

Research and Evaluation Position Statement

SeriousFun Children's Network (SeriousFun) research and evaluation efforts use ethical, high-quality approaches to better understand the potential outcomes of camp for all involved. The primary goals of this effort are namely:

1. to inform best practice opportunities for continuous improvement of experiences for campers with serious illnesses and their families,
2. to demonstrate how these experiences enhance the lives of campers and their families,
3. to advocate for the need for SeriousFun, member camps, and partner programs through telling our story, and
4. to share, inform, and partner with other communities that care for children.

As part of SeriousFun’s overall strategic plan to strengthen Network capacity by creating a body of work around the impact and value of camp for children living with serious illness, the following complementary strategic plan offers more specificity for proposed research and evaluation efforts. The five main strategies below align with the position statement.

Research and Evaluation Guiding Principles

1. Participation in Network-wide studies

- a. Camps and programs are expected to participate to the extent possible in Network-wide studies when asked. All Network-wide studies involve camp and program personnel in the planning stages to ensure the burden of participation is as low as possible while still maintaining high quality methods. However, camps might decline participation due to acute issues such as changes in leadership, disaster, or other organization-wide issues that would preclude enthusiastic engagement in the study.

2. Use of individual camp/program data from Network-wide studies

- a. Whenever a Network-wide study includes datasets for individual camps, each camp will receive the raw data for their camp. The reason for this is transparency and as gratitude for involvement in the study.
- b. Camps can choose to analyze their own camp’s data to share internally, for program improvement or decision making. The reason for this is that there could be insights or suggestions relevant to camp operations that could improve experiences for campers and families, but not be a strong enough message to communicate to external audiences.
- c. Camps may not publish on their individual camp’s data nor communicate this information to the public or external camp audiences (e.g., through newsletters, in grant reports, to donors). The reason for this is that the benefit of a Network-wide study is that several camps’ data are grouped together which elicits more confidence in the findings than data from one camp alone. Further, there might be statistical or other methodological barriers to analyzing data from one camp.
- d. Camps can use the marketing and communications toolkit that will accompany every Network-wide study. Camps can also state publicly that they participated in the Network-wide study. The reason for this is that participation in Network-wide studies is a benefit of membership in a network and the SeriousFun Network provides value to camps that don’t have to conduct such studies on their own, using their resources to provide exceptional experiences for children and families.

3. Advancing equity

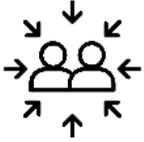
Throughout all stages of research and evaluation processes from project design to reporting,

- a. Engage in anti-racist self-reflection and learning

- b. Identify and address white supremacy
- c. Foster and participate in collaborative and equitable partnerships
- d. Continually consider cultural, historical, and political contexts.

Data Framework

This framework guides how data are collected and used in various SFCN efforts.



Participant

- Demographics, numbers of attendances, number of new campers served
- Mental and physical needs/accessibility



Program

- Program quality
- Participant engagement and satisfaction
- Medical care provided
- Program types and descriptions, numbers of new programs
- Retention, wait list, no-shows, use rates, percentage or ratio of eligible children/families compared to those who attend
- Groups served and not served
- Staff trainings



Purpose

- Changes for program participants: psychosocial or health-related traits, qualities, skills, knowledge, or behaviors (outcomes)
- Changes in communities and groups (impact)

Although displayed as separate ideas, there are multiple levels and layers of overlap between all three. Identifying appropriate indicators, measures, and tools, and uses for these data at all levels is an ongoing process and conversation with Development, Program, camps, programs, and other entities.