



# Institute for Community Health

A collaboration of the Cambridge Health Alliance, Mount Auburn Hospital, and Partners Healthcare

## 2008 AMERICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

### **Translating an organizational evaluation policy across different program settings: The Institute for Community Health experience.**

**Abstract:** The Institute for Community Health (ICH) is a community-based evaluation and research institute embedded within a health care system. Given this setting, ICH serves as the evaluator for many clinic and community-based health programs. ICH has its own policies on how it approaches and conducts evaluation, which include using a participatory, collaborative approach. However, the programs that ICH is asked to evaluate may have their own, different evaluation policies. This presentation will look at two case studies and examine how ICH's policies can play out in very different ways depending on the setting of the program being evaluated and its evaluation policies. We will discuss what we do when there is a conflict between our organizational approach and that of the program we are evaluating; how their policies influence our approach; and how we may need to modify our approach to meet the needs of different settings.

**Relevance/Importance of Proposal:** Evaluation organizations generally have established policies on how they approach and conduct evaluations. The organizations whose programs they are evaluating, however, may have very different policies or no policies at all. Ideally, programs are able to select an evaluator whose policies are in line with its own, and evaluation organizations are able to work with programs that value the organization's approach. In reality, however, there may not always be a perfect match. In keeping with this year's conference theme of evaluation policy and practice, this paper will explore how conflicting or converging organizational evaluation policies influence practice.

The two case studies discussed during this presentation will include: 1) A breast cancer clinic with a grant to improve their services and clinical outcomes, and 2) A community-based volunteer health outreach and education program, with which the ICH evaluators have a history of serving as internal evaluators. This session will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss lessons learned from working in these two settings and examine the effect a clinical setting has on the way evaluators may be expected to approach evaluation. We will also discuss how a history of having internal evaluators affects the evaluation policies a program develops for itself. We hope that this session will contribute to knowledge about organizational evaluation policy and practice.