

*Model Programs Guide*  
**Implementation Guides:**  
**Background and User Perspectives on**  
**Implementing Evidence-Based Programs**



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We thank the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, which helped organize numerous focus groups that were conducted during their annual conference. We also thank Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, and the National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges, each of which put on a great conference this year that allowed us to connect face to face with important individuals who contributed a great deal of information to the project.

Finally, we express our deep gratitude to all of the Juvenile Justice Specialists, all the State Advisory Group members, and all of the other individuals across the country working with at-risk youth who made time to speak with us about their experiences implementing evidence-based programs and practices. The insight that was gained from their experience and knowledge was very valuable to the development of the *MPG* Implementation Guides, and we truly appreciate all that they contributed.

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## **1. Background on Developing MPG Implementation Guides**

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) *Model Programs Guide* (MPG) contains information about evidence-based juvenile justice and youth prevention, intervention, and reentry programs. The MPG is a resource for practitioners and communities about what works, what is promising, and what does not work in juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, and child protection and safety.

A major objective of the first year of the new MPG cooperative agreement (no. 2013-JF-FX-K002) tasked Development Services Group, Inc. (DSG), with developing Implementation Guides to be featured on the Web site. The goal of the Implementation Guides is to enhance the information and resources available on MPG to better support MPG users (policymakers and practitioners) in implementing evidence-based programs and practices.

During the past year, DSG developed an Implementation Guide Development Plan in conjunction with OJJDP's Program Manager. The document outlined the approach DSG would take to gather background information on implementation science research, user perspectives, and other pertinent information, which would be used to outline the MPG Implementation Guide Protocols and Standards. The Protocols and Standards would include recommendations about the type of information to be included in the Implementation Guides, the standards of evidence with regard to research used to develop the Implementation Guides, the general format and layout of the Implementation Guides, and other procedures and standards that will guide development of all future Implementation Guides. This document provides a summary of this background work, including the research, data collection and analysis, and internal discussions held on the MPG Implementation Guides. When available, additional reports will be published with the plan for developing the new Implementation Guides.

Part 1 (this section of the document) provides an overview of some of the implementation guides and research already available to policymakers and practitioners. Part 2 provides a description of the methodology used to collect qualitative interview and focus group data from 38 practitioners, researchers, and various other professionals in the juvenile justice field (or related fields) who have experience in implementing a program or practice. The qualitative data was designed to supplement the information and knowledge gained from the research described in Part 1. Part 3 is an overview of the findings that were identified, based on the responses from the 38 interviewees.

## Search of the Literature

The process of developing Implementation Guides for the MPG began with a search of relevant literature. This included searching for resources and information currently available from peer-reviewed journals, government agencies, and other organizations, such as the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), to get a general understanding of what was already

**Figure 1.1. Stages of Implementation Process**  
(from Fixsen et al. 2005)



known about implementation and implementation science. The search resulted in the development of an annotated bibliography. A brief overview of some of the identified research is provided below. The research is discussed in context of the proposed framework of the MPG Implementation Guides. The information discussed below (in addition to many other implementation research articles and projects identified during the literature search) was considered during internal DSG meetings and conference calls between DSG and OJJDP in terms of whether the MPG Implementation Guides would follow a specific implementation model already developed and, if not, how much influence the other implementation models would have on the framework of the MPG Implementation Guides.

## Specific Models of Implementation

Many implementation models provide practitioners with an ordered or sequential Implementation Process to follow. Most models will emphasize the importance of not viewing the Implementation Process as linear, but rather a process that often goes back and forth between stages. However, visual representations (for example, arrows pointing from one step to another) are often used to illustrate the various steps or components of a specific model, which seems to contradict the suggestion that the process should not be viewed as linear. This may suggest to practitioners that they should follow a prescriptive formula when implementing a program or practice, even if they are instructed otherwise. For example, Fixsen and

colleagues (2005, 15) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature and developed six stages of the Implementation Process based on prior research (see Figure 1.1). The report emphasized: “[I]mplementation is a process, not an event. Implementation will not happen all at once or proceed smoothly, at last not at first.”

Similarly, RAND’s *Getting to Outcomes (GTO)* series presents 10 steps to address issues before and after the implementation of a program has begun. The model (see Figure 1.2) provides numbered steps across two phases: the Planning process and the Evaluating and Improving process. The steps are: 1) identify needs and resources in your community; 2) identify goals and desires outcomes; 3) find programs that help achieve your goals; 4) review program choices for best fit; 5) determine the capacities needed for implementation; 6) make a plan for implementation; 7) evaluate the implementation process; 8) evaluate outcomes of the program; 9) improve the program with continuous quality improvement; and 10) plan for

**Figure 1.2. The 10 GTO Steps as a Painter’s Palette**  
(from Mattox et al. 2013)



program sustainability. The guide does explain: “While the steps are numbered and there is an overall order to them, you may need to skip around and pick and choose depending on your particular needs” (Mattox et al. 2013, 3).

The Quality of Implementation Framework (QIF) developed from a literature synthesis concentrated on 25 frameworks of implementation from myriad fields, including health care; substance abuse prevention and treatment; school-based innovations; technological innovations; community-based preventions services; and mental health promotion. When discussing the development and overview of the QIF, Meyers, Durlak, and Wandersman explain in a footnote of the article:

The arrows from one phase to the next are intended to suggest that steps in each of the phases could continue to be addressed throughout the implementation process. Steps in each of the phases may need to be strengthened, revisited, or adapted throughout the use of an innovation in an organization/community. While a logical order in which the critical steps unfold was needed to develop a coherent framework, we believe the manner in which they are implemented in practice will depend on many factors.” [2012, 475]

The phases of QIF, presented in Figure 1.3, also suggest a prescribed order to addressing the various factors of implementing a program or practice, although narratively the authors emphasize that the advancement of these steps depends on the specific situations and contexts of the organization or community. The QIF is meant to represent the “dynamic interplay” of the important phases and steps of implementation within a structured framework.

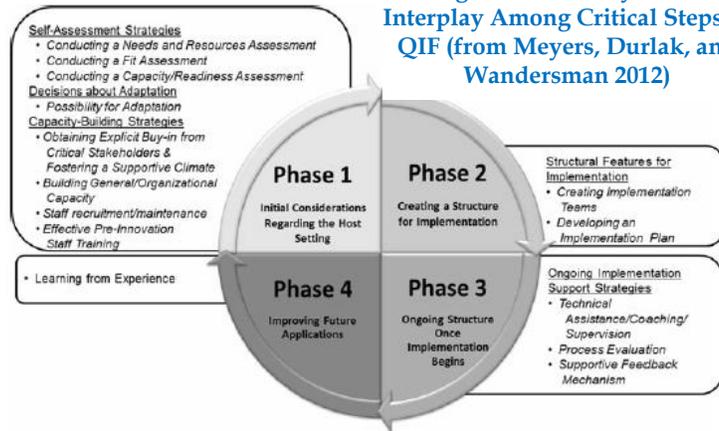
Moreover, if a practitioner is searching for information on a particular component or step of the implementation model – such as how to conduct a needs assessment – this may require familiarity and understanding about the entire implementation model to find information specific to the practitioner’s needs. For example, a reader may not know the specific components that fall under each of the six stages of the Implementation Process developed by NIRN or the 10 steps of RAND’s GTO model.

Finally, although the models described above allow for practitioners in various fields to use the information about implementation, it may be difficult for those in the field to translate the general information into something more specific for their particular program or practice. As one interviewee noted: “One caveat to using a guide like NIRN is they may not be as useful on small projects. However, the key steps/pieces are the same.”

### Focus, Scope, and Breadth of Included Implementation Information

In addition to considering whether to follow a specific implementation framework, another important issue was the focus of the MPG Implementation Guides and the amount of

Figure 1.3. The Dynamic Interplay Among Critical Steps of QIF (from Meyers, Durlak, and Wandersman 2012)



information that should be provided. The focus refers to the phases, stages, or steps of the Implementation Process that would be discussed in the Implementation Guides. Many guides focused on a general framework for the implementation of various types of programs. The stages of the Implementation Process (Figure 1.1) developed by NIRN is an example of a general model that could be used by practitioners and policymakers in diverse fields (Fixsen et al. 2005). The NIRN model centers on the entire Implementation Process and not on a particular stage. Similarly, the *GTO* model guides readers through a 10-step process across the spectrum of the implementation, from planning to evaluation. The QIF (Figure 1.3, above) is another example of a conceptual framework that illustrates all of the phases and steps involved in the process of quality implementation, though the authors note that “most of these of steps (10 of the 14) should be addressed *before* implementation begins” (Fixsen et al. 2005, 468).

The scope refers to the level at which the Implementation Guides would provide specific information about implementation. For example, the guides could look at implementation about specific programs, or take a broader scope and look at certain topic areas or practices. The *GTO* series includes guides developed for various topic areas including home visitation, services for homeless veterans, underage drinking prevention, and developmental assets (RAND Corporation 2014). Conversely, the *Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development* database (a registry of violence, delinquency, and drug prevention programs that have been demonstrated as effective) provides implementation information, such as program costs and funding strategies, for each program listed (Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development 2014).

With regard to the breadth of information provided to readers, many guides offer an abundance of information about implementation. For example, the *Getting to Outcomes for Home Visiting* guide by RAND provides readers with specific information about planning, implementing, and evaluating a home visiting program. It takes readers through its 10 steps of the Implementation Process (see Figure 1.2, above), in addition to providing checklists; examples; tools; and tips, resources, and other helpful extras during each step. The information is comprehensive, and the guide is lengthy (Mattox et al. 2013). This may be daunting to readers, who may not take the time to explore such a guide even if it provides valuable information about the Implementation Process. Like RAND, NIRN provides a great deal of valuable information on implementation. One example is a synthesis of the reviewed literature and research on implementation (Fixsen et al. 2005). The report provides the results from an extensive search of the literature, but is also lengthy. However, additional research and resources provided by NIRN do take shorter forms (see Blase, Kiser, and Van Dyke 2013; Blase and Fixsen 2013). Another example is the Community Tool Box Web site, developed by the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. The Community Tool Box is a free online resource for policymakers and practitioners looking to build healthier communities and bring about social change (University of Kansas 2014). The Tool Box provides an immense number of resources, including 46 chapters through which users can obtain step-by-step guidance in community-building skills, including information on implementing programs and practices. Although the Web site provides very useful and thorough information, navigating through 46 chapters may be overwhelming to users. Within each chapter, there are as many as 10 separate sections that users need to further dig through to find the information they may need.

## Specific Formatting of Implementation Guides

Another factor that was explored was the specific format for the MPG Implementation Guides. Many guides take the form of a booklet or a journal article (see Fixsen et al. 2005; Mattox et al. 2013). However, other Web sites, such as SAMHSA's *National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP)*, provide an interactive site for users to explore through the various topics related to implementation (SAMHSA 2014). *NREPP's* interactive Web site also offers users the opportunity to print the entire course as a guidebook, by downloading a printer-friendly PDF version of the Web pages (see Figure 1.4 for an example of the first Web page in the course provided by *NREPP*). The Community Tool Box available from the University of Kansas is another example of a more interactive approach to providing users with information. Each section of the 46 chapters includes a Main section, which provides a narrative explanation about the Implementation Process; a Checklist section (if relevant for the topic under discussion), which practitioners can use in the field; an Examples section, which includes an interview with a practitioner who discusses the implementation experience with regard to the topic under discussion; and a PowerPoint presentation, which summarizes the major points in the section. The Community Tool Box also provides users with a printer-friendly version of each section (University of Kansas 2014). However, because each of the 46 chapters can have as many as 10 sections each, printing out each section may be time consuming.

Figure 1.4. A Roadmap to Implementing Evidence-based Programs (from SAMHSA)

**A Road Map to Implementing Evidence-Based Programs** Page 1 of 24

Course Overview Language Five Stages Exploration Installation Initial Implementation Full Implementation Program Sustainability

### Course Overview

#### About This Course

This course provides guidance to facilitate selection and implementation of one of the many evidence-based programs related to prevention and treatment that are publicly available today. You will learn how to (1) select the program that best matches your organization's needs and (2) carry out the steps necessary to implement the program you choose.

#### Intended Audience

Individuals who may benefit from this course include members of an organization working collaboratively to identify and implement an evidence-based program.

Whether you're looking for a program that addresses bullying, underage drinking, drug abuse, or treatment of a specific mental health disorder, the information here can help you in the selection and implementation of a suitable program. Those who may find the course useful are:

- Administrators, program directors, or clinicians charged with identifying, selecting, and implementing a program to meet the needs of their target population, funders, community, etc.
- Individuals interested in learning more about best practices and strategies for successful program selection and implementation.

[Download a printer-friendly version of this course \(PDF, 494KB\).](#)

Select "Next" to continue.

Back Current Page Previous Next

## Conclusion

There is a great deal of information available on numerous frameworks and models that can guide the Implementation Process for practitioners in juvenile justice and other fields. What is notably absent from much of the currently available literature on the Implementation Process is empirical research exploring the application and effectiveness of specific models. Some evaluation work has recently been conducted. One example of this limited research is the PROMoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience (PROSPER) model, a program-delivery system in which universities partner with community teams to implement evidence-based programs aimed at preventing substance abuse and other problem behaviors among youth. Although randomized controlled trials were conducted to evaluate the impact of PROSPER (Spoth et al. 2013), the model represents a specific approach to implement a select number of prevention programs, as opposed to a general framework that can guide

practitioners looking to implement any type of program. There has been limited research on the effectiveness of a general framework (such as those developed by NIRN and RAND).

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## 2. Methodology of Qualitative Interviews and Focus Groups

### Development

To determine the common elements in program implementation and the needs of those involved in the process, *Model Programs Guide* (MPG) staff conducted interviews and focus group discussions with practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and program developers who have successfully implemented programs or who have otherwise been involved in the implementation process.

An initial focus group discussion was held on Feb. 18, 2014, which included only federal staff from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The MPG Program Manager sent out an invitation to staff members from both agencies, and 12 staff members from OJJDP and four from NIJ participated. The primary goals of the focus group were to a) discuss the possible scope, focus, and format of the MPG Implementation Guides; b) get feedback from participants about other implementation models and frameworks identified during the literature search (NIRN, RAND, etc.); and c) learn about what other agencies and projects within the Office of Justice Programs were doing with regard to implementation.

Although the ideas from the initial focus group discussion were considered when developing the recommendations for the Implementation Guides, the meeting notes were not included in the coding with the rest of the interviews and focus groups, as the focus group with federal staff had a different focus. However, this initial focus group informed the MPG Implementation Guide Development Plan, which laid out the approach to conduct informal, qualitative interviews with a small number of practitioners at four conferences.

### Design

Conferences that occurred between April and August 2014 and would draw an interested audience were chosen as the interview/focus group sites, as this would allow for the maximum number of in-person interviews. In addition, numerous phone interviews were conducted to gather input from various OJJDP grantees who did not attend the conferences. The following conferences were chosen:

- *Blueprints Conference in Denver, Colo.* The Blueprints Conference took place April 14–16, 2014. The target audience included state child welfare, juvenile justice, education, mental and behavioral health, and public directors interested in learning about evidence-based programs, as well as policymakers, researchers, and program developers of some of the name-brand programs included on the *Blueprints for Health Youth Development* Web site, such as Functional Family Therapy. The conference provided professionals with support, guidance, and tools to help implement Blueprints programs successfully in their own communities.
- *National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) Conference on Children, Youth, and Families in San Diego, Calif.* The NCCD conference took place during May 14–16, 2014. The conference concentrated primarily on child welfare and sought to engage all

systems working with children and families, including child protection, foster care, juvenile justice, and education. The overall goal of the conference was to bring together those involved in these systems to create stronger connections and thereby better serve youths and families.

- *OJJDP's Core Requirements Training and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.* The OJJDP Core Requirements Training and the 2014 CJJ Annual Conference took place June 17–21, 2014. The CJJ conference brought together Juvenile Justice Specialists (JJSes), State Advisory Group (SAG) Members, and other pertinent state juvenile justice personnel. The conference included workshops, informative sessions and plenaries, and provided an opportunity for conversations among those involved in juvenile justice in their state, as well as those who provide grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations in an effort to prevent crime and delinquency. At the CJJ conference, Development Services Group, Inc. (DSG), held a focus group with SAG members, and, at the Core Requirements Training, DSG held another focus group with JJSes.
- *National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) Annual Conference in Chicago, Ill.* The NCJFCJ conference took place during July 13–16, 2014, and featured a wide range of juvenile- and family-law topics including child abuse and neglect, trauma, custody and visitation, judicial leadership, juvenile justice, sex trafficking of minors, family violence, drug courts, psychotropic medications, children testifying in court, detention alternatives, substance abuse, and the adolescent brain. This conference provided the opportunity to speak with judges: a group that had not been present at previous conferences.
- As a result of discussions with OJJDP, DSG staff also interviewed members of the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ), which has an evidence-based subcommittee. The staff also conducted interviews with tribal grantees, so that experiences of program implementation in tribal communities were captured. Moreover, DSG staff was able to leverage contacts through the OJJDP National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention to obtain other potential interviewees.

Once the conferences were selected, DSG staff contacted conference organizers to obtain the participant lists so that interviews with conference attendees could be scheduled. DSG was able to obtain the lists for the OJJDP Core Requirements Training and the CJJ Annual Conference and invite specific JJSes and SAG members. Invitations to the JJSes were approved and sent out by the OJJDP MPG program manager and invitations to the SAG members were sent out by the DSG MPG project director. Unfortunately, for the other three conferences, participant lists were not available beforehand. Instead, DSG staff contacted presenters at each of the conferences, as this information was available on the conference Web sites. The lists of presenters and their available biographies from each of the conferences' Web sites were reviewed, and potential interviewees were selected if they seemed to have substantial experience with program implementation or were currently in the process of implementing a program. DSG contacted these potential interviewees by email and provided them with information about the MPG and the Implementation Guides project. Potential interviewees were asked if they had time for a 30-minute, one-on-one interview during the conference. Interviews were set up around presenters'

schedules when possible; follow-up phone interviews occurred for some presenters who were unable to meet during the conferences.

### **Instruments**

The interviews were loosely structured around an interview Discussion Guide and the overall goals of developing the *MPG* Implementation Guides. The interview guides were developed to capture specific ideas and concepts related to implementation and the interviewees' experiences implementing a program or practice. The questions were semistructured and open ended, allowing for interviewers to guide the discussion based on the respondents' answers. Each interview included two interviewers: one functioning as the lead interviewer, the other functioning as the secondary interviewer. The lead interviewer asked most questions, while the secondary interviewer took notes and asked additional questions as needed. For each interview, the Discussion Guide was modified based on the background and expertise of the interviewees. For example, state- or county-level employees of the juvenile and child welfare systems were asked different questions from those asked of direct-service providers. The interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes.

Similarly, there was a loosely structured Focus Group Discussion Guide, which had fewer questions and captured broader ideas related to implementation. This guide was used to facilitate the discussion during the focus groups at the NCCD conference, and during the State Advisory Group and Juvenile Justice Specialist focus groups at the Coalition for Juvenile Justice Conference. Overall, the questions varied among the different focus groups; for example, the conversation with the JJSEs and SAG members included questions related to how the focus group members used the *MPG* and encouraged communities in their states to use the site. The focus groups lasted approximately 1 hour.

All one-on-one interviews and both focus groups were audio-recorded (with respondents' permission) and were covered by note takers. To ensure confidentiality, interviewees were informed that any identifying information would not be included in any documents made available to the public.

### **Sample**

Thirty-eight individuals were interviewed through one-on-one interviews or in focus groups. Table 2.1 shows the number of respondents interviewed across conferences and phone interviews.

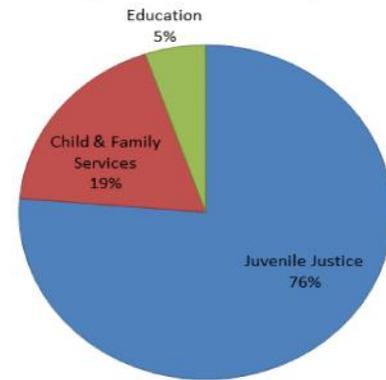
**Table 2.1. Number of Respondents by Conference**

Conference/Target Population	One-on-One Interviews	Focus Groups	Total Interviewed
Blueprints Conference	3	0	3
NCCD Conference	4	1 (including 5 respondents)	9
OJJDP Core Requirements Training: Juvenile Justice Specialists	0	1 (including 9 respondents)	9
CJJ Conference: SAG Members	0	1 (including 9 respondents)	9
NCJFCJ Conference	3	0	3
FACJJ Phone Interview	1	0	1
Tribal Grantees Phone Interviews	2	0	2
National Forum Grantees Phone Interviews	2	0	2
			38

Of the 38 respondents, there were almost even numbers of women (20) and men (18). The interviewees had expertise primarily in the following three fields: juvenile justice (76 percent); child and family services (19 percent); and education (5 percent); as shown in Figure 2.1.

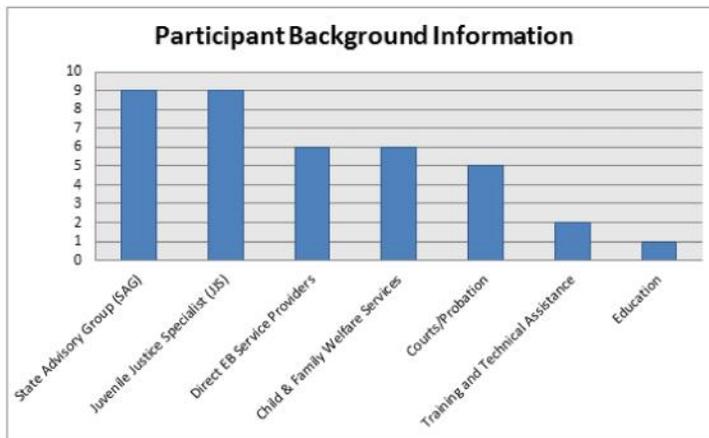
**Figure 2.1**

**Participant Field of Expertise**



With regard to participants' specific jobs, the bulk of the interviewees were SAG members and Juvenile Justice Specialists (about 24 percent for both SAG members and JJSes). The rest of the sample (see Figure 2.2) comprised direct service providers (16 percent); child and welfare services personnel (16 percent); courts/probation (13 percent); training and technical assistance (5 percent); and education (3 percent).

**Figure 2.2**



The interviewees represented the District of Columbia and 21 U.S. states (see Figure 2.3): California, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia. The regional diversity among interviewees ensured that the data reflected program implementation experience from across the United States.

Figure 2.3



### Data Analysis/Procedures

All notes from the interviews and focus groups were analyzed by two DSG research assistants (RAs) using QSR NVivo 10 for Windows, a well-known and state-of-the-art qualitative data-processing software package. The RAs imported the detailed written notes from the interviews and focus groups into the program. Individually, each RA read through the text and coded the responses from the interviewees. The responses were coded and categorized based on similar topics that had been discussed during the interviews and focus groups. This made it easier to analyze the text for specific themes.

Once the text was coded and organized, the responses were analyzed for common themes and key ideas or components of the implementation process. Queries were run through NVivo to search the text for specific words or phrases, identify the most frequently coded words or phrases, create charts and graphs corresponding to the coded text, and run tests to ensure interrater reliability.

With regard to interrater reliability, because all of the text was double coded, a query was run to compare the coding of the two RAs. Some differences in coding or categorizing some responses were discussed, and a consensus was usually reached. The results of the interrater analysis showed Kappa=0.67. Using the rule of thumb when interpreting values of Kappa, this means that there was substantial agreement between the RAs.

### Part 3. User Perspectives: Findings From the Qualitative Interviews

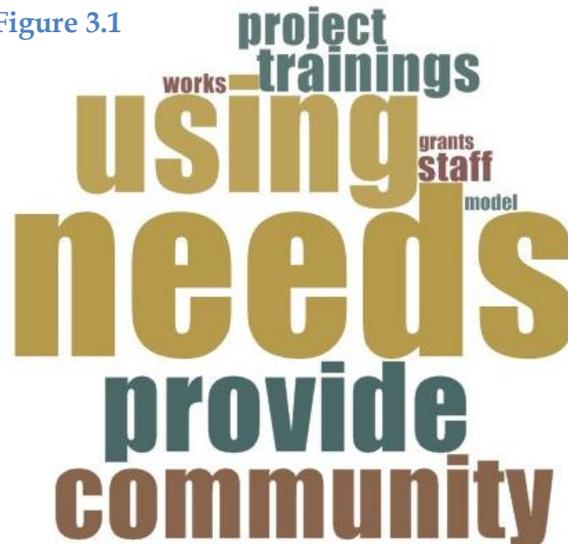
The interviewees and focus group members provided important and helpful information about implementation. Below is an overview of the responses given to the questions asked during the interviews and focus groups. The responses are grouped by the major themes that were found through analyzing the responses using the NVivo program. There were a total of 38 respondents across three focus groups and 15 one-on-one interviews.<sup>1</sup>

#### Frequently Occurring Words

Using the query option in the NVivo program, the 10 most frequently occurring words in the coded responses of the interviewees were identified. The query was run to exclude certain common words (such as “the”) and words often spoken during all interviews (such as “implementation”). The query was run to include stem words (for example, if the primary word is “work” the stem words would be “working,” “worked,” and “works”). The 10 most common words were 1) needs, 2) using, 3) provide, 4) community, 5) trainings, 6) project, 7) staff, 8) works, 9) model, and 10) grants.

A word cloud is shown below in Figure 3.1 to represent the 10 most common words that were spoken by interviewees (with the most frequently occurring words in larger fonts). The results from the query helped guide the identification and categorization of key themes (discussed below) by providing a list of important words that should be focused on when analyzing the response from interviewees. For example, the word “needs” guided DSG to concentrate on responses about using particular needs assessments as well as discussions with regards to the specific needs of interviewees’ communities or jurisdictions.

Figure 3.1



<sup>1</sup>The responses from the focus group conducted with staff members from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) were not coded with the responses from the 38 interviewees. However, several responses from OJJDP/NIJ focus group members are noted in this section.

## **Key Themes**

The results below are based on coding specific words or phrases that were said by interviewees. For example, some interviewees specifically talked about the issue of adaptability, while others talked about changing a program to fit the needs and resources of their community. Both responses were coded as discussing the theme of adaptation.

Many of the major themes discussed below overlap in certain ways. For instance, when discussing the importance of getting staff buy-in, many interviewees noted that providing training was a useful method to keep staff members involved in and informed of the implementation process. When considering the number of respondents who discussed each of the themes, respondents were counted if they mentioned a specific theme. In the previous example, an interviewee would be counted as having discussed two major themes: staff buy-in and training. If a respondent mentioned staff buy-in and did not mention training as an option, then the respondent was counted as having discussed staff buy-in but not training.

**1. Funding.** Almost half of the interviewees (17 respondents) discussed the importance of securing funding. Overall, interviewees received funding from a variety of sources, including grants from the federal government, state governments, private foundations, nonprofit organizations, and businesses.

Numerous interviewees had implemented a particular program or practice because of specific funding they received. For example, a few interviewees' jurisdictions were presented with the opportunity to receive funding from research agencies or nonprofit organizations (such as the Annie E. Casey or Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) to address certain target populations or youth-related problems in the community. In these instances, it appears funding drove the decision to implement a program and also affected which programs were implemented. For instance, one interviewee explained that in her jurisdiction an initiative targeting crossover youth (i.e., youth involved in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems) was implemented because a grant opportunity to fund a pilot year of the program became available. However, had the funding not been available, her jurisdiction might not have implemented a program targeting crossover youth.

Others described identifying a particular problem in their jurisdiction and finding appropriate funding to address the problem. For example, one interviewee was interested in delivering gender-specific programming to juvenile girls in her jurisdiction. After conducting a needs assessment to determine the services that were currently provided to girls involved in the system, she searched for funding to support the pilot program. In the end, the county received funding from a federal grant.

Some interviewees discussed the idea of planning from the beginning of the implementation process for ways to secure funding (past the initial funding amount) for the long term, instead of waiting for funding to run out before looking for other sources. Various respondents said that grants or other types of funding from the state or federal government will typically last 2 to 3 years, a brief period for any program to be fully implemented. As a result, jurisdictions face the challenge of finding ways to continue the program or locating new sources of funding.

A few interviewees mentioned the importance of understanding the financial costs of implementing an evidence-based program or practice, and noted that this information is not often available. For example, a few Juvenile Justice Specialists stated that it would be beneficial if the *MPG* included additional information about the costs of implementing a program, such as the costs of buying materials, training staff, and evaluating the fidelity and effectiveness of the program. Moreover, a tribal grantee emphasized that not only does it cost a great amount to initially train staff members to implement a specific therapeutic program aimed at youths, it costs even more to maintain staff certification every year following the initial training. Such information might not be readily available in an *MPG* program profile.

**2. Adaptation.** Almost half of the interviewees (16 respondents) discussed the importance of considering the adaptability of programs and practices during the implementation process. Some interviewees discussed how they adapted a particular program or model to fit the needs and resources of their community. For example, one interviewee discussed a structured decision-making tool that was implemented in her state's child welfare system. However, the tool needed to be "tweaked" to account for the state's child welfare statutes and definitions that differed from other states. Another interviewee learned, in the course of implementing a prevention program that targeted a specific problem behavior, of other related problems faced by program recipients that needed to be addressed. This problem was discussed with the federal agency funding the pilot program, and the agency later changed future RFPs to require grantees to account for unanticipated issues that may arise in the course of implementing a prevention program.

One interviewee (a researcher/TA provider) explained that his organization supports the idea of "flexible fidelity." He acknowledged that certain components of most programs must be included in the implementation process, but he also believed that each community and population has different needs that must be considered. He noted the importance of understanding those specific needs and allowing for flexible fidelity.

While acknowledging that adaptation was important, some interviewees questioned how much of a program model could be changed. A few interviewees specifically noted that they did not necessarily support the idea of adapting a program model or curriculum. Another interviewee noted that she was currently responding to a proposal that required potential grantees to select an evidence-based program; yet the RFP specifically stated that adaptations were not allowed.

Some interviewees mentioned that sites they managed were implementing components of evidence-based programs rather than implementing the entire program. For example, one interviewee explained that her jurisdiction was beginning to implement programs that included aspects of positive youth development. However, the jurisdiction was not implementing specific PYD programs; rather the emphasis was on implementing important aspects of PYD, such as focusing on youth's assets rather than their deficits.

During the Juvenile Justice Specialists focus group, a participant suggested that "it would be useful for the *MPG* to include information on using particular program components rather than the whole program, as sometimes it's not practical to implement an entire program." Most focus group members agreed that it was important to consider issues such as location, cultures, and subpopulations when thinking about adaptation.

Finally, during the initial focus group with staff members of OJJDP and NIJ, participants frequently mentioned adaptation as an important topic. One staffer from OJJDP stated that adaptation was important to consider, but wondered if the evidence was really available to tell communities what active ingredients or components of programs or practices could be implemented effectively. Although focus group members shared different opinions about adaptation, overall the group seemed to agree that it was an important topic that should be addressed in the *MPG Implementation Guides*.

### ***3. Working With Developers, Using Program Manuals, and Receiving Technical Assistance.***

About half of the interviewees (16 respondents) discussed working with program developers, using specific program manuals, or receiving technical assistance in some form to assist in the program implementation process. Some interviewees were implementing specific program models (including some programs featured on *MPG*), such as Functional Family Therapy, Teen Outreach Program, Structured Decision Making, and Raising Healthy Children. Many interviewees mentioned contacting the program developers directly to ask questions about implementation (such as costs and necessary resources) and adaptability of the program model. For example, some interviewees were working directly with the program developers to implement the program, while others were working without technical assistance or program manuals from the developers. One interviewee noted that because of the success of the program being implemented in her jurisdiction, a manual was being developed for other jurisdictions interested in implementing a similar program.

Numerous the interviewees were receiving technical assistance from outside organizations (for example, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and Georgetown University). The technical assistance received from these organizations was usually tied to specific initiatives the organizations were supporting in the grantees' jurisdictions. For example, Georgetown University was working with many the interviewees to implement a crossover youth initiative in jurisdictions across the country.

Two respondents (who were working at the state-level) explained that they provided technical assistance to local jurisdictions (rather than provide them with outside assistance). One interviewee stated that she had traveled around her state to provide technical assistance to various communities on concepts such as how to select an evidence-based program, and the types of data that needs to be collected to evaluate the program.

***4. Speaking With Others Who Have Experienced Implementation.*** Just over one third of the interviewees (14 respondents) specifically mentioned meeting with other professionals (in their jurisdictions or in other states) who have implemented programs similar to the ones being considered for implementation in their jurisdictions. Through talking with others, interviewees were able to learn about the challenges, mistakes, and successes that other jurisdictions experienced during their implementation process. The extent of talking to others varied from basic networking, to site visits, to receiving coaching or training from others who had previously implemented the program. One interviewee explained: "By working with others, you can learn from their mistakes and their successes; you don't have to learn the lessons on your own."

A few interviewees said they wished they had talked to other jurisdictions or communities before beginning the implementation process, because it would have been beneficial to learn from the experiences of others. For example, one interviewee was in the process of implementing a crossover youth initiative in four counties in her jurisdiction's court system. She had not reached out to other jurisdictions in her state that had implemented a similar initiative to get their feedback before taking on the major initiative, and as a result she encountered some issues when the program was implemented in the first of the four counties. The first county in her jurisdiction to start the program experienced communication and bonding issues among staff members from various agencies involved in the initiative (including juvenile justice and child welfare) that affected program implementation. However, the interviewee noted that staff in the three counties that were about to begin implementation were already talking and coordinating among themselves, learning from the experience of the first county.

A few interviewees also mentioned the idea of "coaching." One interviewee was implementing a program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In addition to providing financial support, the Foundation also offered coaching to new sites beginning the implementation process. The new sites were given the opportunity to meet with a professional from another site that had already implemented the program to discuss any concerns or questions about the implementation process.

**5. Getting Staff Buy-In.** About one third of the interviewees (12 respondents) said that staff buy-in was critical to the implementation process. Some interviewees explained that it was important to keep staff informed of the changes that would be happening and why they were happening, while still being responsive to their concerns. As one interviewee stated, "Staff need to have an understanding of *why*."

A few interviewees noted that it was particularly important to get buy-in from frontline staff because implementing a new program or practice could impact their workload. One interviewee stated that a key step to the implementation process was having "good marketing strategies." The interviewee further explained that good marketing strategies are a way to explain why a particular program will work or why the state is mandating a particular program or change.

There were several suggested methods to gain buy-in from staff. One common suggestion was to provide training to staff. This can include training on the new program or practice model, and/or training on why an evidence-based approach is being taken in the first place. By participating in trainings, staff members are more likely to understand the entire process.

A few interviewees specifically noted the challenge of dealing with high staff turnover, which often resulted from staff not accepting the new program. One interviewee suggested combating employee turnover by explaining to the workers and staff members the benefits of the proposed changes. However, she also noted that workers who want to leave are probably not dedicated to the organizational change. Additionally, the interviewee said it was important to give everyone space to learn in a reactive system. Coaching and support are important factors in overcoming these challenges.

A few interviewees explained that buy-in may be internal (i.e., the staff directly implements the program) or external (i.e., the treatment providers may have to implement a new model or process). When discussing the issue of staff buy-in, the interviewees also noted the importance of building trust and relationships and of maintaining good internal and external communication.

**6. *Creating and Garnering Support From Managers/Executives/Leadership.*** Similar to the idea of getting stakeholder buy-in, several interviewees (including those in managerial positions) emphasized the importance of getting support from executive level staff before implementing a new program or practice. One interviewee explained: “Ensure that you have upper management buy-in. Without upper management buy-in, the implementation process will be an uphill battle.”

Two interviewees specifically mentioned receiving support to implement new programs and practices from their states’ governors. One interviewee described how her state governor provided a substantial amount of funding in the beginning, and has recently increased the funding to continue the work past the first year. Another interviewee explained that in her state, the governor worked alongside child welfare staff members because he wanted to understand how the changes to the system actually worked.

**7. *Finding an Advocate/Champion.*** About one fourth of interviewees (9 respondents) mentioned the importance of finding an advocate or champion of the program. This was important to garner support to implement the program, but it also establishes a go-to person who can field questions and provide a clear explanation of the program or practice. One interviewee, who worked in the child welfare system, described her agency’s director as the champion for change in her state. Once the director was appointed to the position, she pushed the agency to become more research oriented. When the state began to implement new evidence-based programs and practices, the director worked to get buy-in at the executive-level (i.e., support from the state’s governor), explained the new vision of the agency to all stakeholders, spearheaded the funding efforts, and pushed for fidelity reviews and evaluations to show that the new programs were having a positive effect.

Similarly, some interviewees suggested that having a project coordinator, or someone in a similar position, was important to ensure at least one consistent person who is knowledgeable about the program model and its components. One interviewee who was implementing a multiagency initiative thought that it was necessary to have one lead person for the entire project or at least one lead person from each of the various agencies involved. She described the coordinator as someone “who would be the backbone of the program and who would worry about the details. You need someone who is passionate about the position.”

Some interviewees were advocates and champions of the programs and practices they had implemented (although they did not initially identify themselves as such). For example, one interviewee described her efforts to provide support for an initiative in her state that focused on reducing the number of youth who were incarcerated. The interviewee stated that she provided training and technical assistance to stakeholders involved in the initiative through many site visits and phone calls, to answer questions from various individuals. She also handled the

initial pushback from some stakeholders, such as juvenile court judges, when the initiative was first proposed.

**8. Specific Jurisdictional Issues.** One third of the interviewees (13 respondents) discussed specific issues in their jurisdictions that affected the implementation process. Examples of specific jurisdictional issues provided by interviewees included challenges associated with implementing programs in different settings (i.e., rural, urban, and suburban), implementing programs for specific targeted populations (i.e., tribal youth, females, and crossover youth), and handling pushback from certain individuals or organizations involved in the implementation process. As one interviewee noted, “There are variations in implementation across the regions because of differences in many factors, such as urban and rural variances, transportation available, services provided, etc.” Another interviewee explained that the issue of transportation was an obstacle to implementation in her state. “A lot of communities in Georgia have no public transportation options. The state wants to widen the network of providers using the trainings to close the gap between access for community members and service providers.”

In many instances, these jurisdictional problems were not identified beforehand and affected the implementation process. For example, one interviewee was involved in implementing a multiagency initiative that targeted crossover youth. The initiative included collaboration among court services personnel and judges in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. She described how defense bar leadership and defense attorneys were resistant to change because they did not want judges in different agencies (i.e., juvenile justice judges and child welfare judges) to obtain too much information about their clients, which could affect a client’s plea deal or chances of getting released.

Another interviewee described an initiative in her state to decrease the number of youth sent to detention and increase the number of evidence-based programs used by the juvenile court system, especially the juvenile judges. She noted that there was initial pushback from juvenile court judges because the judges were not familiar with the programs that they were allowed to implement, so they felt they were being told what to do. One way she addressed this problem was to provide training and technical assistance to the judges about the initiative. This also gave the judges an opportunity to express their reservations about the move to evidence-based programming.

In a few cases, jurisdictional issues can affect whether a program or practice is implemented at all. For example, many Juvenile Justice Specialists noted the lack of evidence-based programs specifically targeting tribal youth. This has hindered attempts by some jurisdictions to implement programs that fit the needs of the youth population, as there are few evidence-based programs available for them to choose from. In other instances, the jurisdictional setting has been an issue. For example, one focus group member mentioned contacting a name-brand therapy provider to begin services in her community; however, the provider was not willing to travel to such a remote location to train only a few staff members who would work with a small number of youths.

**9. Sustainability.** Almost 30 percent of the interviewees (11 respondents) specifically discussed the importance of sustainability in the implementation process. Most of these interviewees

further emphasized the importance of considering sustainability from the start of the process, versus waiting until after a program has been fully implemented.

Many ideas about sustainability were discussed, such as capacity-building (i.e., training staff), building strong partnerships, and securing funding. As one interviewee explained: “Strong partners in sustainability is key. It’s key that funding be the number one concern, with sustainability.” Another interviewee, who provided training/technical assistance, explained that his organization provides grantees with information up front on barriers related to sustainability, such as the amount of time, money, and staff turnover that may occur when implementing a new program.

Numerous interviewees mentioned high staff turnover as one obstacle to sustainability of a program or practice, as it creates the added complication of training new staff. One interviewee, when discussing staff turnover, said “it can slow down the project, momentum, and the passion, especially when leadership leaves.”

Funding for the program or practice was another issue mentioned by respondents as an obstacle to sustainability. A few interviewees talked about the difficulty of securing funding, especially once initial grants or other funding sources are done. Interviewees noted the importance of ensuring continued funding of a program well beyond the grant period during the initial implementation stages.

**10. Doing Research/Homework.** One third of the interviewees (13 respondents) mentioned the importance of doing research and “homework” before launching the implementation process. Interviewees suggested that practitioners and policymakers interested in implementing a program or practice should research all the facts before getting too far into the implementation process. The specific information that needed to be researched seemed to vary by interviewee. For example, a few interviewees discussed researching specific programs or practices that were being considered for implementation. One interviewee explained that his jurisdiction created a partnership between court staff, treatment providers, and representatives from the mental health services board to identify treatment programs that could be implemented. The collaboration team analyzed the research and identified Functional Family Therapy as a program that best fit the community needs, in terms of how much funding was required to launch and sustain the project.

Several interviewees also discussed the importance of researching the costs associated with implementing a program. During the Juvenile Justice Specialists focus group, several participants discussed the problem of gauging implementation costs for the program or practice, specific to their community, as often that information is not readily available (even on Web sites run by the program developers). Numerous interviewees talked about contacting the program developers directly to obtain information (such as specific program costs or adaptability of a program) to determine whether implementing the program in their jurisdiction was possible. Others discussed contacting other jurisdictions that had already implemented the same program to learn more about the process and associated costs.

Some interviewees mentioned doing research on more general information, such as Dr. Mark Lipsey’s Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) or research done by Dr. Edward

Latessa. The importance of Dr. Lipsey's work was also discussed during the focus group with staff from OJJDP and NIJ. One focus group member mentioned that OJJDP was evaluating SPEP, but that the research would likely not be done for a few years.

**11. Needs Assessments.** About one fourth of the interviewees (10 respondents) discussed conducting needs assessments. The needs assessments were sometimes conducted internally, looking at data already available, while other assessments were conducted by outside organizations.

Interviewees described conducting a needs assessment to determine what services were needed that were not already available. Other interviewees examined the services currently being provided to determine if the services were adequate. If it was found that the services were not adequate, the needs assessment helped interviewees make adjustments to current services and/or add services.

For example, one interviewee worked in a jurisdiction in which a nonprofit agency was interested in assisting with the implementation of gender-specific programming. The interviewee mentioned that a needs assessment was conducted with the probation department to examine the services currently being delivered to girls. She mentioned the use of a gender-specific assessment tool to determine whether services offered at the county level were sufficient to handle the issues of girls in the justice system. The needs assessment revealed that the services were not sufficient, and gender-specific programming was implemented. Another interviewee discussed a yearly needs assessment that is conducted across the state to help regions determine the services they need to provide. Another interviewee explained that every year her jurisdiction administers a tool to youths on probation called the Risk Resiliency Assessment, to determine a youth's need for treatment and services.

Whether a needs assessment had been conducted was a specific question that was asked during the interviews. While several interviewees discussed conducting needs assessments, several also stated that no formal assessments were completed.

The importance of needs assessments was also discussed during the focus group with staff members from OJJDP and NIJ. For example, one focus group member talked about providing a needs assessment tool for *MPG* users to help them determine their problems and the resources available. This information could then be used to help users determine which *MPG* programs they should focus on.

**12. Establish Clear Goals.** More than 20 percent of interviewees (8 respondents) mentioned the importance of establishing and communicating clear goals at the beginning of the implementation process. Respondents mentioned developing "plans of action" or creating "frameworks" to help guide the implementation process from the start.

Establishing clear goals when implementing a new program or practice was considered important to the interviewees for a few reasons. First, when establishing the goals, a clear plan of action can also be developed. This plan can include important information such as identifying the key stakeholders involved, determining each stakeholder's responsibility and its role in implementing the program, and developing a potential timeline of when certain action

items will occur. Many interviewees specifically mentioned the importance of implementation planning.

Second, establishing clear goals also provides a way to gain buy-in from all stakeholders with the implementation process, especially in situations that involve cross-agency collaboration. By creating well-defined goals that are known by all those involved, everyone can be on the same page about the course of action.

Third, establishing clear goals at the beginning of the implementation process allowed for some interviewees to develop outcome or performance measures they used to evaluate the impact of the program or practice. As one interviewee explained: “Having a well-defined plan is very important. Without a well-defined plan, it would almost be impossible to apply for funding. Your plan also shows how you will evaluate your program.”

**13. Implementation Teams.** Almost 30 percent of the interviewees (11 respondents) mentioned the use of an implementation team. Interviewees expressed the importance of implementation teams for programs or initiatives implemented across multiple agencies (e.g., juvenile justice, child welfare), as the teams provided a platform for collaboration and communication. For example, one interviewee from the juvenile court system explained that an implementation team created for an initiative implemented in his community included representatives from the alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health services board; the court system; the probation department; and the treatment provider.

Another interviewee also described an implementation team that was established in her jurisdiction to help with implementing a program targeting crossover youth. The initiative included the juvenile court system, child welfare services, and the probation department. She explained that as many as 40 people would attend the implementation planning meetings, but within the team there was a smaller core group of individuals who “did all the heavy lifting.” She also expressed the importance of having the right leadership and people on the implementation team; interviewees reiterated this idea as well.

**14. Handling Unanticipated Setbacks.** About 18 percent of interviewees (7 respondents) discussed unanticipated setbacks or obstacles they encountered during the implementation process, such as unexpected delays in implementing the program or receiving funding. Some interviewees believed the setbacks may have been preventable, while others did not think it was possible to know ahead of time what could happen.

Echoing the importance of having a clear and established implementation plan from the start of the process, other interviewees noted the importance of creating a plan that is flexible enough to address unanticipated setbacks and allows for potential changes. One interviewee recommended that “there should always be a Plan B ready to go if Plan A doesn’t work.”

**15. Program Evaluation/Performance Measures.** More than one third of the interviewees (14 respondents) discussed evaluating the impact of the implemented program or practice and/or fidelity to the program design. However, not all interviewees were at the stage to collect outcome data. Outcome data may have been collected internally, or it may have been collected by an outside organization that was assisting in the implementation process. For example,

interviewees from the NCCD focus group discussed working with a private research organization that was providing training and technical assistance to help implement the program, as well as collecting performance measures to examine the impact of the program.

Several interviewees discussed collecting performance measures as a requirement of the funding they were receiving. Members from the Juvenile Justice Specialists and SAG focus groups discussed the performance measures that were required of grantees, and mentioned specific databases used to report this information [including OJJDP's Data Reporting Tool (DCTAT)]. One interviewee explained that jurisdictions in her state were required to select evidence-based programs from *CrimeSolutions.gov* to receive funding. The interviewee stated that one of the main reasons for this requirement was the description of the outcome measures in the program profiles listed on *CrimeSolutions.gov*, which could be used to evaluate the success of implementing those programs in her state.

As discussed before, a few interviewees mentioned the importance of defining outcomes at the beginning of the implementation process. While many interviewees discussed measuring the impact of the program, none of the interviewees talked about conducting an evaluation that included a comparison group. Most of the evaluations mentioned by interviewees were evaluations that collected predata and postdata from program participants.

**16. Program Training.** About 15 percent of interviewees (5 respondents) discussed the importance of program training during the implementation process. For example, one interviewee explained that her jurisdiction was implementing a gender-specific program. In addition to the training on the specific program model, staff also received general training about gender-specific programming so they could understand why the approach was necessary. Most staff did not understand the research behind gender-specific programming, or why it was important to consider implementing these types of programs. As a result, staff received training on the importance of research and need for gender-specific programs in their jurisdiction.

"Some people did not accept the gender responsive programming so we turned to Girls Matter, which was training provided by NGI [the National Girls Institute], to show why gender-specific programming was needed." This helped with getting staff to buy in, as discussed previously. Another interviewee described her experiencing working with the developers of the Raising a Healthy Child program and the training provided to teachers to ensure the program was delivered as designed in the classrooms.

Numerous interviewees discussed "training the trainers" as an approach to build internal capacity and to ensure sustainability of a program. This approach helped ensure that staff could continue to run a program, even after the program developers or technical assistance providers left.

### **Specific Recommendation to Improve MPG and *CrimeSolutions.gov***

A few interviewees familiar with the MPG and *CrimeSolutions.gov* gave suggestions to improve the Web sites. For the MPG, participants in the Juvenile Justice Specialists focus group suggested 1) adding a search option to filter programs by community size, 2) providing information about the effectiveness of implementing program components (rather than just

information on implementing the whole program), 3) providing information about racial and ethnic disparities and tools to help communities evaluate disproportionate minority contact, and 4) adding more information about the cultural competencies of programs (i.e., explaining whether a program worked for a certain subpopulation, such as tribal youth).

One interviewee was involved in a statewide initiative to implement evidence-based programs to reduce the number of youths who were detained or incarcerated. The initiative provided funding to communities with the highest incarceration rates of juveniles in the state; however, to receive the funding, the communities had to select an Effective-rated program from *CrimeSolutions.gov*. The interviewee had spent considerable time on the Web site, and had a few suggestions for improvement: 1) streamlining the Web site so that it is easier to navigate (for example, the interviewee thought there were many tabs to choose from, which made finding specific information a daunting process), 2) rewriting some of the program profiles to be more succinct and less “wordy,” 3) creating individual Web pages to show all of the programs available for individual treatment and group treatment, 4) providing information about costs and implementation (such as certification requirements) earlier in the program profiles (i.e., not at the bottom of the Web page), 5) adding more information about costs and implementation (such as the initial start-up costs, the annual costs, and costs to sustain a program – a concern echoed by some in the focus group of Juvenile Justice Specialists), and 6) providing direct links or email addresses for the program developers, so users can contact them directly with questions.