

Making the Case for Individual Evidence-Based Programs

The Blueprints Approach

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Delbert S. Elliott
University of Colorado

The Blueprints Strategy

- A systematic review of individual program evaluations to identify violence, drug abuse and delinquency prevention programs that meet a high scientific standard of effectiveness
- Individual programs meeting this standard are certified as Model or Promising evidence-based programs
- Only Model programs are considered eligible for widespread dissemination

Blueprint Systematic Review

- Ideally: A Meta Analysis of multiple RCT's of a given program. Provides best estimates of expected effect-size and generalizability.
- In Practice: A review assessing the quality of each study (similar to TTIS* criteria), the consistency of findings across studies, effect sizes and external validity.

* Brown et al., 2000. Threats to Trial Integrity Score.

Threats to RCT and QED internal and external validity *

- Selection bias
- Statistical power
- Assignment to condition
- Participation after assignment
- Diffusion/Contamination/Receiving another intervention
- Implementation of intervention (fidelity)
- Inadequate measurement
- Clustering effects
- No mediating effects/causal analysis
- Effect decay
- Attrition and tracking N's
- Improper analyses, e.g., wrong unit of analysis

*adapted from Brown et al., 2000, Threats to Trial Integrity Score.

Using This Strategy: Are There
Programs That Can Be Certified as
Evidence-Based Programs?

Programs that are Proven Effective
and Ready to be Disseminated on a
Wide Scale?

U.S. Federal Agency Lists of EB Programs

- Center for Mental Health Services (2000)
- National Registry (NREPP) (2002)
- Office of Safe & Drug Free Schools (2010)
- Blueprints (OJJDP) (2010)
- National Institute of Drug Abuse (2003)
- Surgeon General Report (2001)
- OJJDP Model Program Guide (2010)
- Helping America's Youth (OJJDP) (2007)

Consensus Across 8 Federal Lists

- No program appeared on all lists
- Only one program (LST) appeared on 7 of 8 federal lists as a model/exemplary/Level 1 program*
- Two programs were on 5 lists: MST & TND
- 4 Programs on four lists: ALERT, ATLAS, Early Risers for Success, & FFT
- 12 Programs on 3 lists: BBBS, GBG, TNT, PATHS, MTFC, NFP, Project Northland, Focus on Family, Strengthening Families, Caring School Communities, Incredible Yrs., BASICS

* Top category on each list.

Federal Working Group Standard for EB Certification*

- Experimental Design/RCT
- Effect sustained for at least 1 year post-intervention
- At least 1 independent replication with RCT
- RCT's adequately address threats to internal validity
- No known health-compromising side effects

*Adapted from *Hierarchical Classification Framework for Program Effectiveness*, Working Group for the Federal Collaboration on What Works, 2004.

Evidence-Based Program Classification*

- I. *Model*: Meets all standards
- II. *Effective*: RCT replication not independent.
- III. *Promising*: Q-E or RCT, no replication
- IV. *Inconclusive*: Contradictory findings or non-sustainable effects
- V. *Ineffective*: Meets all standards but with no statistically significant effects
- VI. *Harmful*: Meets all standards but with negative main effects or serious side effects
- VII *Insufficient Evidence*: All others

*Adapted from *Hierarchical Classification Framework for Program Effectiveness*, Working Group for the Federal Collaboration on What Works, 2004.

Model and Effective Programs

Federal Working Group Standard*

- Model Programs
 - FFT, Incredible Years, MST, LST
- Effective Programs
 - BBBS, Midwestern Prevention Project, MTFC, NFP, TND, PATHS

*www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/220889.pdf

Promising Programs

Federal Working Group Standard

- Bullying Prevention, Guiding Good Choices, Raising Healthy Children
- CASA START, Strong African American Families Program
- Perry Preschool, I Can Problem Solve, Linking Families and Teachers
- Project Northland, Preventive Treatment Program
- Communities that Care, ATLAS, Strengthening Families (10-14)
- Triple P (Population level), Good Behavior Game
- Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program
- Brief Strategic Family Therapy, FAST TRACK
- Preventive Treatment Program

Defining “Evidence-Based”

- Programs classified as Model, Effective, or Promising on Federal Hierarchy
- Consistently positive effects from Meta Analyses
- Only Model programs should ever be taken to scale

Recommended Lists of Evidence-Based Programs

- Blueprints (OJJDP): Model or Promising (100%)
- NIDA: Effective (60%)
- OJJDP Model Program Guide: Exemplary (52%)
- Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools (DOE): Exemplary (55%)
- Surgeon General's Report: Model or Promising (100%)

What are the Alternatives?

Review of Evaluation Evidence*

800 Crime and Drug Prevention Programs

- Most Programs Have No Credible Evaluation
- Those With Credible Evaluations:
 - Most Fail to Find Positive Effects
 - 30 to 35 Appear to Work or Have Promise
 - A Few Appear to be Harmful (e.g. Scared Straight, Shock Probation)
- Most EB Programs Don't Have Capacity to Go to Scale

*Blueprint Project, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

Best Alternative Strategy: Generic Program Meta-Analysis

- Good estimates of expected effect size for a given *type* of program
- Good estimates of generalizability
- Identifies general program characteristics associated with stronger effects
- Best practice guidelines for local program developers/implementers
- An incremental approach to increasing effectiveness-easier to sell locally

Advantages- Specific EB Program Approach

- Existing Program Manuals, Protocols, etc.
- Available Support : TA, Training, Data Collection/Management Systems and Fidelity Assessment Tools
- Faster Start-Up
- Lower Risk of Program (Change Model) Failure
- Lower Need for Outcome Evaluations

Advantages- Specific EB Program Approach

- Increased Chances for Substantive Changes in Intervention Portfolios
- Overall Higher Probability of Effectiveness
- Greater Certainty and Consistency of Positive Effects When Going To Scale
- Bold approach: Promise of greater reach, larger effects, faster change to more effective portfolio of programs

Disadvantages- Specific EB Program Approach

- Local Resistance to “Canned”, “Off the Shelf” Programs
- Lower Flexibility/Adaptability
- Potentially Lower Sustainability
- Higher Initial Costs
- Lack of Consensus on EB Standard
- More Limited Generalizability

A critical assumption of incrementalism is that modifying projects or programs at the margin will increase their effectiveness enough to help ameliorate a social problem. Yet if the basic assumption of a program or project are flawed, marginal changes may not be enough to improve client welfare (Shadish et al, 1991: 445)

“This is a great paradox in evaluation. Programs reach more people and promise larger effects than projects and elements, but are so politically entrenched that evaluation results contribute little to starting or ending them.”

Shadish, Cook and Levinton, 1991:443-4

Issues To Be Resolved

- Fidelity: Different question for programs vs strategies/elements. Limited assessments
- Scientific standards for certification as EB
- Mediating effects: validating theory & establishing source of failure
- Defining replication
- Absolute vs marginal deterrent effects
- Best strategy: bold (radical) vs incremental approach

Conclusions

- There is confusion over the meaning of “evidence-based”
- Standard for EB certification must be high or we will lose credibility
- We have some programs that qualify as model or effective EB programs
- Several Blueprint Model Programs are being taken to scale: NFP, FFT, MST & LST
- For the practitioner, adopting EB programs is the best option for reaching more youth with greater effects faster

THANK YOU

Center for the Study and Prevention
of Violence

Phone: 303-492-1032

Web Site: www.colorado.edu/cspv