

Integrating Technology into Effective Social Work Practice

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Abstract

Increasingly technology is being used to support effective social work practice. This seminar will explore a variety of ways in which information technology can help implement and sustain effective services. In combination with local organizational support and coaching, information technology can provide consistent training, certify basic competencies, help plan services, support supervision, and monitor progress. Multiple examples will illustrate meaningful uses of technology in practice settings. Participants will explore opportunities and implications for education and practice.

Proposal

Increasingly technology is being used to support effective social work practice. This seminar will explore a variety of ways in which information technology can help implement and sustain effective services. In combination with local organizational support and coaching, information technology can provide consistent training, certify basic competencies, help plan services, support supervision, and monitor progress.

Supporting workforce development and training needs in practice for new and seasoned professional is ongoing. Information technology is well suited to help disseminate information and to test understanding and the ability of participants to apply the knowledge to case examples. Advantages include consistency in training and competency tested basic skills across multiple sites. Combined with local implementation coaches (supervisors with advanced training and skills), new knowledge and skills can be then be supported in practice settings.

Many evidenced based practices have developed specific assessments and case management platforms. As local service agencies and state/county service systems often have their own electronic record systems, using an external case management system is challenging and impractical. In 2009, we explored the possibility of using a common assessment tool, Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS, Lyons, 2009) with Transition to Independence Process (TIP, Clark et al., 2004) to identify key components of using a system-wide tool to support planning and monitoring progress.

Assessment information is also being used to map the needs and strengths of individuals, youth, and families to specific practice models. An alternative to supporting multiple evidence-based practices (EBPs) within an organization is to map commonly used skills across EBPs to the needs of individuals (Bruns et al., 2014). Technology supports clinical skill development and planning. Resulting plans and services are more likely to consistently be based on research about what works. Improved outcomes for youth and families are more likely.

Technology is also beginning to be used to help monitoring progress in social services or treatment. Access to understandable assessment information over time can help caseworkers, clinicians, supervisors, and youth and families monitor progress. Examples of outcome measurement reports will be shared; implementation challenges and possible solutions will be discussed. Participants will be encouraged to share additional examples, opportunities, challenges, and to discuss implementations for education and practice.

References

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