



Fundamentals in Evidence Based Decision-Making

A Hands-On Opportunity to Learn and
Apply Core Principles of Continuous
Quality Improvement, Implementation
Science, and Data Analysis

October 2019 - March 2020

Welcome to Fundamentals!

Welcome to the *Fundamentals in Evidence Based Decision-Making*, a new program developed to support skill development in making evidence based decisions in child welfare. All actors in a child welfare system have an obligation to think critically about the system in which they are working in order to be part of the ongoing effort to improve outcomes for children and families, and we are excited to have the opportunity to work with you in this collaborative mission.

About Fundamentals

Fundamentals responds to the imperative for strong CQI leadership by supporting leaders to be disciplined, evidence based problem solvers. The Practicum strengthens leadership's capacity to bridge the gap between *data* (bits of information), and *evidence* (appropriate use of data to draw conclusions), and then apply evidence to decisions and actions at all points in the cyclical process of improvement. Participants will learn how to ask mission-critical questions about the performance of the child welfare system, use administrative data to generate and interpret the answers to those questions, use the resulting evidence to craft local/state-level improvement efforts, and finally, implement those strategies for improvement using implementation science.

Program Format

The program includes five day-long onsite classroom sessions, homework and practice exercises, remote support and technical assistance, and opportunities for students to apply new concepts and skills to self-initiated areas of inquiry. *Fundamentals* begins with classroom sessions focused on learning and applying best practices in performance measurement and evidence use. Following the classroom-based instruction, students use their new skills to develop an evidence-based plan for improving an identified outcome in their own county. A *Fundamentals* instructor is assigned to each participant to function as coach, providing feedback and technical support along the way.

Classroom Sessions

The focus of the five sessions will be on addressing a permanency challenge common to all participants, and developing rigorous evidence to support participants as they progress through each stage of the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle. This will include developing and planning the implementation of a county-specific remedy addressing the identified permanency challenge.



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Classroom Schedule

Session	Date and Time	Location
Session 1	Tuesday, October 22, 2019 – 9am - 4pm	Sacramento 1 Capitol Mall
Session 2	Thursday, November 21, 2019 – 9am – 4pm	Sacramento 1 Capitol Mall
Session 3	Thursday, January 21, 2020 – 9am – 4pm	Sacramento 1 Capitol Mall
Session 4	Thursday, February 13, 2020 – 9am – 4pm	Sacramento 1 Capitol Mall
Session 5	Wednesday, March 18, 2020 – 9am – 4pm	Sacramento 1 Capitol Mall

Participant Expectations

Fundamentals is a highly interactive learning experience with faculty and class participants. Registered participants will be expected to:

- Attend each session
- Attend a pre-session webinar in advance of the first session date
- Complete assignments/homework in between sessions, both on their own and in consultation with instructors. These assignments could include such tasks as developing some basic analyses using course materials, interpreting the results, and in some cases collecting data on their own. Participants should expect to spend about 3 hours per month on autonomous work.
- Work with a coach to review homework and other key learnings.

Purpose

The purpose of the Fundamentals series is to help participants use administrative data and other resources to build evidence that supports a CQI Plan. This includes learning how to make use of those resources to make specific and sound observations about an outcome that may need improvement. The course will then use implementation science principles to develop implementation strategies for their CQI plan.

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The central premise of Fundamentals is that efforts to improve outcomes for children and families should be rooted in a theory of change that is supported by evidence. At its core, that theory is composed of four main claims:

- ✚ I observe that...
- ✚ I think it's because...
- ✚ So I plan to...
- ✚ Which I think will result in...

In a defensible theory of change, these four statements are supported by evidence. The goal of *Fundamentals* is for participants to identify a performance area that needs improvement (I observe that...) and to build a theory of change accordingly. However, this process is never linear. Students should expect to acquire new evidence about performance in their county, but they should also expect to encounter the classic hiccups that can reroute the process of improvement. As such, the goal of the series is not for students to create a theory of change that perfectly defends all four statements with evidence. Rather, the goal is for students to use their new skills to get as far along as possible, understanding that the pace of improvement varies from project to project.

Course Logistics

What times does Fundamentals begin each day? Fundamentals starts promptly at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m.

How much time will I need for homework? You can expect about 3 hours of homework between monthly sessions. Please be sure to share this expectation with your supervisor so time can be supported to complete assignments.

Will I be required to speak publicly? Yes, the course does involve some public speaking, which is typically done in small groups. There will be plenty of time for preparation and practice.

How will meals be handled? Coffee and tea will be provided each morning, along with lunch. We will provide a vegetarian option, but if you have further food restrictions please plan on providing your own meal.

Who should I contact if I have questions or need support? Scott Fong is the contact for logistics and most technical support, scofong@ucdavis.edu. Once the program begins, your coach will be the contact for content questions.



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Faculty

Laura Packard Tucker, Ph.D., is a researcher at Chapin Hall, where she focuses on evaluating child welfare systems and programs to support vulnerable youth populations, including youth transitioning to adulthood and at-risk young children. In her current research work, she applies quantitative and qualitative research methods to policy research in the field of child welfare. She examines and analyzes longitudinal data to understand and monitor states' child welfare outcomes, analyzes child welfare policy fiscal effects, and develops administrative data to support program evaluation in a continuous quality improvement framework. In addition to her research activities, she is an instructor for Chapin Hall's Center for State Child Welfare Data's long-running *Advanced Analytics for Child Welfare Administration* seminar.

Daniel Webster, M.S.W., Ph.D., is a research specialist at the Center for Social Services Research at UC Berkeley. He serves as co-principal investigator of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project. For more than a decade, he has provided technical assistance in the understanding and use of longitudinal data to promote child welfare system improvement in the states of Alaska, California, Florida, Nevada, Oregon and Washington. He regularly co-instructs courses through the Regional Training Academies on the application of advanced analytics for public child welfare administrators from state and county agencies.

Wendy Wiegmann, M.S.W., Ph.D., is project director of the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP). Her many years of experience includes collaborating with partnered research agencies; supervising aspects of the quality assurance process to ensure the accuracy of the project's data; presenting data in many formats online, at national conferences and in print; and serving as a liaison and representative of the project. In addition, she has a number of specialized skills such as analyzing data from large national surveys and using propensity score methods to balance observational data. Prior to her graduate studies, she worked as a child welfare worker in Alameda and San Francisco counties. Formerly a foster youth and legal guardian to her younger siblings, Wiegmann uses her personal and professional experiences to inform her work as a researcher.



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