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This monograph presents the remarks of several speakers at a symposium in Pennsylvania on May 18th, 2001, on "Funding What Works." It includes presentations by several distinguished leaders in the children's services field. Although the primary focus is not on children's mental health, the report makes an important contribution to the discussion on the use of research and evidence to improve services, systems, and policy.

The opening chapter is by Lisbeth Schorr, author and director of the Harvard University Project on Effective Interventions. While she supports the use of evidence to determine the funding of programs and services, she advocates for an inclusive approach to what counts as credible evidence. Schorr indicates that often times randomized clinical trials are just not appropriate. She makes the point that, "Promising social programs often are complex efforts with multiple components that require constant mid-course correction, the active involvement of committed human beings, and flexible adaptation to local needs and strengths, to lessons learned, and to changing circumstances. It is the very nature of the most promising programs that makes them almost impossible to evaluate the way we evaluate drugs" (p. 2).

Mark Greenberg, Director of the Prevention Research Center at Penn State University, also summarizes the characteristics or attributes of effective programs. He indicates that programs that are "more comprehensive, more flexible, and more responsive to the needs of participants are more likely to be effective" (p. 7). He also reports that effective programs view children in the context of broader ecologies, such as their families, schools, neighborhoods, churches, and communities, and are generally operated by people with a commitment and intensity to their work. Greenberg advocates for the use of randomized clinical trials when appropriate, and quasi-experimental designs if at all possible when randomized clinical trials cannot be conducted. He also calls for research on effective implementation, and points out that when a community selects an empirically validated program for funding, this is only the start of a process of achieving positive results.

Michael Little, a Senior Research Fellow at the Chapin Hall Center for Children and Bristol University in Great Britain, recommends that developing effective services should not start at the program level, but rather by looking at children themselves, and determining what is known about children living in our communities. Program development should come after learning about the children, and then thinking about the desired outcomes. The next step is to try to establish an appropriate organizational structure to deliver those services. Little points out that while this may seem simple and obvious, when he looks at the United States, he often sees "people starting with an organizational structure into which services are forced and adapted to the financing that is available," (p. 20), rather than being based on the needs of the children to be served.

In the next chapter, Heather Weiss, Founder and Director of the Harvard Family Research Project, argues strongly for a continuous quality improvement approach. She maintains that, "the earmark of a quality program or organization is that it has the capacity to get and use information for continuous improvement and accountability. No program, no matter what it does, is a good program unless it is getting and using data of a variety of sorts, from a variety of places, and in an

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ongoing way, to see if there are ways it can do better” (p. 23). This emphasis leads Weiss to call for building an information infrastructure to provide the necessary support and assistance to establish learning organizations.

Cynthia Guy, a Senior Research Associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, discusses the process of knowledge development and application that was utilized within a large teen pregnancy prevention project of the Casey Foundation. She points out that while the Casey Foundation is committed to making the maximum use of rigorous research and evaluation, often times the strongest research designs just cannot be used and in such instances it is important to use other approaches because “we cannot allow the limits of current evaluation technology to limit our aspirations to develop programs that work” (p. 35).

Overall, this is a brief and easy to read monograph that makes an important contribution to the discussion on how best to use evidence and research to improve services, policy, and outcomes. This report is available from the National Center for Service Integration, c/o Child and Family Policy Center, 218³/₄ Avenue, Suite 1021, Des Moines, IA 50309; phone: 515 280-9027; website: <http://www.cfpciowa.org>