

A meta-analysis was conducted to describe core elements of technical assistance that lead to sustainable program and organization change (Dunst et al, 2018). Technical assistance (TA) has been used to describe a wide variety of behaviors used by professionals to support program staff build capacity and improve the quality of instruction. As a result there is no one consistent definition recognized that clearly conveys the essential practices used by a TA provider. Authors of this meta-analysis sought to describe the essential elements for planning, implementing and evaluating technical assistance. Twenty-five technical assistance models and frameworks were analyzed in order to identify essential elements of technical assistance that facilitates program and organizational change.

Findings from this analysis contribute to the improvement of in-service professional development focused on improving the capacity of programs and organizations to deliver high quality early childhood experiences.

The Purpose

Implementation describes five core elements for the provision of technical assistance. The five core elements include technical assistance provider credibility, professional development, coaching and mentoring, consultation, and provider support/feedback. These elements were found throughout all the frameworks reviewed; however, not all frameworks included all five elements.

The Practices

TA Provider Credibility – Practices used by a TA provider to establish staff trust, respect, rapport, and beliefs that the provider is acting in the best interests of the program receiving technical assistance.

Professional Development – The evidence-based professional development practices used by a TA provider to build and strengthen staff, program, organization, and systems capacity to use targeted intervention practices.

Coaching and Mentoring – TA provider use of either or both coaching and mentoring as part of the provision of technical assistance in interactions with staff to build and strengthen their capacity to use targeted intervention practices.

TA Provider Consultation – Tailored responses to individual staff, small groups of staff members and other program staff in response to questions and concerns about staff adoption and use of targeted intervention practices.

TA Provider Support/Feedback – TA provider nonjudgmental acknowledgment, encouragement, and feedback on staff efforts toward and accomplishment of changing program practices consistent with the objectives and goals of the plan.

Why Are These Findings Important?

Using known practices that result in effective teacher change not only leads to improved teacher instruction but can also have a profound impact on the quality of educational services provided in programs and organizations that seek to engage in sustainable systems change. As providers implement professional development and systems for supporting teachers, they should seek information related to evidence-based strategies that are shown to be effective in helping teachers to adopt and use teaching strategies.

