

# Transforming Communities Through Policy: Bridging the Gap between what we know and what we do

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## Executive Summary

**1 Problem Statement:** Research findings are implemented into social services practices too slowly and inconsistently.

A large gap between research and practice can result in mental health agencies' interventions lagging the research by over 20 years (Henggeler & Schoenwald, 2011; Fixsen, et al, 2005; Brekke, 2007).

### Impacts:

- Case study example: **Poorer outcomes for clients and community**  
2010 Nebraska 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate of youth incarceration in U.S. instead of evidence-based programs (Voices for Children, 2012, Murphy, et al., 2017).
- Increased costs to taxpayers** – incarceration much more expensive compared with more cost-effective community solutions

**2 Solutions Development and Impact:**

The field of **Implementation Science** has been used to analyze problem root causes, and develop systematic, robust models to move from science to service. (Fixsen, et al., 2005; Fixsen, et al., 2009).

**Systematic approach to implementation is critical due to complex environment** of federal, state, community, and organizational elements in which agencies operate (Bertram, 2014).

**3 Practice Implications:** Intermediaries are increasingly relied upon by providers and policy makers to help navigate the complex, shifting terrain of multilevel systems change (Graff, et al., 2010).

**4 Policy Implications:** Governments are increasingly using implementation science to inform policy and budget decisions.

**5 Improved outcomes**

- Better outcomes for clients and community**
- Better use of taxpayer dollars**

## Research Question

*What actions can agencies take to adopt evidence-based practices for treating juvenile offenders and other clients in a more timely and effective manner?*

## Methods

A case study of Nebraska youth over-incarceration was examined within an overall context of juvenile justice reform in Nebraska, and led to the research question.

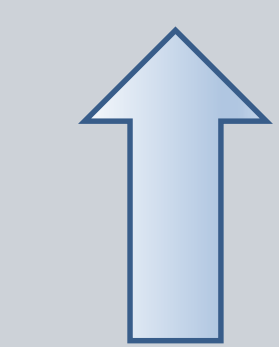
A literature review was conducted using PSYCHINFO, ProQuest Premium Social Sciences, and AcademicSearchComplete with the following keywords:

*research to practice gap, translational research, implementation, purveyor, evidence-based practice, dissemination.*

## Results

**1 New research findings are ready to be implemented** – how to accomplish this better and faster

The cycle continues as new research evolves



**2 Solutions Development through Implementation Science:**  
"the study of factors that influence the full and effective use of innovations in practice. The goal is not to answer factual questions about what is, but rather to determine what is required" (NIRM, 2015).

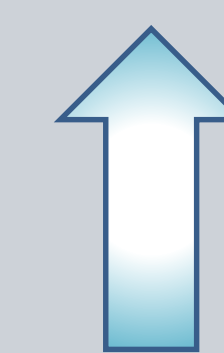
**4 Evidence-Based Policymaking is used to:**

- Reduce wasteful spending
- Expand innovative programs
- Strengthen accountability

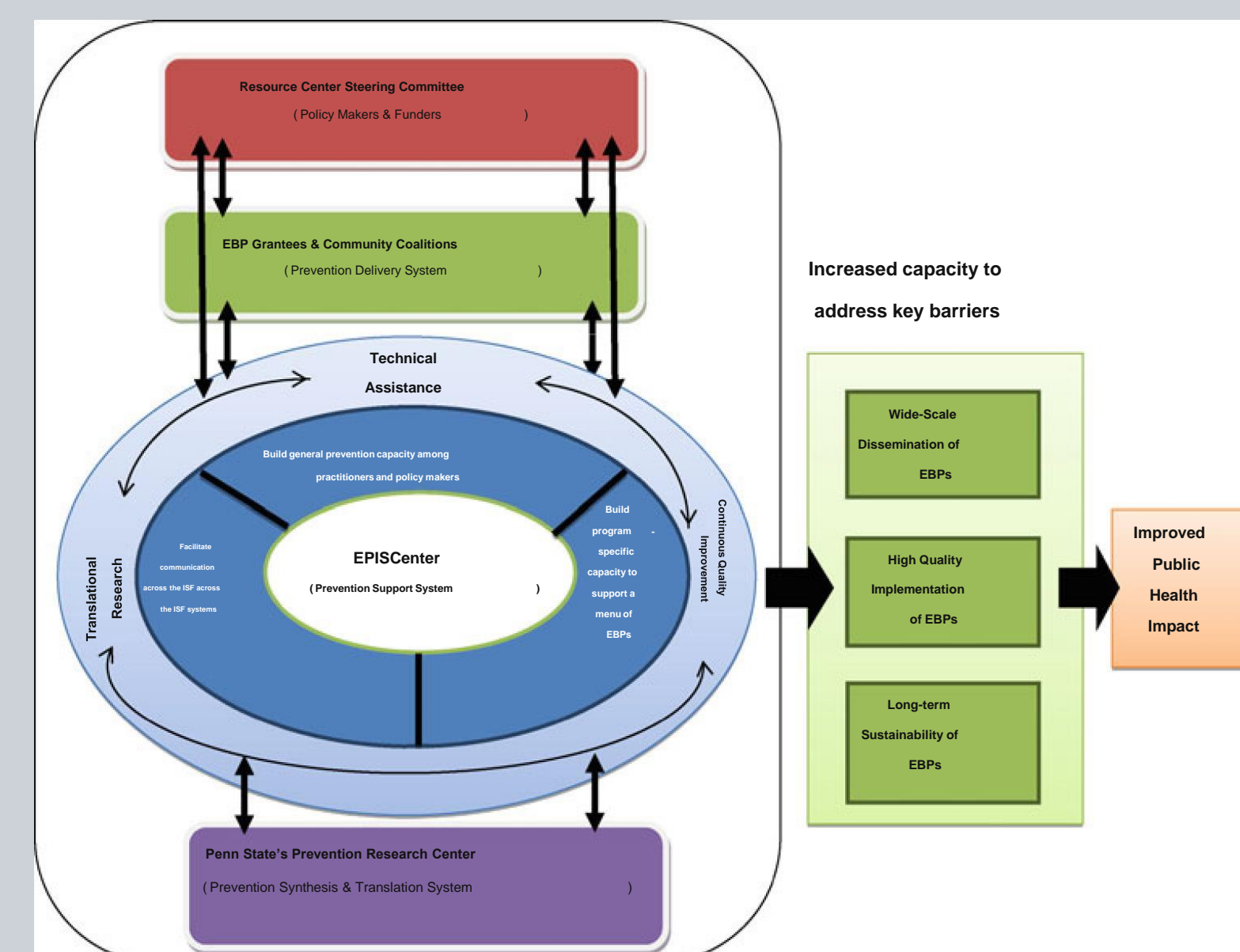
The **Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative** works with state and local governments to implement cost-benefit analyses to support budget and policy decisions. Pew-MacArthur recognized implementation support centers' role to ensure program investment benefits are realized (Pew-MacArthur, 2017).

**During 2012 and 2013**, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, and Vermont have used the **Results First model to target \$81 million in funding** to more effective programs that the model shows will achieve higher returns (Pew-MacArthur, 2014).

**Currently, 23 states and 8 counties are participating in Pew-MacArthur's Results First initiative** (Pew-MacArthur, 2017).

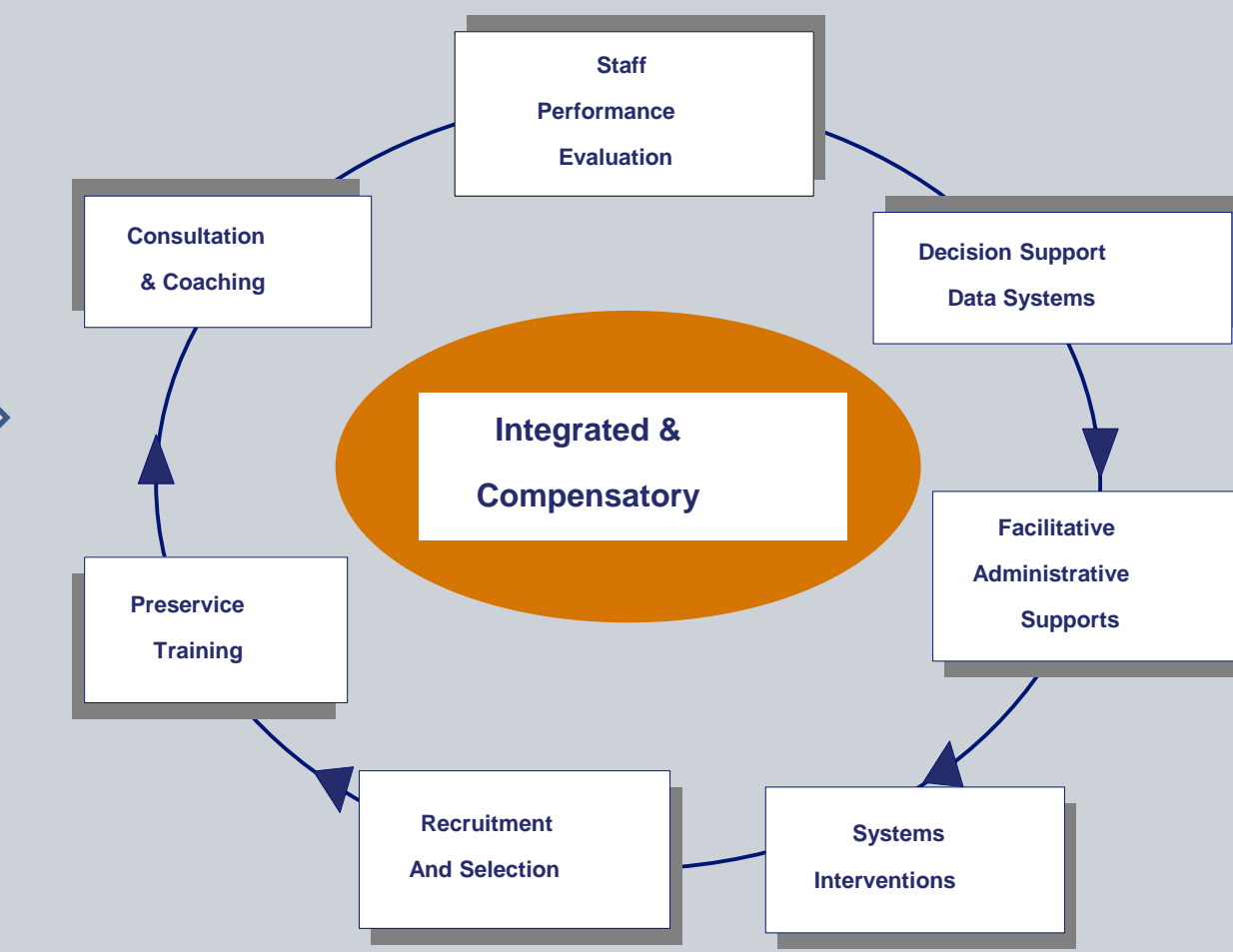


**How EPISCenter has Bridged the Science to Service Gap for 10 years**



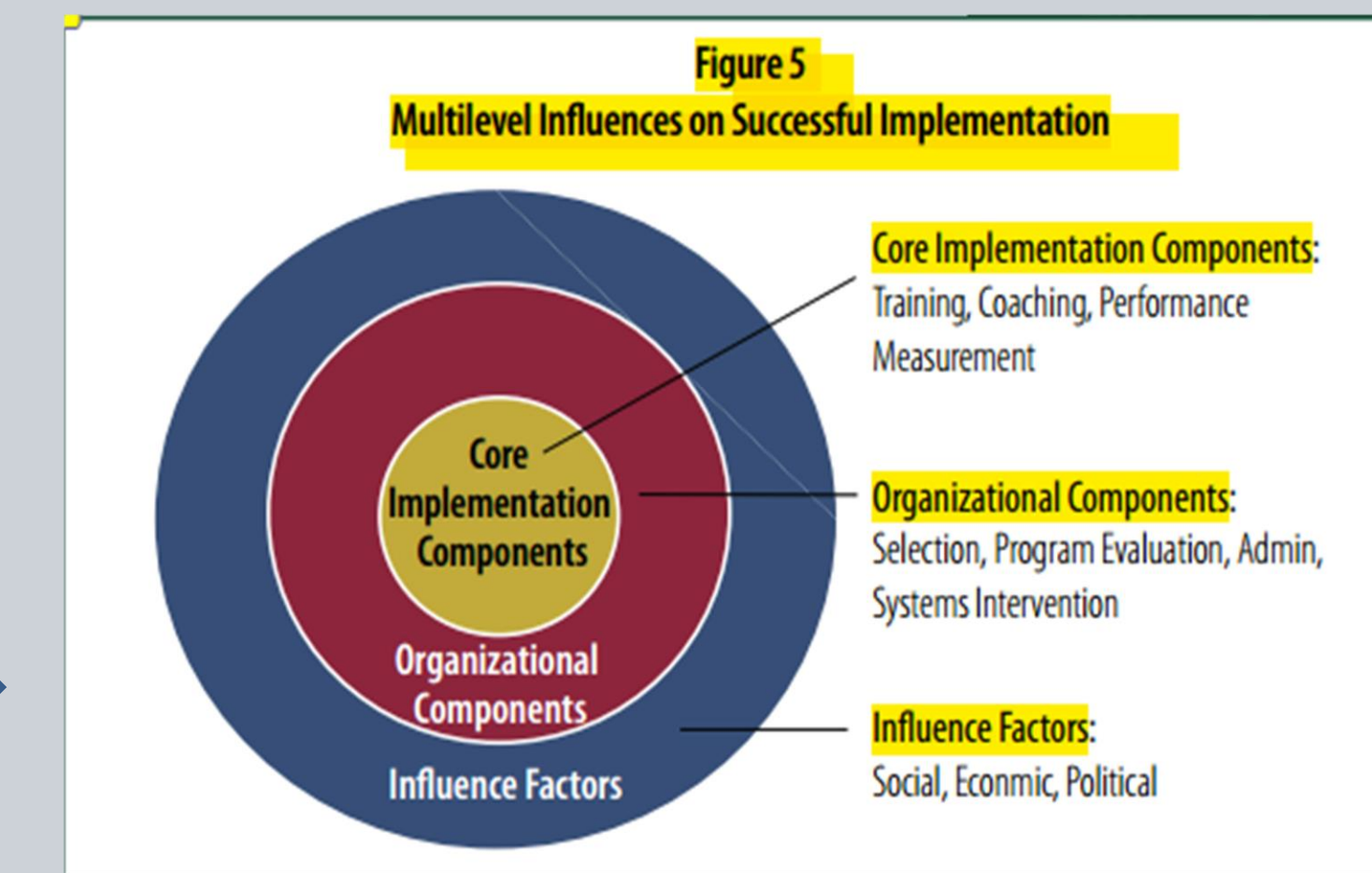
Source: Rhoades, 2011. Conference poster presented at Prevention Research Center Seminar.

## Core Implementation Components

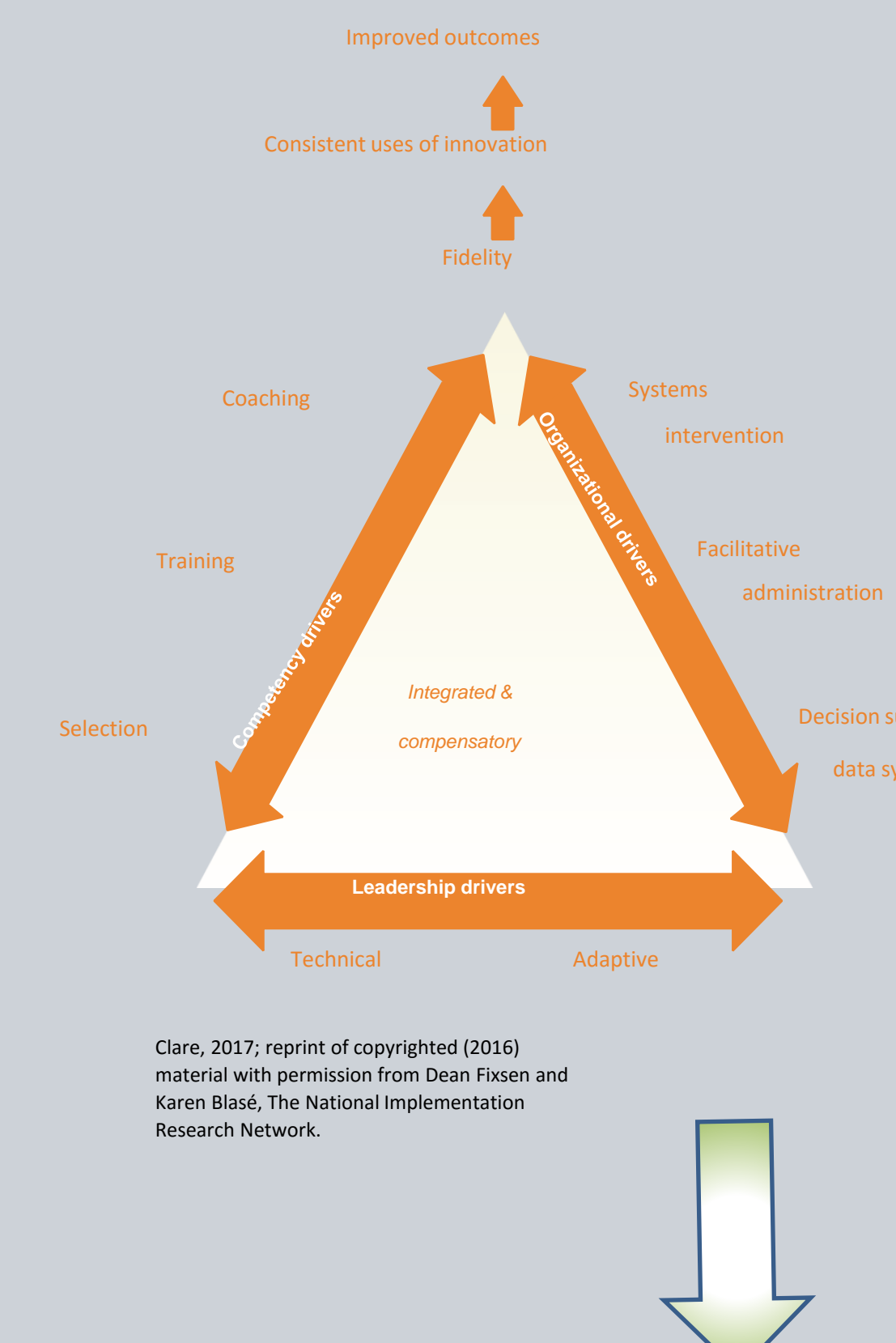


Core Components That Work Together to Implement and Sustain the Effective Use of Human Service Innovations Such as Evidence-Based Programs. Fixsen, et al., 2009.

**2 Core Implementation Components are delivered within a Multilevel Environment**



Source: Fixsen, et al., 2005



Clare, 2017; reprint of copyrighted (2016) material with permission from Dean Fixsen and Karen Blase. The National Implementation Research Network.

**2 Implementation Drivers Analysis is used to:**

- Help support and maintain high-fidelity (true to research) implementation of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs
- Recommend ways to strengthen and sustain evidence-based models in preventive services.

**5 Better Outcomes:**

**Effectively-implemented programs had 2 to 3 times greater mean effect sizes** compared with programs not as effectively implemented, according to 5 meta-analyses covering nearly 500 studies (Durlak, J. A., & DuPre, E. P., 2008).

**5 Better Use of Taxpayer Dollars:**

Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) conducted cost-benefit analyses of the Functional Family Therapy program, and found, **for each dollar spent:**

**\$10.69 in benefits** (avoided crime costs) when delivered with fidelity to the program model.

**\$4.18 of extra cost to taxpayers** when **not** delivered with fidelity (Pew Center on the States, 2012).

**5 Higher Return on Investment (ROI): EPISCenter helped secure an estimated \$24 million from**

**Evidence-Based Programs in Pennsylvania** for FY 2013/2014 (Source: EPISCenter 2014 Annual Report)

**3 Implementation centers affiliated with research universities provide technical support**

**Pennsylvania State University – Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support Center (EPISCenter)** (Pew-MacArthur, 2016).

**3 A Case Study of Effective Implementation: The New York City Experience**

In 2011, the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) implemented the largest, most diverse continuum of evidence-based and evidence-informed preventative programs in any child welfare jurisdiction in the U.S., and leveraged an implementation science framework as an integral part of the initiative.

ACS is responsible for child protection, child welfare, juvenile justice, and early childhood care and education services in New York City, through a network of more than **75 contract agencies and approximately 7,000 employees.**

**Preliminary results reflect ACS implementation of preventative Evidence Based Methods are positively impacting families:**

- More families are being served each year** per paid contracted slot, due to EBMs' shorter length of service
- High-risk families' outcomes are improved** compared with ACS traditional models:
- Higher case goal achievement** for closed cases
- Improved collaboration** between the ACS Division of Child Protection and its contracted providers
- Decrease in the number of indicated investigations**

Source: Clara, Garcia, & Metz, 2017

## Conclusions

- Evidence-based programs** can fully reach community members only if they are administered with fidelity.
- Agency practitioners operate within complex environments**, making policy changes challenging to execute and maintain.
- Policy changes are well supported** when practitioners use structured, robust methods of implementation science.
- Implementation centers and other intermediaries have demonstrated success** in connecting research to practice through implementation science, and offer valuable solutions to achieve positive community outcomes in cost-effective ways.
- State and local governments, and funders, can execute their responsibility to administer taxpayer and donor funds wisely** by requiring agencies to select and implement evidence-based treatments using proven methods that leverage implementation science.

## References

Complete references are available in separate handout

## Acknowledgements

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