

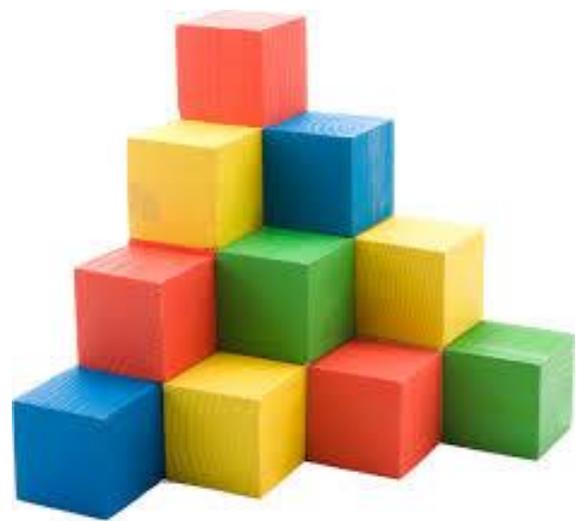
Applied Promising Practices Toolkit Pilot Project

Awareness, Motivation and Engagement (AME) Final Report

**Prepared by:
Tracey Hulten &
Michele Haddon**

Applied Practice
Research & Learning
Branch

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1. Project Background

The Federation of Community Social Services of BC (Federation) first launched its Applied Promising Practices (APP) initiative in 2008. They invited community service agencies to identify a practice, activity, strategy, service or program that they believed was making a positive difference – either for children, youth and families, or for the practitioners and agencies that were delivering services to children, youth and families. In the first wave of APP initiatives, groups based in four areas of the province looked at practices in residential care, clinical supervision in family development work, early years development, and youth hub models¹.

Through a facilitated process, the participating community agencies and the Federation APP team learned about the promising practices, identified key elements of success (and challenges), compared the practice-based evidence with available research evidence, built ‘communities of practice’, and encouraged the ‘scaling up’ of the most promising practice – examples of scaling up could include expanding the application of the promising practice to additional client groups, program areas, geographical areas or organizations.

The communities of practice encouraged curiosity, reflection, applied research and learning. Some of the groups had short lifespans, whereas others may continue.

In a broader sense, the APP Project also helped the participating agencies and the Federation learn how to increase:

- Organizational capacity to collect and analyze data from ongoing service delivery;
- The use of quality improvement processes for ongoing enhancement of service delivery; and
- The adoption and integration of promising practices in child, youth and family organizations through the timely distribution of new and emerging knowledge to front-line practitioners and program leaders.

In 2013, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)’s Applied Practice Research & Learning (APRL) Branch, in partnership with the Federation of Community Social Services of BC (Federation), developed the [Applied Promising Practices Toolkit](#). In 2014/15, APRL and the Federation set out to pilot the toolkit with four promising practices. In the summer of 2014, APRL and the Federation initiated the APP Toolkit Pilot Project, in which four promising practices were selected from within the province in order to assess the efficacy of the toolkit prior to promoting it more broadly across MCFD and the social services sector.

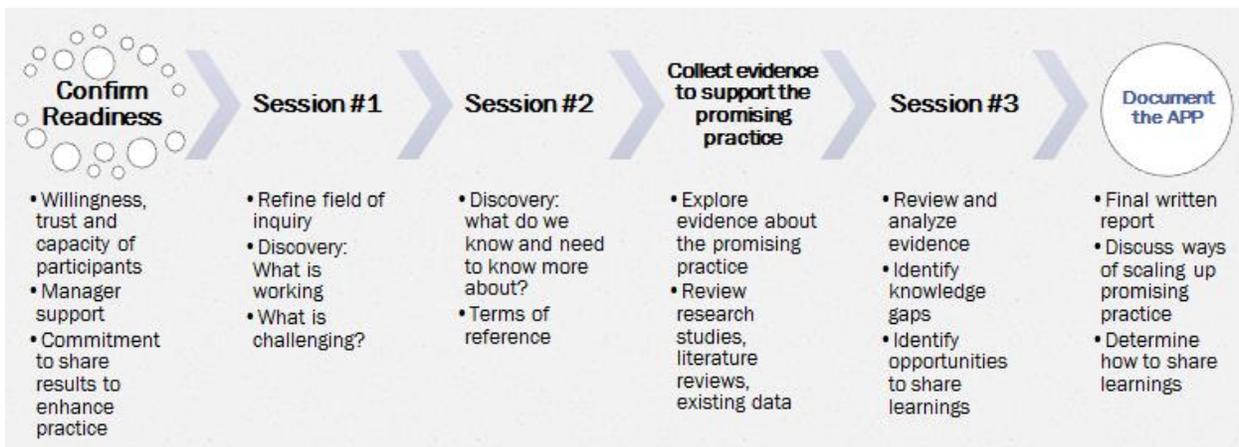
A “promising practice” is an activity, strategy, service or program that has preliminary evidence of effectiveness in smaller-scale interventions and for which there is potential to generate knowledge and expand the intervention.

¹ More information can found on their website: <http://fcssbc.ca/alliances/applied-promising-practices/>

2. The Applied Promising Practices (APP) Process

An APP project is, by design, a practice-based, practitioner-driven undertaking; one does not have to be in a formal position of leadership to invite others to participate in the process of co-learning. Shared leadership and responsibility are keys to its success over time. The APP process is designed to be a collaborative and iterative process whereby participants are given the opportunity to examine their own practice-based experiences.

Although the APP approach is considered relatively flexible in nature, there is a general flow to the APP process. In terms of flexibility, additional sessions can be convened, timeframes can be flexible, the participant group can change over time, etc. The following diagram depicts the general flow of the APP process in identifying, documenting and sharing learnings about promising practices:



2. A) Project Selection – Awareness, Motivation, Engagement (AME) Training Program (Duncan)

In 2014/15, the APRL Branch set out to evaluate the efficacy of the APP approach and Toolkit, and to assess the resources that are required to carry out APP projects prior to promoting it more broadly across MCFD and the sector. As such, APRL collected and reviewed a variety of proposals for potential APP projects against readiness criteria, of which the following is an abbreviated list of what is outlined in the APP Toolkit itself:

- Willingness, trust and capacity of participants;
- Manager support; and
- Commitment to sharing results to enhance practice.

In 2010, the Centre for Addictions Research of BC (CARBC) developed the Awareness, Motivation, Engagement (AME) program for the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)'s Youth Justice Policy and Program Support. The AME program was designed as an adaptation of Motivational Interviewing (MI) to be used by Youth Probation Officers (YPOs) to address substance use by young offenders.

AME was recommended as a potential APP project, as initial evaluations of the AME Program were positive and showed reduced substance abuse in youth. It was thought that elements of the AME training (E.g., Motivational Interviewing) could potentially be applied to other lines of service within the ministry.

AME was targeted at YPOs working in B.C.'s youth justice system with the goal to:

- Increase the knowledge, skills and confidence of YPOs in addressing the substance use issues of clients;
- Improve the quality of the relationship between clients and YPOs;
- Increase the motivation, knowledge and skills of clients to address issues related to substance use; and
- Reduce the personal, social and societal harms related to substance use by clients.

“Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a method that works on facilitating and engaging intrinsic motivation within the client in order to change behavior. MI is a goal-oriented, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence.”

Initially, 22 youth probation officers received AME training in 2010, and an evaluation of the pilot project was conducted in 2012/13.

Twenty communities across B.C. received training between February 2014 and January 2015. During training, a group of up to 20 professionals from both government and non-governmental organizations participated in a two-day training workshop, followed by three post-workshop training sessions via teleconference. In addition, the participants were encouraged to continue ongoing collaboration through communities of practice. The Duncan training cohort was selected for this APP project, as it was the first community to receive the AME training in February 2014.

2. B) APP Participants

At the onset of the AME APP, 12 individuals were identified as having actively participated in the follow-up training sessions, and as forming an emerging community of practice in Duncan. Based on these factors, they were invited to participate in the APP Pilot Project. In addition to MCFD probation staff, community partners represented at the table included the Vancouver Island Health Authority, Cowichan Tribes, Tsewulten Health Centre and the John Howard Society.

Two Project Coordinators – contracted by the Federation of Community Social Services of BC – led the project and were responsible for planning, organizing and facilitating the APP sessions, developing materials, completing research and reports, and arranging unique ways of sharing learnings from each of the pilot projects.

APRL Branch staff attended sessions and conducted an evaluation of the project with the following objectives:

- To learn about and assess the usefulness of the APP approach;
- To assess the usefulness of the APP Toolkit; and
- To assess resources used in the APP process.

A number of data sources and methods were used to meet the evaluation objectives, including debriefing sessions with the facilitator, a participant survey, interviews with key contacts of each of the four projects, focus groups with APRL staff observers, and project documents.

2. C) APP Sessions

The fundamental purpose of an APP project is to learn about promising practices through a collaborative and iterative approach that brings practitioners together as a group to focus on new or emergent practices and their applications and impacts. At these sessions, practitioners share what they think is working, and then through a stepped process, they identify key themes that emerge from the discussion. Research literature is then explored to uncover evidence that supports the practices that groups are finding to be successful.

Project Phase	Timeframe	Key Players	Summary
APP Session #1	September 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Facilitator • 2 APRL Staff • 6 APP participants from community/MCFD Office 	<p>Participants indicated that some elements contributing to the success of AME might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client-focused – considers the youth voice and perspective • Promotes collaborative practice -- common language, community of practice • Includes follow-up sessions with participants – helps people with different levels of skill
APP Session #2	October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Facilitator • 2 APRL Staff • 5 APP participants from community/MCFD Office 	<p>Further brainstorming occurred regarding “What are the attributes that make AME training successful?” For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The passion and enthusiasm of the trainer • Tools that are practical and useable • The very collaborative environment between service providers and MCFD in the community of Duncan • The training/program layers the learning on multiple occasions, which helps to integrate the information
Evidence Collection	October 2014 - March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Facilitators 	<p>Collection, review and organization of research literature to support key themes discussed as promising practices</p>
Follow-up Conference Call	January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Project Facilitators • 2 APRL Staff • 4 APP participants from community/MCFD Office 	<p>The APP group explored several aspects of the AME training and post-training practice considered to be promising in a follow-up conference call in late January 2015, at which the final field of inquiry was determined.</p>
APP Session #3	March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Facilitator • 2 APRL Staff • 3 APP participants from community/MCFD Office 	<p>Participants were provided the research evidence to support some of the key themes making the AME training successful.</p> <p>Discussions took place regarding how to share the learnings with the larger community.</p>
Knowledge Sharing	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APP participants • APRL Staff 	<p>A broadsheet article was developed to highlight the APP process and key themes and learnings from the APP project.</p>

2. D) Discovery

In the first two sessions, the participants identified a number of success factors attributable to the AME training, including the following:

- Motivational Interviewing (MI) is about being a good ‘question asker’ – “seeing a piece of light, grabbing on to it and working with it” (APP Pilot Project participant);
- The flexibility of the model – practitioners can use what fits for each client and scenario they are working with; they don’t need to use the whole model or all the tools;
- APP participants indicated that they have experienced a shift in their general practice toward a focus on a more client-centered, strengths-focused, asset-focused and holistic orientation;
- Common language – co-training with MCFD and community partners and using the same language is beneficial;
- Strengths-based model – the AME model gives practitioners the ability to ‘fan flames’; YPOs found themselves focusing more upon celebrating clients’ successes rather than on their failures and setbacks, and had seen positive responses from clients as a result. They found that this orientation equipped them better to deal with the challenges they faced with their clients;
- The training helps with the process of creating a collaborative environment between service providers;
- Service providers are starting to be able to identify when another practitioner who received the training has been working with a particular youth – they are noting that a foundation has been laid and the youth is presenting as “primed” for MI-type conversations.

By the end of the first two APP sessions and a follow-up conference call, the APP group agreed that:

The delivery model of the AME program was different from other training opportunities in youth probation. The two-day training sessions – using experiential learning processes combined with three follow-up sessions and coaching – have shown promising outcomes for participants when integrating the MI tools into their practice.

Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience, and is more specifically defined as learning through the reflection on doing.

Those who are using the tools in a collaborative environment have found that a commonly understood process, language, and approach have built on and strengthened their practice working with clients.

The AME APP participants thus chose to examine aspects of the AME training model as a promising practice that has made it effective for those working with youth.

3. APP Session Findings

The Duncan AME APP Project set out to explore the factors contributing to the effectiveness of the AME training, as experienced and realized, when practitioners integrated the knowledge and skills learned into their practices with clients. Throughout this iterative process, three key themes emerged:

1) Effectiveness of the two-day experiential workshop – The two-day experiential workshop delivery method in Motivational Interviewing (MI) was deemed to be an effective method for learning and gaining confidence in these new skills.

2) Importance of Follow-up & Community of Practice – The follow-up sessions and coaching were found to be very important for maintaining and consolidating MI knowledge and skills. Those who participated in the training workshop, the follow-up sessions, and the emerging *community of practice* reported the ongoing ability to integrate AME tools and strategies into their practice with clients; and

3) Benefits of Inter-Agency Collaboration – The training and subsequent practice development of AME skills and strategies led to the development of a common language and skill set that has built more effective collaboration, and has shown to be beneficial when working with clients in common. We will examine each of these learnings in greater detail, and compare them to the findings from the literature review.

A summary of discussions at the APP sessions around these key themes is to follow. Evidence from the research literature that supports these key themes has been provided in Appendix A.

3. A) Theme 1: Effectiveness of the Two-Day Experiential Workshop

In general, the participants of the Duncan APP group were positive and enthusiastic about the AME training they had received. For some practitioners, it validated prior knowledge and practice, while for others it represented a significant shift in practice. Participants who received the AME training felt strongly that everyone who works with youth should receive the training, and that its principles (such as client-efficacy and a strengths-based approach), and its strategies (such as active listening and change talk) would work well across a wide spectrum of services for both youth and adults (including protection social workers, foster parents, etc.).

Participants of the Duncan APP group attributed the success of the workshop, in part, to the passion and enthusiasm of the instructor and to the experiential aspect of the training. Participants felt that the workshop brought the depth of motivational interviewing to a practical level, and that it provided user-friendly tools that could be put into action.

Research evidence on this theme says...

Throughout the research, by far, the most widely documented form of training in motivational interviewing is through 1-2 day workshops including a mixture of didactic instruction, and experiential exercises such as role plays, and other demonstrations and practice. (Madson et al. 2009).

Studies show that this experiential learning aspect of the training contributes to the overall success in terms of MI knowledge and skill improvement among workshop participants. For example, in a recent meta-analysis of MI training studies, all twenty-one of the studies included reported positive gains in MI skills immediately following workshop training. (2014 Meta-Analysis)

3. B) Theme 2: Importance of Follow-up & Communities of Practice

In addition to the two-day AME workshop, the APP participants identified follow-up sessions and participation in a “Community of Practice” as important elements of their AME training. The participants emphasized that follow-up sessions allowed them to consolidate the knowledge and skills they learned through the AME workshop.

Participants explained that the follow-up training had a very positive effect since it allowed them to practice what they had learned through training. They could return to the group and discuss what had worked well and what had not; then return again to the field to carry on implementing what they had learned. Some of the staff explained that it had been important for them to maintain contact with at least one other individual who had received the AME training in order to maintain MI knowledge and skills.

The participants who have maintained contact with one another explained that they usually do not meet together with the specific purpose of discussing the AME training, but that different aspects of the training often get incorporated into their discussions, and that the common set of tools and language that the AME training provided them has strengthened their work.

This post-workshop training, alongside collegial support and collaboration from the *community of practice*, helped those new to the AME model to gain comfort and to build competency. The participants acknowledged that they felt that they were still in the development stage of this learning process, and they welcomed new tools and skills to support their ongoing development and the chance to continue meeting as a group to build and enhance the training tools collectively.

Research evidence on this theme says:

Within Canada, the Paul Burke Training and Consulting Group (2009) actively promotes the formation of Communities of Practice in order to sustain and develop MI skills. They state: “We know that people get some exposure to MI through participating in workshops. After that they need to develop a plan for how they will integrate that new learning into skills training and practice.”

Melinda Hohman (2013), Director of the School of Social Work at the San Diego State University, confirms the research findings that post-workshop follow-up and coaching is essential to consolidate MI skills. She says that this follow-up can take 2 forms: formal or informal. The important contribution Hohman makes is the notion that developing an MI Community of Practice can serve as an excellent form of “informal MI coaching.”

3. C) Theme 3: Benefits of Inter-Agency Collaboration

The other major learning that emerged from the Duncan AME APP project was that the training and subsequent practice development helped to foster inter-agency collaboration, and has shown benefits when working with clients in common. The AME training brought together practitioners from a number of different agencies within the community of Duncan. This gathering of practitioners helped them to communicate and find common ground in their work with youth and amongst agency staff.

Prior to the AME training, a number of these practitioners already worked with clients in common and/or collaborated with one another to varying degrees. On the other hand, some described having worked in silos in the past, and having referred clients based on assumptions.

One of the strengths of the AME program was that it provided practitioners with a common set of tools and language that allows them to communicate information regarding the client more effectively. An important aspect of the AME training in Duncan was that it was given to a range of professionals from different agencies and disciplines.

Practitioners noted the ability to identify whether or not a client has been working with a trained AME clinician. When that is the case, clients are more able to recognize a consistent approach and are comfortable moving forward with the AME tools. This leads to a sense of continuity and allows for the work to progress more quickly and effectively.

Research evidence on this theme says:

Some scholars are beginning to examine the topic of multidisciplinary learning and collaboration. One study concluded that: “teaching MI skills to multidisciplinary groups simultaneously has the potential to be quite beneficial for strengthening the MI skills of different groups.” (Madison, et al. 2009)

Many companies in today’s world realize the benefits of T-shaped workers , multidisciplinary workers who are capable of responding creatively to unexpected situations, and develop interdisciplinary teams in order to bring a variety of skill-sets and perspectives to the table. By engaging a number of practitioners from different agencies and backgrounds in a local community of practice, the potential exists for maximizing learnings and strengthening and sustaining MI skills learned through the AME training. (Brooks 2012)

4. Potential Applications of the Applied Promising Practice

Key components of the Applied Promising Practice Toolkit help to highlight the value of promising practices and to propose ways in which the learnings can be shared and applied more broadly. This table outlines some possible ways in which the learnings from the AME training program could be applied by a variety of stakeholder groups.

Discovery and Learnings	MCFD Field Staff	Service Providers	Policy Makers	Strategic HR/ Learning and Development	Funders	Public	GCPE
a. Effectiveness of Experiential Type Workshop Training	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
b. Motivational Interviewing Training Benefits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
c. Significance of Common Language and Tools for Practitioners	✓	✓	✓	✓			
d. Benefits of Inter-Agency Learning and Collaboration		✓	✓	✓	✓		
e. Improved Communication Between Practitioners	✓	✓					✓
f. The Benefits of Communities of Practice Supporting Training Objectives	✓		✓	✓	✓		
g. The Advantages of Follow up Training Sessions	✓	✓		✓			
h. MI Offers a Consistent Approach to Case Work	✓	✓					
i. Client Familiarity with Tools and Modalities – improves client outcomes	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

5. Conclusion

The effectiveness of a program or service can only be understood by collecting and evaluating data that relates to its goals. The AME APP Toolkit Pilot Project set out to examine the impact of the AME training that took place in the community of Duncan in February 2014. It engaged participants in a collaborative and iterative process in which they identified ways in which the AME training had worked well, and attempted to discover the driving factors behind those successes. Examples in the research literature provided further validity to the success factors that participants identified.

Through the AME Applied Promising Practices Project, the APP participants identified the following aspects of their promising practice that they believe could inform policy-makers and serve other service providers in developing and expanding training initiatives for those working with youth:

- The two-day experiential workshop delivery method in motivational interviewing (MI) proved promising by allowing practitioners to integrate MI skills and knowledge into their practice with clients;
- Follow-up training and a community of practice are strongly suggested in order to maintain and improve MI skills over time; and
- The training and subsequent practice development of AME skills and strategies has helped to foster inter-agency collaboration, and has shown to be beneficial when working with clients in common and has begun to develop an emerging community or practice.

One of the goals of the AME Program is fostering a *community of practice* in order to sustain and further develop the MI skills gained through the training process; the Duncan group, for example, appears to be in the beginning stages of this process. We learned that a Community of Practice can act as an informal, cost-effective method of maintaining MI skills, and helps support the ongoing integration of the tools and skills collected during the training.

The Duncan AME APP Project affirmed the value of the AME training as a powerful tool for practitioners who work with youth with substance abuse issues, and points to the potential benefits of expanding and providing further MI training opportunities to a wider array of service providers within British Columbia and beyond. It is hoped that the findings identified through this project will be shared widely within the Ministry and amongst service-provider partners to enhance the ongoing development of policies and programs.

Appendix A – Research Evidence Supporting the Promising Practices

This appendix summarizes the research-based evidence found in the literature review phase of the AME APP Project that relate directly to each thematic category explored and developed during the APP sessions with participants.

The APP participants felt the following promising practices best embodied the AME training’s success, and could most inform policy-makers and support other service providers in developing and expanding training initiatives for those working with youth:

- The delivery of the two-day experiential workshop on motivational interviewing (MI) proved promising in allowing practitioners to integrate MI skills and knowledge into their practice with clients;
- Follow-up training and a community of practice are strongly suggested in order to maintain and improve MI skills over time; and
- The training and subsequent practice development of AME skills and strategies has helped to foster inter-agency collaboration, and has shown to be beneficial when working with clients in common, and has begun to develop an emerging community of practice.

Theme 1: Effectiveness of Experiential Learning

The effectiveness of the AME two-day experiential training workshop is a foundational element of the AME process according to participants. Participants felt that the workshop brought the concept of Motivational Interviewing (MI) to a practical level, and provided user-friendly tools that could be put into action. During the workshop training, participants developed a common set of terms and reference points, which subsequently informed their ongoing practice and encouraged emergent learning and knowledge sharing.

For the purposes of the literature review phases of the APP project, the Coordinator sought out evidence related to the importance of experiential learning in terms of improving service delivery to youth and integrating new skills into practice.

The importance of the experiential aspect of the training is highlighted in the research literature. Interest in MI and MI training has exploded in recent decades, as evidenced by the sheer number of studies that have been published in recent years.² During the 1980s, only six references could be found on the subject; by contrast, a current search would yield up to 1,000 citations. Clearly, MI has generated

² In addition to the vast array of academic literature seeking answers to this question, in 1997 the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) was founded. The mission of MINT is “to promote good practice in the use, research and training of motivational interviewing” (About MINT, 2013). The organization now has a presence in 35 countries and in more than 20 different languages.

a substantial and increasing body of evidence (Lundahl & Burke, 2009). One of the topics MI researchers have studied, in particular, is that of motivational interviewing training methods.

Throughout the research, by far the most widely documented form of training in motivational interviewing is through 1-2 day workshops that include a mixture of didactic instruction and experiential exercises, such as role plays and other demonstrations and practice (Madson et al, 2009). Studies show that this experiential learning aspect of the training contributes to the overall success in terms of MI knowledge and skill improvement among workshop participants. For example, in a recent meta-analysis of MI training studies, all 21 of the studies included reported positive gains in MI skills immediately following workshop training (Schwalbe et al., 2014).

Theme 2: Importance of Follow-up & Communities of Practice

As critically important as the workshop was, the Duncan APP group also felt the follow-up coaching and inter-agency networking were major drivers for the ongoing integration of AME concepts and skills into their respective practices. The common understanding, shared knowledge and skills that the participants gained in the workshop, in turn, engendered and fostered further inter-agency collaboration and strengthened their relationships.

Of note is the fact that AME APP participants also reported that the process was beneficial for the youth they serve. The participants stated that youth clients were “primed”, through exposure to the Motivational Interviewing (MI) process, for their work with other service providers. The AME APP participants identified follow-up sessions as vital to the integration of their AME training into practice, emphasizing that the follow-up sessions, coaching and community of practice allowed them to consolidate and expand on their existing knowledge and skills through the AME workshop.

The reflections from the APP participants about the importance of follow ups and communities of practice are also echoed in the literature. It is now becoming clear to most MI scholars and trainers that participating in training workshops is *not* sufficient to sustain training gains for most human service professionals. Researchers are discovering that MI skills decline over time among training participants when post-workshop feedback and coaching are not provided, sometimes as soon as two months post-workshop (Schwalbe et al., 2014).

Resonating throughout the research findings was the reflection that although motivational interviewing techniques are simple, they are not necessarily easy to learn or to integrate into one’s everyday work with clients. In fact, Miller and Moyers (two of the founding MI scholars) have identified eight particular stages in becoming competent in MI, beginning with an understanding of its philosophy and culminating in the integration of MI with other theoretical approaches (2006).

In their review of MI training studies, Madson, Loignon and Lane (2009) found that of all of the 28 different trainings reviewed, not one workshop appeared to have touched upon all of the eight stages

for proficiency in MI.³ This is not surprising, given the fact that in the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) description of the different types of MI training options available, they make it clear that an initial 2-3 day MI workshop is an “introductory workshop.” They state: “With 16-24 hours of training contact time, it is possible to provide participants with an understanding of the spirit and method of MI, and to offer *some* practical experience in trying out this approach. A reasonable goal for this level of training is not MI proficiency, but rather to *learn how to learn* MI from ongoing practice.” They also point out that research and experience caution that attendees may leave a one-time introductory workshop *overconfident* in their mastery of MI, but that this confidence may not necessarily be demonstrated in actual skill proficiency (2013).

To get a better sense of proficiency, beginning in the late 1990’s, MI experts began to create objective tools by which to measure MI skills. The Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers lists six different MI assessment/coding tools on their website. The two most important are:

- 1) The Motivational Interviewing Assessment Code (MISC)
- 2) The Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity Code (MITI) (2013).

Many clinical trials have been carried out using one of these objective assessment codes, including the evaluation of the AME Pilot Project conducted in 2012 wherein a trained observer utilized the MITI code to assess the efficacy of the MI training and refresher sessions.⁴

Some studies have noted, however, that the MITI and MISC measures are mainly suitable for use in research contexts, since they require intensive training and time to score, which means that they are costly and time-consuming. As one study stated: “Research on MI training has yet to evolve to develop a product, process, or checklist for practitioners to utilize in the real world” (Madson et al. 2009). The authors note that what is needed is a user-friendly method of tracking MI fidelity in the field that is “highly usable, simple and resource neutral.” One tool listed on the MINT website – the Behavior Change Counselling Index (BECCI) – may serve as a viable alternative for practitioners (Madson et al. 2009).

In their 2008 article, Alexander, VanBenschoten and Walters specifically examine the question of MI training in the area of criminal justice – in particular, the training of probation officers. Because of the evidence they provide to demonstrate that MI can be highly effective in a criminal justice setting and the fact that many criminal justice agencies in the United States have already begun training officers in MI (typically through 1-2 day workshops), the authors set out to develop a “model plan” for effectively implementing MI training. They state: “it appears that competency in the MI style is achieved through long-term training that involves skill practice and feedback” (Alexander et al., 2008).

³ It is interesting to note that upon the researcher’s revision of the content of the AME training workshop, all of the eight stages for MI proficiency seem to have been touched upon to a certain degree during training, leading the researcher to believe that the training was a very well-rounded introduction to MI. In addition, Rob Axsen is a trained member of MINT.

⁴ The 2013 Evaluation revealed significant variability in how well the YPOs trained in AME used the principles of MI in their work. Some YPOs were found to demonstrate high levels of fidelity in their practice, while for others the training had not been integrated into their work to a significant degree, despite their overall positive perception of the training and its principles (Remocker & Reist, 2013).

The plan that they developed included the following elements:

- Supervisors and criminal justice officers are trained during an initial two-day MI workshop, conducted by an MI trainer certified by MINT or another reputable trainer.
- Subsequently, officers should receive monthly coaching/feedback sessions focused on building MI skills, with sessions including the review of an audio and/or videotape of officer-defendant/offender interactions.
- Ideally, the MI trainer will train an internal supervisor and/or officer to become proficient in coaching MI and lead the monthly feedback sessions.
- Booster MI sessions for both supervisors and officers should occur six months and 12 months post initial training (preferably given by the original trainer).
- Informal ratings of MI skills can be made during monthly sessions using informal feedback forms.
- Then, once an officer appears to have reached proficiency in MI, he/she should submit a taped interaction for formal MITI coding.
- Even when minimum MITI “competency” standards have been met, the proposed model still recommends that feedback and coaching sessions occur at least quarterly (2008).

This model plan resonates with MINT recommendations for reaching MI proficiency. They believe that ongoing on-site consultation is the best way to help improve MI skills. In the absence of having an on-site coach proficient enough to provide ongoing training and feedback, an MI workshop(s), followed by feedback and coaching sessions, is the preferred method of MI training (“Training Expectations”, 2013).

An important study published last year found that MI skills were sustained and, in some cases improved, in the presence of post-workshop feedback/coaching. While the largest gains in skill proficiency directly correlated to the number and frequency of post-workshop contact, the overall results of this study suggest that “the level of post-training expert supervision needed to sustain MI skills is somewhat modest – approximately three to four contacts totalling at least five hours of contact time over a six-month period was sufficient for the average study to sustain training effects over a six-month window” (Schwalbe et al., 2014). Schwalbe et al conclude their study by recommending approximately monthly coaching and feedback sessions devoted to MI implementation and skills, in order to not only sustain the skills attained during an introductory workshop, but to “actively advance trainees towards overall MI proficiency” (2014). They also recognize that coding systems for MITI and MISC – while they do play an important role in the process of coaching and feedback – may be too invasive and expensive, and therefore not sustainable for many agencies (2014).

Hohman confirms the findings from research that post-workshop follow up and coaching are essential to consolidate MI skills. She says that this follow up can be formal or informal. The formal feedback/coaching methods Hohman discusses fall in line with those discussed. The important contribution Hohman makes is the notion that developing an MI community of practice can serve as an excellent form of “informal MI coaching” (2013).

Similarly, within Canada, the Paul Burke Training and Consulting Group actively promotes communities of practice in order to sustain and develop MI skills. They state: “We know that people get some exposure to MI through participating in workshops. After that, they need to develop a plan for how they will integrate that new learning into skills training and practice.” While the group provides many types of MI training, they believe that helping to foster MI communities of practice can be a cost-effective alternative to outsider feedback and coaching. They specialize in “designing cost-effective sustainable learning systems for agencies wishing to implement the practice and ongoing training of Motivational Interviewing within their own organizations” (Paul Burke Training Group, 2009).

Theme 3: Inter-Agency Collaboration

The AME training brought together practitioners from a number of different agencies from within the community of Duncan. The other major learning that emerged from the Duncan AME APP project was that the training helped to foster inter-agency collaboration. The AME APP participants stated that this aspect of the process has shown benefits when working with clients in common, has promoted knowledge sharing, and has illuminated the lessons learned.

The literature review suggests scholars are beginning to examine the topic of multidisciplinary teams as they relate to knowledge sharing, learning, and inter-agency collaboration. One study concluded that “Teaching MI skills to multidisciplinary groups simultaneously has the potential to be quite beneficial for strengthening the MI skills of different groups” (Madson et al., 2014).

A concept that may provide some insight in terms of the benefits of interdisciplinary collaborative relationships is the concept of “T-shaped teams.” The term “T-shaped” began being used in the 1990s, mostly in the consulting and technical fields in order to refer to “multidisciplinary workers who are capable of responding creatively to unexpected situations” (Brooks, 2012).” The vertical stem of the T provides an individual’s foundation: an in-depth specialized knowledge in one or two fields. The horizontal crossbar of the T refers to complementary skills, such as communication, creativity, empathy and skills that are valuable but not specific to one discipline (2012). In this instance, practitioners from different agencies came together and gained common motivational interviewing skills and tools, while maintaining the unique and specialized knowledge and skills related to their specific interactions with the youth they serve.

Many companies in today’s world realize the benefits of T-shaped workers and develop interdisciplinary teams in order to bring a variety of skill sets and perspectives to the table. By engaging a number of practitioners from different agencies and backgrounds in a local community of practice, the potential exists for maximizing learning, and strengthening and sustaining the MI skills learned through the AME training.

Appendix B - Bibliography

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