The Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) - Project Overview

The Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) was established in 2000 by the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton. The ECRC's mission is to to promote the healthy development of young children by strengthening families, improving the quality of early learning experiences, increasing school and community readiness, and informing public policy.

One program the ECRC oversees is SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids). SPARK is a kindergarten readiness program that works collaboratively with schools, families, and the community. Each month, SPARK families receive a new book, a lesson activity, and educational supplies, all with the goal of increasing the child's success in school and life. There are 26 SPARK sites throughout Ohio.

The Challenge: Keeping Track of SPARK Information Throughout Ohio

While each SPARK location throughout the state is independently managed, the ECRC must track the activities of all the sites in order to note trends, offer technical assistance, and report statewide program information to the independent evaluation team at Kent State University.

Prior to Adatasol's involvement, the ECRC was using a home-built system. The system was unable to keep up with the program's growth, which jeopardized the accuracy of the entered data.

The Solution: Adatasol's System for SPARK

The system installed by Adatasol for SPARK monitors key program information. The system captures name, enrollment date, program attendance, and assessments, and it tracks the visit history and scheduled visits with SPARK families.

The Adatasol system is designed to receive information from both desktop computers and remote mobile devices. SPARK staff routinely visit homes in remote rural locations as well as inner city neighborhoods, so the information can be entered either from the field or from the program office.

One of the custom features of the Adatasol system is a "Status" button that allows for a quick assessment to determine whether a SPARK family is newly "in process," is actively participating, or has withdrawn from the program. This feature helps monitor attrition, which is an important metric to ensure continued services for needy children and to assess program performance.

Conclusions

With Adatasol's system, the ECRC can now identify inconsistencies across the state in program attrition rates and patterns of family visits. This allows for early identification of any program issues that must be addressed.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis recently completed an assessment of model Early Childhood Development (EDC) programs and concluded they are one of the most successful public program types in terms of future return-on-investment. One dollar invested in early childhood development results in eight dollars saved because it mitigates future public expenses for adult education, incarceration, teen pregnancy, welfare, etc.

Providing the ECRC with reliable SPARK program information management through the Adatasol system allows the ECRC to have uniformly positive impacts throughout the state of Ohio.

The ECRC is pleased with the user-friendly features of their custom database installed by Adatasol, and they can operate the system and generate reports without outside assistance.