

## About the Core Topic

Sustaining service delivery involves developing strategies to continue providing a mental health service or program over time while achieving consistent, positive patient outcomes for all. Sustaining effective programs requires careful planning and continued attention to funding, partnerships, and resources. Sustainability refers to the extent to which effective programs and practices can continue to be delivered over time, are institutionalized within settings, and have the necessary capacity to support their delivery.<sup>1</sup> Sustainment refers to the continued use of an effective practice given the resources available.

## Key Components

Several factors influence a program's ability to last over time, including:

- **Funding and Financial Support:** Securing long-term funding sources.<sup>2,3</sup>
- **Community Alignment:** Ensuring the program meets community needs and values.
- **Collaborations & Networks:** Building strong partnerships with coalitions and stakeholders.<sup>4</sup>
- **Infrastructure & Capacity:** Ensuring resources, staff, and technology are in place.
- **Leadership Support:** Engaging leaders and other champions who promote program sustainment.
- **Evaluation & Evidence:** Measuring both the program's impact and its ability to continue.<sup>1</sup>

The likelihood of sustainment can be increased by the following steps:

- **Identify Barriers and Facilitators to Successful Sustainment:** Factors influencing sustainment (barriers and facilitators) can be measured through several validated and reliable instruments such as the Program Assessment of Sustainability Tool (PSAT)<sup>5</sup> and the Sustainment Measurement System Scale (SMSS).<sup>1</sup>
- **Develop a Sustainment Action Plan:** A Sustainment Action Plan documents efforts being made to ensure that an effective program or practice can be successfully sustained into the future and/or beyond the duration of initial funding (if funded through a grant). Such plans should be feasible, acceptable and appropriate. Developing a Sustainment Action Plan includes use of a logic model that could consist of identifying barriers and facilitators to successful sustainment of an effective

### References:

1. Palinkas, L. A., Chou, C. P., Spear, S. E., Mendon, S. J., Villamar, J., & Brown, C. H. (2020). Measurement of sustainment of prevention programs and initiatives: The sustainment measurement system scale. *Implementation Science, 15*(1), 71.
2. Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. (n.d.). *Community toolbox, chapter 16: Sustaining the work or initiative*. University of Kansas.
3. Bao, Y., Li, Y., Jeng, P. J., Scodes, J., Papp, M. A., Humensky, J. L., Wall, M., Lee, R., Ancker, J. S., Pincus, H. A., Smith, T. E., & Dixon, L. B. (2021). Design of a payment decision-support tool for coordinated specialty care for early psychosis. *Psychiatric Services, 72*(2), 180–185.
4. CCBHC Expansion Grantee National Training and Technical Assistance Center, National Council for Mental Wellbeing and Third Horizon Strategies. (2023). *Approaches to sustainability for certified community behavioral health clinics: An environmental scan and guidance for grantees*. National Council for Mental Wellbeing and Third Horizon Strategies.
5. Center for Public Health Systems Science (CPHSS). (2013). *Program sustainability assessment tool*.

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program or practice, choosing one or more strategies to address the barriers, and selecting outcomes to be assessed in determining whether strategies were successful in achieving continued use of the program/practice.

- **Monitor the Process of Sustainability:** Monitoring the process of sustainability is important for two reasons. First, it enables an organization to identify potential obstacles and opportunities for improving the likelihood of successful sustainment. Second, it offers evidence to a funder that progress is being made to ensure successful EBP sustainment post award (if needed). An organization should form a sustainment development team of agency staff and external experts to collect information on progress toward sustainment and then suggest revisions to Sustainability Support Plans to increase likelihood of successful sustainment outcomes.
- **Evaluate Performance in Achieving Sustainability and Sustainment:** To ensure that sustainability efforts have been successfully established and are operating to support continued use of the program/practice, organizations need to use valid and reliable measures of sustainment outcomes.

## How We Can Help

### WHAT WE CAN DO

- Identifying barriers and facilitators to sustaining effective services
- Developing a sustainment action plan
- Identifying funding needs and objectives to sustain effective services

### SUPPORT WE HAVE PROVIDED

- We held a multi-session learning series and brief consultation to cultivate long-term success in service delivery. Sessions reviewed key sustainability resources, discussed helpful frameworks in implementation science that can be used to improve sustainability monitoring, and included real-life examples.
- We held a learning community on strategies to develop and enhance the sustainability of school-based mental health systems for current and former Project AWARE grantees and school mental health leaders. Content included: creating plans for sustainment given current trends in the field, using SMART goals to develop shared agendas across agencies throughout the grant cycle, and

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addressing challenges related to workforce recruitment and retention. The learning community offered participants the opportunity to address these issues through invited perspectives from Project AWARE veterans, peer-to-peer learning, and the dissemination of relevant resources.

## Key Resources

These practical resources are designed to help you move from planning to action.

- [\*Sustainment Support Planning Infographic\*](#). Center for Mental Health Implementation Support, Sustaining Service Delivery Workgroup.
- [\*Community Toolbox, Chapter 16: Sustaining the Work or Initiative\*](#). Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas.
- [\*Approaches To Sustainability For Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics: An Environmental Scan and Guidance for Grantees\*](#). CCBHC Expansion Grantee National Training and Technical Assistance Center, National Council for Mental Wellbeing, and Third Horizon Strategies.
- [\*Measurement of Sustainment of Prevention Programs and Initiatives: The Sustainment Measurement System Scale \(SMSS\)\*](#). Palinkas, L. A., Chou, C. P., Spear, S. E., Mendon, S. J., Villamar, J., & Brown, C. H.
- [\*Program Sustainability Assessment Tool\*](#). Center for Public Health Systems Science (CPHSS).
- [\*The Fiscal Mapping Process: A Strategic Planning Tool for Sustainable Financing of Evidence-Based Treatment Programs in Youth Behavioral Health Services\*](#). RAND Corporation.
- [\*Sustaining Improved Outcomes: A Toolkit\*](#). New York Health Foundation.

To view recorded learning sessions and online courses focused on sustaining service delivery and our other core topics, visit the [CMHIS Learning Lab](#).



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