



## Digital Story 1, Part 5

### Evidence-Informed Decision Making: Lessons Learned, Next Steps

#### NCCMT

Now, this breastfeeding story that comes from Peel Public Health has a lot of important information that would be good to share with other health organizations out there. Can you just recap a little bit of the learning that came from this story and how it might be applicable to other situations and other organizations?

#### PPH

It's been a huge learning curve for us. I think this story kind of comes at the very beginning of that curve, and I think the lessons in the story are about just this need to have a willingness to be open to what you don't know and to be prepared to go and dig in and to follow that systematic process when you need to. In some ways you could think it as a little embarrassing, this story, but I think I've told it so many times now that I'm way passed being embarrassed about it. In fact it's the kind of a story that I think comforts people because you never get to change and grow unless you kind of run up against something and it makes you have to do it differently. Part of the thinking that we have to do about that is about our employees. And a big piece for us is trying to build what we're calling a culture of inquiry so that the organization as a whole and its employees are able to say and willing to say: "Hmmm, maybe there's something I should be thinking about differently here. Maybe there's something I could be doing differently. Maybe there's some new piece of research or evidence that we should be looking at for this program." We started in this evidence-informed work on bringing training to people that are doing what we call the heavy lifting of the search and appraisal but we also have five hundred or so other employees. Those employees, that's really the next stage of our work here, and we call it, in short form, EIDM for the 500 because it's those 500 staff that need to understand those basics of the idea to be able to work and live and produce good quality work in this environment. So, I do think it's a cultural change, and I'm sure you know it takes a long time to change culture and it requires many different small pieces that I think add up to building this culture of inquiry.

#### NCCMT

Thanks very much, Bev, for sharing all this with us. I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about what this investment in evidence-informed public health, and specifically your decision making processes, has led to as far as costs and benefits for your organization.

#### PPH

Hmmm. That's a good question, Jeannie. There has been, I would say a huge investment to this by Peel Public Health. And the payoffs are just as huge ... on many levels. First of all, the payoff to the client, the customer, the public in Peel. The idea is that they get the very best evidence-based programs and services that they have a right to. So, they're getting public health services that are based on the best available evidence. And I think in a world that is changing this much and in a world that's addressing these complex things like obesity, like the continuing rates of tobacco use amongst young people. Those are tough questions. If we can bring the research to bear on that and use that to inform our programs, then I think we're doing a service to our clients. The other piece is there's never enough money to go around. There's never enough money in the health system, let alone the public health system, to be able to address in-depth all the things that we need to address. And so we need to use the evidence to make the very, very best choices with these limited resources. And then I think the other payoff that is very important and very rewarding to somebody like me who's working in this organization and who has a focus on our workforce development, is there's a payoff for the employees. It's very energizing to learn new things. It's professionally rewarding to be able to think through these issues and to feel that you're bringing the best work to the front. And I would say there's a tremendous amount of energy in the organization right now. And I think it's the result of many things but part of it is the work that we're investing in evidence-informed decision making and that in itself requires an investment in our work force. That's another very positive element.