Implementing Evidence-Based Programs

A summary of the scientific literature on implementing evidence-based programs in communities.



How This Impacts Children's Development

Federal, state, and local funders of evidence-based programs want to see improved outcomes for children and families from their social spending. For these investments to pay off, and improve outcomes for children

and families, evidence-based programs must be supported for high-quality implementation within a local context.

READ THE BRIEF: Evidence-based social policy: Recommendations for Programs that fit Communities' Needs, 2015

READ THE BRIEF: A guide to implementing evidence-based programs and policies, 2009

Talking Points from the SRCD Briefs

- Evidence-based policy involves integrating the best scientific knowledge, clinical experience, and input from clients to choose the most effective course of action for a problem.
- There has been a rapid increase in federally sponsored systematic reviews that support states and communities' selection of programs or practices with evidence of effectiveness.
- It is crucial that evidence-based programs are designed to be carried out on a large scale, disseminated effectively, and are supported for high-quality implementation, or they risk not delivering promised outcomes for children and families.
    - Developers need to discuss up front the technical and organizational resources needed for the program's success.
    - Program implementers should explicitly discuss stakeholder roles and responsibilities, maintaining ongoing communication once a community begins implementing a program.
- Rigorous research showing that a program can achieve its goals is only the first step in putting science into practice, the crucial next step involves implementing the program effectively on a broader scale and in a real-life setting and evaluating its success or lack thereof.

Policy Considerations in the Briefs

- Evidence-based programs should be designed and tested from the start to be implemented at scale, keeping in mind the potential end users and local contexts.
- Infrastructure should be put into place to support disseminating information about evidence-based programs, a technical support system should be available to help communities select appropriate programs and put them in place with fidelity, and data should be available for ongoing quality improvement.

- Local service providers must be willing and able to closely replicate documented programs. However, many programs need to be tailored to the needs and circumstances of the participants and environment, so actual programs often differ substantially from community to community.
- Programs must exist, must have been evaluated, and must have been found to be effective. Many human service programs have yet to be demonstrated to be effective.

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