Massachusetts Childrens' Alliance: Evaluation Plan

PPUA 6509 Techniques of Program Evaluation

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Organization & Program Overview

The Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) is an organization that acts as a major point of contact and service for children experiencing abuse. Through the Children's Advocacy Centers

(CACs) approach, each case has a mixed methods approach, having all important actors in the same room when deciding on case outcomes and care to diminish unnecessary stress. With Marcus Puleo, CSEC Statewide Program Manager, Massachusetts Children's Alliance, we can dive deeper into this organization and understand how to evaluate MACA's core standards. Our team, composed of Aida Zilkic, Jessica Lam, Jane Dreher, Katherine Sims, & Mary Ankomah, hopes to relay our program evaluation to better the MACA system and approach to standardizing care across all branches of CACs.

Overview of Organization:

The Massachusetts Children's Alliance is an organization that is tasked with fighting and ending child abuse in the state of Massachusetts. They are part of the National Children's Alliance and also serve as the umbrella organization and the voice for the twelve Children's Advocacy Centers throughout the state. They provide services for victims of abuse through various endeavors. They promote legislation that will help end abuse and trafficking, create educational programs for schools, and provide support for victims entering their program through streamline processes that don't cause further harm to these victims. This approach is trauma informed so that the victims don't have to repeatedly tell their story which could potentially cause more discomfort and pain. MACA also provides various services such as child forensic interviews, victim advocacy, community training, medical consultations and exams, and mental health services.

Overview of the Program we are evaluating:

The Children Advocacy Center (CAC) is the program at MACA responsible for providing actionable steps to victims of child abuse and exploitation. There are twelve total branches present in the state of Massachusetts and they utilize a hands-on, discrete approach to aid children in need. The CAC utilizes a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders from different branches to provide the best response to victims of abuse. The services offered at these facilities range from responses to allegations all the way to assisting authorities in the investigation of such allegations. The CAC also serves as a safety hub for victims in need of mental, physical and financial support during and beyond delicate times.

The intended user of the evaluation plan:

The evaluation plan is primarily designed for the Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) leadership, program managers, and coordinators. It aims to assess how effectively Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) adhere to core standards for responding to child exploitation. MACA can use this tool to identify strengths and areas needing improvement in each CAC, guiding targeted support efforts. Furthermore, stakeholders involved in child welfare and protection at the state level, such as representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Governor's Council on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence,

and Human Trafficking (GCSADVHT), would also benefit from utilizing this evaluation plan; as it would provide them with valuable data and insights into the overall effectiveness of CACs in responding to CSEC and sex trafficking, facilitating informed decision-making, policy development, and resource allocation to support these efforts. By implementing a comprehensive evaluation framework, MACA and its partners can work collaboratively towards enhancing the quality of care and support provided to these vulnerable populations, ultimately contributing to the prevention and mitigation of child exploitation across the state.

Conclusion:

The Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA)'s mission is to mitigate child abuse and provide necessary resources and rools for families across the state of Massachusetts experiencing the trauma of child abuse as MACA is a major point of contact and service that provides support to children and families of child abuse. Through the Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC)'s approach, each case is evaluated carefully through an approach where the victim can tell their story all at once and not through multiple investigations and meetings so that all of the multidisciplinary teams(MCTs), so that they do not have to live through their trauma a numerous amount of times. Together, MACA and the MCTs work together to come up with the best possible outcome for the children and their families, providing necessary care and services in order for the children to live a life to their best potential.

Building on the foundational efforts of the Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) to combat child abuse, the next phase involves scrutinizing the effectiveness of these interventions. This critical evaluation aims to ensure that the programs not only reach their intended recipients but also make a measurable difference in their lives.

Program Context and Evaluation

The Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) serves as the umbrella organization for Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) in Massachusetts. Through our evaluation of this program, we aim to assess the effectiveness of MACA's services and provide solutions and ideas for improvement. We will be creating a sustainable tracking tool for the CAC's in Massachusetts to help ensure they are successfully supporting victims and meeting their goals. Leveraging insights from our contact, CSEC Statewide Program Manager, Marcus Puleo, we will be able to gain a deeper insight into potential issues or areas needing improvement.

The evaluation's key focus is on assessing the effectiveness and adherence to core standards and best practices of the Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) and its affiliated Child Advocacy Centers (CACs). The evaluation of MACA is requested by children and families affected by abuse to measure program effectiveness. As a major support hub for child abuse cases, MACA must uphold high standards. We aim to assess if MACA and its CACs are meeting these standards to ensure quality service delivery. In addition to assessing program effectiveness and adherence to core standards, the evaluation aims to create a sustainable tracking tool for all CACs across Massachusetts. This tool will serve as an instrument for continuous assessment,

allowing MACA and its CACs to monitor and evaluate their performance over time, identify areas for improvement, and implement targeted interventions to enhance service delivery and victim support.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to create and define a sustainable tracking tool for all CACs across the state of MA, which will be utilized as an instrument for continuous assessment to ensure that quality service and care is being provided to victims and families. Additionally the evaluative tool will serve as an internal assessment to the organizational structure and approaches utilized by coordinators/teams present in the Centers . Furthermore, the evaluation will serve as an evaluation study for possible future efforts in the specific areas of child abuse and trafficking across the state and/or nation. The evaluation tool will help ensure that all CACs are complying to core standards (similar to the Massachusetts Multidisciplinary Team Core Standards for CSEC) reflective of positive results in terms of victim support. A current core standard protocol is not present for CACs, the evaluation will serve as a tool to further define the responsibilities and approaches implemented by CACs.

Benefits of Evaluation

The benefits of evaluating the Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) will be for all who interact with the program. The children who are receiving care will benefit greatly by being a part of a program that strives for an equal level of care across all CACs. By standardizing this vital support system, you are giving these children a fair chance, despite which center they are visiting. This ensures a level of care that should be held in all facilities. This program evaluation of these standards also gives each servicer, (Department of Children and Families workers, Medical professionals, Mental health professionals, Police officers, Prosecutors & Victim advocates), a core understanding of what is expected of them at these CACs. This ensures a smooth transition for these children in such a difficult time. Having standards also acts as a form of accountability, as they clearly state the expectations that each actor is accountable for.

Through our work as a team and with the help of Marcus Puleo, we will be creating this tracking tool to ensure that victims that are coming through MACA are well cared for and that the CAC's have the tools that they need to successfully accomplish their goals. MACA is a well established and successful organization that wants to guarantee continued success and support for victims in the state of Massachusetts. Through the creation of this core standard protocol, MACA will be able to continue this service for those in need. Not only will MACA and CAC's benefit from this evaluation but it will also ensure that the victims coming through these organizations are receiving the best support possible. The initiative represents a significant advancement in MACA's support system for victims, establishing a new benchmark for care with the introduction of a tracking tool and core standards. The MACA Logic Model details the essential elements, including funding and collaboration, crucial for achieving our objectives.

Stakeholders, Program Model and Evaluation

MACA Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		
 Funding Staff expertise & resources Collaboration with National Children's Alliance (NCA) Legislative support Training & Technical Assistance resources 	 Activities Providing support and resources to 12 Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) in Massachusetts Facilitating legislative support and advocacy for child abuse victims Elevating Child Sex Trafficking (CSEC) response via: Training & Technical Assistance Elevating at state & national convenings Implementing statewide initiatives Conducting Child Forensic Interviews Providing Victim Advocacy services Offering Mental Health Services for affected children and families Conducting Community Training sessions to increase awareness and knowledge about child abuse prevention and response 	 Increased access to support services for child abuse victims & families Enhanced collaboration & coordination among multidisciplinary teams Improved legislative support & advocacy efforts for child protection Elevated response to Child Sex Trafficking (CSEC) through training, convenings, & initiatives Conducted investigations into child abuse cases Child Forensic Interviews conducted Victim Advocacy services provided Mental Health Services offered to affected children & families Community Training sessions conducted to increase awareness & knowledge about child abuse prevention & response 	 • Enhanced well-being and safety of child abuse victims • Strengthened collaboration among stakeholders in the child protection system • Increased awareness and understanding of child abuse prevention and response in the community • Reduced incidence of child abuse through prevention efforts and effective intervention • Improved support services for child abuse victims and their families • Enhanced legislative support and advocacy for child protection initiatives • Elevated response to Child Sex Trafficking (CSEC) statewide, leading to improved identification, intervention, and support for victims 		
Assumptions	 Greater awareness & understanding of issues related to child trafficking/abuse can lead to change at the systems level. MACA acts as a supplementary tool to CAC's where they are needed, enhancing their efforts. General assumptions made about child trafficking can filter its way into the system level where MACA exists. Fiscal crisis in MA Legislature in past several weeks has led to the consideration of budget cuts that would cut off funding for these Child Abuse Centers. People don't understand how much funding, work, and care goes into keeping each center successful. 				
External Factors	 Some bias against MACA, thinking it exists to get centers in trouble or to tell them what to do. Unconscious or conscious bias against youth victims. Due to High turnover rate of team members there is a loss of experience & knowledge of the system . Lack of consistent funding throughout all centers. Legislation and policy changes. Community socio-economic factors. Cultural norms and values. 				

Stakeholders with an interest in the evaluation:

- Youth victims and their family members
- Government agencies, Massachusetts Children's Alliance members, donors and funders, partner organizations, and the general public.
- The National Children's Alliance
- Child Advocacy Center employees and CSEC Coordinators

What are the primary purposes and who are the intended users of the evaluation?:

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent of alignment with the newly established core standards within MACA member organizations, evaluate the effectiveness of implementing these standards throughout the organization's work processes, and utilize insights gained to enhance alignment moving forward. The intended users of the evaluation include MACA itself, CSEC coordinators, government agencies, donors and funders, partner organizations, the National Children's Alliance, and the general public.

Ultimately, this evaluation will lead to the creation of a user-friendly goal tracking dashboard tool to facilitate the documentation of and reporting of CACs' performances. Eventually, our evaluation could also potentially be emulated by the other member organizations under the National Children's Alliance. This evaluation will serve as a tool for MACA to solidify and implement their core standards, measure outcomes, and provide support to children and families affected by it.

The direct intended users of this evaluative tool:

The evaluative tool is primarily for the use of CAC coordinators and MACA. CAC coordinators will be the ones taking the monthly survey, and use it to assess their practices against core standards and improve alignment. MACA will use it to monitor progress, inform decisions, and enhance alignment with core standards to better support abuse victims and their families.

What questions will the evaluation seek to answer?:

Our evaluation seeks to answer several key questions regarding the alignment with and implementation effectiveness of the newly established core standards within MACA and its member organizations:

1. To what extent do the organization's current practices align with the newly established core standards?

This is the primary question of the evaluation; as we seek to measure the degree of alignment between existing practices and the prescribed standards

2. How effectively are the core standards being implemented throughout the organization's work processes?

With this question, we focus more on evaluating the integration and execution of the core standards within the day-to-day activities and processes of MACA member organizations. It aims to gauge the consistency and thoroughness of implementation across different areas of operation.

3. How can the organization use the insights gained from this evaluation to enhance its alignment with the core standards moving forward? It is our overall desire that this evaluation will continuously be utilized to drive improvements and enhancements in alignment with the core standards. With this question we seek to identify actionable steps and strategies that MACA can take to further align with the prescribed standards and better fulfill their mission.

Evaluation Questions and Design

Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) serves as the leading authority in Massachusetts for supporting victims of child abuse and ensuring they receive the best possible care. There are twelve Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) present in the MACA organizational umbrella. The CAC's utilize their collaborations with the multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) to foster effective responses to the child abuse cases they work on, thereby driving systemic and societal changes to protect children. The core standards set by MACA aim to standardize practices across all CACs, ensuring a consistent and effective response to child abuse cases statewide.

The evaluation design aims to assess the alignment of the organizations present in MACA to the newly established core standards created by MACA. As an accredited state chapter of the National Children's Alliance, there are core standards currently present for all stakeholders involved in the response to child exploitation (CSEC, District Attorney's Offices, law enforcements & DCF) except for the Children Advocacy Centers (CAC). MACA is in the process of solidifying a set of core standards for all 12 Massachusetts CAC's to follow. Due to

the population being serviced and the sensitivity of the data, there are some rigid parameters the core standard must follow. The six core standards provide guidance in the following areas:

- 1. CAC MDT Membership
- 2. MDT Written agreements and protocols between all stakeholders
- 3. CAC & CSEC Data Sharing and Response
- 4. Training and Community Education on Children Sex Trafficking and Victim Abuse
- 5. Extensive Data Tracking and Outcome
- 6. Local Leadership & Meetings

Our evaluation will be significantly beneficial to all stakeholders involved both directly and indirectly with MACA. By developing a user-friendly goal tracking tool for Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) we will be able to measure success in alignment with core standards and support multidisciplinary responses to child abuse. This tool also enables the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and the Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) to access historical data and monthly evaluations to improve adherence to these standards. The evaluation will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data collection with qualitative insights, via a monthly survey that will track and visually display outcomes on a virtual dashboard. This paper outlines the main questions the evaluation seeks to answer, along with proposed measures, data sources, data collection methods, and sampling strategies to guide the evaluation process effectively.

Measures

The evaluation's importance lies in its ability to measure the extent to which CAC member organizations align with these standards; it is critical that such alignment is consistent as it is important to note that the CAC's are placed in different counties, have different staffing needs and budgets. Such criterias influence operations and consequently the support provided to victims. Furthermore, the evaluative tool seeks to measure the extent of alignment with the core standards by assessing the degree to which the organization's current practices align with the newly established standards. For that reason the evaluative tool must assess various aspects of the organization's work processes against the defined core standards. We find implementation effectiveness to also be a critical tool as it seeks to measure how effectively the core standards are being implemented through the organization while also observing the consistency and thoroughness of implementation across different sectors of the CAC's.

Data Sources & Collection Methods

The evaluation design seeks to gauge how well the member organizations of the Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) adhere to recently set core standards. It will utilize a mixed-methods approach, blending quantitative data gathering with qualitative observations.

This will be accomplished via a monthly survey designed to monitor and visually present outcomes.

Surveys will be sent out to CAC coordinators on a monthly basis to gather data on their adherence to the core standards. These surveys will provide direct feedback from the individuals responsible for implementing the standards in their daily activities. It is important to note that some of the questions present in the goal tracking tool will focus on the quality of services provided to victims at large, others will focus on measuring the numerical quantity of meeting certain internal core standards (e.g. attendance to local leadership meetings).

In designing a program model and evaluation for MACA, it's crucial to consider the sensitivity of data collection, especially when working with trauma-impacted youth. The process must ensure that the collection methods do not re-traumatize participants or compromise their safety and confidentiality. In doing so, the team has utilized the core standards, provided by MACA as a foundational guide. Along with this, certain data can not be collected because it would interfere with the goals of MACA. CAC's that are within the District Attorney's Office may not not divulge certain information without risking harm to their case or the victims. Our team will effectively discern the pivotal information that should be integrated into our survey design. This approach ensures that the data collected is not only relevant but also aligns with the predefined criteria that MACA has established as essential.

By focusing on these core standards as our primary source, we can tailor our survey questions to the specific datasets that will be most beneficial for our program model and evaluation. Consequently, this strategic alignment with MACA's standards enables us to streamline our data collection process, ensuring that we gather the most pertinent information that will aid in the comprehensive assessment and refinement of our program. This selective approach to data sourcing allows us to conduct a more focused analysis, which is crucial for identifying key insights and making informed decisions regarding program improvements. Moreover, this methodology supports the establishment of a robust framework for continuous program evaluation, enabling us to systematically measure progress and outcomes against MACA's core standards. As a result, we can ensure that our program not only meets but also exceeds the expectations set forth by MACA, thereby maximizing its impact and effectiveness.

Additionally, engaging a CSEC Coordinator in the evaluation process allows for a specialized understanding of the nuances associated with trauma-impacted youth. This expertise is invaluable in tailoring the survey to elicit meaningful responses without causing distress. Furthermore, by adhering to MACA's core standards, the team ensures that the survey's content is both pertinent and sensitive to the participants' needs, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the data collected. This structured methodology also enables the team to monitor progress over time. By meticulously aligning the survey with these standards, the team can

achieve a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact, thereby contributing to the continuous improvement and effectiveness of MACA's initiatives against child abuse.

An ordinal level of measurement will be utilized to track the responses posed by the evaluation. The evaluative questions will be a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches. This mix-method approach, via monthly survey, will include primarily quantitative questions with use of satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading for some of the core standards with 0 = Unsatisfactory & 1 = Satisfactory; as well as Likert scale responses to measure the extent of alignment and implementation effectiveness. This will allow for MACA to easily track progress. Open-ended questions will also be included to gather a more holistic perspective via qualitative insights. Given these monthly surveys will be asking questions that encompass activities across several cases that CAC's handle each month, we want to assure capturing any additional insights that may have emerged from individual cases, in addition to evaluating everything as a whole.

Sampling Strategies

The sampling strategies for this evaluation involve the combined utilization of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling - a type of non-probability sampling that involves the sample being drawn from that part of the population that is close to hand - is chosen due to its practicality and ease of implementation as it allows for the inclusion of all facility coordinators without the need for complex recruitment processes.

By selecting the twelve CAC Coordinators as the respondents of the survey evaluation, allows for a specialized understanding of the nuances associated with trauma-impacted youth. This expertise is invaluable in tailoring the survey to elicit meaningful responses without causing distress; enabling us to efficiently collect data from those most responsible for implementing and overseeing core standards within each CAC while still ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and experiences are captured. Our chosen method of sampling additionally falls under purposive sampling, in that CAC coordinators have been purposely chosen to capture insights that encompass the work of the various CAC's Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) assigned to vulnerable youth. This method allows for a deeper exploration of experiences and challenges related to core standard implementation, offering a more nuanced understanding of the evaluation context. With this selection of sampling methods, the evaluation will capture a broad range of perspectives and experiences, enriching the depth and validity of the findings regarding alignment with core standards among MACA member organizations.

In conclusion, the evaluation design for assessing adherence to the core standards within the Massachusetts Children's Alliance (MACA) member organizations utilizes a comprehensive mixed-methods approach. By combining monthly surveys with both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this strategy aims to provide a holistic view of how well the core

standards are being implemented. The surveys, targeting CAC coordinators, are instrumental in capturing direct feedback on the quality and quantity of standard adherence, including aspects like service quality to victims and participation in leadership meetings. This approach not only ensures a thorough assessment of compliance with the core standards but also highlights areas for improvement, paving the way for enhanced service delivery within the alliance.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the critical components necessary for constructing a comprehensive evaluation of our program. By focusing on the main questions derived from the program model, we have identified measures, data sources, data collection methods, and sampling strategies essential for a thorough analysis. The evaluation design table serves as a practical blueprint for implementing the proposed design, ensuring clarity and organization throughout the evaluative process. The significance of connecting with an organization for a service learning experience cannot be overstated, as it enhances the practical application of our evaluation by incorporating a goal tracking model. This model is not only crucial for the current assessment but also provides a valuable tool for continuous improvement and future evaluations. By meticulously planning and executing this evaluation, we pave the way for meaningful insights that will drive program enhancements, ultimately contributing to the betterment of the MACA, CAC, and CSEC initiatives across Massachusetts.

Evaluation	Evidence	Method(s) &	Sample	Time Frame
Question(s) What questions will be answered by the data you collect?	What will be measured to determine if change occurred?	Measurement Tool (s) <i>How will data</i> <i>be collected?</i>	Who will be the source of information and how will they be selected?	When will data be collected?

Evaluation Table

To what extent do	Satisfactory/Unsatisf	Method(s):	Surveys will be sent	On a monthly basis,
the organization's	actory grading per	Online Surveys	out to CAC	to be reviewed at
current practices	each core standard	Omme Surveys	coordinators to	large on a quarterly
-	with	Measurement		series
align with the			gather data on their	series
newly established	0 = Unsatisfactory &	Tool(s):	adherence to the	
core standards?	1 = Satisfactory. This	Questionnaire;	core standards.	
	will allow for	-Discussed		
	MACA to easily	having yes/no	These surveys will	
	track progress	answers to cut	provide direct	
		down on any	feedback from the	
	Feedback on survey	room for	individuals	
	design and process	deluding full	responsible for	
	will be used to	completion of	implementing the	
	improve all future	standard)	standards in their	
	designs		daily activities.	
How effectively	Number of			
are the core	completed Surveys			
standards being				
implemented	Engagement metrics			
throughout the	(response rate,			
organization's	dropout rate)			
work processes?				
How can the	Quality of responses			
organization use				
the insights				
gained from this				
evaluation to	Change in awareness			
enhance its	or attitudes (pre and			
alignment with	post taking survey)			
the core	post taking survey)			
standards moving				
forward?				

Appendix A: Goal Tracking Tool

This survey was made using Qualtrics, please look <u>here</u> for access to the form. Please note that the below reflects the same questions,

Core Standard A: CSEC MDT Membership

Are all CSEC Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) composed of the core partners specified in the state statute, including the CSEC Coordinator, law enforcement, the District Attorney's Office, and the Department of Children and Families (DCF)?

Yes No

Is there a designated individual in every core team specifically assigned to build a relationship with and provide interpersonal support to a youth victim? Yes

No

Does the CSEC Coordinator lead the MDT response effectively? Yes No

Are additional MDT members and disciplines brought in by the CSEC Coordinator on a case-by-case basis, tailored to the unique needs of the case and the youth involved? Yes

Core Standard B: MDT Written Agreements and Protocols

Does our partnership agreement explicitly state the purpose, function, and activation timeline of the CSEC MDT? Yes No

Are the roles and responsibilities for all MDT partners clearly defined in our agreement and protocols?

Yes

No

Does our protocol include comprehensive guidelines for onboarding and training new members, sharing information, mandated reporting, and protecting confidential data? Yes

No

Is there a clear coordination process outlined from referral to case closure, including case-tracking and data collection methods? Yes

No

Does our values statement reflect our commitment to treating all exploited children as victims, promoting collaboration, and upholding our central values? Yes No

Core Standard C: CSEC MDT Information Sharing and Response

Is the CSEC MDT providing a consistent and comprehensive response that includes victim outreach and identification, screening and risk factor identification, information-sharing, and service planning and delivery tailored to each individual youth? Yes

No

Does this service planning and delivery include a timely, individualized response, case management and coordination, risk assessment and safety planning with youth input, victim advocacy, mental health services, medical services, substance abuse services, identification of underlying trauma, interpersonal support including CSEC or sex trafficking-specific and familial support, forensic interviews, placement, and planning for the locating, reengagement, and safety planning of missing youth at risk of exploitation?

Yes

No

Core Standard D: CSEC and Sex Trafficking MDT Training and Community Education

Are all members of the CSEC MDT participating in foundational, advanced, and ongoing training covering the topics of exploitation and trafficking? Yes No

Core Standard E: Data Tracking & Outcomes

Are the data collection practices of the CSEC MDTs satisfying the requirements of being trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, and age-appropriate while capturing comprehensive demographic information of victims and offenders, details of abuse/victimization, relationships with alleged offenders, participation of MDT members, criminal charges and dispositions, DCF outcomes, the status of medical, mental health, and service referrals, and MDT outcomes? Yes

No

Core Standard F: Local Leadership Meetings

Are the regular, county-based, cross-disciplinary group meetings being convened by all CSEC MDTs to ensure adherence to protocols, provide a strong and consistent response, address systems-level issues, share resources and best practices, integrate survivor voices, and identify community training opportunities on child exploitation awareness and response strategies? Yes

No