

Example: EBDM Work Group Charter for Assessing Evidence-Based Policy, Practice, and Decision Making

What are we trying to achieve through the work group process?

The role of the work group is to educate and advise the EBDM policy team on strategies that will result in the greater use of evidence (research) to support decision making consistent with the team's vision for the justice system.

What do we mean by "evidence"?

In the justice system, the term "evidence" is used in a variety of ways. "Evidence" can refer to items collected at a crime scene, eyewitness accounts, or security camera footage. These types of evidence are referred to as **legal evidence**. For the purposes of the EBDM initiative, the term "evidence" is used to describe findings from empirically sound social science research. The Framework refers to the results of this research as **evidence-based policy and practice**.

What is "evidence-based decision making"?

Evidence-based decision making is the use of evidence (as defined above) to inform decisions throughout the criminal justice system process at the case level (e.g., applying practices in light of offenders' risk level), at the agency level (e.g., providing agency direction and support that results in probation officers spending 20 minutes or more in their offender contacts, and focusing those contacts on risk reduction techniques), and at the system level (e.g., working collaboratively to collect and analyze data to determine if systemwide policy decisions are resulting in the desired outcomes, and making adjustments as needed).

Who should be on the work group?

The work group should be composed of individuals who represent all agencies that affect or are affected by the decision points the group is tasked with addressing. The selected individuals should represent diverse experiences and points of view in order to ensure the broadest perspective on the topics discussed. The work group serves as a standing committee that seeks input from others ("ad hoc members") as needed.

What is the role of the chairs or co-chairs?

Chairs or co-chairs are tasked with leading and organizing the work group. To that end, it is their responsibility to make certain that they and their group members are clear about their tasks and the work they are undertaking and, based upon this understanding, develop a work process that will be successful in accomplishing specific tasks within the designated time frame. It will be up to each set of work group chairs to determine how and when the work group will meet. The work group chairs will also be responsible for reporting progress to, and sharing their products with, the EBDM policy team.

What is the work group's time frame?

Work groups should be prepared to complete their work by April 2011. If completion is possible sooner, this is desirable, but not if it means sacrificing quality of work.

What tasks are the chairs/co-chairs and their work groups expected to accomplish?

1. Identify the agencies that/individuals who should be on the work group and secure their agreement to participate.
2. Ensure that all work group members have read the EBDM Framework and EBDM project overview documents, and are familiar with relevant portions of the Mesa County system maps.
3. Ensure that all work group members are aware of the EBDM policy team's vision statement and have read the team's charter.
4. Ensure that all work group members are clear about the work group's tasks and purposes.
5. Create and manage a work plan (e.g., recruit members, establish a schedule of meetings that works for members for the next 2–3 months, clarify the tasks and work to be undertaken).
6. Review and ensure that the system map and system map notations are complete and accurate.
7. Identify all the decision points and decision options on the system map that are within the domain of the work groups. Ensure that relevant decision points are reflected by a diamond shape.
8. Educate yourselves! Identify and review the evidence-based practice literature that most applies to the decision points for which your work group is responsible.
9. Discuss the extent to which evidence-based information is available and used to inform each of these key decisions. For each decision point, ask yourself the following:
 - a. What risk and harm reduction measures are we seeking to achieve (or contribute to in major ways) at this decision point?
 - b. What guidance does the existing research literature have to offer at this decision point?
 - c. What can be done to ensure that research informs decisions made at this point?
10. Identify gaps and barriers that impede the effective use of evidence-based knowledge to inform these decisions (e.g., offender risk/need information is collected but not used to inform a particular decision; risk/need information is not collected; or research suggesting that individuals identified as low risk through the use of an actuarial risk tool is not used to inform the intensity of the applied criminal justice intervention).
11. Identify further information needs that relate to #8 and that would inform the work group's discussions (e.g., "We know that community corrections has risk/need information, but we need further information about how this information is used (i.e., consistently? accurately? appropriately?) and the extent to which it supports the outcomes we desire" or "We know

that we have a variety of intervention options, but we do not know the criminogenic needs (risk factors) these interventions address or the risk levels of the individuals who are receiving these services”). Ask your work group’s data committee member to assist with getting answers to these questions.

12. Identify how best the information in #9 would be collected. Can the work group do this, or someone else within the Mesa County justice system or county? Is support needed from an outside expert?
13. Identify change targets and opportunities that will support the EBDM policy team’s efforts to achieve its vision.
14. Keep the executive committee informed of your progress and of any issues/problems that need the input and advice of the policy team.