It’s Time: Using a Time-Study Tool to Understand and Enhance School Social Work Practice

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Agenda
• Intro- Michael  Rationale for SSW practice
• History and Data- Steve
• Report- Michael
• Q & A- Steve

Poll Questions Using Your APP
• 1. Have you ever tracked your time on a daily basis in your job? Yes no
• 2. If you did track your time, do you think your data would match your administrators’ perception of what you do? Yes no
Selected References


Framing Today’s Keynote

- Overall, SSW Are Not Promoting Universal Strategies
  - SSW are not doing them consistently and DO NOT feel prepared to do them competently
  - SSW Spend most of their time with at-risk students in Tier 3 and crisis intervention situations
    - Putting out fires rather than prevention & coordination
- Overall, SSW Are Not Comfortable using Data
  - SSW report lacking competency, resources, and supports to be data-driven and evidence-informed in their practice
    - School, community, state, and national responses needed
- Overall, the major policy and research initiatives of the last 20 years are not being significantly reflected in day-to-day SSW practice
- So...what can we do to train the future and current SSW workforce to become more visible, valuable, and indispensable?

The Big Picture Going Forward

- Online tools that are evidence-informed, free, and easy to use**
- Field placements that move us forward
- A network of School Social Work Master Mentors
- Sustainable evidence-informed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that use data to enhance SSW practice**
The problem

- Saw a lack of time for SSWs to do their jobs.
- “Lack of funding” influencing staffing, causing reductions.
- Administrators typically focused on caseload.
- No time or space for people to think/reflect on practice or practice improvement.
- No universal agreement on “best practice” around caseload activity.

Webinar from IDEA Partnership
(Jan, 2015)

- From SLP’s, PT’s and OT’s
- Workload versus Caseload
- Simple Microsoft Excel Log to record activities

In order to support all students in least restrictive environment (LRE), and facilitate participation in the general education curriculum, workloads of SISPs have broadened from traditional “direct & indirect” services to include: Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention (RtI), & Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Section on Pediatrics, APTA
Workload Study, 2009

Using a time study approach with school-based PT volunteers and representation from all regions across the country
- Student service and documentation for one work week was 63% of a FTE documentation.
- For PTs, 46% of an FTE spent in Direct and Indirect, 17% of an FTE spent in documentation tasks
Results?

- In North Carolina, district modified how they determined workload. Work feels evenly distributed, has improved efficiency & effectiveness.
- Ohio law recognizes workload considerations for SISPs.
- In Texas, after implementing a workload approach, the Houston School District noted a significant decrease in SLP vacancies as well as improved quality of services, increased collaboration among service providers, and enhanced ability to identify students needing services.

In Summer 2015, Oakland Schools Decided to...

- Revise the IDEA Partnership Time Study Tool to be appropriate for school social workers.
- Create a Community of Practice to discuss the tool, tool improvements, practice issues, and how to have conversations with other professionals.
- Bring on Dr. Michael S. Kelly because of the potential significance of the work.

Last Fall, Started with a CoP of 11 Volunteers

- Mixed set of job titles and populations:
  - Self-contained Program Ed.
  - General Ed at a Charter School that focused on truancy reduction.
  - Early Childhood Program plus three elementary schools.
  - Elementary that housed several Autism Categorical Rooms.
  - One elementary building with several programs. Some general ed responsibilities.
  - One high school, one middle school with two elementary schools.
  - One high risk impoverished building: special and general ed.
  - Charter school with K-8 population.
  - One high school in inner city.
  - 1.1 elementary buildings with multiple programs.
  - Charter school with K-8 general and special education duties.
**CoP Members would...**

- Log all activities in 15 minute blocks for the first full week of the month.
- Submit to Steve for tabulation.
- Discuss in Virtual CoP Meeting (1x a month) after school.

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**In the Community of Practice Sessions...**

- Identified Time Robbers or Barriers to Efficiency then members took turns presenting on topics:
  - Time Management,
  - Support students with ASD,
  - Supporting new teachers,
  - Documentation,
  - Progress Monitoring using Google Forms, and
  - Having conversations about work.
- Reviewed and discussed data.

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**Coding Categories**

- **D** Direct
- **I** Indirect
- **C** Crisis - Caseload
- **CD** Compliance - Documentation/Assessment
- **CM** Compliance Meetings
- **CN** Crisis - Non-Caseload
- **P** Pre-Intervention Services
- **SWP** School Wide Prevention Services
- **Prof/Prof** Professional Development
- **Sup/Ment** Supervision & Mentoring
- **T** Travel
- **O** Other

*Include population served:
1: Special Education Student
2: General Education Student/504/Title I
3: Both General & Special Educ. Students
Data to led to larger discussions...

• Is direct service the most valuable service that a SSW can provide? What does the research say?

• What do you do when your principal wants you to handle general education crisis and your special ed supervisor says that you should see special ed students only? What is ethical? What does it say about system capacity?

• Does a crisis end when a student walks out of the door? What about the days afterwards in follow up? When does the crisis truly end?

• How many hours should a SSW be working even though the contract says 37.5 hours and you know of teachers who work 60? When do you say, “No, I am not taking paperwork home this weekend because I want to go visit my son out of state,” and not feel guilty?

• “I feel that I am faced with an ethical dilemma when writing less service time on an IEP than a student needs, but I know I can’t provide any more given my duties. How do people handle this?”

Trends that we noticed...

• 75% activity was "caseload related".
• Direct service hovered around 2 hours a day.
• For every hour of direct service, there seemed to be another two hours of indirect service, crisis intervention, documentation/assessment, & meetings.
• Largest Indirect service was consultation with staff (about 55min).
• School-wide & prevention was less than 20 minutes a day.
• No two months were the same. Job is influenced by the time of year.
• When documentation/assessment were higher, direct service was mostly lower.

3. Does this match your 8 hour day?
Yes, Somewhat, No
Discuss with your partner:

• Poll:
  – 3. Does this match your 8 hour day
  – What do you wonder?

Benefits from use...

• Conversations with administrators. Helped bring data to the table. Wasn’t sole data, but was helpful in creating understanding of the job. Two reported cases of increased staffing.
• Self-reflection...
  – This is what I do...saw value to the tasks at hand.
  – Is this the best way to use my time?
• Conversations with other SSWs/staff about practice and systems issues. Problem-solve alterate practices.
• Potential: uses in Field Education, Research and Advocacy/Policy.

Year 1 Time-Study Evaluation

• Dearth of literature on use of time-study work with SSW and SMH
• “Workload vs. Caseload” literature in nursing, medicine, and SLP offers some ideas
• Time-Study Project was a mixed-methods study (analyzing data from the monthly time-study tools, data from the monthly conversations online, and conducting in-depth interviews at the conclusion)
Goals of Pilot Study
We sought to answer these questions with this initial pilot project:

• 1) How successful was the time-study tool in becoming a useful and practical tool for SSWs to integrate into their busy work day?
• 2) What key findings might emerge from this first year of pilot data to inform our understanding of practice, given the lack of time-study literature in the field?
• 3) How would the participants themselves view the experience of the CoP and the time-study process in enhancing their sense of self-efficacy in their daily practice?
• 4) As a key component of self-efficacy, how did the time-study data impact SSWs relationships with their school administration and other key school stakeholders?

Pilot Study Findings
• Different months = Different Time Priorities.
• Direct Service Was Just the Start of SSW Service, not the End Point.
• School-wide Prevention Work Barely Registered Day-to-Day.
• Documentation time continued to increase, and encroached on SSWs time away from school.
• A stable workload profile emerged from the data, but also led to larger discussions about the changing role of SSWs.

More Findings: Interviews
• Key Theme #1: CoP members chose this project to improve their practice, and to advocate for the value of their role.
• Key Theme #2: CoP members quickly integrated the tool into their day-to-day practice, and saw it as a valuable ongoing tool for them.
• Key Theme #3: CoP members saw the indirect service data as a revelation, and a validation of their work.
2016-17
- Developing an APP using resources through Loyola.
- Examine moving work to Loyola.
- Cohort 2 of Community of Practice.
- Pilot version 2.0.
- Allow and track non-CoP folks.
- Explore/Develop partnerships with others across country.

Our Current Community of Practice
- Meets once a month on Wednesday afternoons (3:30-4:45pm)
- In person or virtually.
- Access to a top SSW researcher, Michael S Kelly.
- Opportunity for practice reflection based on data.
- Opportunity for learning about EBP and time savers.
- Continuing Education Credits.

Poll: 4. Based on what you have heard today, would you be interested in doing a time study project with your district or region colleagues?
Yes
No
Maybe
Links/Contact

- Document with links: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OeyiAOllBMHxrhRVK2wY0tlMDJ7FSI_2xEQ6pVd67zM/edit?usp=sharing
- Twitter: @oaklandssw
- Scoop.it: http://www.scoop.it/t/school-social-work-effectiveness
- To request a copy of tool (version 2.0), please contact: Steve Whitmore at Steve.Whitmore@oakland.k12.mi.us