

VI. DESIGN PLAN FOR THE PROCESS STUDY

The cross-site evaluation's process study will focus on the implementation of the entire EBHV grant initiative. The process study serves three purposes for the cross-site evaluation. First, it will provide information at points in time about the context in which each grantee operates, as well as how this context influences the grantee's progress and results in each evaluation domain. Second, it will inform the cross-site evaluation by focusing on how and why grantees implemented key grant activities, including the home visiting programs grantees selected. Third, it will document factors that facilitated the implementation of key activities within the grant initiative, challenges and barriers encountered in the implementation of these activities, how grantees responded to emerging concerns, and how the concerns affected their plans and activities.

Overview of Domain and Key Research Questions

The scope of this cross-site evaluation domain is broader than the other four evaluation domains because it is designed to inform our understanding of the EBHV grant initiative as a whole. The process study will look beyond grantees' efforts to support implementation of home visiting programs by also looking at how grantees participated in activities associated with the grant initiative, such as their involvement in the cross-site evaluation and their receipt and use of technical assistance. It will also collect point-in-time contextual information that will complement the other evaluation domains. The process study will use a case study approach that examines the 17 grantees funded through the initiative, mainly through information gathered as part of site visits to grantees in 2010 and 2012 (Creswell 1998).

The process study comprises eight overarching research questions that provide context for the other four evaluation domains. The questions are cross-cutting, in that the information gathered will be relevant to the general understanding of how grantees implemented this initiative. Table VI.1 provides the key research questions, as well as a detailed list of subtopics for each process study research question. It also identifies the respondents who will inform each subtopic.

Table VI.1 Process Study Research Questions, Subtopics, and Respondents

	Respondent				
	Lead Grantee Staff	Local Evaluators	Home Visit Program Model Purveyors	Grantee Partners	Implementing Agency Staff
What are the key characteristics of EBHV grantees, and how did these change over time?					
Staff structure and responsibilities, wage rates, time allocation, and turnover	X				X
Activities conducted by direct service staff, including content and frequency	X				X
Pace of enrollment and whether this pace aligned with grantees' plans	X				X
Target population and actual population enrolled, including level of risk	X		X		X
Common needs and concerns of families served and how program addresses these				X	X
Related programs in community (or primary service area) and coordination efforts with the EBHV grant program	X			X	X
Active partnerships and collaborations; role and activities	X		X	X	X
Available funding streams and changes during the planning and implementation periods	X			X	
How did grantees plan and implement their EBHV projects?					
Processes used by grantees to plan for and implement their EBHV project	X	X	X	X	X
Participants in the planning and implementation processes; role played by each participant and their level of involvement and contributions	X	X	X	X	X

Table VI.1 (continued)

	Respondent				
	Lead Grantee Staff	Local Evaluators	Home Visit Program Model Purveyors	Grantee Partners	Implementing Agency Staff
What is the context in which EBHV grantees planned and implemented their projects, and how did the context change over time?					
Geographic location of EBHV project activities	X			X	X
Political climate in state and target community	X			X	
Changes in program direction or management during the planning and implementation periods	X				
Natural (or man-made) disasters or other unexpected events that occurred during the funding period and substantially altered service delivery or planning	X				
What factors facilitated or posed barriers to planning and implementation of the EBHV projects over time?					
Facilitating factors, challenges, and constraints that influenced the grantees' ability to support the implementation of their selected home visiting program(s); strategies developed to address challenges and constraints and how well the strategies worked	X		X	X	X
Facilitating factors and ongoing challenges and constraints that influence the grantees' ability to maintain implementation fidelity; strategies for addressing challenges and constraints	X		X		X

Table VI.1 (continued)

	Respondent				
	Lead Grantee Staff	Local Evaluators	Home Visit Program Model Purveyors	Grantee Partners	Implementing Agency Staff
What initial and ongoing training and technical assistance did EBHV grantees receive from the purveyors of national program models?					
Satisfaction with training and other support received from purveyors of national program models for preparing to implement the EBHV grantee-selected models ^a	X				X
Ongoing training and support received from purveyors of national program models once the EBHV grantee-selected models were implemented	X		X		X
Frequency and content of ongoing communication received from purveyors of national program model	X		X		X
Use of information entered into purveyors of national program model's data system for program monitoring and improvement	X		X		X
What technical assistance did grantees receive from the Children's Bureau (CB), its contractors, or other technical assistance providers to support their planning and implementation efforts, and how was it used?					
How grantees used the technical assistance offered by the program technical assistance provider throughout the grant period; specific ways in which this technical assistance supported implementation ^b	X	X			
Assessment of usefulness of program technical assistance	X	X			

Table VI.1 (continued)

	Respondent				
	Lead Grantee Staff	Local Evaluators	Home Visit Program Model Purveyors	Grantee Partners	Implementing Agency Staff
How grantees used the evaluation technical assistance offered by Mathematica-Chapin Hall; specific ways in which this technical assistance supported local evaluation efforts and why grantees received varying levels of technical assistance	X	X			
Assessment of usefulness of evaluation technical assistance	X	X			
Role of Peer Learning Network (PLN) in supporting grantees	X	X			
Assessment of usefulness of PLN	X	X			
Whether grantees received technical assistance from sources other than the CB and its contractors; if so, type and usefulness of technical assistance received and how grantees accessed these resources	X	X			
How did grantees participate in the design and implementation of the cross-site evaluation?					
Assessment of alignment between the local and cross-site evaluations	X	X			
Assessment of the degree to which the cooperative agreement and cross-site evaluation met the CB's goals of being participatory and utilization-focused	X	X			
Role of participatory and utilization-focused cross-site evaluation in supporting EBHV grantees	X	X			
Suggestions for improving participatory and utilization-focused efforts	X	X			

Table VI.1 (continued)

	Respondent				
	Lead Grantee Staff	Local Evaluators	Home Visit Program Model Purveyors	Grantee Partners	Implementing Agency Staff
How did grantees identify their expected outcomes; how and for what reasons did grantees adjust their perspective on achieving these outcomes as the initiative matured?					
Activities to achieve buy-in and consensus among partners on targeted outcomes, effectiveness of activities, perceived level of agreement, and challenges to developing consensus	X	X		X	
Whether stakeholders, in addition to the grantee, have responsibility for maintaining a focus on outcomes and how this manifests in interactions, relationships, and accountability requirements	X	X		X	
Accountability for achieving outcomes; how accountability is assessed; when stakeholders expect to see outcomes	X	X		X	
Main challenges that hindered achieving targeted outcomes	X	X		X	
Strategies developed for overcoming challenges and how well the strategies worked; individuals or entities most helpful in overcoming these challenges	X	X		X	
Assessment of whether the local and cross-site evaluation designs were on track to measure targeted outcomes; if not, why; threats to documenting impact on outcomes	X	X		X	
Anticipated sustainability of grant outcomes; challenges	X	X		X	

Table VI.1 (continued)

	Respondent				
	Lead Grantee Staff	Local Evaluators	Home Visit Program Model Purveyors	Grantee Partners	Implementing Agency Staff
Suggestions for how grantees could change their local or the cross-site evaluation designs to better address their expected outcomes	X	X		X	

^aThis topic will be addressed during the first round of site visits only.

^bThe program technical assistance providers contracted by the Children's Bureau are the Family Resource Information, Education, and Network Development Services (FRIENDS), and their partners, National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), and Human Systems Dynamics (HSD).

EBHV = evidence-based home visiting.

Process Study Data and Analytic Approach

The process study will produce case studies of each grantee's implementation experiences and a cross-site analysis of common themes about implementation experiences, facilitators and barriers to implementation, and strategies for overcoming roadblocks. The cross-site analysis will also explore common themes among subgroups of grantees, such as those implementing specific home visiting models, grantees implementing more than one model, different types of grantee auspice (for example, state agencies versus private nonprofits), grantees with different geographic service areas (such as one county or community versus a state, or whether grantee service areas are rural, urban, or suburban), and other subgroups that emerge from the analysis. Chapter IX provides a more detailed discussion of reporting for the cross-site evaluation.

A primary data source for the process study will be two rounds of site visits conducted with each grantee.¹⁵ The first visit will occur in spring 2010 and focus on learning about each grantee's planning process and initial implementation experiences. The second visit will occur in spring 2012 and focus on documenting grantee's ongoing implementation experiences and the evolution and

¹⁵ While the site visits are the primary data source for the process study, we will also review background information, such as grantee implementation plans and six-month grantee progress reports submitted to the CB.

maturation of each grantee’s program, as grantees will most likely be operating at a steady state of implementation by this time.

During site visits, we will address most process study research questions and subtopics described in Table VI.1 to learn about grantees’ experiences implementing the EBHV grant, the challenges they face, and their successes when facing challenges (see the master site visit protocol in Volume II for a detailed list of site visit topics and questions). As described in more detail in Chapter VII, each visit will last for multiple days and be conducted by two members of the Mathematica-Chapin Hall evaluation team. Site visitors will work closely with grantees to plan the visits and select respondents to participate in individual and small-group interviews and focus groups.¹⁶ While all site visits will cover the research questions and topics listed in Table VI.1, site visitors will work closely with grantees to tailor the plans for each visit to the unique plans and circumstances of each site. For example, some grantees are implementing more than one program model; the site visit team will need to include respondents implementing each model. Although the configuration of respondents for each grantee will vary, the evaluation team anticipates including the following types of respondents in all visits (see Chapter VII for more details):

- Lead grantee staff
- Local evaluators
- National program model purveyors
- Partners such as private and state-level funders, referral sources, state or county child welfare offices; Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention state program leads, and others
- Implementing agencies that provide direct home visiting services

We will use an alternative data collection method, such as a web-based survey, for gathering information on the process study research questions related to technical assistance from the Children’s Bureau and its contractors and grantees’ involvement in the design and implementation of the cross-site evaluation. We will ensure the alternative method will allow grantees to feel comfortable reporting non-favorable experiences, particularly about experiences that involved

¹⁶ When feasible, local evaluators may also participate in some site visit activities to streamline data collection across the local and cross-site evaluations.

representatives of the Children’s Bureau or members of the EBHV cross-site evaluation team and the programmatic technical assistance team.

The process study will primarily use qualitative methods to analyze the data collected (see Chapter XIII for a more detailed discussion of analytic methods). All data collected during site visits, such as interview and focus group notes, will be coded in Atlas.ti using a coding scheme developed by the evaluation team. We will use the case study approach to triangulate data from different sources and identify common themes or categories (Yin 1994). Triangulation will allow us to compare data sources for reliability, as well as to identify areas of agreement and disagreement across respondents. Through theme identification, we will reduce the large volumes of data gathered during site visits and other sources (progress reports) to a manageable number of topics/themes/categories that are important to address the process study’s research questions (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

As noted earlier, we will conduct two main types of analysis for the process study to examine grantees’ implementation experiences. First, we will develop case studies to gain a detailed understanding of each grantee and its context, the design and implementation of its home visiting program, and its perspective on achieving specified results. Second, we will conduct a cross-site analysis to identify themes and patterns about implementation experiences across all grantees and relevant subgroups.

