Frontline Interactions Audit

Understanding frontline activities help knowing where you do well or not.

The diversity of public policies and programs, as well as the many settings where they are implemented, creates distraction sometimes from analytically focusing on the frontlines, where implementation system interacts with the target group of the policy or program.

To understand a particular situation and be able to describe it to others, it is often helpful to do a quick audit of the situation.

What is needed? Pen, printed copies of this worksheet for all; *for Steps 2 and 3: markers, flip charts/whiteboards if necessary*
Who is needed? Complete Step 1 before proceeding to Steps 2 and 3.
How long will this take? Complete Step 1 before proceeding to the next steps. *Steps 2 & 3:* 2 hours

Activity

Step 1
Consider the most appropriate source of information for the audit.
- Do you or other professionals understand enough about frontline interactions to recount typical experiences?
- Does some structured observation need to occur?

Depending on your answers in Step 1, you may need to gather the right persons and/or sources of observation before you continue.

Step 2
Use the table in the next page as a template. Describe the key elements significant for understanding the nature of frontline interactions in your context or area of your own implementation analysis. Tip: You can recreate the table in a larger format (e.g. on a flipchart or a whiteboard).

Step 3
Once you have described the current situation, it is important to consider its implications in shaping frontline implementation.

Write out or discuss with others the following questions:
- How does the nature of target group engagement shape the interactions?
- What is the significance of the label given to the target groups? What assumptions does it communicate? What are the moral issues at work in this categorization?
- What is significant about how the interaction is structured?
- Given that we know target group expectations shape assessments of quality, is the interaction structured in ways that are consistent with policy or program intent?
- Are there variations in the target group expectations across different members? Is that significant in program satisfaction?
- How much vulnerability does the target group experience in the interactions? Is this something to be capitalized upon or minimized to achieve desired policy results?

Step 2: Key Factors in Frontline Interactions

Target Group

Nature of the engagement

Participatory? Voluntary? Mandatory?

Descriptive labels

How is the target group referred to at the frontlines? Other parts of the system?
(for example, "Clients," "homeowners," "patients")

Diversity of group

Is the target group homogeneous, mixed, or heterogeneous in relation to program objectives?

Interaction Structure

Communication medium

Is the interaction face-to-face, in close or distanced physical proximity? Is it facilitated by technology through a web site or portable app, or phone?

Duration

Are the interactions typically fleeting, one-time, multiple times, or is there continuity of contact over extended times?

Information and communication infrastructure

Is there an established process for standardization or customization? Is there an information technology infrastructure provided?

Social Significance

Expectations

Does the target group have expectations of transactional interactions, emotional connection, customization? Something else?

Value

How significant is the program benefits in the target groups' livelihood? What is the importance of it in their lives?

Power of Information

Are there disparities in information between the target group and system? Are they acknowledged?