

Questions and Answers about role of SAVES Center and Demonstration Site Efforts for Research and Evaluation

The Saves Center (hereafter referred to as “the Center”) Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) providers intend to work collaboratively with each site to develop an evaluation framework that identifies the types of policies and practices that:

- Improve physical and psychological safety for domestic violence (DV) survivors in the Child Support (CS) system
- Decrease disparities in safety and other experiences among DV survivors in the CS system
- Increase financial security for DV survivors and their children quickly
- Decrease the number of DV survivors forced into unsafe CS cooperation to qualify for public benefits
- Increase the number of DV survivors who voluntarily use the CS system to meet survivors’ self-defined goals

Additional research questions may be explored by the Center to better understand ways to:

1. Ensure safe and fair access to child support, parenting time, and paternity services for survivors of DV who are marginalized by public systems (e.g., low income, non-marital, LGBTQ+, ethnic and racial minorities), including survivors who receive, or fear applying for, child support
2. Integrate child support agencies as a key partner in coordinated community responses to domestic and sexual violence
3. Equip the child support workforce with the knowledge, skills, resources, and organizational support to consistently provide trauma-informed and culturally responsive child support services to survivors

We will collaborate with each site and the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to develop and refine the evaluation approach over the next year.

I. What is the role of the SAVES Center in supporting demonstration site evaluations?

- Per the Notice of Financial Opportunity (NOFO), the Center will be responsible for designing and implementing a range of cross-site evaluation strategies to establish the strongest evidence possible for what policies, procedures, training and partnerships effectively increase safe access to child support and parenting time services for victims/survivors
- The Center will also:
 - Compile, prepare data for analyses, and analyze data from demonstration sites to answer key evaluation questions.
 - Address key evaluation questions that help move the field forward for future policy/practice recommendations. The Center will not produce comprehensive cross-site or site-specific evaluation reports.
 - These evaluation questions may be answered by using existing data from all sites, a few select sites working on a similar activity in differing contexts, and/or one site implementing a novel approach.
 - The final “evaluation products” will be short, promising practices briefs covering select policies and procedures.

- Provide a high-level snapshot to each demonstration site in the final year of the project to highlight key analyses and changes over time within a specific demonstration site for their reference (these will not be published on the Center website)
- Provide ongoing analyses and results specific to each site. For example, if a demonstration site administers a survey to their CS caseworkers relevant to this project and/or the evaluation, the Center will analyze those data and provide a site-specific summary of results (in addition to the compilation across multiple sites if a similar measure is used as part of the larger evaluation effort).
- Provide ongoing training and technical assistance to support demonstration site efforts to collect data, develop measures, analyze data for continuous quality improvement efforts, etc.
- Review copies of sample tools and measures that demonstration sites plan to use (e.g., surveys) and provide input, including suggestions to support the Center evaluation. If desired, the Center will draft and develop questionnaires, data collection tools, and other assessment instruments that demonstration sites would like to use to evaluate their project interventions.

II. What is the role of the demonstration sites in supporting the Center evaluation efforts?

- The [NOFO](#) for demonstration sites documents several key activities required by OCSE to support the Center evaluation:
 - Participate in baseline research efforts to identify prevalence rates of DV for parents needing or wanting child support and parenting time services, and barriers and needs for safe access to services (p. 8)
 - Collect and report any data (participant or program) required to support the evaluations (p. 9)
 - Support staff time for participating in the training, technical assistance, research, and evaluation activities overseen by the Center, as well as collection, compilation, and analyses of program performance data for purposes of effective management and oversight of program operation. Recipients do not need to conduct their own evaluations and are not permitted to expend grant funds on their own evaluation. However, grant funds may be used to support staff time in the aforementioned activities (p. 9)
 - Support and fully participate in the national, cross-site evaluation that will be conducted by an independent third-party evaluator connected to the Center (p. 12)
 - Assist with the submission and completion of Institutional Review Board plans, if needed and depending on the state or tribal requirements (p. 12)
 - Employ a project manager or manager who is anticipated to also function as the site evaluation coordinator, working collaboratively with OCSE, the Center recipient, and the third-party evaluator supporting data collection and sharing information with the evaluation team as the primary data source for the evaluation will come from administrative records (p. 13)
 - Ensure that all evaluation-related data collection and submission activities are appropriately staffed and managed with access to necessary technology, and that program staff responsible for collecting evaluation-related data receive necessary training from the Center research/evaluation team (pp. 12-13)
 - Ensure that all staff participating in evaluation and data collection-related activities complete any trainings as directed by the Center third-party evaluator, including those related to human subject protection, informed consent, and maintaining privacy (p. 13)
 - Assist the research team in collecting child support administrative data, as necessary, including obtaining appropriate consents from program participants, data from other agencies and programs, and materials (e.g., data dictionaries) that facilitate use of such data (p. 13)
 - Assist OCSE and the research/evaluation team in identifying and addressing any concerns related to administrative data (p. 13)

- Assist the research/evaluation team in scheduling interviews, surveys, focus groups, and any other required means of information collection for the purposes of program evaluation (p. 13)
- Coordinate logistics of OCSE and research/evaluation team site visits, including preparing agendas, as requested, and arranging for participation by all key decision makers (p. 13)
- Per the NOFO, the SAVES Center will work with demonstration sites to gain access to data collected by sites:
 - In sites' automated systems (e.g., extracts of cases with a family violence indicator, client & case characteristics, order & payment outcomes with an appropriate data dictionary)
 - Through other activities proposed by sites, as applicable (e.g., surveys with staff on increased understanding after a training, client satisfaction surveys and other forms of feedback)
- The Center will rely on demonstration sites to better understand existing and historical policies and practices dealing with DV and safety that are state or site specific.
- If demonstration sites are completing analyses related to this funding to enhance their own understanding of the context and effectiveness of their interventions, the Center kindly requests that sites share this information, as it will likely inform the broader collective knowledge.
- Some sites may be selected for evaluation case studies. It is expected that most of these case studies will commence in future project years, after the Center has conducted its baseline assessments and the site interventions have been launched and refined. The Center will work with demonstration sites and OCSE to prioritize this list and minimize burden on site staff. Per the NOFO, some assistance will likely be needed by demonstration sites selected to coordinate logistics for this visit and assist with scheduling data collection efforts.

III. Will the SAVES Center request data from the automated system beyond what is part of the project's proposed activities?

- This is possible because the Center is charged with conducting research on:
 - The safety of survivors
 - The effectiveness of various policy and procedural responses
 - Other research to support policy and practice recommendations
- As such, the Center needs to understand differences by state on select policies and practices beyond what a demonstration site is specifically doing. For instance, the Center may want to look at all site data to understand whether differences in good cause policies, assignment of the family violence indicator, and/or screening procedures relate to different outcomes for survivors.
- The Center will work with sites as requested to review and consult on any automated system updates planned by demonstration sites, if applicable. The Center can also consult on ways new data elements might be used for future evaluation, assessment, and ongoing continuous quality improvement efforts. The Center can also work with sites to identify and consult on potential data cleaning needs related to DV indicators and participant information. Data cleaning refers to the process of fixing incorrect, corrupted, incorrectly formatted, duplicate, or incomplete data within a dataset.

IV. Will demonstration sites be asked to collect data and other information beyond what was written in the proposal and NOFO?

- The Center will not require sites to collect any new data beyond what was proposed and/or in the demonstration site NOFO. Any requested additions or modifications will be made in collaboration with demonstration sites and in consultation and direction from OCSE.
- Per the NOFO language listed in II above, the Center may ask sites to support Center data collection activities (e.g., administering an electronic survey to survivors in the system; the survey and incentives will be provided by the Center).

- There are certain types of data the Center will strongly request sites to collect (e.g., demographic data) to aid in Center efforts to understand whether site activities support favorable outcomes for all survivors or whether additional efforts are needed to address disparities.
- The Center may suggest other activities to support the evaluation and/or the sites' understanding of the usefulness of a particular activity, but these suggestions will be made in collaboration with site efforts and always in the context of consultation and direction from OCSE.

V. Will the SAVES Center need personally identifiable information (PII)?

- The Center does not anticipate needing PII data beyond broad characteristics of participants (e.g., demographic data) from the CS automated system. However, the *possibility* exists that the Center will want to link site data with other demonstration data, in which case PII may be needed if there is not a unique ID number across data systems.
- The Center will potentially conduct interviews at some sites, including with survivors. In addition, they will review recordings and/or transcripts of interviews or focus groups that sites engage in. In these situations, the evaluation team will have access to PII data.
- The Center will need to analyze child support performance patterns for family violence cases over time. This will involve:
 - Analyzing different types of information (e.g., rates of order establishment, timing for order establishment, payment rates, enforcement actions, order levels, arrears balances)
 - Exploring differences in outcomes by subgroup (e.g., does someone who enters the CS system from a TANF referral have the same outcomes over time as someone who self-selects into the CS system?)
 - Analyzing change in outcomes over time (e.g., # of family violence cases before and after changing practice/policy)

Depending on how data are stored within the system, exploring this information over time by survivor will likely require at least a unique ID so Center evaluators can link data.

VI. What will the SAVES Center try to answer as part of the evaluation and research efforts using the demonstration site data?

- This information is not yet known as we need to first identify what data are currently available across all sites and where there are existing gaps. Broadly, the Center will strategically choose questions to answer based on: (a) what will be most useful, and add evidence, to the field, (b) what will best inform future policy and/or practice, and (c) the availability and quality of data.
- The Center will share potential research questions for input from sites as they become available.

VII. How will the Center protect data shared by demonstration sites?

Protecting the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of sensitive data, and adeptly navigating the ever changing security threat and regulatory landscape, are critically important to the Center team. Child Trends will oversee all data security for this project. Child Trends has collected, stored, and analyzed countless data sets, including those that would pose serious harm if not securely stored (e.g., personally identifiable data on child maltreatment, educational outcomes, teen parenting, public benefits, incarceration, etc.). All projects at Child Trends must comply with our internal 10-page data security policy, which includes:

- Base standards for the treatment of PII,
 - Including standards for passwords,
- Use of and access to secure servers,
- Storage and destruction of data,

- Guidance for reporting actual or potential data security breaches.

Staff are trained and assessed on the policy annually. Our data security policy also complies with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Information Security Program. In addition, Child Trends has an internal Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviews all projects, is responsible for addressing human subjects' protections in our work, and administratively tracks the storage and disposal of data. Additionally, Child Trends maintains a data security committee that develops and oversees the data security procedures and policies to ensure that projects comply, maintain high levels of data security, and conduct security audits.

In addition to following Child Trends own internal data security policy, Child Trends also adheres to specific security requirements of other agencies and develops project specific data security plans. After Child Trends receives information about the data needed from demonstration sites and site-specific security requirements, we will create a project specific data security plan that aligns with other requirements that may be needed by demonstration sites. The data security plan will include procedures for:

- Handling sensitive information;
- Restricting access to project folders where project data are stored;
- Assuring participants about the privacy of their data;
- Securing data collection, storage, and transmission using FIPS 140-2 encryption;
- Storing data on a secure drive that operates on Microsoft Azure, which maintains FedRAMP high P-ATOs with access via multifactor authentication;
- Providing annual data security training for all project staff;
- Handling breaches of data security;
- Disposal of data.

Only members of the research team will have access to project data for analyses.

VIII. What is the process for establishing data sharing agreements?

- Most demonstration sites will have specific requirements from their state agency on data security requirements.
- Some sites also may require projects be submitted through an agency-specific IRB or show compliance with an external IRB.
 - Again, Child Trends will submit all proposed data activities to our IRB for review and approval, regardless of other site-specific requirements.
- Demonstrates sites will provide Child Trends with all information that is required by their governing agency for data security purposes.
- Child Trends' data security division will work closely with demonstration sites to address any data security concerns and finalize any site-specific data sharing agreements.
 - *To note:* Child Trends does not require any data sharing agreements. We require the Center team to adhere to our data security requirements, but we do not require data sharing agreements to get access to data from others. However, most sites require some type of agreement before they are able to share their data.