



**Criminal Justice Coordinating Council**  
Statistical Analysis Center

Research Applications in Criminology and  
Criminal Justice Series

*“Evaluability Assessments: What You Need to Know Before Evaluating  
the Efficacy of a Program”*

May 21, 2013

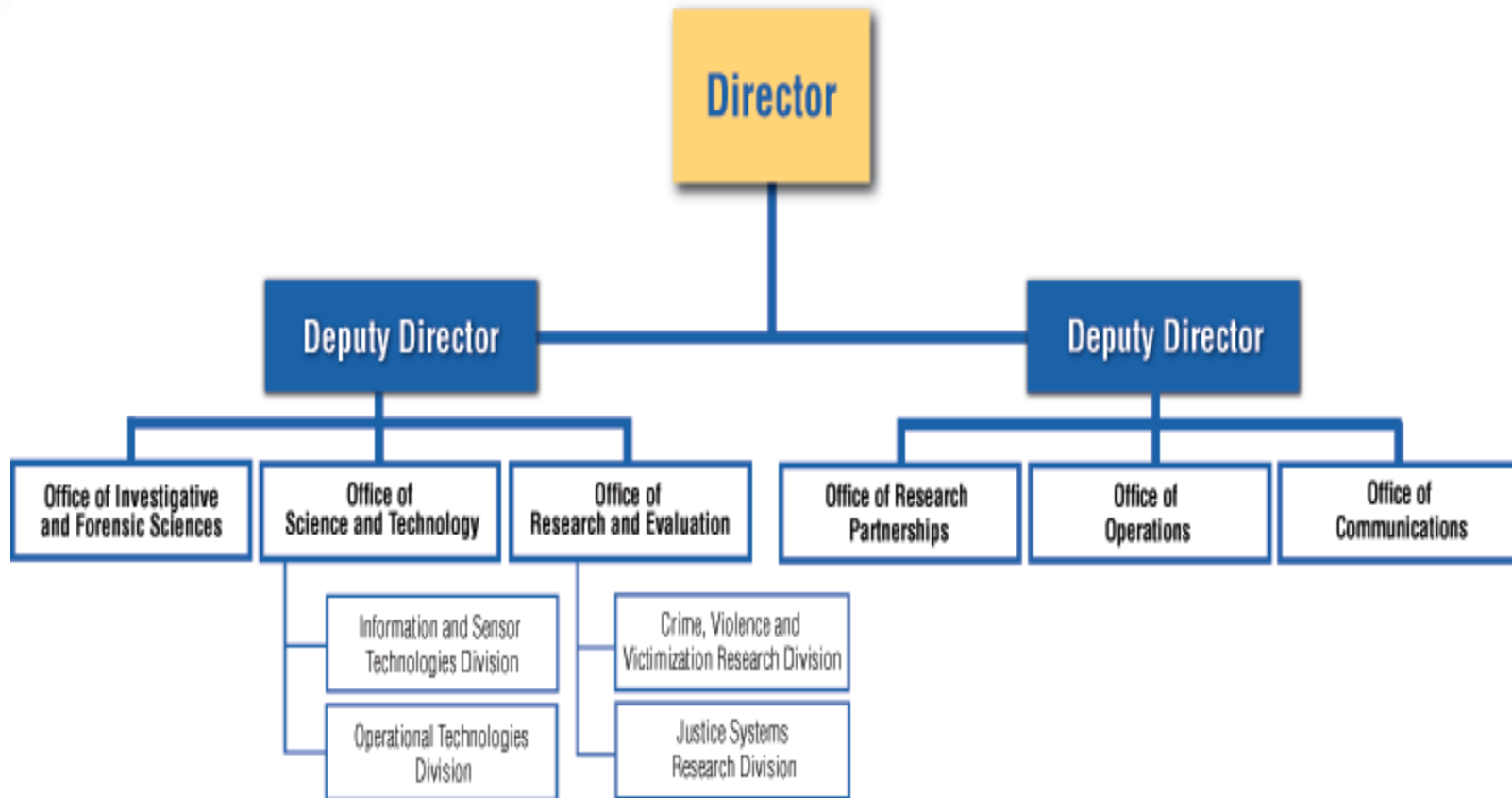
*Evaluability Assessments:  
How They Work to Improve  
the Decision-Making Process*

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National Institute of Justice



- NIJ Overview
  
- Evaluability Assessments
  - Objectives and goals
  - Examples
  - Next steps

# National Institute of Justice



# Evaluability Assessments

- Objectives and goals
- Examples
- Next steps

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# ***Looking Before You Leap: Evaluability Assessment***



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**D.C. Criminal Justice Coordinating Council  
Washington, DC • May 21, 2013**



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# Session Overview

- **Objectives**
  - Review evaluability assessment (EA) as an analytic tool
  - Examine EA objectives, outcomes, and utility
  - How EA differs from evaluation
    - How EA supports evaluation
    - How EA can inform program improvement
  - Discuss critical considerations
    - Timing, resources, capacity, and implementation
- **Outline**
  - Approach
  - Activities
  - Resources
  - Application
- **Questions**





# Evaluability Assessment (EA)

- **What is it?**
  - Systematic process of program review
    - Theoretical and empirical (Weiss 1998)
  - Critical pre-cursor to program evaluation
    - Identifies if program evaluation is warranted
    - Informs evaluation design and framework
- **Why do it?**
  - Assess program logic and performance
    - Are program features well-defined and linked to outcomes?
    - Is the program stable or “in flux” – do key features change often?
  - Identify resources and expertise necessary to support evaluation
    - Are data readily available and reliable?
    - Is there a comparison group?
  - Clarify evaluation objectives



# EA Core Criteria

*“At minimum, an evaluable program must have 1) well-defined goals, target population(s), and eligibility criteria; 2) reliable and accessible performance data; and 3) a defensible counterfactual” (Barnow et al. 1996)*

- Program model and project elements well-defined
  - Activities/services; eligibility criteria; target population; curriculum/approach
- Objectives and outcomes clearly articulated
- Program stability
- Linkages drawn between program activities and outcomes
- Caseload capacity
- Valid comparisons available
- Data systems (content; electronic or hard copy)
- Performance measures
- Collaboration, coordination



# **Core EA Activities: Explore Program Operations**

- **Describe the program's history, design, operations, characteristics**
  - Collect and review program documents, materials, manuals, reports, etc.
  - Identify and assess key program features
    - Target population, core activities, eligibility criteria, etc.
  - Consider program maturity and stability
    - How long has the program been fully operational?
    - Do key program features change frequently?
    - Do program staff and partners describe the program consistently?
- **Observe the program in action**
  - Do operations reflect the “paper program”
    - If not, how do they differ?



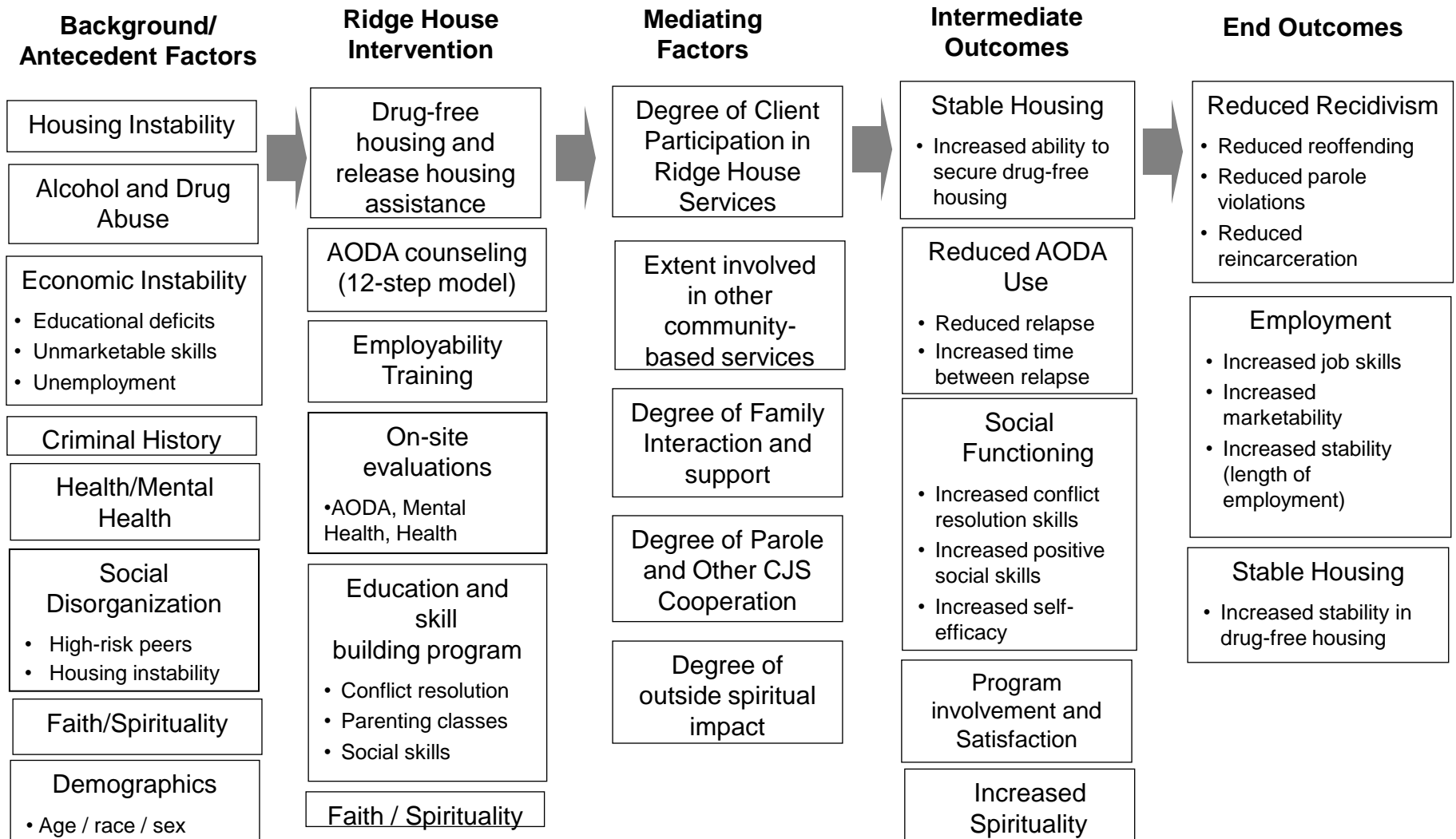
# Core EA Activities:

## Map the Program's Logic and Flow

- **Map the program's underlying logic**
  - Are program objectives well-defined?
  - Do program objectives translate into measurable results?
  - Is there evidence the program is achieving its goals and objectives
  - Are objectives and activities clearly linked to outcomes?
    - Is the linkage compelling and pragmatic?
- **Document program's case flow and attrition**
  - How do clients enter and exit the program?
    - Define key terms (eligibility, enrollment, active, exit, etc.) and adherence
  - Does need exceed program capacity?
  - How many participants enter the program monthly? Annually?
  - What factors affect case flow?
- **Explore “business as usual” (BAU)**
  - How does the program differ from BAU?
  - What are the program's “unique” features?

# Program Logic Model :

# Ridge House

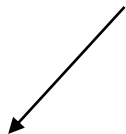


# Program Case Flow Map

- Interested women **complete a brief WRAP jail application** form
  - Potential participants learn about the program from WRAP fliers and word of mouth



- WRAP CMs review the completed WRAP Jail application form to identify eligible women
- WRAP CMs meet individually with potential participants **to review the program and confirm eligibility**
  - WRAP screening/intake packet completed
  - Women's Risk and Need Assessment (WRNA) administered
  - Eligible women sign contract/documentation
- WRAP women engaged in **Helping Women Recover (HRW)** and **Beyond Trauma** cognitive group, **reentry planning w/ WRAP CMs** and **peer mentoring**; may access other in-jail services.
  - On average, WRAP participants join the program 55 days prior to release
  - Release w/ discharge plan



## MS Transitional Housing

- Referral by WRAP CMs
- 3 months of housing for WRAP women and her children w. follow-up placement or permanent housing
- 6 beds for WRAP
- Case mgmt. by MS
- Biopsychosocial assessment
- Range of services including family reunification



## 180 day Post-Release WRAP Services

- Intensive services with WRAP CM**, peer mentor, and other service providers begin at release and continue 180 days
  - Transitional housing, parenting classes, employment, transportation, treatment (drug and mental health)provision of basic needs, family reunification
  - HWR/BT cognitive groups continue in community
  - FACT teams for women with major mental illness
- Completion/graduation**
  - WRAP participants "complete" the program at 180 days or when their CM believes all reentry goals have been accomplished, the women has stable housing, and is either employed or in school
  - Graduation ceremonies implemented in 2012
  - Woman can complete and not graduate; the opposite is also true

Most WRAP participants enroll through the jail. A portion may be referred pre-trial by a public defender or by probation following incarceration. Some are referred by the courts.

**Ineligible women** may still receive some level of service from WRAP CMs although intensive services are reserved for women who score as medium to high risk on the WRNA and plan to return to Solano County at release.

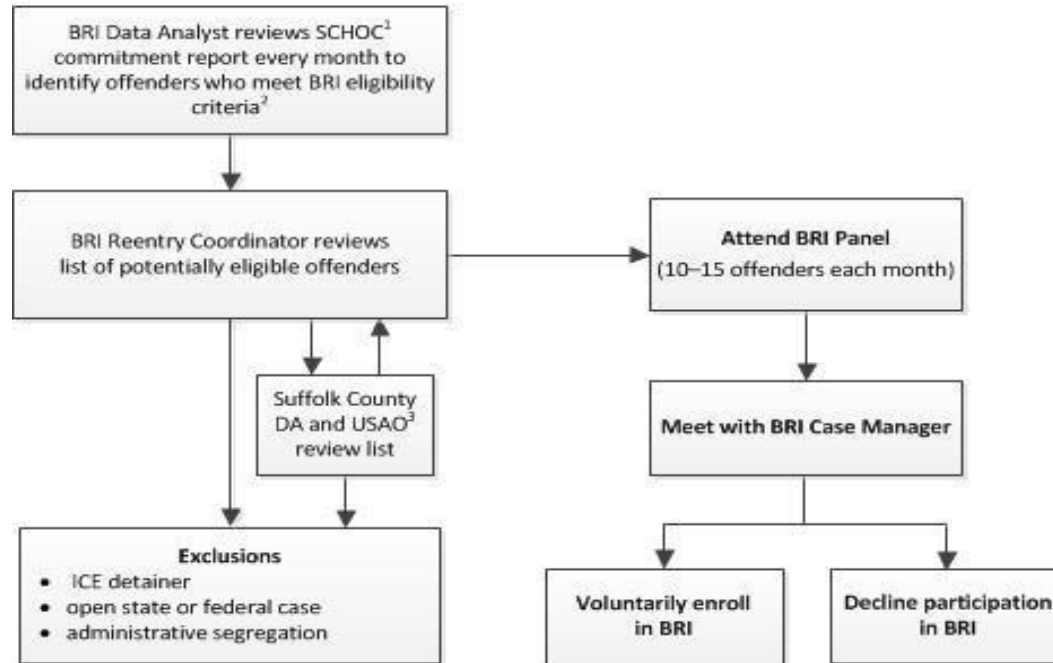
**WRAP staff keep a list** of all interested participants including this deemed ineligible or who later decline services.

A small number of women enter WRAP post-release through Probation or from MS, the program's transitional housing partner. These women receive post-release services only.

Probation referrals include LSCMI assessment data

# Program Case Flow Map: Boston Reentry Initiative

## Boston Reentry Initiative (BRI)



1. Suffolk County House of Corrections

2. In addition to being sentenced to SCHOC, eligibility criteria include:

- Male
- 17–30 years old
- Returning to Boston (Note that the majority of participants return to the neighborhoods of Mattapan, Dorchester, Roxbury however eligibility is not limited to these areas.)
- Extensive, serious criminal histories that include violence, firearms, and/or gang associations

3. United States Attorney's Office



# Core EA Activities:

## Assess Available Data

- **What client information is routinely collected?**
  - Are records automated or hard copy?
    - How far back do records go?
  - Is critical information missing?
- **Is there a unique client identifier?**
  - Can records be linked across data sources?
- **What type of permission is needed to access individual-level records?**
- **What types of outcomes does the program track after exit?**
  - For how long?
- **What external data systems does the program access?**
  - Is this information available for non-program individuals?
- **Obtain sample reports**





# Core EA Activities:

## Identify the Counterfactual

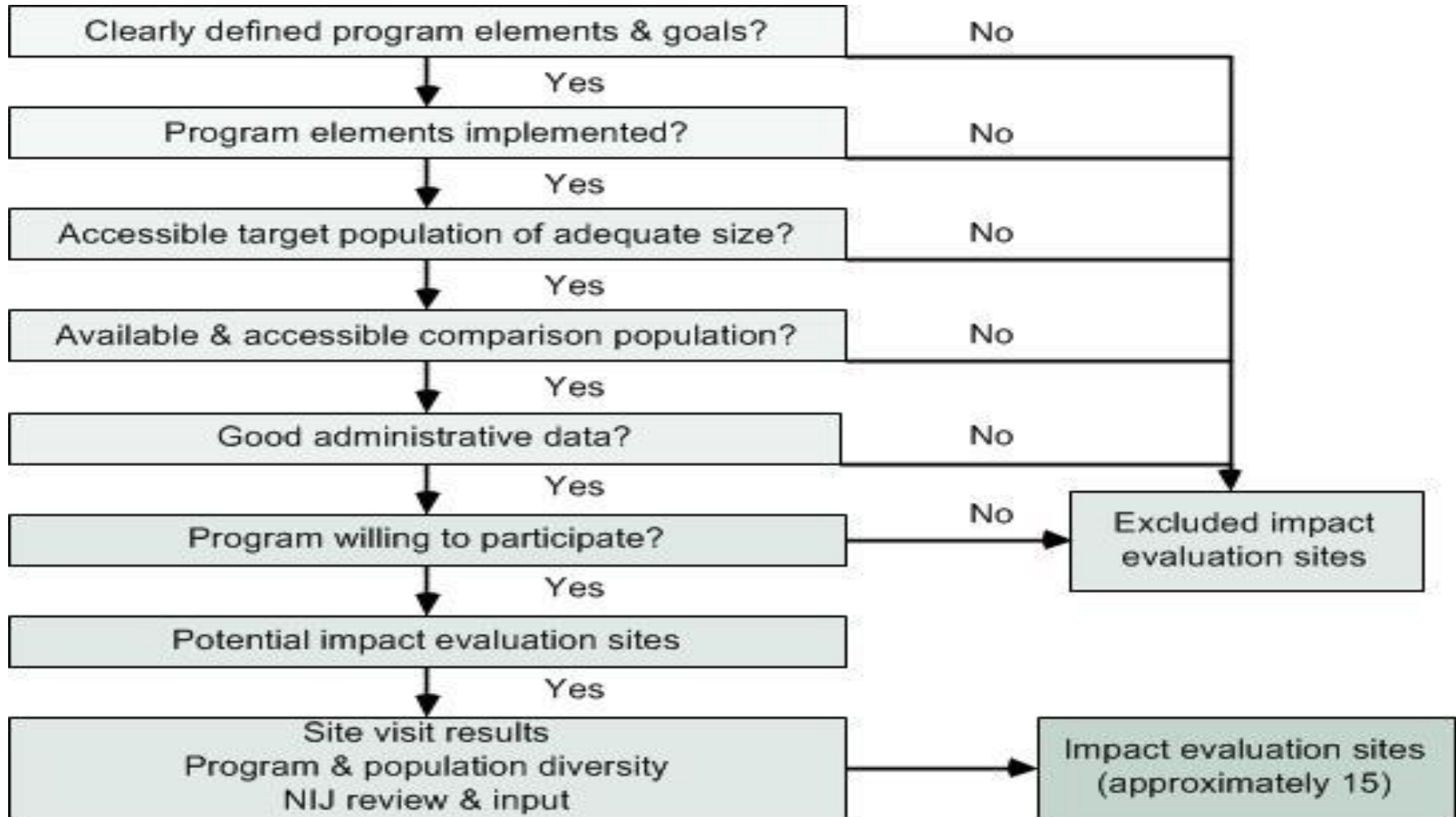
### Is there a viable comparison group?

- **Option 1: Random assignment**
  - Is it permissible ethically?
  - Is case flow sufficient?
  - Are stakeholders and clients willing?
- **Option 2: Contemporaneous group**
  - Logistical considerations
- **Option 3: Retrospective group**
  - Data considerations/ measurement limitations

### Explore “business as usual” (BAU)

- How does the program differ from BAU?
- What are the program’s “unique” features?
- What does the comparison group get?

# Core EA Activities: Analysis and Outcomes



SVORI Final Report. Lattimore and Steffey 2010.



# ***EA Considerations and Application***

- **Evaluation goals**
  - Are evaluation goals clearly defined (i.e., why evaluate)?
    - Improvement? Effectiveness? Both?
  - What do stakeholders want to learn from evaluation?
- **EA benefits**
  - Clarify evaluation goals and objectives
  - Inform design and measurement
  - Direct program improvement
  - Enhance stakeholder capacity for evaluation
- **EA considerations**
  - Timing, resources, capacity
    - Selecting an external, independent evaluator



# References and Resources

- Barnow, B.S. and The Lewin Group. (1997). An evaluability assessment of responsible fatherhood programs: Final report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Justice Research and Statistics Association (JSRA) Juvenile Evaluation Center. (2003). *Program and Evaluation Briefing Series #6. Evaluability Assessment: Examining the Readiness of a Program for Evaluation.*
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- Wholey, J.S., H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer. (2004). Handbook of practical program evaluation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Zedlewski, E. and M.B. Murphy (2006). Maximize Your Evaluation Dollars. NIJ Journal No. 254 [http://nij.gov/nij/journals/254/evaluation\\_dollars\\_print.html](http://nij.gov/nij/journals/254/evaluation_dollars_print.html) (Accessed 6/11/12).

# Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's Statistical Analysis Center Brown Bag Series on Evaluability Assessments

## Speaker Bios

**Dr. Marie Garcia** is a Social Science Analyst in the Justice Systems Research Division, JSRD, at the National Institute of Justice. She received her MS in Criminology from the Department of Criminology at California State University, Fresno. Dr. Garcia received her Doctorate of Philosophy in Criminal Justice from Temple University in 2008. While at Temple, her research focused on the impact of disorganization and crime on levels of trust in Philadelphia, communities and crime, and institutional corrections. Through collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Prisons, she was able to gather five years of institutional- and staff-level data to examine perceptions of danger in the prison environment. Dr. Garcia's dissertation was titled, "Individual and Institutional Demographic and Organizational Climate Correlates of Perceived Danger among Federal Correctional Officers." Dr. Garcia's publications have appeared in *Justice Quarterly*, *Criminology & Public Policy*, *The Journal of Research on Crime and Delinquency*, *The Journal of Family and Marriage*, and *Criminology*.

During her time at NIJ, Dr. Garcia's portfolio has focused on offender reentry, and institutional and community corrections. Current projects include: an evaluation of adult offender reentry demonstration projects funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance via the Second Chance Act in FY2009, and an examination of the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) on high-risk gang offenders under community supervision in the state of California. Dr. Garcia is currently collaborating with the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART) on several projects which aim to inform and improve sex offender management practices in the community.

**Jennifer L. Hardison Walters, MSW**, is a research analyst in the Crime, Violence, and Justice Program in RTI International's Behavioral Health and Criminal Justice Research Division. Ms. Hardison Walters has over 12 years of research and evaluation experience in the areas of family and partner violence (including workplace approaches for addressing intimate partner violence and preventing teen dating violence) prisoner reentry, child maltreatment, human trafficking, and juvenile assessment instruments. She currently serves as Co-Principal Investigator for the National Institute Justice (NIJ)-funded Evaluability Assessment of the FY2011 Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects. Additionally, she serves as a task leader for the NIJ-funded study, Evaluation of Services for Minor Victims of Human Trafficking, a



participatory process evaluation of three community-based programs funded by the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, as well as contributes to NIJ's Evaluation of Second Chance Act Adult Reentry Courts. Before joining RTI, Ms. Hardison Walters served as evaluator, trainer, and project coordinator with the North Carolina Family Group Conferencing Project, a statewide child welfare initiative. She also has worked as a victim advocate, providing direct services to victims of domestic violence.

**Janeen Buck Willison** is a Senior Research Associate in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute. She has more than a decade of experience managing and directing complex multi-site fieldwork studies of youth and adult populations using a variety of methods. Her project work includes studies for the federal government and private foundations focused on specialized courts; delinquency prevention; juvenile justice reform; mental health interventions for offenders; faith-based reentry programs; evidence-based practice; systems change; and the link between substance abuse and crime. Ms. Willison is Principal Investigator for the National Institute Justice (NIJ)-funded Evaluability Assessment (EA) of the FY2011 Second Chance Act Adult Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects and the Evaluation of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention FY2010 Second Chance Act Juvenile Offender Reentry Demonstration Projects, which also includes a research feasibility study, and served as Assistant Investigator for the NIJ-sponsored EA of faith-based reentry. Additionally, she is the Evaluation Director for the Transition from Jail to Community (TJC) initiative in six sites, and serves as co-PI for the National Institute of Corrections' Norval Morris workforce transformation project. She holds a Masters degree in Justice, Law and Society from American University in Washington, D.C.

Prior to coming to NIJ, Dr. Garcia worked as a mental health counselor at Valley State Prison for Women, VSPW, in Chowchilla, CA and as a research and teaching assistant at Temple University.



## The District of Columbia Statistical Analysis Center (DC SAC) Research and Applications Series

### **July 15<sup>th</sup> 3pm: “Where Can I Find Data to Support My Grant Application: Sources of Juvenile and Criminal Justice Data in DC” (subject to change)**

*Many grant applications go unfunded because of their failure to support their request with the appropriate data. To help DC stakeholders enhance their grant applications, this presentation will provide an overview of sources of juvenile and criminal justice data.*

### **September 16<sup>th</sup> 3pm: “Risk Assessment Instruments: The Role Statistical Prediction Plays in Juvenile and Criminal Justice Decision-making” (subject to change)**

*This presentation will provide an overview of the history of risk assessment instruments (RAI) in the juvenile and criminal justice system, including a discussion on how these instruments are typically designed and how they are validated. Specific examples of RAIs from across the country will be used to guide the discussion.*

