

IDEAS CENTER



Research Project 1 | Accelerating Research to Practice via Policymaking

Research Project 1

National Survey of State Policy Decision Making & Simulation.

Co-led by Drs. Mary McKay & Jonathan Purtle, this study focuses on understanding state policymaker decision making processes to improve their use of research evidence.

Survey of State Policymakers

Dr. Purtle and doctoral candidate Katie Nelson will deploy a national survey to 600 state agency policymakers (mental health, substance abuse, Medicaid, and other public health agencies) to collect data on their policy priorities, use of children's mental health research, and dissemination preferences. This data will be linked to measures of agency and state context.

... and Simulation Model

Using this data, Dr. Purtle and colleagues will build a prototype agent-based model, which will provide insights into ways in which dissemination strategies *can be targeted* to increase policymakers use of research evidence in children's mental health policymaking.



Accelerating Research-to-Practice

Improving the Integration of Research Evidence into the State Children's Mental Health Policymaking Process

A large body of dissemination and implementation (D&I) research, mostly conducted during the last two decades, has revealed a set of supports that can improve the installation of evidence-based practices (EBPs) in state child-serving systems. However, today, many children are still not receiving evidence-based services. This IDEAS Center study aims to change that by focusing not on implementation supports, but instead, on improving the dissemination of scientific research evidence to state policymakers.

Why Focus on State Policymakers' Decision Making Processes?

State policymakers are critical agents in decreasing the time it takes for research evidence to be integrated into community practice. State policymakers:

- Determine which services are funded and/or reimbursed;
- Influence approaches to prevention and recovery;
- Shape the context in which services are provided;
- Control the safety net for low-income children and families



What do we Know about State Agency Policymakers Decision Making Processes?

Jonathan Purtle, DrPH, study co-lead, is no stranger to working in the state policymaking arena and understanding the decision making processes therein. Both the NIH and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) have invested in his work, which is focused on:

- testing the effects of strategic frames about toxic stress on public and policymaker support for child development policies and stigma towards children and families (RWJF)
- surveying state legislators to understand their opinions about mental health and substance use issues and how they use evidence in decision making (NIMH R21)
- assessing the effects of public housing policies on HIV/STI risk (NIMH)

Dr. Purtle earned a DrPH in Health Management & Policy from Dornsife School of Public Health, an MPH from Drexel, and an MSc in Sociology, from De Universiteit van Amsterdam.

Combining Survey Techniques ... and Systems Science

The national survey will assess the extent of the use of research evidence in children's mental health policymaking in state agencies, and importantly, identify individual, agency, and state factors that influence policy decisions. Data from the survey of 600 state policymakers – from mental health, substance abuse, Medicaid, and other state agencies – will also be linked to measures of agency and state context (e.g. per capita spending on mental health, Medicaid expansion state, etc.). This data, combined with a case study

approach and in-depth interviews with a set of state agency policymakers, will be used to build a prototype agent-based model. This model will provide insights into ways in which

dissemination strategies *can be targeted* to increase policymakers' use of research evidence in children's mental health policymaking. "We acknowledge that politics will never be taken out of the policymaking process; however, research evidence can be more effectively infused into it," said Dr. Purtle.

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