



Newsletter edition 27

In this edition of the TEI Program Reform newsletter we will be looking at one of the key reform directions; moving towards evidence informed practice, why it's necessary and how we plan to get there.

Why change?

There is strong support within the TEI sector to moving towards evidence-informed practice.

Our consultations and other research and program evaluations have identified service models with well-supported evidence, as well as those with supported or emerging evidence. The benefits of moving towards evidence-informed practice include:

- better client outcomes through TEI services, with more people assisted earlier
- improved TEI service delivery achieved gradually through testing and refining
- better monitoring, performance management and evaluation of existing services
- room for innovation and testing of promising practices
- setting transparent expectations
- exploring and establishing supports to effectively deliver outcomes for clients
- consistent data that can be used to assess the cost-effectiveness of TEI investments.

How we'll get there

We considered several options, such as requiring all interventions to be evidence-informed or only a proportion to be evidence-informed. What we decided on was a gradual transition to increasing the number of evidence-informed services over time.

This means we will require all newly commissioned services to be evidence-informed. At the same time, we will build in a monitoring and performance management component that will apply to all existing services and allow for innovation and testing of promising practices, particularly for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities.

The literature has identified the importance of building the capacity of systems, organisations and practitioners to implement evidence-informed practice, the need for an approach that recognises and builds on existing good practice, and an iterative approach that includes mechanisms that enable a focus on continuous quality improvement rather than a pre-determined ideal end-state.

The literature suggests several elements are required to achieve an evidence-informed approach in the TEI sector. Firstly, TEI programs need to be informed on the best evidence available for different services along the service continuum. FACS has started implementation of this approach more broadly through the Research to Practice Program. FACS will build on this with peak organisations and Districts to provide a foundation for future improvements.

To support adoption of evidence-informed practices a culture that values evidence-informed practice and continual service improvement will be further developed.

Collaboration between stakeholders, with a view to breaking down barriers and finding shared solutions, will help to build this culture. Culture will also be built through the creation of a flexible environment embracing change, which enables lessons learnt to result in changes to programs. Contracting and other incentives to utilise evidence-informed interventions will be adopted to develop a culture of embracing evidence.



Also fundamental to the adoption of evidence-informed practice is effective implementation.

Constructive adoption of evidence-informed practice recognises that implementation and consideration of program fidelity are as important as the interventions themselves, as poor implementation of best practice approaches can result in negative outcomes (as outlined in the accompanying diagram from the paper by Murdoch Children's Research Institute [Towards a model of evidence-informed decision making and service delivery](#)).

Evidence-informed practices will be implemented flexibly with consideration for the new context, including cost effectiveness and adaptability to existing interventions and locations.

Implementation will also be supported through enhancing capacity and capability. Support will be provided through advice to TEI program delivery staff by TEI Local Champions and through training.

Assistance will extend past implementation through local and central governance arrangements so the sector is supported with ongoing development of highly skilled practitioners to lead the sharing of good practice and innovation.

This culture for learning and improvement will be supported by a TEI Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation system as well as open dialogue with service providers. Following implementation, evidence-informed practices (as well as other practices) will be monitored and evaluated to identify any issues and avenues for achieving possible improvements.

Success will be mapped against the TEI Outcomes Framework and the TEI Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

To evaluate programs determining their effectiveness and status as evidence-informed, standards for understanding and grading evidence-informed practices will be established.

There are numerous standards that could be adopted fully or partially by FACS and applied to evaluation of current programs and those programs in an evidence-informed repository (there is a range of information currently available on evidence-based programs, such as parenting programs, including [FACSAR](#), [Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth](#), [Australian Institute of Family Studies](#), and [Parenting Research Centre](#)).

The level of standards required for different services, including level or intensity of the service, along the service continuum will be considered. While the highest level of evidence may be required for some programs such as family intervention, flexibility is needed to ensure evidence requirements are fit-for-purpose and allow for innovation.

Rigorous standards demonstrating programs as effective and reaching an evidence-informed status would provide direction for future investment, not only to government but the non-government and private sectors.

The standards would provide a classification tool for the private sector to understand the value and risks of different programs. Additionally, the non-government sector would have clearer standards directing their strategic direction and investment.

With Aboriginal TEI services, we are aware that practice models developed for non-Aboriginal communities may not necessarily be effective for Aboriginal communities. What is important is ensuring that there is room for innovation, and the service system is flexible enough to encourage the design of Aboriginal service models. There are currently a number of models being trialled in other jurisdictions that could be applied in NSW.

Local and central governance arrangements will help build evidence-informed practice through shared-learning from experience, or practice-based evidence, continuous improvement, and by maintaining collaborative relationships for ongoing feedback from all stakeholders including children, young people, families, communities and local service systems and networks.

Next newsletter

In our next newsletter we will be looking to providing more information on the work being undertaken in central office on the reform.

More information

For more information about this reform visit www.facs.nsw.gov.au/teiprogramreform or email the FACS Families and Place branch at TEIReform@facs.nsw.gov.au.

Questions and Answers

Q&As are available on the [FACS](#) and [Community Services](#) websites.

As always please email any comments or questions to TEIReform@facs.nsw.gov.au