

SCOSAR *Framework.*



August 2025

Introduction

This document outlines intended and developing foundational theories, frameworks, and processes that will guide the Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery (SCOSAR) in delivering effective, evidence-based services. Consistent application of these practices ensures high-quality care for clients, accountability to funding agencies, and transparency to the community.

Our methodology is rooted in systems thinking, a discipline championed by Peter Senge and central to Peter Stroh's *Thinking for Social Change*. This approach moves beyond fragmented service delivery to recognize the complex, interconnected factors shaping client well-being and community health. By fostering a shared vision, promoting team learning, and uniting stakeholders around a common purpose, SCOSAR can address entrenched social problems with adaptive, evidence-informed strategies.

A clear roadmap for data documentation underpins service continuity, rigorous program evaluation, and measurable, results-based outcomes. Our principles—commitment to evidence-based practices, quality assurance, and staff protection—ensure public resources are used efficiently to create meaningful change in people's lives and advance community well-being.

As Mark Friedman reminds us in *Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough*:

“Trying hard is not good enough. Having good intentions is not good enough. We are responsible for producing measurable change in people's lives.”

This is the standard to which SCOSAR holds itself—turning effort and good will into real, measurable impact.

Respectfully,

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the core philosophy guiding the Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery (SCOSAR)?

SCOSAR's core philosophy emphasizes a consistent investment in evidence-based techniques and programs that have undergone rigorous evaluation. The belief is that replicating and scaling proven approaches leads to the best outcomes, avoiding the need to "reinvent the wheel" or create new interventions unnecessarily.

How does Systems Theory influence SCOSAR's approach to client care?

Systems theory is a foundational element that guides SCOSAR's approach by viewing human behavior and problems within the context of complex and interconnected systems. This holistic perspective means that helping staff consider all factors within a client's system, including family, friends, counselors, teachers, and community networks, as well as societal values. The goal is to work towards making the entire system healthy and supportive for the client.

What is Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) and why is it crucial for SCOSAR?

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is a decision-making process in human services that ensures optimal service delivery. For SCOSAR, it's crucial for identifying the most appropriate interventions for clients, whether for mental health, substance abuse, or healthcare access. EBP involves continuously asking specific, practical questions related to client needs, objectively finding the best current evidence, and taking action based on the latest research to ensure the highest level of care.

Why is diligent documentation so important for SCOSAR's services?

Diligent documentation is vital for several reasons: it enhances the quality of services, protects program staff, ensures accuracy in records reflecting services provided, and facilitates continuous service delivery. Furthermore, HIPPA and CFR 42 compliant records are essential for assessing client circumstances, planning services, providing accountability to various stakeholders (clients, funding agencies), evaluating services, and ensuring continuity of care if a staff member becomes unavailable.

What defines a "Culture of Quality Assurance" within SCOSAR?

A "Culture of Quality Assurance (QA)" at SCOSAR signifies an environment where team members genuinely prioritize the quality of their work and make decisions to achieve that quality. QA is a core management function that ensures services meet agreed-upon standards derived from professional organizations, evidence-based practices, public policies, and program expectations. In SCOSAR, QA is not an additional task but is embedded in the "DNA" of each staff person, driving all actions through a system of measurement, comparison to standards, and feedback.

How does SCOSAR utilize a "Results Driven Outcomes" approach?

SCOSAR employs a "Results Driven Outcomes" approach to ensure that government policies, programs, and service models effectively reach their intended beneficiaries while making efficient use of public funds. This involves focusing on outcomes and measuring the impact of programs, starting with a Theory of Change (or Foundational Theory). The process uses an iterative evaluative framework, combining both qualitative and quantitative evidence, to rigorously measure the impact of interventions and maximize the value delivered by public money.

What is Results-Based Accountability (RBA) and how does it differentiate itself?

Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is a structured framework for improving complex social problems and enhancing program effectiveness, utilized by communities and organizations worldwide. Developed by Mark Friedman, RBA is a data-driven process that helps stakeholders move from discussing problems to taking actionable solutions. Its unique distinction lies in separating "population accountability" (improving community well-being with co-equal partners) from "performance accountability" (maximizing impact on specific clients), clarifying responsibilities and contributions towards broader community goals.

What is the distinction between "population accountability" and "performance accountability" in RBA?

In Results-Based Accountability (RBA), "population accountability" refers to the collective effort with co-equal partners to promote overall community well-being. It focuses on broader societal outcomes. In contrast, "performance accountability" organizes the work to achieve the greatest impact on individual clients. Essentially, the services provided to clients (performance accountability) are seen as SCOSAR's direct contribution to the larger goal of community well-being (population accountability).

Foundational Theories and Practices

The SCOSAR framework is built on several foundational theories and practices, which guide its service delivery and decision-making processes.

- **Systems Theory:** This theory views an individual's behavior and problems within the context of their complex, interrelated systems. It considers all individuals interacting within a system, including the client's family, friends, counselors, teachers, and community. The goal is to make the client's system healthy and supportive by considering all the factors impacting them. The theory also acknowledges the effect of societal values on an individual.
- **Evidence-Based Practice (EBP):** SCOSAR relies on evidence-based practice to guide decisions and ensure optimal service delivery. EBP involves staff continually posing specific, practical questions to clients and then objectively finding the best, most current evidence to inform appropriate action. This process helps professionals choose the most suitable intervention for various situations, such as mental health or substance abuse issues. Consistent investment in these proven techniques and programs is believed to bring about the best outcomes.

Key Operational Components

The SCOSAR framework also includes a strong focus on key operational components that support its core theories.

- **Documentation:** Careful and diligent documentation is essential for enhancing service quality and protecting program staff. Documentation should be accurate, timely, and sufficient to reflect the services provided, facilitate future service delivery, and ensure continuity of care. This is particularly important if a client's primary worker is unavailable. Records must be compliant with HIPAA and CFR 42 to assess client circumstances, plan services, provide accountability to funding agencies, and evaluate the services provided.
- **Quality Assurance (QA):** SCOSAR fosters a quality assurance culture, where staff genuinely care about the quality of their work. QA is a management function that ensures services meet agreed-upon standards derived from professional organizations, public policies, and evidence-based practices. In a high-functioning team, quality assurance is deeply embedded in the staff's approach, not just an additional duty. A QA system consists of measuring, comparing findings to standards, and providing feedback to staff, clients, and stakeholders.

- **Results-Driven Outcomes:** The program emphasizes the importance of evaluating how well it achieves its desired effects to maximize the value of public funds. SCOSAR's effective human service programs are based on evidence and focused on outcomes. Measurement of outcomes begins with a Theory of Change or foundational theory, which drives an evaluative framework where both qualitative and quantitative evidence are important.

Accountability Framework

SCOSAR uses Results-Based Accountability (RBA) to improve complex social problems and the effectiveness of its programs.

- **Results-Based Accountability (RBA):** RBA is a data-driven process that helps communities and organizations move from discussing problems to taking action to solve them. It is a simple, common-sense framework that starts with the desired "end" and works backward toward the "means" of achieving it. The key distinction in RBA is between population accountability and performance accountability.
- **Population Accountability:** This focuses on promoting community well-being with co-equal partners.
- **Performance Accountability:** This focuses on having the greatest impact on clients, and what is done for clients is SCOSAR's contribution to broader community impact.

Surry County Office of Substance Abuse Recovery Service Frameworks and Theory

Research has found that consistently investing in evidence-based techniques and programs that have undergone rigorous evaluation can deter efforts to reinvent the wheel or build yet another new version of an intervention.

Experience suggests that the replication and scaling of proven approaches can help bring about the best outcomes.

Selected Foundational Theory	Systems theory looks at human behavior and problems from the perspective of the individual in the context of complex and interrelated systems. This holistic theory considers the needs, behavior, and experiences of all those interacting within the system. In systems theory, a helping staff must consider all the factors within the system impacting the client and work to make that system healthy and supportive. Those in the system include both the client and members of the client's family, as well as networks and communities such as friends, counselors, teachers, mentors, classrooms, schools, and religious communities. Systems theory also considers the effect of societal values on an individual.
A Reliance on Evidenced Based Process	Evidence-based practice (EBP) is used in human service to guide decision-making that ensures optimal service delivery. How do staff ensure that they're choosing the best intervention for clients on matters ranging from mental health issues to substance abuse to access to healthcare? Good decision-making demands identifying which services are most appropriate in various situations. To achieve this level of care consistently, human services professionals utilize a process called evidence-based practice (EBP). EBP "involves continually posing specific questions of direct practical importance to clients" to objectively find the current best evidence related to each of the client's responses—and taking appropriate action based on the latest research.

A Focus on Documentation	Careful and diligent documentation enhances the quality of services provided to clients and, ultimately, can protect program staff. Staff must take reasonable steps to ensure that documentation in records is accurate and reflects the services provided. Staff should include sufficient and timely documentation in records to facilitate the delivery of services and to ensure continuity of services provided to clients in the future. HIPPA Compliant and CFR 42 Compliant records are necessary to assess clients' circumstances; plan and deliver services; facilitate supervision; provide proper accountability to clients, other service providers, funding agencies, evaluate services provided; and ensure continuity in the delivery of future services. Documentation also helps to ensure quality care if a client's worker becomes unavailable because of illness, disability, vacation, or employment termination.
Culture of Quality Assurance	A true quality assurance (QA) culture is an environment where team members genuinely care about the quality of their work and make decisions based on achieving that level of quality. Quality assurance is a widely accepted management function that is intended to ensure that services provided to clients meet agreed-upon standards. Standards come from professional organizations, evidence-based practices, public policies, and program expectations that specify outcomes for clients. QA systems consist of measurement, comparison of findings to standards, and feedback to staff, clients, stakeholders, and decision makers. In a high functioning team evidenced based process, data and outcomes driven decision making is part of the normal course of doing business. Quality assurance is embedded in the DNA of each staff person and is not an add on or additional job duty - it is the driving feature and spirit behind the work.
Results Driven Outcomes	It is increasingly important that government policies, programs and service models reach the people they are intended to serve while making efficient use of public money. Effective human service programs are based on evidence and focused on outcomes. One important element of commissioning effective and efficient human services is identifying and measuring the impact of programs. By evaluating how well a program achieves the desired effect, a focus on outcomes will maximize the value delivered by public money. Effective measurement starts with a Theory of Change or (Foundational Theory) that drives the development of an integrated evaluative framework where both qualitative and quantitative evidence play equally important roles. It is only through an iterative approach that probes, measures and adapts, that an evaluative framework can be created with sufficient validity to measure the impact of programs, policies and interventions in the community.

Results Based Accountability	Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is a disciplined way of thinking and acting to improve entrenched and complex social problems. Communities use it to improve the lives of children, youth, families, adults. RBA is also used by organizations to improve the effectiveness of their programs. Developed by Mark Friedman and described in his book <i>Trying Hard is Not Good Enough</i>, RBA is being used in all 50 United States and in more than a dozen countries around the world to create measurable change in people's lives, communities, and organizations. RBA uses a data-driven, decision-making process to help communities and organizations get beyond talking about problems to taking action to solve problems. It is a simple, common-sense framework that everyone can understand. RBA starts with ends and works backward, towards means. The "end" or difference you are trying to make looks slightly different if you are working on a broad community level or are focusing on your specific program or organization. The population versus performance distinction is what separates RBA from all other frameworks. It is important to understand because it determines who is responsible for what. Population accountability organizes our work with co-equal partners to promote community well-being. In contrast, Performance Accountability organizes our work to have the greatest impact on our clients. What we do for our clients is our contribution to community impact.
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References

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