Understanding Evidence-Based Programs

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Agenda

- What are evidence-based programs?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the principles of effective evidence-based programs?
- How might you apply this knowledge to your own work?

Where do you stand?

- I know a lot about evidence-based programs. Agree 5--4--3--2--1 Disagree
- Successful parent education and support programs are as much art as science. Agree 5--4--3--2--1 Disagree
- Many good parenting programs are based primarily on experience and good intentions. Agree 5--4--3--2--1 Disagree
- Only parenting programs that have strong evidence that they work should be funded. Agree 5--4--3--2--1 Disagree
What are evidence-based programs?

A new class of programs that:

- Are based on a solid theoretical foundation
- Have been carefully implemented and evaluated using rigorous scientific methods
- Have been replicated and evaluated in a variety of settings
- Have evaluation findings that have been subjected to critical review
- Have been "endorsed" as evidence-based by a federal agency or respected research organization

History of Evidence-based Programs

- Medical Practice and Health Care
- Public Health
- Social Work
- Clinical and School psychology
- Prevention Science (e.g., drug & violence prevention)
- Other fields

Common Program Labels

- **Exemplary Programs** (Department of Education)
- **Effective Programs** (CDC, NIDA, DHHS)
- **Model Programs** (SAMHSA)
- **Proven Programs** (Promising Practices Network)
- **What Works** (Child Trends)
Terminology

Evidence-based = Science-based

Terminology

Evidence-based ≠ Research-based

Are evidence-based practices the same as evidence-based programs?

- “The integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture and preferences.” (American Psychological Association)

- “The integration of best-researched evidence and clinical expertise with patient values.” (Institute of Medicine)
Why the growing interest in evidence-based programs?

- Public agencies, private funders and political climate are beginning to require it
- Public accountability
- Efficiency (i.e., don’t need to reinvent the wheel)
- Body of scientific evidence has reached a critical mass
- A desire to use what is known to be effective
- Increases the likelihood that limited resources will be used wisely
- Evidence helps sell the program

Observer Rated Aggressive & Hostile Behaviors

![Graph showing changes in aggressive and hostile behaviors across grades.]


Adolescent Cigarette Use Over Time

![Graph showing changes in adolescent cigarette use over time.]

Alcohol-Related Cost-Benefits of Strengthening Families Program 10-14

For every $1 dollar invested... $9.60 saved

Percentage of Schools Using Evidence-based Programs

What are some limitations of evidence-based programs?

Where can evidence-based programs be found?
Benchmark: Increase the percentage of children who do not experience physical, psychological or emotional abuse

Proven Programs
- Child-Parent Centers
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: Teacher Training Workshop
- Project TRUST
- Safe Child Program
- Who Do You Tell?

Promising Programs
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Classifications of Evidence-based Prevention Programs

- **Universal:**
  interventions directed at the general public or an entire population *(e.g., all new parents)*

- **Selective:**
  interventions directed at a subgroup of a population at risk of developing a problem but not yet exhibiting any difficulties *(e.g., parents who are isolated or experiencing high levels of stress)*

- **Indicated:**
  interventions targeted at high risk individuals who show some signs or symptoms of a problem *(e.g., parents who are showing some signs of abusive behavior)*
Evidence-informed program improvement

Ineffective & unproven programs

Evidence-based programs

A less orthodox view of evidence-based programs

Principles of effective programs

- Program design & content
- Program relevance
- Program delivery
- Program assessment & quality assurance
Program design and content

Effective programs...
- Target relevant risk and protective factors and assets
- Are theory-driven
- Are of sufficient dosage and intensity
- Are comprehensive
- Limit the use of fear and punishment
- Use active learning approaches

Target relevant risk and protective factors and assets

Address dynamic risk & protective factors

Theory-driven

A good roadmap is essential
Sample logic model – Parent education program

**INPUTS**
- Staff
- Money
- Partners

**OUTPUTS**
- Select parent ed curriculum
- Provide training sessions
- Targeted parents attend

**OUTCOMES**
- Parents increase knowledge of child development
- Parents use improved parenting skills
- Reduced rates of child abuse & neglect

**OUTCOMES**
- Parents use improved parenting skills
- Parents learn new ways to discipline & communicate

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**Sufficient dosage and intensity**

Enduring change takes effort

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**Comprehensive**

Simple solutions rarely work

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Limit the use of fear and punishment

Use active learning techniques

Effective programs...
- Target relevant risk and protective factors and assets
- Are theory-driven
- Are of sufficient dosage and intensity
- Are comprehensive
- Limit the use of fear and punishment
- Use active learning approaches
Effective programs...
- Are developmentally appropriate
- Are appropriately timed
- Are socio culturally relevant

One size does not fit all

Developmentally appropriate

One size does not fit all

 Appropriately timed

One size does not fit all
Socio-culturally relevant

One size does not fit all

Program delivery

Effective programs...
• Foster good relationships
• Are delivered by well-trained and committed staff
• Stay true to what works

Good relationships are critical
Well-trained and committed staff

Stay true to what works

Program assessment and quality assurance

Effective programs…
- Are well-documented
- Focus on evaluation and refinement
Make sure the program is well-documented

- Staff need to understand the program in order to implement it well
- Maintaining program fidelity requires that people know what the program is about
- Program replication is difficult if the program isn’t well documented

Focus on evaluation & refinement

- Evaluation is your friend
- Evaluation takes many forms
- Don’t evaluate too soon
- Evaluation ain’t always easy

Implications for professional practice

- What are some other ways you might use some of today’s ideas in your work?
- What challenges do you foresee?
- What types of additional resources or technical assistance do you need to move forward?