

# ENHANCING STATE POLICYMAKERS' ABILITY TO USE RESEARCH EVIDENCE

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## BACKGROUND

The Reforming States Group, a bipartisan organization of legislative and executive branch leaders from most U.S. states, requested assistance with educating colleagues about evidence-informed policymaking. The Center for Evidence-based Policy at Oregon Health & Science University and Milbank Memorial Fund collaborated to develop a two-day Evidence-informed Health Policy (EiHP) workshop.

## OBJECTIVE

Build state capacity to use research evidence in policymaking.

## METHODS

### Workshop OBJECTIVES

- Introduce key evidence & research concepts (e.g., study design, risk of bias, relative vs. absolute risk)
- Foster networking & build team capacity
- Introduce evidence resources (e.g., Cochrane)
- Develop strategies to translate evidence into policy

### Workshop PROCESS

- Senior state official convenes legislative & executive branch members
- States identify relevant topics such as:
  - Atypical antipsychotics
  - Autism
  - Diabetes prevention
  - Hepatitis C
  - Substance abuse
  - Early child development
  - Homelessness
- Faculty provide 1- to 2-day workshop using relevant topics

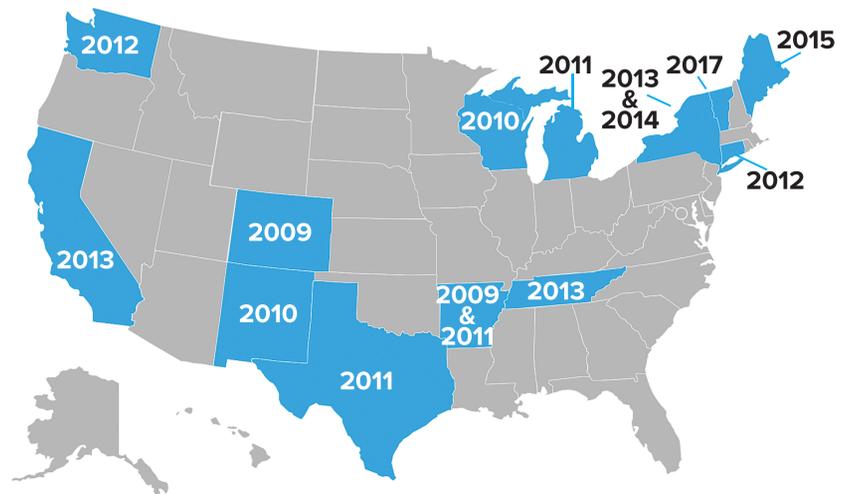
### Workshop EVALUATIONS

- All participants were given brief evaluation forms at the end of the workshop
- Evaluation included both quantitative & qualitative data
- Milbank Memorial Fund conducted key informant interviews & analyzed qualitative data

## RESULTS

Since 2009, 13 states and 284 policymakers have participated in EiHP workshops.

Figure 1. Participating states & year of EiHP workshop



Participants felt better equipped to find and use evidence and challenge claims made by others. Some found the content too detailed. Two states requested refresher sessions, three requested assistance with evidence resources, and several requested help in communicating research information to constituents.

Table 1. Summary of evaluation results (n = 200), 2009–2015

Evaluation Question	Mean Response (SD)
How much have you learned?*	5.4 (0.7)
How was the amount learned to the time spent ratio?*	4.8 (0.8)
How were the course materials?*	4.9 (0.8)
How were the small group sessions?*	4.6 (1.0)
How were the large group sessions?*	5.2 (0.8)

\* 0=nothing, 2=not much, 4=some, 6=a lot

\* 0=terrible, 2=not good, 4=good, 6=great

## CONCLUSIONS

EiHP workshops successfully introduced state policymakers to concepts needed to use evidence in policymaking and provided opportunities to strategize about using evidence in their work. It was important to collaborate with policymakers to customize workshops to participants' needs and relevant topics.

## NEXT STEPS

- Expand range of topics to include social services & public health
- Customize workshops, balancing length with depth of evidence review, into 60-minute, 5-hour, and 1-day workshops
- Offer repeat & follow-up workshops to address participant turnover & reinforce skills
- Develop curriculum to address evidence communication skills

*My eyes were opened wide. You increased my awareness while also terrifying me about how many new policies are put in place when the evidence isn't there.*

— EiHP Participant

