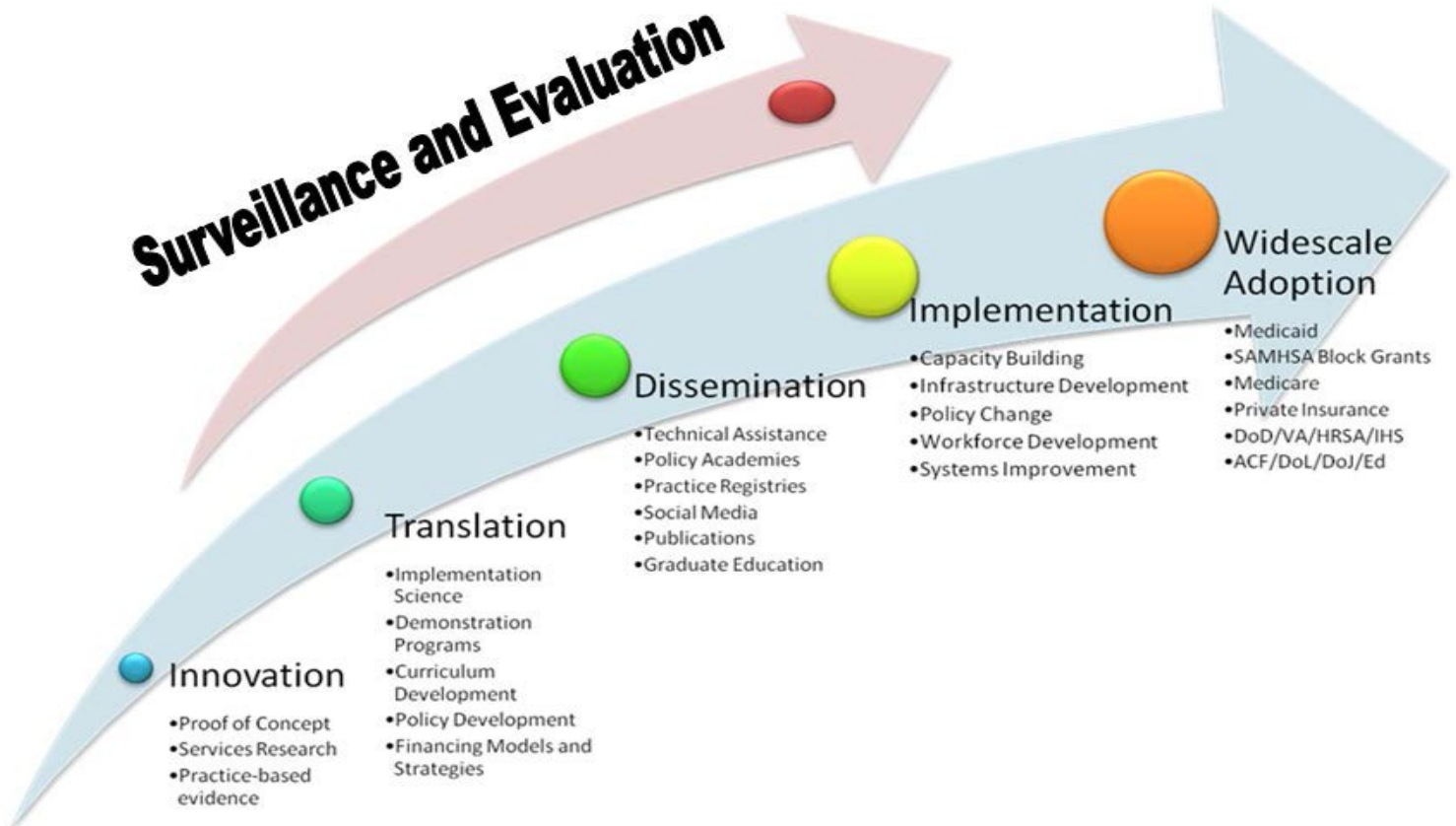
[4] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Leading Change 2.0: Advancing the Behavioral Health of the Nation 2015-2018.* HHS Publication No. (PEP) 14-LEADCHANGE2. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014. Available at: https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//PEP14-LEADCHANGE2/PEP14-LEADCHANGE2.pdf

[5] Ibid

[6] Leading Change in an Era of Health Reform, Pamel S. Hyde , J.D., SAMHSA Administrator, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Grantee Meeting, Baltimore, MD, March 1, 2011, Available at: https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA11-PHYDE030511/SMA11-PHYDE030511.pdf
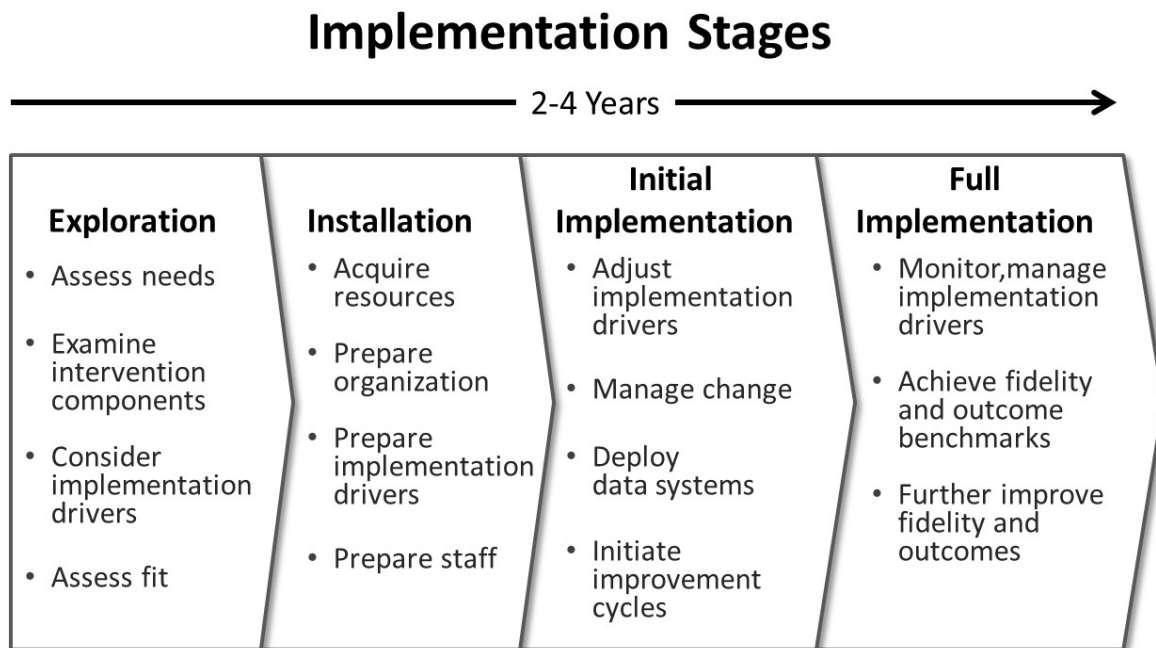
Implementation Science

Implementation Science is perhaps the least known of the three theories being described and is the study of methods to promote the integration of research findings and evidence into policy and practice.

It is perhaps best described in the article "Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature by Deal L Fixsen et. al. who states, "over the past decade, the science related to developing and identifying 'evidence-based practices and programs' has improved—however the science related to implementing these programs with fidelity and good outcomes for consumers lags far behind". [7]

He goes on to say, "as a field, we have discovered that all the paper in file cabinets plus all the manuals on the shelves do not equal real world transformation of human service systems through innovative practice. While paperwork and manuals do represent what is known about effective interventions, these tools are not being used effectively to achieve behavioral health outcomes for children, families, and adults nationally. Clearly, state and national policies aimed at improving human services require more effective and efficient methods to translate policy mandates for effective programs into the actions that will realize them". [8]

He states that "to this end, our intent is to describe the current state of the science of implementation and identify what it will take to transmit innovative programs and practices to mental health, social services, juvenile justice, education, early childhood education, employment services, and substance abuse prevention and treatment". [9]

The chart below lists the stages required in implementing change and recognizes it is a process that takes a significant amount of time to implement.[10]

Implementation Stages

2-4 Years →

Exploration
- Assess needs
- Examine intervention components
- Consider implementation drivers
- Assess fit

Installation
- Acquire resources
- Prepare organization
- Prepare implementation drivers
- Prepare staff

Initial Implementation
- Adjust implementation drivers
- Manage change
- Deploy data systems
- Initiate improvement cycles

Full Implementation
- Monitor,manage implementation drivers
- Achieve fidelity and outcome benchmarks
- Further improve fidelity and outcomes

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[7] Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005). Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature.Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231). Available at: https://www.fraserhealth.ca/media/implementation-research-synthesis-of-the-literature.pdf

[8] Ibid
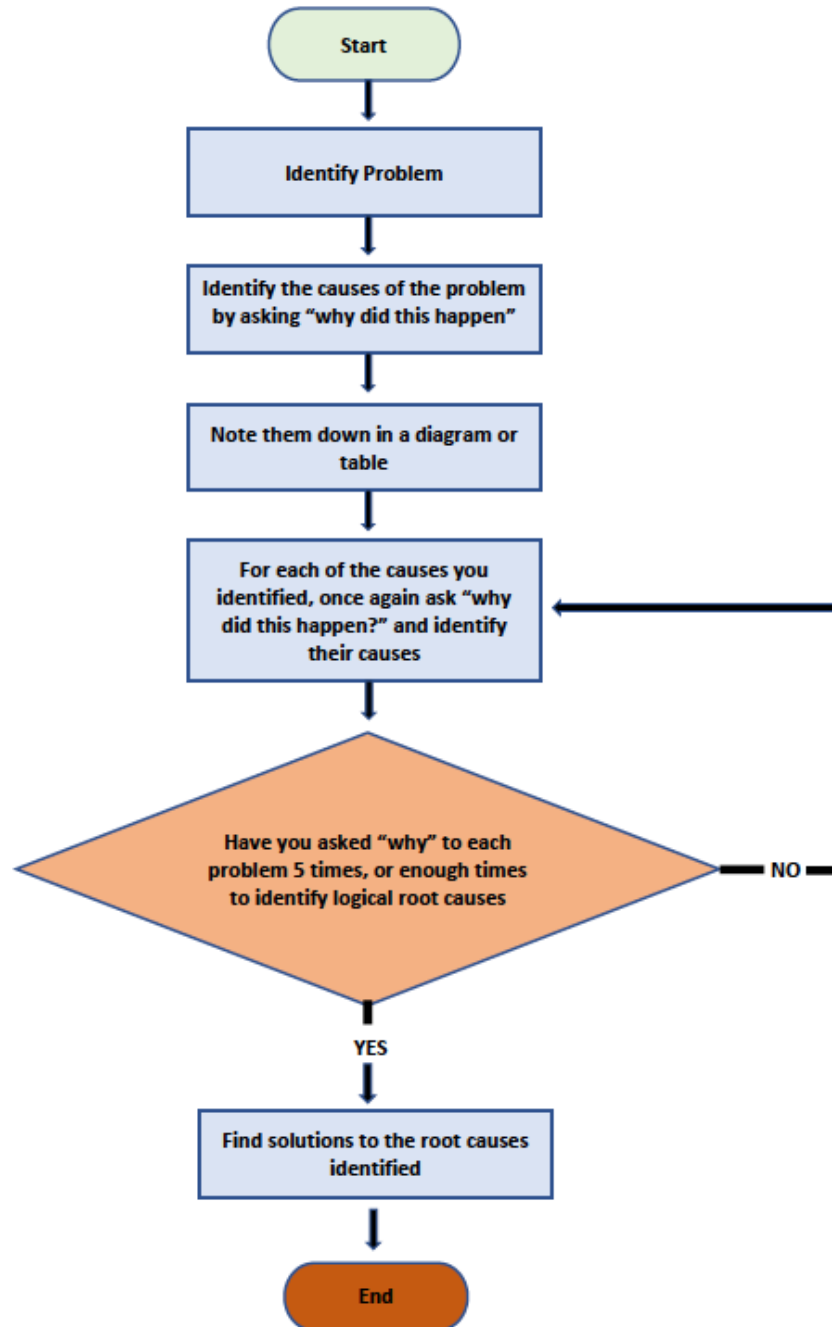
[9] Ibid

[10] Improving Programs and Outcomes: Implementation Frameworks 2013, Rosalyn M. Bertram, Karen A. Blasé, Dean L. Fixsen. Available at: **http://www.uh.edu/socialwork/news/events/05292012-bridging%20the%20gap%202013/Bertram-Blase-**

The 5-why Process

The 5-why Process is an approach that can inform BBI consultants when they work with Oversight Agencies.[11] This is not a required approach, or an approach currently used by the BBI Lead Consultants, and it may not lend itself to easewith initial conversations with Oversight Agency staff, but the 5-why Process provides a context for problem solving.

5-why Process Flowchart

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                        Start

                    Identify Problem

        Identify the causes of the problem
          by asking "why did this happen"

          Note them down in a diagram or
                       table

             For each of the causes you
          identified, once again ask "why
          did this happen?" and identify
                    their causes

          Have you asked "why" to each
         problem 5 times, or enough times  ──── NO
           to identify logical root causes

                        YES

           Find solutions to the root causes
                     identified

                         End
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[11] The 5 Whys Process We Use to Understand the Root of Any Problem, Courtney Seiter, 12/17/14, Available at: https://open.buffer.com/5-whys-process/