

Evaluation at the Georgia Health Policy Center



The Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) focuses on solutions to complex issues facing health and health care today by conducting, analyzing, and disseminating evaluations to connect decision-makers with the objective research and support needed to make informed decisions about health-related policies and programs.

Evaluation is a formalized approach to studying the goals, processes, and impacts of projects, policies, and programs. GHPC employs an approach that places emphasis on building relationships that deepen trust and encourage candor among all stakeholder groups to establish rapport and maximize impact.

Framework

GHPC's signature style of evaluation is based upon a synthesis of practical and methodological insights from a broad range of policy evaluation, community-based research, technical assistance, and capacity-building experience with content-specific expertise. A key component to this evaluation approach is that clients work in partnership with GHPC and can quickly apply findings to their work. Using this approach and the evaluation framework created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, GHPC develops a collaborative evaluation design and execution plan.

Evaluation Framework¹

Engage stakeholders	Creation of an advisory committee that provides insight to the evaluation
Describe the program	Development of a comprehensive program description used to clarify all components and intended program outcomes
Focus on evaluation design	Determination of the most important evaluation questions and the appropriate design for the evaluation
Gather credible evidence	The collected evidence depends on stakeholder input and a final decision about evaluation design
Justify conclusions	Data analysis and synthesis and a justification of the claims by comparing the evidence against the value held by those affected by programs
Ensure use and share lessons learned	The evaluation's purpose guides its use and may be used to identify ways to improve the program or to demonstrate to funders or other stakeholders that resources are being well spent and that the program is effective or not

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework/index.htm>

Purpose

GHPC approaches evaluation as a critical intersection between research and programs that can improve health. Research, policy, and practice are related components of a continuous learning cycle with research informing policy, policy informing program design, and evaluation refining program implementation and further informing research and policy. GHPC conducts evaluations to assess impact, contribute to existing knowledge, and stimulate program and process improvement.

Areas of Specialization

- Theories of change
- Logic models
- Survey design and implementation
- Performance monitoring
- Evaluation capacity building
- Realist evaluation
- Formative, summative, and developmental evaluation

Project Examples

Evaluating the Money Follows the Person Program

GHPC provides the Georgia Department of Community Health with a state-level evaluation of the Money Follows the Person program. The rebalancing program helps people with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities (under age 65 years), traumatic brain injury, older adults, and youth with a mental health diagnosis who are living in institutions return to their homes and communities, while continuing to receive supportive services. Semiannual evaluations include participant characteristics, cost analysis of demonstration service expenditures, and comparisons of pre- and post-transition quality of life survey data (conducted pretransition, as well as one and two years post-transition).



The project team regularly supports additional data collection and ad hoc analyses, including interviews with transition staff and a Photovoice study with program participants.

Assessing Impact of the Second Chance Act

GHPC researchers, in partnership with faculty from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies' departments of Criminal Justice, Social Work, and Economics, are conducting research and evaluation that measures the implementation, outcomes, and impact of re-entry services provided by Second Chance Act program grantees, with funding from the National Institute of Justice. The four-year evaluation is assessing re-entry outcomes including employment, education, housing, access to mental health and substance use services, and substance use and recidivism rates. Additionally, it assesses the effectiveness of Second Chance Act program structures for service provision; cost-effectiveness; and the impact on participants, other related programs, and communities.



Learning from Accountable Communities of Health

The Episcopal Health Foundation is funding the multiyear Texas Accountable Communities for Health Initiative (TACHI) in which six Texas communities will build ACHs that serve as a local platform for bringing providers, partners, and community residents together to transform local health systems to improve community health and achieve greater equity. The Episcopal Health Foundation engaged GHPC as an external evaluator for both the planning and implementation stages. Evaluation activities for the planning year included a grantee readiness assessment, coaching to aid grantees in developing logic models, and defining performance measurements at both the grantee and enterprise levels. GHPC is also evaluating the three-year implementation using both formative and summative evaluation practices to help summarize progress across the sites and capture learnings that will inform both TACHI and the broader field.

