

Nonprofit News

A service of Temple University's Nonprofit Evaluation Services and Training Center (NEST)
December 2010



From the Director's Desk

Embracing Evaluation

Dave Zanis, PhD

The Temple NEST (Nonprofit Evaluation Services and Training) Center was established in 2008 to build the capacity of nonprofit health and social service organizations, foundations and governmental services to effectively and efficiently evaluate their practice.

Our belief is that most organizations want to demonstrate that an investment in services results in positive changes. Funders (taxpayers and philanthropists) of these services want to understand the outcomes of their investments. Finally, consumers of services, particularly vulnerable individuals, should be assured that programs operate efficiently and effectively utilizing best practice standards.

While these expectations are reasonable, the reality is that few organizations embrace evaluation. Some organizations engage in evaluations that are self-

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS

Temple University
Harrisburg Social Work
Continuing Education
Conference
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2011

Sessions include:

“Legal and Ethical
Conflicts Confronting
Social Workers,”
presented by Ron Costen,
PhD, Esq.

“Technical Ethics,”
presented by James
Corbin, LSW

“Tobacco Cessation
Intervention and Referral
Skills for Social
Workers,” presented by
Dave Zanis, PhD

“Using Practice-Based
Evidence: Special Tools to
Improve Therapist
Effectiveness,” presented
by Barry Nazar, DPA

“The Legacy of Addiction:
Adult Children of
Alcoholics,” presented by

serving, while the majority of organizations simply avoid evaluation.

Evaluation is a powerful tool that promotes social justice, improves professional practice, enables financial resources to be used cost-effectively and increases clinical effectiveness. If this is so, then why do organizations not embrace evaluation? Answer: We have found that agencies are not held accountable or asked to provide evaluation data.

There are several general reasons why organizations do not actively conduct evaluation: (1) few boards of directors view it as their responsibility to require program evaluation, (2) consumers avoid asking about program effectiveness, (3) funders often do not financially support evaluation activities and (4) administrators do not integrate evaluation activities as part of clinical practice.

Evaluation produces knowledge, and with knowledge we can improve the quality of the health and human service sectors. Over the course of the next year, Temple NEST will embark on a comprehensive series of educational forums to increase the skill of various stakeholders to utilize various evaluation strategies. While evaluation data are important, understanding how to use evaluation data is even more important.

—Dave Zanis, PhD, is director of Temple NEST and associate professor at Temple University's College of Health Professions and Social Work. Contact him at dzanis@temple.edu.

Research Topics

General Change Mechanisms

Barry Nazar, DPA

In earlier Temple NEST newsletters and workshops, Appreciative Inquiry was advanced as a potent means of bringing about change at an organizational level. The underlying notion is that positive attention gains more traction than a focus on problems. It is as though we are coming out of the Dark Ages in this regard. For many years, social and behavioral sciences concentrated on pathologies. The millennium issue of *American Psychologist* (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) marks a turning point for entering the age of "Positive Psychology."

The leading trend came from the fields of management and organization during the 1970s and 1980s with popular works like Peters and Waterman's "In Search of Excellence" and Blanchard and Johnson's little book, "The One Minute Manager." These and other works put an emphasis on "catching people doing things well." But can this positive approach work at the clinical level?

A groundbreaking study conducted in Switzerland by Gassmann and Grawe (2006) examined the detail content of therapeutic processes and the outcomes.

Claudia Dewane, LCSW,
DEd

Registration is free for Temple University alumni and \$15-\$30 for others, depending on the number of sessions attended. Click [here](#) or call 866-769-1860 for more information and to register.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Tom's of Maine Dental Health for All program will award \$20,000 to five nonprofit mobile dental clinics in 2011. The application deadline is Jan. 14, 2011. Learn more [here](#).

CEC ArtsLink Inc. will provide grants of up to \$10,000 for nonprofit arts organizations seeking collaboration with arts organizations abroad. The application deadline is Jan. 15, 2011. Learn more [here](#).

The Eisner Foundation has launched a national program to give a \$100,000 prize to an individual or nonprofit using intergenerational programs to positively change their community. The application deadline is Jan. 31, 2011. Learn more [here](#).

The Kessler Foundation
Signature Employment

The patients presented a wide range of maladies, including depressive disorders, bipolar disorder, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, PTSD, cannabis withdrawal, adjustment disorders and pain disorders. Therapies were conducted by trained clinicians using an integrative therapy approach based on empirically supported general change mechanisms. All sessions were videotaped and analyzed minute by minute. Each session was rated by the patient using a Patient Session Questionnaire and the overall therapy (average of 23 sessions) was rated using goal attainment scaling.

The investigators coded the minute-by-minute content of the therapeutic process according to whether the process activated patient problems or patient resources. Problem activation alone did not lead to therapeutic progress. Only when resource activation was combined did any therapeutic potential unfold. Further, the amount and timing of resource activation were reliable predictors of therapy outcomes. Early resource activation and higher amounts of resource activation were associated with successful outcomes. Indeed, sessions that began with problem activation tended to get stuck, and patients resisted the clinicians' efforts to rally resources near the end of the session.

References

Gassmann, D. & Grawe, K. (2006). General change mechanisms: The relation between problem activation and resource activation in successful and unsuccessful therapeutic interactions. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, 13, 1-11.

Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5-14.

—Barry Nazar, DPA, is senior research associate at Temple NEST and adjunct assistant professor at Temple University. Contact him at barrynazar@gmail.com.

NEST Welcomes Christina Reardon

Christina Reardon, LSW, joined Temple NEST as research associate Dec. 1. She publishes the NEST newsletter, updates the organization's website and assists with NEST projects.

Christina completed Temple University Harrisburg's MSW program in August 2010. While in the program, she developed an interest in organizational development, as well as in international social work. She combined the two as co-founder of Beyond Our Borders, a Temple University student organization that promotes awareness of how global events affect social work. Before earning her graduate degree, she worked as a journalist, covering the health care and nonprofit sectors for the Central Penn Business Journal in Harrisburg, Pa.

Grant program offers grants of up to \$500,000 to organizations with innovative solutions to increasing employment outcomes among people with disabilities. The application deadline is Feb. 18, 2011. Learn more [here](#).

Christina looks forward to working with you. If you would like to share nonprofit news about jobs, trainings or funding opportunities, please contact her at ccreardon@temple.edu.

About Temple NEST

The Temple University Nonprofit Evaluation Services and Training Center (NEST) in Harrisburg, Pa., is an enterprise center of Temple University. Temple NEST aims to build capacity of nonprofit and public sector agencies. It does this by assisting agencies with grant writing, information technology, evaluation designs, original research, and training in a variety of skill areas. Temple NEST is a vehicle for faculty, staff and students to engage collaboratively with community-based agencies and groups to bring resources of the university to serve the community.

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