



Appendix E2: The Critical Role of Implementation Teams and their Evolution through EPIS

Purposeful, active, and effective implementation work is done by implementation teams. Implementation team members have special expertise regarding programs, implementation science, improvement strategies, and organizational capacity building. They are accountable for making it happen: for assuring that effective interventions and effective implementation methods are in use to produce the intended outcomes. The roles and responsibilities of implementation team members need to evolve through the phases of EPIS.

In the **Exploration Phase**, the Implementation Team must include those who have authority to make decisions about which practice to choose to implement. In addition, membership should include those with content expertise in the area being explored (for instance, if the area being explored is Mental Health, then it would be important to have representation of those in child welfare who oversee program/policy management of mental health contracts, as well as leaders in mental health at the table). Relevant stakeholders (e.g., providers, advocates, family members, etc.) should be included in the Exploration process. Finally, members who are not decision makers, such as front line staff, provide information on the practicalities of implementing a new practice. Examples might be infrastructure, workforce, and caseload requirements that will impact the implementing organization.

Once a specific practice has been identified and the agency has moved into the **Preparation Phase**, membership in the Implementation Team may need to be adjusted. During this phase, work shifts to the development of timelines and contracts; much of the work will focus on identifying and addressing potential stumbling blocks. A change agent or coordinator should be identified; this person's role may include day-to-day leadership of the Implementation Team. Leaders in the agencies implementing the new practice, as well as those responsible for training and quality assurance, will have a key role in preparing for active implementation. Depending on the practice, a representative from the program being implemented might also be added to the team, or included on an as-needed basis. During this phase, the group should meet on a regular basis to keep the process moving forward.

The **Implementation Phase** begins as the providers begin to deliver the new program and, at this point, the Implementation Team will require members who have both authority and responsibility to provide quick resolution to problems encountered in the implementation process. Leadership roles should be clear and agreed to by all. At least one member, typically the change agent, should be identified who will have responsibility for monitoring and communicating difficulties and successes in a timely fashion in order to insure quality implementation. During this phase, the Implementation Team may need to be available to meet via telephone on short notice, or hold virtual discussions and resolve issues via email.

During the **Sustainment Phase**, the Implementation Team should be expanded to include

members who represent additional agencies that will be implementing the practice, as well as representatives from new funding sources who have been identified, such as local foundations. Members should also include quality assurance and training staff from the implementing agencies, to ensure that fidelity and outcomes continue to be a focus. During this phase, the group may meet less frequently than in previous phases – the new program has become ingrained in the service system and challenges and changes are less common.