

# New Contributions on Emphasizing Evidence-Based Programs for Children and Youth



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# Presentation Overview



- Discuss purpose of the Evidence-Based Programs for Children and Youth Project
- Share themes from the April 2011 Forum
- Describe dissemination plans
- Summarize issue papers
  - Core Intervention Components: Identifying and Operationalizing “What Works”
  - The Importance of Implementation for Research, Practice and Policy

# Overarching Questions



- What are the opportunities and challenges of promoting evidence-based programs?
- We have identified what we think the evidence-based models are—now what? How do we reach our goals of improved program quality and accountability?
- What is needed to support successful implementation of evidence-based programs?
- How do we conduct evidence-based (or evidence-informed) policy work within a growing evidence-base?

# Project Goals



- Assemble an advisory group of experts in implementing EBPs
- Identify the challenges faced by program implementers as they implement EBPs for children and youth
- Assess the state of the knowledge from research and practice -- across fields -- that helps to address these challenges
- Synthesize lessons learned about replicating and scaling up EBPs and implementing evidence-informed or innovative strategies

# Emphasizing Evidence-Based Programs Forum



- Convened experts in April 2011 in research and practice that focus on human service programs to discuss:
  - Selecting evidence-based programs for replication
  - Adaptation
  - Scale-Up
  - Developing evidence-informed approaches



# Key Themes from the Forum



- Implementation quality matters
- Using good criteria for selecting and implementing may be more important than the original evidence alone
- Implementation science can guide program selection
- Research can be used for innovation
  - When EBPs are not available, there are strategies and bodies of evidence to inform program development.

# Next Steps

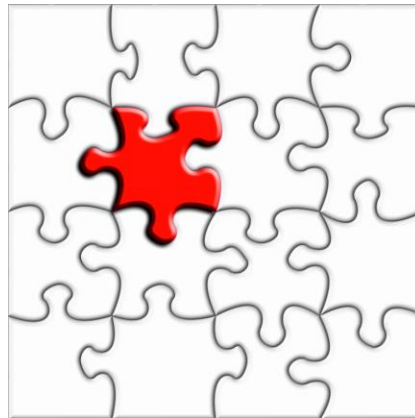


- Disseminate products from the Forum in the spring of 2012 on FindYouthInfo.gov and ChildTrends.org:
  - Videos
  - Summaries of the Forum discussion
- Develop a set of issue papers for the field to synthesize the knowledge base and identify knowledge gaps
  - Experts are creating three issue papers:
    - ✦ Strategies for Identifying Core Components
    - ✦ Importance of Implementation
    - ✦ Developing Evidence-Informed Strategies

# Core Intervention Components:



**IDENTIFYING AND OPERATIONALIZING  
“WHAT WORKS”**





# How to Identify Core Components



- **Authors:** Karen Blase and Dean Fixsen, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at UNC-CH
- **Audiences:** Designed for the “initial doers”: program developers, researchers (but also practitioners, funders, and policy makers)
- **Purpose:** Little guidance exists about how to identify core components of evidence-based programs
  - Outcome data do not tell the whole story
  - In addition to outcomes, need to define and understand the active ingredients that make the programs work

# What are Core Components?



- Essential functions or principles that make up a program or intervention and the active ingredients (activities that operationalize each core component)
- Components that are intended to, and have been found through research to, positively affect the proximal outcomes

# Benefits of Identifying Core Components



- Focusing on core components and their associated active ingredients increases our ability:
  - To focus implementation resources on the right variables
  - To accurately interpret outcomes and use effective program improvement strategies
  - To make adaptations that improve fit without decreasing benefits
  - To replicate and scale-up without program drift

# Challenges



- Few programs have adequate and clear descriptions of the core components and their recommended dosage and strength
- Commonly accepted criteria to verify the presence or validation of core components are lacking
- The components named by program developers may not necessarily include the functional core components or all the core components. More research is needed

# Elements of Well-Operationalized Programs



- Clear description of the context for the program
  - Philosophical principles and values behind the program
  - Intended population
- Clear description of the core components/active ingredients
- Description of the activities that operationally define the core components
- Practical assessment of the performance of the practitioners
  - Should be highly correlated with intended outcomes
  - Also called fidelity assessments

# Implications



- Greater attention to the definition and validation of core components would be assisted by investments in research agendas to clearly operationalize, measure, and test the efficacy of the core components.
- Asking program developers about core components and fidelity measures helps communities and agencies assess the fit for their community and understand how well specified the program is at this point.

# The Importance of Implementation for Research, Practice and Policy



# Importance of Quality Implementation



- Author: Joseph Durlak, Loyola University (emeritus)
- Audiences: Policymakers, funders, researchers, practitioners
- Purpose: To discuss the cost of poor program implementation and share lessons learned
  - Poorly implemented programs are a poor allocation of resources
  - Inability to achieve impacts for youth



# What is quality implementation?



- Quality Implementation = Conducting a program as intended/planned
- Dimensions of quality implementation:
  - Fidelity: the extent to which all core components (the critical active ingredients of a program) are replicated faithfully
  - Adaptation: extent to which program elements other than the core components are changed
  - Dosage: how much of the program is delivered

# Factors that Affect Implementation



- **Community-wide or societal factors**
  - Funding, policies, politics
- **Practitioner characteristics**
  - Self-efficacy, skill proficiency, perceived need
- **Characteristics of the program**
  - Adaptability, fit with the setting and population
- **Characteristics of the organization hosting the program**
  - Positive climate, shared vision, use of data, leadership
- **Factors specific to the implementation process**
  - Successful training, technical assistance, feedback to staff

# Importance of Program Implementation



- Extensive data demonstrates the link between quality of EBP implementation and effect sizes on outcomes for children and youth
  - After school literature
  - Violence prevention programs for youth
  - Drug prevention programs
- Money, resources, and time spent on poorly implemented programs is wasted.
- Poor implementation limits the ability to learn from evaluation studies.

# Phases of Quality Implementation



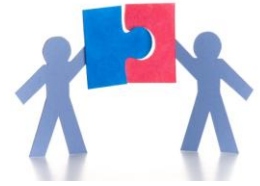
- Initial considerations regarding the host setting
  - Assessment activities (needs assessment)
  - Decisions about adaptation
  - Capacity-building strategies
- Creating a structure for implementation
  - Create teams and an implementation plan
- Ongoing structure support once implementation begins
  - TA, process evaluation, feedback mechanism
- Improving future applications

# Lessons Learned



- Don't implement a program on your own.
  - Draw on the expertise and experience of outside professionals.
  - Chances of quality implementation increase when multiple stakeholders work collaboratively in a systematic way.
- Implementation is never perfect and varies over time.
  - Be patient and anticipate and deal with challenges.
  - A pilot program is a good idea.
- Practitioners vary in their performance.
  - It's important to monitor practitioners' performance and offer professional development as needed.

# Implications for Practice



- Organizations that host new programs must devote sufficient effort, time, and resources to implementation.
- Investing in evidence-based programs requires investing in quality implementation.
- Funders should allow time and resources for implementation.

# A Word from Joseph Durlak



# Questions

