

2003 Safe Start Local Evaluator Technical Assistance Assessment

September 12, 2003



Safe Start National Evaluation Team: the Association for the Study and Development of Community, Caliber Associates, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

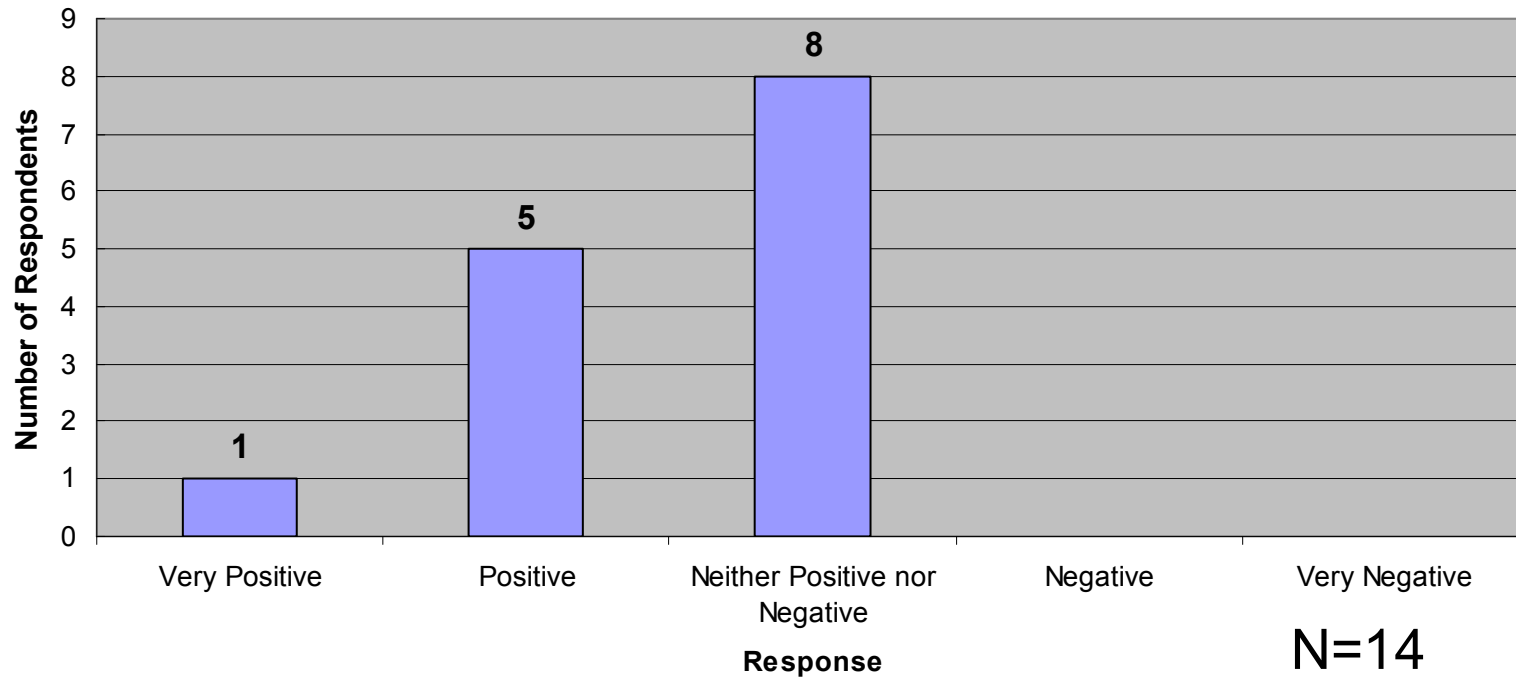
Introduction

During August and September 2003, two Safe Start web-based surveys were disseminated, one to local evaluators and one to program directors. The surveys requested feedback on the technical assistance services provided by the National Evaluation Team. Goals of the survey effort included identifying site TA needs, determining gaps in TA, and assessing how the NET can better provide technical assistance to the local evaluators and sites.

The following pages provide an overview of the results of the local evaluator survey. In addition, some pertinent results from the program director survey are included.

Of the 17 local evaluators, 13 responses were received (76%). Eight of 11 program directors responded (73%).

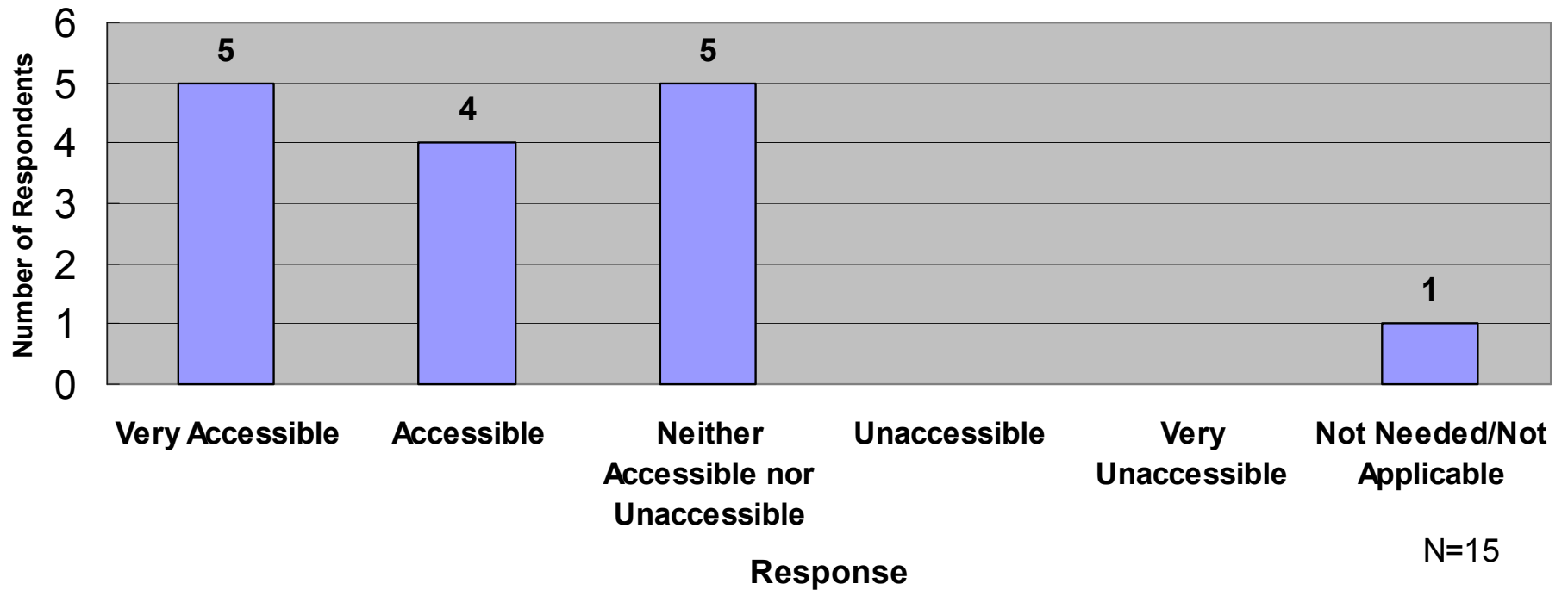
Overall, how do you feel about the services provided by the National Evaluation Team's technical assistance (TA) providers?



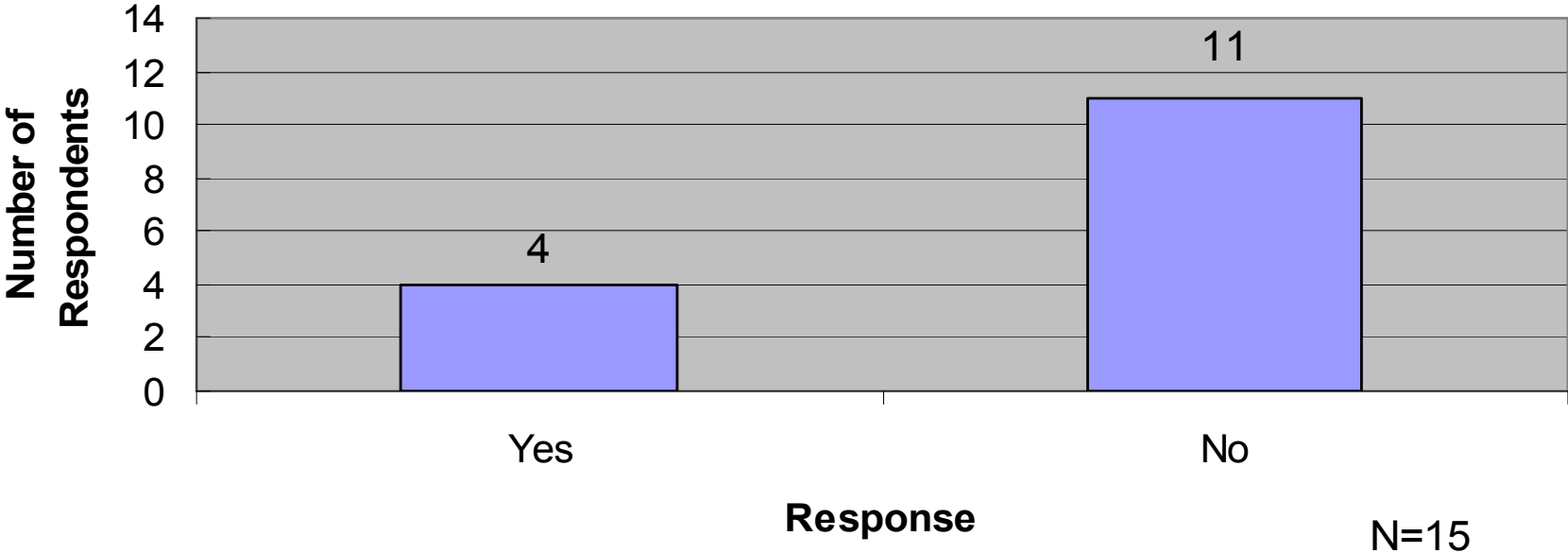
Comments Regarding Overall Feelings About the Services Provided by the TA Providers

- Could be more proactive
- Some variation, but overall extremely helpful
- Evaluation plan guidelines helpful; conference calls have been very interesting

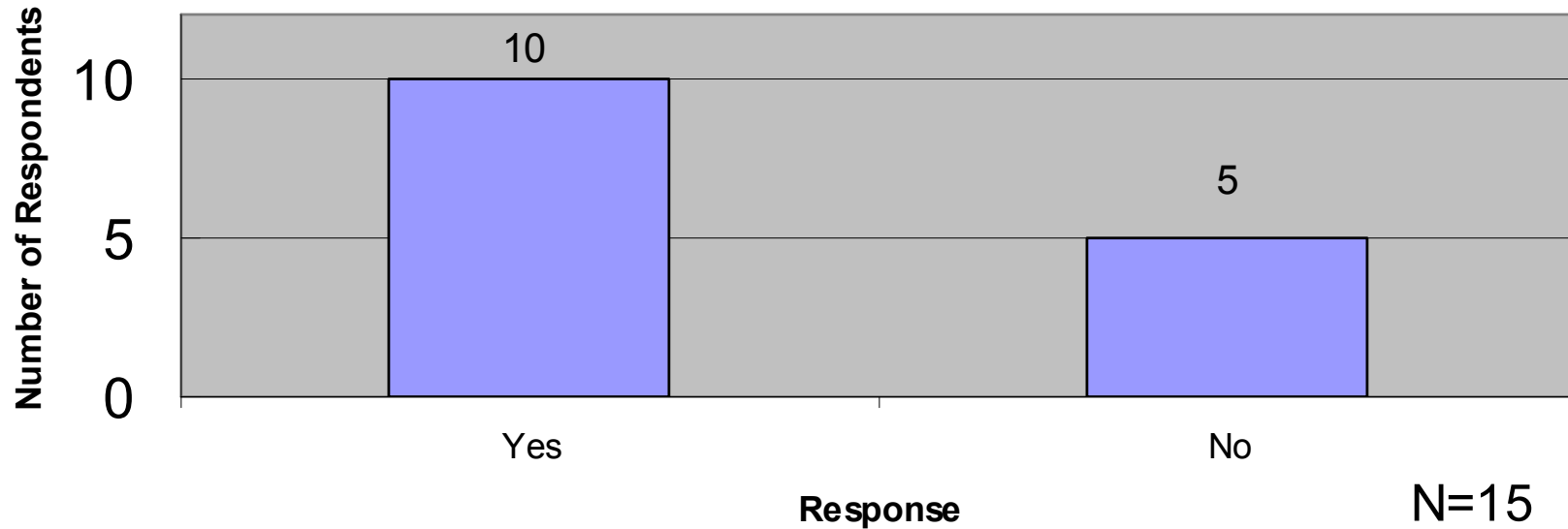
How accessible have the evaluation TA providers been when you were in need of assistance or information?



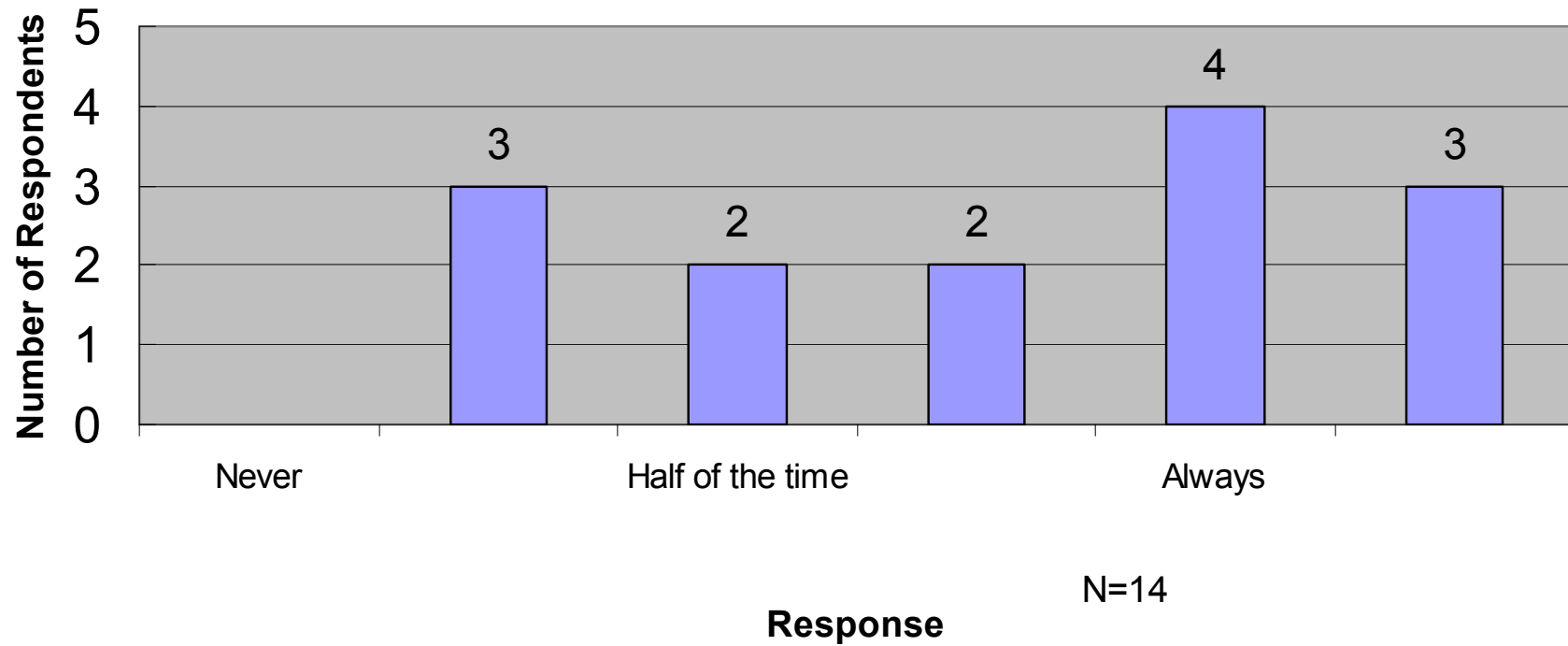
Have you or your evaluation team had TA needs that the evaluation TA providers have not been able to meet?



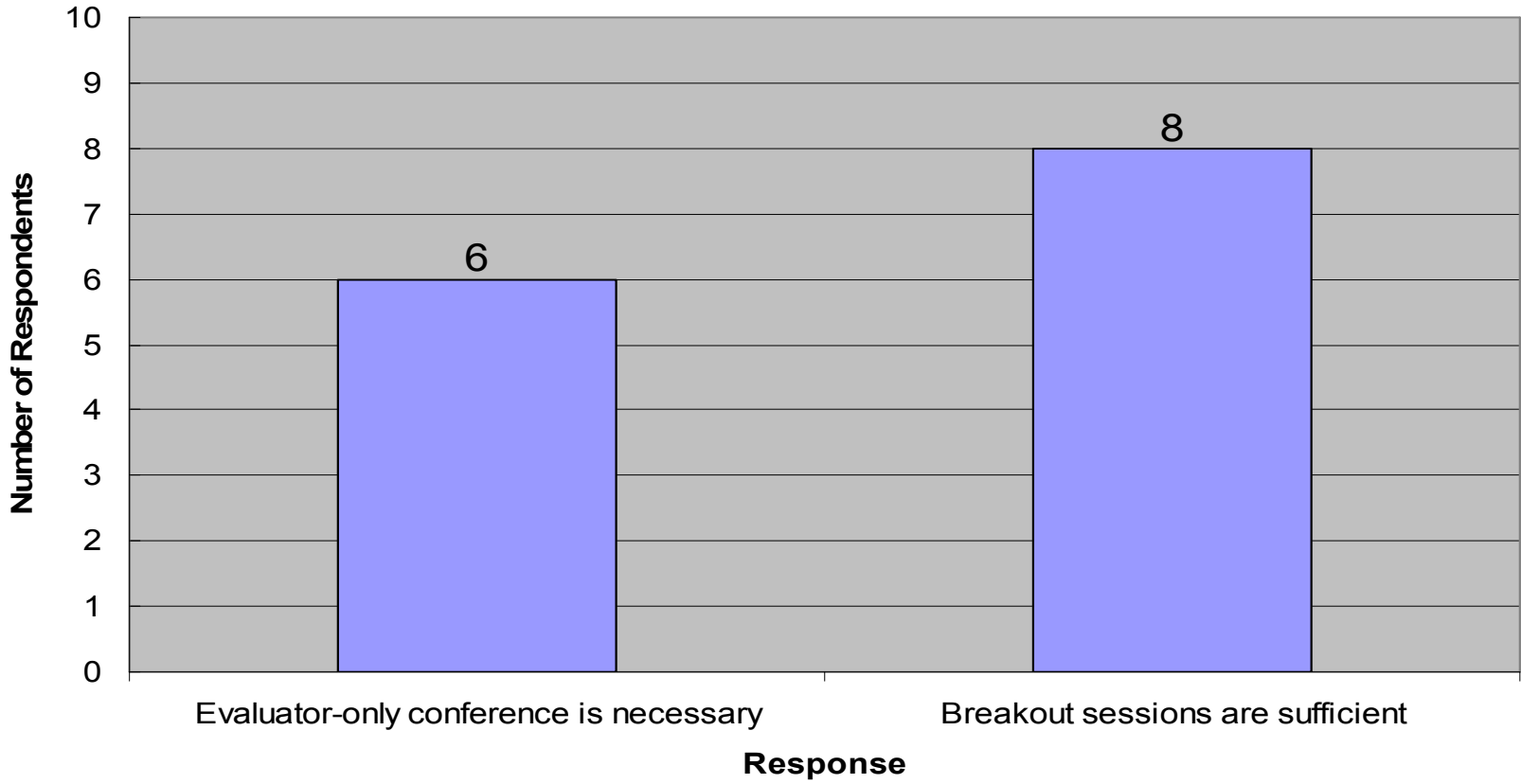
Has the National Evaluation Team provided you with resources or assistance you needed?



How often have the TA providers responded to your requests in a timely manner?



Do you think an evaluator-only conference would be helpful in addition to the evaluator breakout sessions at the cross-site conference?



N=14

Suggested Topics for Evaluator-Only Conference

Data Collection

- Instrument sharing, such as survey & interview protocols/questions
- Specific measurement tools for SS population
- Standardized measures
- Control and comparison groups
- Data quality
- Data compliance
- Combining qualitative and quantitative methods
- Collecting data from parents/caregivers who recently experienced a violent incident in the home and how to follow-up
- Data collection strategies
- Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of a mental health assessment/screening process
- What is the best way to get an accurate estimate of the prevalence of children exposed to violence in various settings?

Suggested Topics for Evaluator-Only Conference (continued)

Data Analysis

- Sharing approaches to the multivariate analysis of Safe Start data
- Using structural equation modeling to analyze the effects of intervention

Data Utilization

- Creating cultures of data-based decision making
- Dissemination / Publication

General Evaluation

- Systems change evaluation
- Updates on progress to date by various sites including lessons learned and helpful hints
- Challenges for evaluating the safe Start Initiatives
- Sites Shared Evaluation Progress Report
- Tracking a case through CPS, the courts, and then on to further care
- Relations with Project Directors
- Budgets or the lack thereof

What are the strengths of your relationship with your program director?

- Consistent, meaningful communication
- Mutual respect of the other's role
- Recognizing needs of evaluator
- Realizing value of evaluation
- Working as a team/common goals

What are the challenges you face in maintaining your relationship with your program director?

- Getting enough meeting time with PD/Being on-site
- Duties/roles not clearly defined
- Discrepancy between vision of evaluator and PD or the initiative's direction

How can the NET help your relationship with your program director?

- Disseminating information about the evaluations in progress at other sites
- Need agreements between evaluators and NET in writing
- NET needs to constantly make evaluation an integral part of the Initiative as a whole
- Unsure/don't know/not needed

Comments Regarding Conference Calls

- Specific agendas of calls are necessary.
- Resiliency information has been helpful.
- Helps to give evaluators a broader perspective.
- Some topics are introduced too late in the process.
- More advance notice of time and agenda needed.
- Calls need more focus and better moderation.

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Program Director Comments

How do you use the evaluations or evaluation techniques for program development or improvement?

- The evaluation data is used to make enhancements or changes to existing procedures or policies.
- Program development includes implementing evaluation.
- We provide feedback to our service providers regarding service delivery based on our data collection.
- I believe this kind of feedback would be invaluable across my administration of this initiative. I don't believe I have seen any such report.
- We use broad process and clinical development evaluation as continuous improvement tools.
- I partner with my local evaluator to ensure there is an objective third party assessment of all critical initiative activities.

What are the strengths of your relationship with the evaluator at your site?

- Communication is frequent, open, and productive.
- [We hold] regular meetings.
- [There is] active participation in the development of all aspects of the Initiative.
- The collaboration has a sense of a united front.
- Evaluator is completely integrated in the program decision making process.

What are the challenges you face in maintaining the relationship with the evaluator at your site?

- [It's challenging] having the evaluation design not obstruct the objectives of the project.
- I have not experienced any challenges since I am new.
- Lack of clarity about the wording of the evaluator role and responsibilities [produces challenges].
- The way the evaluators and directors are handled separately by the national partners breeds division and a lack of collaboration.
- I think the lack of open discussion at cross-sites and site visits is alarming.

How might the National Evaluation Team help to improve your relationship with the evaluator at your site?

- Address concerns, anticipate tensions, and provide tools and other opportunities to problem solve proactively.
- We see no need for assistance.
- Better advance planning for cross sites. Site visits ... are they on or off?
- Providing additional funding to support our local evaluation efforts.

In what ways can the evaluation TA providers assist you?

- Provide on-going feedback on evaluation plan as we implement.
- Sustainability strategies with having the community and social services continue to be self critical of their programs.
- The sharing of evaluation tools from other sites has been very useful.
- Better articulate[d] levels of confidentiality, trouble-shooting, and mediation that PD can honestly expect from you.