Reporting Program Evaluation Findings: How to Demonstrate Effectiveness to Stakeholders

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[Video Introduction]

Capt. Thoumaian: Hello. My name is Captain Armen Thoumaian of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury or DCoE. Thank you for joining us for this episode of the DCoE Program Evaluation and Improvement webinar training series.

DCoE's Mission is to improve the lives of our nation's service members, families and veterans by advancing excellence in psychological health and traumatic brain injury prevention and care.

DCoE accomplishes that mission in coordination with its three Centers: Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, Deployment Health Clinical Center and National Center for Telehealth and Technology. Together, we produce a variety of trainings on subjects ranging from program evaluation to clinical care and prevention practices.

This training series is designed for program administrators and service leadership who are involved with or who plan to conduct program evaluation activities within the Defense Department's psychological health and traumatic brain injury programs. Our objective is to enhance the capability of these personnel to actively engage in program evaluation activities and, ultimately, make program evaluation an inherent component of everyday program operations.

By supporting enhanced program evaluation capabilities across the Defense Department, this series contributes to DCoE's larger mission to improve the quality and effectiveness of the psychological health and traumatic brain injury prevention and care programs that serve our military members, their families and veterans.

On behalf of DCoE, thank you for participating in this training series.

[Slide 1]

Ms. Aguirre: Hello. My name is Carmina Aguirre. I provide contract support to the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury or DCoE. I will be your moderator for this presentation, the eighth episode in the 2015 DCoE Program Evaluation and Improvement webinar training series. The webinar is hosted using the Adobe Connect platform and the technical features are being handled by DCoE's webinar support team in Washington, D.C.

Today's topic is "Reporting Program Evaluation Findings: How to Demonstrate Effectiveness to Stakeholders." Before we begin, let's review some details.

[Slide 2]

This presentation has been pre-recorded; however, there will be a live Question-and-Answer session at the end of the presentation.

Throughout the webinar, we encourage you to submit technical or content-related questions using the Question pod on your screen. Your questions will remain anonymous, and our presenters will respond to as many questions as possible during the Q-and-A.

At the bottom of the screen is the Chat pod. Please feel free to identify yourself to other attendees and to communicate with one another. Time is allotted at the end of the presentation to use the Chat pod for networking.

All audio is provided through the Adobe Connect platform; there is no separate audio dial-in line. Please note there may be delays at times as the connection catches up with the audio. Depending on your network security settings, there may also be some noticeable buffering delays.

Closed captioning is provided for today's event, and a transcript will be made available at a later date.

[Slide 3]

Webinar materials for this series are available in the Files pod at the bottom left of the screen during the webinar. They are also posted in the Program Evaluation section of the DCoE website. Modules from the newly revised DCoE Program Evaluation Guide will be posted throughout the 2015 webinar series.

For information about other DCoE webinars and trainings, visit the Training section of the DCoE website by following the link on slide 3.

[Slide 4]

We are pleased to offer continuing education credit for the 2015 Program Evaluation and Improvement webinar series. Instructions for obtaining continuing education through DCoE's collaboration with the Professional Education Services Group were made available during the registration process. Eligibility criteria for continuing education credit are presented on slide 4. In an effort to enhance the focus of individual webinar episodes, we have reduced the length of this and future episodes to one hour. As a consequence, please note that eligible participants will receive one hour of credit rather than an hour-and-a-half.

[Slide 5]

If you preregistered for the webinar and want to obtain CE certificates or a certificate of attendance, you must complete the online CE evaluation. After the webinar, please visit dcoe.cds.pesgce.com to complete the online CE evaluation and download your CE certificate or certificate of attendance. The CE evaluation will be open through August 4th, 2015.

[Slide 6]

This webinar was introduced by Captain Armen Thoumaian. Captain Thoumaian is the Deputy Chief of the Office of Integrated Services at DCoE. He is a Scientist Director in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service with more than 30 years of experience in health and mental health program design and evaluation. In January 2012, Captain Thoumaian joined DCoE to help design and implement program evaluation and improvement efforts in the Defense Department. He holds a B.A. in psychology and sociology, an M.A. in general experimental psychology, and a Ph.D. in social welfare and social work. Captain Thoumaian has also completed a National Institute of Mental Health fellowship in Community Mental Health.

[Slide 7]

Presenters for this episode include Mr. Carter Frank and Ms. Debra Stark.

Mr. Frank is a research scientist who provides contract support to DCoE. Mr. Frank has over 15 years of experience in program development and management at local, regional and national levels. The breadth of his 33-year career includes 11 years of military service, spans military and civilian environments, clinical and non-clinical mental health operations, training, human resource management, business development and government contracting. Mr. Frank holds a B.S. in mathematical sciences and masters degrees in counseling and management information systems. He is a licensed clinical professional counselor.

Ms. Stark is a Research Scientist who provides contract support to DCoE. Ms. Stark is a survey methodologist and analyst with more than 15 years of research experience. Ms. Stark's work includes program evaluation and monitoring, qualitative data analysis, and survey instrument design. She has worked on health services evaluation projects with several Federal agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs and TRICARE Management Activity. Ms. Stark holds an M.B.A.

[Slide 8]

I am Carmina Aguirre, your moderator for today. I am also a research scientist who provides contract support to DCoE. I have over 14 years of experience within the Defense Department. My background includes executive leadership, psychological health, sexual assault prevention and response, and public affairs. In addition to supporting DCoE, I serve as Chief of Public Affairs in the Florida Air National Guard. I hold a B.A. in psychology and an M.A. in human services with a specialization in executive leadership.

[Slide 9]

This training presentation will cover how program managers and administrators can demonstrate the results of program evaluation and improvement efforts to key stakeholders with varying interests. Stakeholders often want to know about programs' effectiveness in meeting key objectives. Topics will include identifying stakeholder interests, engaging stakeholders, choosing appropriate communication strategies and formats, best practices for effective reporting and common challenges that arise when conveying information to stakeholders about program effectiveness.

At the conclusion of this webinar, participants will be able to:

- Identify key stakeholders and their most common areas of interest in program evaluation results
- Use strategic communications to engage stakeholder interest,
- Apply best practices for various reporting formats, And
- Select and implement strategies to address common challenges that programs face in demonstrating and reporting on program effectiveness.

[Slide 10]

As seen on slide 10, Captain Thoumaian will begin by discussing how to identify stakeholders and their interests. Mr. Frank will present practical approaches to engage stakeholder interests, Ms. Stark will address the importance of choosing appropriate communication formats and cover best practices for effective reporting, and Mr. Frank will present strategies for overcoming common challenges that arise in reporting on program effectiveness.

Captain Thoumaian will conclude with a summary of key takeaways. We will wrap up this webinar session by providing a list of references and resources, followed by an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback and a brief question-and-answer session with our presenters.

[Slide 11]

Thank you Ms. Aguirre. In this section, we will review how to identify stakeholders and engage their interest and support. Supportive stakeholders can enhance a program's capacity to deliver high-quality care. Stakeholders support a program structurally, culturally, and functionally, and can help it to attain additional capabilities. For now, we begin with a general introduction to the topic of stakeholders and reporting needs.

[Slide 12]

To begin our presentation, let's review a quote by a prominent best- selling management expert. For those who may not know him, Stephen Covey was one of the world's foremost leadership authorities, organizational experts, and business-oriented thought leaders, recognized as one of Time magazine's 25 most influential Americans. The quote is, "Accountability breeds response-ability." What it means in the context of this presentation is that providing feedback to stakeholders is a crucial and necessary step that goes beyond merely meeting reporting requirements. It can evoke a positive response and successfully mobilize stakeholder attention and engagement in support of your program.

[Slide 13]

Before we go any further, let's review what a stakeholder is so that we are working from the same definition. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: "Stakeholders are people or organizations that are invested in the program, are interested in the results of the evaluation and/or have a stake (or vested interest) in what will be done with the results of the evaluation."

After hearing this definition, you may be thinking of several individuals who would serve as stakeholders for your program. We hope that by the end of this presentation you will have an even broader list of stakeholders for your program.

[Slide 14]

On slide 14 you will see three questions that will help you gain a better understanding of your stakeholders and their interests. Question 1: Who are the stakeholders? Question 2: What information do they need? And Question 3: Why do they need it?

While these are not the only questions to ask when trying to understand your stakeholders, they are important initial questions to help you get organized. The answers to these questions will give you a foundation from which to build when conducting your program evaluation.

We will now go through each of these questions, one at a time, on the upcoming slides.

[Slide 15]

On slide 15 is Question 1, "Who are the stakeholders?" This is a broad question and one that you may not be prepared to answer completely. As such, we have three additional questions (or categories) that will help you further define your stakeholder list. The response to the first question, "Who is involved in program operations?" will include your staff—that is, the team who implements your program. This category may also include such individuals as supervisors and managers.

The response to the second question, "Who is served or affected by the program?" will include the participants of your program and their family members, as well as individuals from the community.

Your response to the third question, "Who will use the evaluation results for decision-making?" will primarily consist of the individuals who set policy and fund your program.

There are a myriad of individuals who could serve as stakeholders in each of these categories. Some of them may even fall into more than one category. And not all of the categories will yield the same number of stakeholders. Let's review this another way on the next slide.

[Slide 16]

On slide 16 is a different depiction of Question 1 and the three stakeholder categories that we just reviewed. The three stakeholder categories are listed across the top, and examples of those stakeholders are listed in the left-hand column. The checkmarks in the cells represent particular stakeholders in their respective categories. This table is a simple illustration, and may look different for different programs, depending on how your program is structured. For example, if you work in a program that is highly collaborative with other programs, you may have several checkmarks across this table.

Remember, you may not have the same number of stakeholders in each category, and some of your stakeholders may fall into more than one category. Also, your stakeholder groups will change over time, so be sure to update your stakeholder listing regularly.

[Slide 17]

Moving on to Question 2 from the "Understanding Your Audience" slide, here on slide 17 is a table of questions to help you understand what types of information stakeholders will need. In the left-hand column are simplified adaptations of our four main questions in the program evaluation process. They are as follows: Was the program implemented with fidelity? Is the program sustainable? How do program structures and processes function? And, has the program achieved its intended outcomes?

Identical to the previous slide, the three columns to the right are stakeholder categories. The questions in the cells of these categories are examples of what stakeholders may ask, as they relate to the four program evaluation questions in the left-hand column. For example, in the cell that is circled in red, an individual who is implementing the program, for instance a health care provider would want to know if the program is meeting its intended outcomes—one of those being a benefit for the individual participating in the program.

Organizing the answers to these types of questions will have you well-prepared when you present your program evaluation results to your stakeholders.

[Slide 18]

On slide 18 is our third and final question from the "Understanding Your Audience" slide, slide 14. "Why do stakeholders need this information?" There are several benefits from sharing information with stakeholders. We offer some of them here: to demonstrate accountability, improve program services, advocate for service members and their families, identify lessons learned, build relationships, generate knowledge, provoke discussion, encourage responsive action, acquire or maintain funding and support, renew interest and commitment to the program, and enhance marketing (or promotion) efforts. We encourage you to add to this list.

[Slide 19]

The final slide of this segment is for program administrators. Program administrators—at all levels—serve an important role in programs, and are key to successful reporting to stakeholders. In this context, the role of program administrators is to advocate for their program. Their task is to assert the value of their program and highlight its strengths. By connecting with stakeholders, program administrators can educate them about the program and inspire their support. An anticipated potential outcome of these efforts is the increased and accepted perception that your program is of value and worthy of attention and resources. These inputs, in turn, may serve to produce a more effective program that accomplishes its goals and serves its population.

Now, I will turn this presentation over to Mr. Frank.

[Slide 20]

Thank you, Captain Thoumaian. In this section, I will be discussing some ways to promote stakeholder engagement and its' important role in the success of program evaluation efforts. In addition, I will present a number of strategies for supporting and strengthening stakeholder interests, which will establish the foundations of trust and confidence needed to maintain stakeholder engagement.

[Slide 21]

Let's begin with a roadmap of general approaches and actions to use in promoting stakeholder engagement.

While the information age has created many additional communication pathways, there is no substitute for active and visible engagement with the key players for any program. For example, emails are best used for scheduling activities and coordinating logistical details, but much less effective in communicating concepts and strategies, or in gaining stakeholder support or approvals. So while many stakeholders and sponsors may not be located close enough for regular, face-to-face communications, every effort should be made to take advantage of those opportunities whenever possible.

Developing and coordinating regularly-scheduled program updates with stakeholders is essential to establishing their trust and support for the program. These regular events are more likely to become priorities in the stakeholders' schedules and will form the foundation of a program administrator's direct communications with stakeholders. These regular events also create opportunities for stakeholders to ask questions or provide feedback, and may also generate additional events for direct communications with smaller groupings of stakeholders.

While direct communications with stakeholders is always preferred, it is also important to build coalitions with peers, leaders and sponsors who are able to clearly articulate and present vital program information near their locations and within their spheres of influence. Effective sponsorship is one of the top factors supporting program success and would include stakeholders, as well as these coalitions.

[Slide 22]

Stakeholder engagement is often a function of how well their interests are supported and strengthened by the program and its' leadership. This support requires a focused approach, which we have outlined here on slide 22.

- The first step is to collect and analyze stakeholder feedback, which helps identify interests, but also reveals concerns and uncertainties.
- The second step is to develop action plans to address and manage those identified concerns and uncertainties.
- The third step is to implement those action plans, and
- Finally, the fourth step is to take the initiative in celebrating program successes,

with a particular emphasis on those that are of most interest to the stakeholders.

We will now cover each of these steps in a little more detail on the slides that follow.

[Slide 23]

An important element of effective feedback collection is making sure that conversations, interviews and other feedback collection activities are arranged at the stakeholder's convenience. This will not only allow them to better prepare their feedback, but also will communicate their importance to the program and its success.

While the means of feedback collection can be formal, such as standardized surveys, or informal, such as focus groups, it is essential to foster a sense among the stakeholders that they are being heard and understood. The skill and art of listening to stakeholders should be developed and enhanced over time, and will support the effective analysis of their feedback.

One important outcome of feedback collection and analysis activities will be stakeholder interests that become more focused over time. In addition, stakeholder engagement will be further enhanced as their focused interests are incorporated into and highlighted in program reporting activities.

[Slide 24]

While stakeholders may choose a number of different ways to communicate their concerns, these will often be a byproduct of feedback collection and analysis activities described on the previous slide. Once stakeholder concerns have been identified, it may also be necessary to confirm and clarify them with the appropriate stakeholder. The most effective way to accomplish this is direct communication with the stakeholder. This practice provides additional relationship-building opportunities that are essential to stakeholder engagement.

Once stakeholder concerns have been properly confirmed, an action plan can be developed to address them and hopefully resolve them. One effective way to approach the development of these action plans is to use an effective communications strategy, such as the ProSci ADKAR® model that will be covered in more detail on the next slide.

This model is built on the premise that concerns are very often related to elements of uncertainty that exist for any given program or project. Uncertainty can include varying levels of resistance or apathy. So identifying and exploring the root causes of these concerns can lead to the development of effective action plans to resolve them. As you will see on the next slide, the ProSci ADKAR® model highlights the gaps that tend to be the source of concerns and uncertainties.

[Slide 25]

The chart on slide 25 shows the five areas or gaps covered by the ProSci ADKAR® model. These five are Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement, which are outlined here on the slide with some example actions.

If the gap is Awareness, action plans could include:

- Communications with senior leaders about the need for program evaluation efforts, to include reasons why it is important, the risks of not doing it, and existing mandates for

program effectiveness.
- It would also include face-to-face communications with key stakeholders about how program effectiveness impacts program viability.

If the gap is Desire, action plans could include:
- Implementation and promotion of concern management strategies, which will be covered in more detail on the following slide.

If the gap is Knowledge, action plans could include:
- Presentations on how program evaluation and improvement capabilities support the mission and improvements in operational readiness.

If the gap is Ability, action plans could include:
- Enabling or empowering strategies for key sponsors to promote and provide support for program evaluation and improvement capabilities within the program. This could also include coaching opportunities with leadership and selected subject matter experts.

And finally, if the information gap is Reinforcement, action plans could include:
- Messages from senior leaders that program evaluation efforts are here to stay, and also
- Organizing and scheduling recurring sessions with individual stakeholders to identify emerging information gaps.

[Slide 26]

Slide 26 provides a list of important approaches and actions that should be included in any effective concern management strategy.

- While picking and choosing one's battles might be necessary at times, avoiding all confrontation is not an effective approach. It is important to actively and appropriately engage those individuals or groups who are expressing their concerns.
- Furthermore, it is essential to practice active listening skills in an effort to better understand the objections and to convey to the stakeholders they are being heard.
- Focusing on the "what" and letting go of the "how" will convey a message of flexibility and also openness to alternative ideas.
- Efforts to remove barriers whenever possible will often reveal options not previously considered and open doors to considering other viable alternatives.
- A lack of clarity often results in unnecessary confusion and can introduce unintended complexity into the decision-making process. Therefore, providing simple, clear choices and associated consequences to stakeholders can help to minimize confusion and reduce complexity.
- Finally, it is helpful to find ways of creating hope for stakeholders in areas where there may be lingering uncertainty or unanswered questions. One way of approaching this could be to encourage stakeholders to focus on a viable future state of the program that is within reach of being realized.

[Slide 27]

As outlined on the two previous slides, an effective communication strategy model will contain guidance on how to develop a strategic action plan that provides more complete coverage in addressing concerns and uncertainties. Program administrators may benefit from using this model in preparation for implementing their strategic action plans.

While program administrators would retain primary responsibility for the implementation of these strategic action plans, it may also be useful to enable key sponsors to assist in this process and to help manage different elements of concern that have been identified. For example, once sponsors are aware of a program's benefits and values, they can identify or respond to areas of resistance, areas of apathy, identify structures necessary to support the program, or identify other sources of support.

Since action plans can become iterative and progressive over time, programs can benefit from recurring reviews of strategic communications. An important purpose of these reviews would be to inform successive versions or updated action plans, and to develop themes or focal points for strategic communication campaigns.

[Slide 28]

The fourth and final step to support and strengthen stakeholder interests is the effective celebration of program successes.

This starts with some preliminary efforts focused on matching stakeholder interests to ongoing accomplishments of the program. Stakeholders want to know when and how the program has achieved accomplishments that are in line with their expressed interests. Highlighting the connections between stakeholder interests and individual successes will help solidify and sustain their engagement.

While this final point may seem a bit elementary, even small successes are worth celebrating in public forums. For example, this practice can help fill perceived voids between the announcement of major milestones or accomplishments. It can also contribute to creating a sense of expectation among the stakeholders and promote images of progress associated with the program.

I will now turn this presentation over to Ms. Stark.

[Slide29]
Thank you, Mr. Frank. Knowing about stakeholder groups is important since communication choices are best made in context--by considering the stakeholder group and the message that is intended for that group. Effective communications will increase the likelihood that programs are seen to add value and produce benefits, that program evaluation results are perceived to be useful, and that program evaluation data can be used to aid stakeholders' decision-making.

[Slide 30]

Communicating evaluation results are important components of the overall program evaluation process. Effective communication will assure that program evaluation information is received by the "right people."

Who are these right people? They are the different stakeholders, both internal and external to your program that Captain Thoumaian previously discussed. The list includes the program funding agency along with program administrators, staff, and program participants.

What does it mean to communicate? On the bottom of slide 30, you see a representation of a basic communication model. The model shows a sender on the left, which in this case may be you, who transmits a message through a channel or format to the receiver, on the right, whose mind interprets the message. The receiver in this case, is one or more of the stakeholder groups.

[Slide 31]
Specific aspects of communicating or reporting will depend on the intended audience, the specific stakeholder group that is to be addressed. Let's take a look at each row in the chart presented on slide 31.

Target audience. Consider the audience's background and level of expertise. It is important to know what type of information is best suited to each stakeholder group so that what you communicate meets their needs. Commercials and Public Service Announcements can be used to communicate to the participant community, while Quad Charts are for internal program leadership.

Reporting Resources. Determine what type of reporting can be achieved given the resources that are available. Do you have the time and monies needed to create and host web pages for program communications? Do you have staff to monitor and update Facebook pages on a regular basis?

Regulations and Requirements. Never publish or produce any materials without obtaining the input and approval of others. Ensure you have releases and permissions for all photos.

Norms. What you report needs to be appropriate for the stakeholder group to which you are communicating. When communicating to service member families, follow plain language directives When communicating with executive leadership, pay attention to military title and service rank.

To sum up, identify your audience, fine-tune your message, and select the appropriate channel and format.

[Slide 32]

Plan to communicate, so that you can select the best channel and format to reach specific stakeholder groups. Communicating evaluation findings to different stakeholders is an important aspect of program evaluation. Invite your stakeholders to suggest ways they would like to receive information.

Stakeholders are more likely to use evaluation results if they have some ownership of the evaluation process. The more people who have active involvement in the process, the easier it will be to use evaluation results for program improvement and decision-making.

[Slide 33]

An effective evaluation provides usable information. As an evaluation communicator, you may be called upon to provide data with little notice. Maintain accurate and readily-available information about program evaluation so that you can respond to requests for data on:

- Program activities and costs
- Participant demographics
- Participant outcomes

- Data that support decision-making
- Improvements to program services, and
- Common questions and responses

Ideally, data collection is "built-in" and maintained alongside regular program operations, so that data may be obtained easily.

[Slide 34]

Some popular communication formats are presented in the chart on slide 34. This chart shows three media types: written, oral, and internet-based or social media.

There are many communication formats from which to choose. For example, an Outbrief is a public presentation conducted by Leadership with a live audience—the implementation team, the larger unit, and other key leaders—typically using a PowerPoint.
Several formats may be combined to promote greater dissemination of results. Sequencing a series of communication events—a written report followed by a meeting, followed by a broadcast—can underscore the importance of findings and recommendations.

[Slide 35]

Understanding the needs of stakeholder groups will be important to help you select the most appropriate format. The chart on slide 35 shows format options to consider for various stakeholder groups.

Senior decision makers likely prefer a technical report. Implementation leadership may prefer After Action Reports or staff presentations. Communications with participants may occur best through town halls or radio and TV interviews.

[Slide 36]

Integrate your communications strategies into a plan or program. A very basic communications plan is presented in the chart on slide 36.

The header row lists essential elements to include in any communications plan: audience, message, format and timetable. In your role as information communicator, you need to understand the audience to whom a communication is targeted, consider the goals of the communication effort, select a communication channel or format, and establish the timeframe for information releases.

[Slide 37]

Slide 37 shows examples of communication formats used by DoD programs. Starting from the top left, there is a radio interview conducted for the Army STARRS program, the Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers, and then posted online; a website created by the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, a section of the Defense Centers of Excellence Facebook page, and a sample tweet from the Defense Centers of Excellence Twitter Feed.

[Slide 38]

Of course, all messages and communication activities must be cleared through the proper channels. Coordinate with your Public Affairs Office or marketing representative for permissions and release authority.

Track metrics and measures to confirm your media strategy and ensure that the effective formats have been selected. Notice when there is an increase in “traffic”: see whether it coincides with any base or installation event, and whether there are any lessons to be learned.

Monitor all accounts for activity ‘spikes.’ Seek to learn whether the media effort successfully met your communication goals.

[Slide 39]

Once you choose the best communication formats to deliver information about program evaluation results, there are several considerations to keep in mind on how best to present that information.

[Slide 40]

Regardless of which format you choose, there are a few general guidelines to help you to deliver your message effectively.

Be clear. Use plain language, which means phrasing messages at about an 8th grade level. If you must use complex terms, acronyms or abbreviations, clearly define them.

Be concise. Don’t say in 20 words what could be said in 12. Being concise does take extra effort, but efficient wording will be a great help to stakeholders.

Be consistent. Use one term or title to refer to the same concept throughout a document. Varying terminology is a sure-fire way to create confusion.

Make sure that your information is correct. Acknowledge that some information is not known or was not collected rather than try to go beyond the facts.

Be compelling. Present persuasive data to demonstrate that your program is of value, that it provides effective services and that it should continue to be funded.

[Slide 41]

Written reports are often required for accountability to funders, and are frequently requested by senior-level stakeholders. All written reports should clearly explain:

- The program, the identified need it addresses and who it serves—its reason for existing.
- The evaluation, including its purpose, its results and how those results were obtained—the evaluation methodology. The report should also include
- Next steps or actions that follow post-evaluation, including how results will be used and what changes will be implemented.

[Slide 42]

On slide 42, we provide a sample structure for written reports.

The Executive Summary appears first but is actually the last section to be written. It contains only key points of the report.

The narrative section of the report begins with a Program Overview. This should include the program's mission statement, goals and objectives. A brief discussion is needed about the programs inputs, or what the program needs to operate, activities, or what the program does, and the program's outputs and outcomes, or what the program strives to change or improve for its participants. Including a logic model, may help to promote a common understanding of the program.

Next, a review of Program Evaluation Methods should be included. Make sure the reader understands how results were generated.

Results and Conclusions should discuss what was learned from the evaluation, both program successes and what the program can improve upon. This section may propose changes for the program moving forward. Be sure to clarify how you reached your conclusions–use data in the form of graphs, tables and quotes to support your conclusions.

Lastly, include References and Appendices. References cite external sources that were used during the evaluation process, such as articles, websites, or interviews. Appendices include detailed information that some but not all stakeholders want, such as forms or procedural manuals.

[Slide 43]

Presentations are another common format used to convey information about program evaluation results. They can allow direct interaction with stakeholder groups and be useful for gathering feedback.

While they vary widely in length, content and style, each should include sections related to the nature of the program, evaluation methods used and results or conclusions.

In some circumstances it is best to gather feedback or respond to questions throughout the presentation. For larger audiences, it is generally best to have one or two designated periods for questions. Feedback may be gathered through a form, such as the Interactive Customer Evaluation card we use for this series.

Always include an appropriate point of contact as well as resources for additional information, such as a link to the program website.

[Slide 44]

Slide 44 shows several best practices to keep audience members engaged. Content for any type of communication should be tailored to the audience, and take into account the audience level of experience and expertise.

Break up content into manageable sections with focused content.

Use images and examples to help illustrate important concepts.

To the extent possible, documents or handouts associated with the presentation should be able to stand by themselves—other people may see them without the benefit of the live presentation.

Limit the amount of text the audience has to read during the presentation.

[Slide 45]

Websites and printed promotional pieces should be tailored to suit the audience.

Flyers and brochures are often used to recruit participants or generate referrals. These so-called "leave behind" documents should be visually appealing and follow the guidelines listed on Slide 40.

Social media sites and blogs allow interaction with participants and family members. Many programs now operate Facebook pages and Twitter feeds that allow program personnel the chance to provide updates, receive feedback and respond to questions. In many cases a public affairs office or marketing staff operate these sites

These media provide opportunities highlight program strengths and benefits for participants and other stakeholders.

[Slide 46]

Evidence-based guidelines have been developed to ensure that web-based communications are clear, consistent, and created with the needs of the user in mind. A reference guide we recommend, and include in our references is "Research-Based Web Design and Usability Guidelines," developed by the U.S. Health and Human Services department. It stresses that the home page is very important. A well-constructed home page will project a good first impression of the site overall.

- A home page should have certain characteristics that distinguish it from subpages within the website. Users have come to expect certain features on a home page, including the ability to find important links, access a site map and conduct search.
- A list of suggestions includes:
- Use a masthead with text and images that clearly identify the program.
- Create separate pages for different parts of a program or its different audiences, such as participants, health care providers, and family members. Subsections should be arranged so that users can easily find the information they need.
- Limit unnecessary scrolling: important material should be presented at the first screen that the user encounters and are able to access without scrolling. Use this primary screen space to display important program information.
- Enable easy access to the home page from every other page on the site.

There is a good deal of guidance available about principles of web page design and usability and we urge you to take advantage of them. Following usability principles will ensure that your web site clearly communicates the value of your program to site visitors.

I now turn the presentation back over to Mr. Frank, who will discuss common reporting challenges.

[Slide 47]

Thank you, Ms. Stark.

There are a number of common challenges that arise when military program administrators seek to report on program effectiveness.

[Slide 48]

On slide 48, we list several common questions we have received during our interactions with program and service leadership.

[Slide 49]

As with any sort of program, priorities should align with those of the parent organization. In this case, a program's priorities and those of its program evaluation activities should be in alignment with Defense Department and service-level interests, such as maintaining readiness and cost effectiveness, in addition to providing high quality, effective services.

It is also important to build in extra time for review of reporting materials through the chain of command. Even relatively brief and basic materials may require extensive review prior to release, especially for documents that will be available to the public. Make sure that review procedures are clear during the planning phases.

As in any large organization, military programs operate in an environment that includes a large number of written reports, meetings and presentations. This fact makes it all the more important that communications about effectiveness are clear, concise, consistent, factually correct and compelling.

Finally, as we have mentioned several times, make sure all appropriate permissions are acquired before release of any program information.

[Slide 50]

On slide 50, "What if I can't show my program is achieving outcomes at the time a program evaluation is carried out?"

This is a concern that we know keeps program managers up at night. Stakeholders demand accountability and transparency of programs, and each program should be able to demonstrate measurable results that show it is useful and efficient.

However, some programs must begin program evaluations with limited capabilities.

If a program cannot readily produce information needed to demonstrate effectiveness, then it should focus efforts on developing and incorporating program evaluation capabilities into everyday program operations. This means:

- Establishing a plan to improve evaluation capabilities,
- Seeking consultation and support from outside resources, and
- Acquiring training and resources needed so that program staff can generate data for self-evaluation and respond to any external evaluation efforts

For programs that are capable of conducting and participating in program evaluation but have not yet found effects, efforts should be focused on planning and carrying out program improvements as discussed in the previous section.

[Slide 51]

On slide 51, “How do I highlight areas for improvement without negatively affecting my program?”

Program administrators and stakeholders at all levels intuitively know that no program is perfect. In addition, the environment in which programs operate is constantly changing such that a program must make changes to adapt and remain relevant over time.

Stakeholders expect to see areas for targeted improvements in addition to program successes and strengths. Areas for improvement are not the same as weaknesses provided that there is a plan in place for carrying out improvement efforts. Stakeholders may be more willing to accept a program’s limitations when successes are evident alongside them. This is one reason why it is important to measure and analyze multiple output and outcome domains, as discussed in episodes 3 through 5 in this series.

Lastly, when areas for improvement are identified, it is critical that the program actually carry out improvements and measure progress toward the objectives of improvement efforts. As such, it is up to program administrators and higher-level leadership to establish priorities for improvements and ensure that objectives are achievable within a specified timeframe.

Now, Captain Thoumaian will provide some concluding statements.

[Slide 52]

Thank you Mr. Frank, Ms. Stark, and Ms. Aguirre.

You’ve heard a great deal today about the importance of reporting program evaluation findings to stakeholders and how it supports efforts to build a culture of effectiveness in the Defense Department’s system of prevention and care for psychological health and traumatic brain injuries.

[Slide 53]

A key takeaway from this presentation is that program evaluation is not an end in and of itself. Program evaluation is intended to make programs more effective in achieving their missions and works best when conducted regularly throughout the program development.

Stakeholder engagement is essential to program evaluation efforts and requires strategic communications in support of stakeholder interests.

Multiple reporting formats are needed to convey information effectively and highlight program successes and demonstrate program effectiveness to stakeholders.

Follow communication best practices and established usability guidance. This will bring clarity to your message. In doing so, a program may ensure it is supported and sustained over time.

I hope you will continue to attend these training presentations and also consult the Program Evaluation Guide and other resource materials on the DCoE website.

Now, back to Ms. Aguirre.

[Slides 54 -57]

Thank you Captain Thoumaian. There is a great deal of useful information available to programs on program evaluation and reporting procedures. On slides 55 through 57, we provide a brief list of key resources and references that we think may be useful.

[END]