Starter Kit
7a: Developing a Communications Strategy; Building Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Navigating the Roadmap
Activity 7: Engage/gain the support of the community.

Introduction
The EBDM Initiative seeks to create a set of conditions under which harm and risk reduction are realized to their true potential. Agreement on a systemwide vision and methods to assess its achievement, collaboration at the policy level, and careful analysis and application of the research in ways that ensure evidence-based decision making and practice are all important but insufficient to the achievement of desired outcomes. Without the understanding and "buy-in" of stakeholders—both within the system and, as importantly, in the public—change of the order described in the Framework is unlikely to take root and flourish.

Purpose
Broadly, the purpose of developing a communications strategy is to facilitate understanding of, and support for, evidence-based decision making policies and approaches. The specific aims of a jurisdiction's communications plan include the following:

- To raise awareness and educate stakeholders about the value of evidence-based decision making as an enhancement to existing justice system practices.
- To engage interest in, and support for, such an approach among those who oversee, work within, interact with, and/or are affected by the local criminal justice system.
- To engage stakeholders in a purposeful way in the identification and/or implementation of harm reduction strategies that will support healthier communities.

Participants
This document was developed for EBDM policy teams (and/or their work groups) to advance their efforts to engage stakeholders—both internal and external to the justice system—in the EBDM Initiative and in jurisdictions' broad harm reduction goals.

Instructions
To begin, consider the following questions to ensure a thorough understanding of the place from which your communications planning effort is starting:

- Who are the audiences you are trying to reach? Consider those within the local and perhaps state justice system (e.g., policymakers, supervisors, and/or staff) and audiences external to the justice system (e.g., community leaders, the general public).

- What information are they currently receiving?
- Who communicates with these audiences regarding justice-system related matters in an official communications capacity (e.g., public information officers) and/or as part of their role (e.g., chiefs of police or district attorneys conduct routine roundtables with civic groups; probation officers and detectives are members of ad hoc public education committees that educate communities on offender reentry issues)?
- For each audience identified, think about (and perhaps create a matrix that identifies) the following:
    - What are the one or two primary ways to reach each audience (e.g., newspaper article, radio broadcast, speech, on the Web)?
    - What do you want each audience to know?
    - What is their current base of knowledge—that is, where are you starting from? Is this a well-informed audience?
    - What is the audience's perspective? For example, does this audience have a positive viewpoint on the topics you want to discuss?
    - Who is best positioned to communicate with this audience, and how?
- In what ways are current communication efforts working effectively?
- In what ways could or should these efforts be expanded?
- Based upon the answers to these questions, and after reviewing the "Tips" section below, build an action plan for your communications strategy. It may include specific, one-time events for specific audiences (e.g., a presentation to the business leaders' quarterly network meeting; a briefing of justice system professional staff on the EBDM Initiative) or a series of events for various audiences (e.g., a series of briefings over the course of six months with three specifically identified local journalists; a series of training events on specific topics for a multidisciplinary group of professional staff). It will likely include a mix of long-term, big-picture topics (e.g., how the justice system operates, strategic action plans being developed or underway) and specific event-related strategies (e.g., highlighting the story of an offender who successfully completed supervision, launching a new program or policy approach).

Adopting a Consistent Message

While Milwaukee County, Wisconsin's communication plan involves outreach to a variety of audiences, including business leaders, citizens, elected officials, educators, and the media, a consistent message is communicated:

Our commitment to the discipline of EBDM will enable us to hold offenders accountable, reduce the overall crime rate and recidivism, and give taxpayers a better return on the dollars they invest in criminal justice.

Tips

- Consider crafting a set of communications messages. Possible examples include the following:
    - Our communities can do better (than a 67% failure rate); we can create safer communities; we can reduce harm; we can have fewer crimes and fewer victims.
    - A local criminal justice system informed by research can point the way because it places the highest premium on outcomes, on the individual and institutional actions that produce them, and on the careful, ongoing measurement of them.

- An evidence-based approach should not replace discretion and judgment, but it can inform and guide that judgment to enhance the likelihood that desired outcomes will be achieved.
- A common local vision, internal collaboration, interagency partnership, public involvement, and shared responsibility are indispensable building blocks for alleviating community harm.

- Consider developing an identity. One resource is provided by the national EBDM Initiative team; jurisdictions may choose to adopt this identity or to develop their own.
  - The national EBDM Initiative team created an "interactive" graphic that encourages decision makers to "complete" its concept with one or more words capturing the forms of harm they, their staffs, and their communities most desire to reduce (i.e., the phrase "One less _____" accompanied by "A strategy for safer communities" as its tagline). The graphic was designed to stand alone as a deliberately incomplete thought to pique curiosity or, for particular audiences, to be filled in with words such as "victim," "crime," "inmate," "offender," "dollar spent," "officer injured," or "court case."

Grant County, Indiana's Core Message

EBDM is the thoughtful stewardship of the public's money and trust in operating an efficient and effective criminal justice system.

One less offender.
One less victim.

- Consider developing communications tools and materials, for example:
  - a scripted "elevator speech" incorporating the key messages. (An "elevator speech" is an overview of an idea for a product, service, or project. The name reflects the fact that it should be possible to deliver the speech in the time it would take for an elevator ride, that is, approximately 30 seconds.)
  - local criminal- and victim-focused case stories that have strong emotional impact.
  - well-designed, appealing pamphlets that replicate the elevator speech in bullet form and include human interest stories.
  - video clips by local champions that illuminate the aspirations of local policymakers, specific approaches or challenges, etc.
  - a presentation of the overall project to be used at stakeholders' meetings (i.e., a core set of slides augmented by stakeholder-specific slides and jurisdictional findings from the assessment phase). The EBDM Initiative team has developed a "core training curriculum," available on SharePoint, that can be tailored for local purposes.
  - stakeholder-specific material for staff on the elements of the Framework and the jurisdiction's implementation plan that is applicable to their role in the justice system.
  - training materials for line staff that tie specific policy and procedure changes to specific research supporting such changes.
  - print communications (e.g., posters, banners, brochures, progress reports) directed at staff and displayed in offices. Examples include a "One Less" brochure or "One Less" posters that feature the name and photo of EBDM policy team members and their "One Less" aspirations. (See an example below.)
  - promotional items and giveaways for staff (e.g., t-shirts, coffee mugs, and/or pens) that encourage the Initiative and remind and excite staff about change.

- Consider conducting a public opinion survey and/or focus groups.
    - Conduct a public opinion survey that measures citizens' opinions on the justice system, its purpose, and the extent to which the system should rely on research, and citizens' satisfaction with current justice system outcomes. For a list of questions that were used in a national survey, see the Appendix.
    - Using subject matter experts, convene focus groups with the general public to better understand their views on matters related to the justice system and evidence-based decision making and/or as a means to effectively communicate with and engage citizens on these matters.
- Consider the development of a deliberate and purposeful public communications strategy using the media and other means.
    - Prepare news releases and Op-Ed pieces; talking points for speeches at local gatherings, professional conferences, radio talk or call-in shows, news conferences, one-on-one meetings and open houses at stakeholders' offices, newspaper editorial board meetings, etc.; public service announcements; and print communications campaigns (e.g., posters, brochures, press kits, web-based reports).
- Understand the research and collect data.
    - Examine the research on effective communication strategies and campaigns to determine how this body of knowledge can best inform and shape your own efforts.
    - Collect qualitative and quantitative information to determine the extent to which your communications tools and methods accomplish their intended purpose. One qualitative method of measurement would be to conduct a series of focus groups with local system stakeholders and the general public. Quantitative methods of measurement would involve pre- and post-testing of training modules, pre- and post-measurements of staff attitudes, or a fuller use of local public opinion polling. One possible strategy is to conduct a baseline poll at the launch of the communications strategy and then a second poll at a specified date in the future to measure change in both public and staff attitudes.

National Survey on EBDM

In Phase I of the EBDM Initiative, the national Initiative team worked with Zogby International to develop and administer a national public opinion survey.

This tested survey offers a model that could be replicated at the local level and a set of findings against which local results can be compared. If the data align with the findings of the national poll, they will provide the impetus, as well as political coverage, for difficult decisions. Even in the event that the data do not align with national findings, they will become an integral part of the development of local messages.

A fact sheet that summarizes the findings of the national public opinion survey can be found here: http://www.ebdmoneless.org/toolsresources

Example: Charlottesville-Albemarle County, Virginia, EBDM Initiative Flyer

OneLess
A STRATEGY FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

A Collaboration among Charlottesville-Albemarle County Criminal Justice Organizations

Charlottesville-Albemarle Criminal Justice System

The One Less Initiative

**One less offender. One less crime. One less victim. One less dollar spent.
One less damaged life. One less harmed citizen.
One less frustrated community member.
One less…**

This Initiative puts forward the belief that risk and harm reduction are fundamental goals of the justice system, and that these can be achieved without sacrificing offender accountability, public safety or other important justice system outcomes.

Principles of One Less

1. The professional judgment of criminal justice decision makers is enhanced when informed by evidence-based decision making (EBDM).
2. Every interaction within the Criminal Justice System offers an opportunity to contribute to harm reduction.
3. Systems achieve better outcomes when they operate collaboratively.
4. The Criminal Justice System will continually learn and improve when professionals make decisions based on the collection, analysis and use of data reflecting the impact of implemented policies.

Charlottesville and Albemarle County were selected as ONE of SEVEN seed sites in the ***nation*** for the One Less Initiative EBDM project.
Sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections

Sixteen members representing the POLICY TEAM are:

The Honorable Robert Downer
Chief Magistrate Yvette Ayala
Sheriff James Brown
Dave Chapman
Maggie Cullinan
Wendy Goodman
Linda Hamilton
Sheriff Chip Harding
Tom von Hemert
Jim Hingeley
Chief Tim Longo
Denise Lunsford
Col. Ronald Matthews
Susan Painter
Col. Steve Sellers
Pat Smith

Example: Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, Article in Rotary Club Newsletter, January 10, 2011

Evidence Based Decision Making
by Judge Michael Schumacher and Tiana Glenna

Eau Claire County **Judge Michael Schumacher** and **Tiana Glenna**, Eau Claire County Criminal Justice Coordinator, presented an overview of the "Evidence Based Decision Making in the Local Criminal Justice Systems" initiative.

Eau Claire County Judge **Michael Schumacher** and **Tiana Glenna**, Eau Claire County Criminal Justice Coordinator

The concept and goal of this initiative is to build a system wide framework that will result in more collaborative evidence based decision making and practices throughout our criminal justice system (arrest through final disposition and discharge).

In Eau Claire County there are 14 members of the Evidenced Based Decision Making Framework Policy Team representing the full range of departments involved in criminal justice. Established in 2006, the team meets every other month to, simply stated, figure out which decisions throughout the criminal justice system, based on the evidence, result in the best outcomes. Previously, each department worked somewhat independently and hoped that the collective efforts of all departments were positive.

In August 2010, Eau Claire County was fortunate enough to be selected to participate as one of seven "seed sites" in a nationwide Evidenced Based Decision Making initiative being sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections.

According to Judge Schumacher, this whole concept and initiative is a "huge deal". The state of Wisconsin spends $1.2 billion per year in corrections, and it is imperative that we at the county, state and national level do a much better job of getting the best outcomes, based on the evidence.

For more information on the Criminal Justice Collaborating Council , go to www.co.eau-claire.wi.us/courts/cjcc_committee.htm

Example: Charlottesville-Albemarle County, Virginia, "What One Less Means to Me" Marketing Tool

One Less seat-of-the-pants judgment,

One More judgment informed by data

Dave Chapman

Charlottesville Commonwealth Attorney

We are moving our community criminal justice system forward toward a model in which the discretionary judgments made by criminal justice professionals are better informed by data and more likely to contribute measurably to improved outcomes. We will improve public health and safety by utilizing evidence-based decision making at each critical stage at which we make choices about policies, practices, and, in individual cases, about people. These objectives can be accomplished without compromising our values or undermining the important principle of holding people accountable for their behavior.

As well-trained, motivated, and experienced as we might consider ourselves to be in our criminal justice-related capacities, we should not as individuals, nor should the community as a whole, assume that our decisions contribute as much to public health and safety as we believe they do. A traditional or typical approach to a type of offense, even one that derives from an important principle such as holding people equally accountable for the same behavior, may not be the most effective one. There may be other approaches that not only uphold the principle of equal justice to the same degree, but also improve outcomes measurably in terms of the contributions they actually make to public health and safety.

There is reason to believe that we can improve outcomes in criminal cases by utilizing evidence-based decision making at each stage of the process where discretion is exercised by officials who work in the justice system. This is true at the system level when choosing among alternative policies, practices, and programs. It is also true at the individual level in the context of sentencing decisions or the consideration of appropriate alternatives to traditional prosecution. We can improve the justice system by keeping better data, by studying it regularly and rigorously, and by making intelligent choices that are supported by evidence.

Our transition to increased reliance on evidence-based practices is a collaborative process in which the experiences and good judgment of veteran criminal justice professionals are utilized to identify and implement an improved set of policies, practices, and programs that meet the needs of the community. This process is not taking place in a vacuum. Participants in this effort include a diverse cross section of professionals from every corner of the criminal justice system who are highly motivated to improve our local justice system while preserving overall confidence that the system is fair at its core and achieves outcomes that enhance public health and safety. We share a common desire to pursue data-driven policies and decisions while maintaining fidelity to the important principles of accountability and proportionality.

Example: Ramsey County, Minnesota, EBDM Brochure

Ramsey County Evidence-Based Decision Making Initiative

One less crime. One less victim. One less offender. A strategy for safer communities.

About the Initiative

Ramsey County is one of only seven seed sites from across the country selected by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) to participate in the Evidence-Based Decision Making for Local Criminal Justice Systems Initiative (EBDMI).

EBDMI is modeled after the medical profession's "100,000 Lives Campaign," which prevented 122,000 accidental deaths by employing an evidence-based framework to hospital procedures. By applying an evidence-based framework in the Criminal Justice System, the Ramsey County EBDMI ultimately hopes to reduce crime as well as the number of victims and offenders. One of the primary methods for implementing the EBDMI framework includes an examination of the policies, protocols, and strategies currently employed by the state, county, and local agencies responsible for the justice system; identification of areas of dissonance; and implementation of strategies supported by research.

Mission & Goals

"To create safer communities, Ramsey County Justice Partners will work collaboratively to employ evidence-based decision making practices across the Criminal Justice System."

The Policy Team's goals include:

1. Create a system map that outlines the county's criminal justice process
2. Encourage and improve collaboration, information sharing, and services among justice system agencies and the community
3. Allow for the wiser use of limited resources
4. Develop a better understanding of our county's criminal justice practices

Mission & Goals (continued)

5. Analyze decision points, policies, and overall processes
6. Identify challenges and barriers to more efficient evidence-based decision making
7. Improve public safety and reduce crime

Agencies & Team Members Involved in the Ramsey County EBDMI – Phase II

- The Honorable Pamela Alexander, President, Council on Crime and Justice
- Jeri Boisvert, Executive Director, Office of Justice Programs
- Matt Bostrom, Ramsey County Sheriff
- Toni Carter, Ramsey County Commissioner
- John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney
- Chris Crutchfield, Deputy Director, Ramsey County Community Corrections Department
- The Honorable Kathleen Gearin, Chief Judge, Second Judicial District Court
- Sara Grewing, Saint Paul City Attorney
- Mark Haase, Vice President, Council on Crime and Justice
- John Kelly, First Assistant Ramsey County Attorney
- John Kirkwood, Ramsey County Chief Deputy Sheriff
- Patrick Kittridge, Minnesota Second District Chief Public Defender
- Mary Pat Maher, Executive Director, Project Remand
- Ken Reed, Assistant Chief, Saint Paul Police Department
- Carol Roberts, Director, Ramsey County Community Corrections Department
- Therese Skarda, Saint Paul Deputy City Attorney
- Thomas Smith, Chief of Police, Saint Paul Police Department
- Stephanie Zugschwert, J.D., Executive Director, Minnesota Alliance on Crime (Victim Advocate)
- Connie Nowacki, Coordinator, Ramsey County Community Corrections Department

Collaboration & Support

The Ramsey County EBDMI Policy Team has been meeting on a monthly basis since October 2010. The team has been receiving guidance and technical assistance from the Center for Effective Public Policy, who is administering the EBDMI for the NIC, and their partners, the Pretrial Justice Institute, Justice Management Institute, and The Carey Group.

Just Getting Started

The EBDMI Policy Team is nearing completion of its first goal: the development of a comprehensive flowchart, or map, of the entire Ramsey County Criminal Justice System. The team is in process of further examining each of the decision points in the system to identify the strengths and gaps in current decision making relative to evidence-based practices through an evidence-based practices lens that will provide unique opportunities for improvements across the justice system.

Next Steps

The EBDMI Policy Team believes that a critical self-examination of the Ramsey County criminal justice system is long overdue and will yield unique opportunities for systemic improvements. The team will submit a final plan to NIC for implementing an evidence-based framework in Ramsey County in June of 2011. Only two of the seven seed sites will be selected to receive implementation funding.

More Information

The Ramsey County EBDMI will provide updates as the initiative progresses. Interested parties are invited to attend monthly Policy Team meetings. Please contact Kelli Hall at 651/266-2394 for exact meeting times and locations.

Additional Resources/Readings

- See http://media.csosa.gov for an example of one jurisdiction's efforts to communicate with stakeholders.
- See http://ebdmoneless.org for a web page your local jurisdiction can link to, build upon, and/or replicate.

Appendix: EBDM Public Opinion Survey Questions

1. Which of the following do you think should be the primary purpose of the criminal justice system?

   Punishing those who commit crimes
   Reducing the likelihood that convicted offenders will commit new crimes
   Protecting the rights of people accused of crimes
   Addressing the interests of victims of crimes
   Not sure/Other

2. Have you, a family member, or anyone you know ever served time in a jail or prison?

   Yes
   No
   Not sure

Questions 3–6:
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the criminal justice system should …

3. Make neighborhoods safer?

   Strongly agree
   Somewhat agree
   Somewhat disagree
   Strongly disagree
   Not sure

4. Increase the confidence of the public in the criminal justice system?

   Strongly agree
   Somewhat agree
   Somewhat disagree
   Strongly disagree
   Not sure

5. Reduce taxpayers' costs for public safety?

   Strongly agree
   Somewhat agree
   Somewhat disagree
   Strongly disagree
   Not sure

6. Strengthen the well-being of offenders' families?

   Strongly agree
   Somewhat agree
   Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree
Not sure

7. If research consistently showed that there are ways other than jail to deal with people who are convicted of non-violent crimes that could reduce the chances they will commit new crimes, would that information make you more or less likely to support alternatives to jail?

   Much more likely
   Somewhat more likely
   Somewhat less likely
   Much less likely
   Not sure

8. If research consistently showed that there are ways other than jail to deal with people who commit violent crimes that could reduce the chances they will commit new crimes, would that information make you more or less likely to support alternatives to jail?

   Much more likely
   Somewhat more likely
   Somewhat less likely
   Much less likely
   Not sure

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "We should increase spending on approaches proven to reduce the chances that offenders will commit new crimes"?

   Strongly agree
   Somewhat agree
   Somewhat disagree
   Strongly disagree
   Not sure

10. When criminal justice officials make decisions, what should be the most important thing they rely on?

    Research on what works in preventing crimes
    Their professional experience
    Their personal beliefs on what's the right thing to do
    Not sure/Other

11. Knowing that research shows that about half of the people released from prison eventually go back to prison and about a third of the people on probation commit new crimes, to what degree do you think these results are acceptable?

    Very acceptable
    Somewhat acceptable
    Somewhat unacceptable
    Not at all acceptable

Not sure

Questions 12–17:
Doctors use research about risk factors to help identify which people are more likely to have a heart attack. Similar research about risk factors exists that helps identify which offenders are more likely to continue to commit crime. Should this research be used …

12. By prosecutors when they decide what sentence to recommend to the judge?

    Yes
    No
    Not sure

13. By corrections officials when making decisions about release from jail or prison?

    Yes
    No
    Not sure

14. By defense attorneys when they are helping their clients?

    Yes
    No
    Not sure

15. By judges when deciding the appropriate sentence?

    Yes
    No
    Not sure

16. When deciding if a person should be released from jail on bail until their trial?
    Yes
    No
    Not sure

17. By the police when deciding to make an arrest?

    Yes
    No
    Not sure

18. Which of the following statements do you agree with more?
    Statement 1: “The most important thing in dealing with people who have committed a crime is to see to it that the punishment fits the crime.”
    Statement 2: “The most important thing in dealing with people who have committed a crime is to do things that will reduce the chances they will commit future crimes.”

Statement 1
Statement 2
Neither
Not sure/Other

19. If two people were convicted of the same kind of crime, but one of them is more likely to commit crime in the future, what should happen in terms of sentencing?

    Both people should be treated exactly the same.
    The person more likely to commit a crime should be sentenced differently.
    Not sure/Other

20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “Criminal justice officials should tell the public how well they are doing at reducing crimes”?

    Strongly agree
    Somewhat agree
    Somewhat disagree
    Strongly disagree
    Not sure