# Utilizing Measurement Tools to Examine Outcomes

A program cannot be identified as effective until it has supporting data. Research-supported measurement tools (including screening and assessment tools) help to efficiently identify family strengths and issues, ensure that families receive the most appropriate services for their needs, allow providers to design a plan to resolve the presenting issues, and ultimately measure their progress toward meeting those issues.

Evidence-based measurement tools are rigorously tested to determine if they effectively measure what they are intended to measure. See the 'Important Measurement Terms' box for a list of areas that measurement tools are tested. The CEBC reviews and rates select measurement tools based on the tool's supporting published, peer-reviewed research evidence.

There are diverse measurement tools that examine a wide variety of areas, including exposure to and risk for child maltreatment, family strengths, mental health/trauma, protective factors, and many other areas. Agencies need to make several considerations when selecting a measurement tool in order to determine the tool's fit with the agency and target population. Tools can vary in length of time to complete, costs, available languages and cultural appropriateness, informants, age range, supporting research evidence, and if the tool requires a clinical license to administer.

In addition to being trained to use the tool, organizations should have policies that promote sound data collection. Visit the BetterEvaluation link below for more information.

## IMPORTANT MEASUREMENT TERMS:

- **Screening** – A brief questionnaire or procedure that examines risk factors, mental health/trauma symptoms, or both. A positive result on a screening tool should result in a referral for a more thorough assessment.

- **Assessment** – An in-depth collection of information to identify strengths and issues the family is facing, design a plan, and provide services that will resolve the identified issues.

- **Reliability** – The extent to which the same result will be achieved when repeating the same tool again.

- **Validity** – The degree to which the tool's results are likely to be true and free of bias.

- **Sensitivity** – A measure of how well a tool *identifies* people *with* a specific problem

- **Specificity** - A measure of how well a tool *excludes* people *without* a specific problem.

## RESOURCES ON MEASUREMENT TOOLS:

1. **Measurement Tools for Child Welfare (California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse [CEBC]) –** Detailed information on various measurement tools relevant to child and family services (www.cebc4cw.org/assessment-tools/)

2. **Assessment (Child Welfare Information Gateway) – Data Systems, Evaluation and Technology** https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/data-systems-evaluation-and-technology/

3. **Manage Data (BetterEvaluation) –** Details various aspects of data quality assurance (www.betterevaluation.org/en/rainbow_framework/describe/manage_data)