PRACTIONER GUIDE
Evidence-Based Programs for
Children & Families
Fall 2020

CORNELL PROJECT
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Understanding Evidence-Based Programs

Broadly speaking, evidence-based programs put findings from the best currently available research into practice.[1] Here, we use a more specific definition from the Oregon Research Institute to highlight key terms researchers and practitioners use to discuss evidence-based programs and practices.[2] All definitions come from Research Connections - their Research Glossary is a great resource for help understanding social science and policy research.[3]

"An evidence-based practice is a practice that has been rigorously evaluated in **experimental evaluations** – like **randomized controlled trials** – and shown to make a positive, **statistically significant** difference in important outcomes."

- **Experimental Evaluations** – "An experiment is a study in which the researcher manipulates the treatment, or intervention, and then measures the outcome. It addresses the question 'If we change X (the treatment or intervention), what happens to Y (the outcome)?' Conducted both in the laboratory and in real life situations, experiments are powerful techniques for evaluating cause-and-effect relationships. The researcher may manipulate whether research subjects receive a treatment (e.g., attendance in a Head Start program: yes or no) or the level of treatment (e.g., hours per day in the program).[4]"

- **Randomized Control Trials** – "Random assignment ensures that all participants have the same chance of being in a given experimental condition. Randomized experiments (also known as RCTs or randomized control trials) are considered to be the most rigorous approach, or the 'gold standard,' for identifying causal effects because they theoretically eliminate all preexisting differences between the treatment and control groups," which allows researchers to attribute different outcomes to the intervention.[5]

- **Statistically Significant** – "Statistical significance refers to the probability or likelihood that the difference between groups or the relationship between variables observed in statistical analyses is not due to random chance. If there is a very small probability that an observed difference or relationship is due to chance (e.g., $p < .05$), the results are said to reach statistical significance.[6]"

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[1] Definition adapted from Oxford Languages
[2] https://www.ori.org/resources/what_does_it_mean_to_be_evidencebased
[3] https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/research-glossary
[4] https://www.researchconnections.org/content/childcare/understand/methods.html#causal
[5] Ibid
[6] https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/research-glossary

Finding Evidence-Based Programs

There are many organizations dedicated identifying effective programs for children and families. Rating systems vary slightly from organization to organization, but are all based on research evidence. Here are resources to help you find programs that meet your community's needs:

The Athena Forum
https://www.theathenaforum.org/EBP
The Washington State Health Care Authority Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery's Athena Forum is a hub for substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion workers. Their Excellence in Prevention Strategy List provides detailed information about direct service and environmental prevention strategies.

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development
https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/
Blueprints' mission is to provide a comprehensive registry of scientifically proven and scalable interventions that prevent or reduce the likelihood of antisocial behavior and promote a healthy course of youth development and adult maturity.

California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC)
https://www.cebc4cw.org/
CEBC hosts a searchable database of evidence-based child welfare-related programs and offers guidance and tools for selecting, implementing, and sustaining these programs

Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/
The Continuum of Evidence is a repository of programs reviewed by Clearinghouse research and evaluation scientists for use with military families. The Clearinghouse also offers other tools and services to help professionals identify, implement, evaluate, and improve programs that strengthen military service members, veterans, and their families.

CrimeSolutions
https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/
CrimeSolutions is a central resource to help practitioners and policymakers understand what works in justice-related programs and practices. CrimeSolutions offers several ways to view and search for relevant programs. Both CrimeSolutions and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Model Programs Guide (see below) are managed by the Office for Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Resource Center
https://www.samhsa.gov/ebp-resource-center
The Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Resource Center out of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides communities, clinicians, policymakers and others with the information and tools to incorporate evidence-based practices into their work.

New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) Registry of Evidence-Based Programs
https://oasas.ny.gov/providers/evidence-based-prevention-programs
OASAS' registry of approved evidence-based programs included early intervention programs to help youth who exhibit elevated risk factors and are using substances, as well as educational and multi-component programs that focus on improving risk and protective factors at home and in the community.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency (OJJDP) Model Programs Guide (MPG)
https://www.ojjdp.gov/MPG/Program
OJJDP's Model Programs Guide (MPG) offers several ways to view and search for relevant programs. Both the MPG and CrimeSolutions (above) are managed by the Office for Justice Programs at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Social Programs That Work
https://evidencebasedprograms.org/programs/
Social Programs That Work reviews programs from a wide range of policy areas and rates them "Top Tier," "Near Top Tier," or "Suggestive Tier" based on the number and quality of randomized control trials evaluating the program and the generalizability of the trials' findings.

★ **TIP** Evidence-based programs sometimes reference endorsements from **registries that are no longer active**. Here are names you may see:

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)
CSAP is still a center at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), but it no longer maintains its own model programs guide - it links to SAMHSA's Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Resource Center instead.
Source: https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/offices-centers/csap

National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)
The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA's) National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) was frozen in 2017 and indefinitely suspended in 2018.
Source: https://pgdf.org/samhsas-registry-of-evidence-based-programs-nrepp-suspended/
Read More: https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/201801110330

The Promising Practices Network (PPN)
The Promising Practices Network (PPN) website was archived in 2014 and retired in October 2019. Summaries from the Programs That Work section of the PPN website as of June 2014 are available as a free ebook.
Source: https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL145.html
Read more: https://www.rand.org/well-being/social-and-behavioral-policy/projects/promising-practices.html

What Works
Child Trends' What Works was a searchable register of over 700 programs that had at least one randomized evaluation to assess child or youth outcomes related to education, life skills, and social/emotional, mental, physical, behavioral, or reproductive health. Child Trends retired the register in August 2019.
Source: https://www.childtrends.org/what-works

Also Good to Know

Funding Evidence-Based Programs
Some evidence-based program developers and clearinghouses offer free grant-writing assistance to help secure funding for program implementation.

Adapting Evidence-Based Programs
The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers guidance on implementing appropriate adaptations that do not negatively impact program outcomes. Their tip sheet focuses on adapting programs that reduce sexual risk-taking among youth, but many of the principles are broadly applicable.
Tip Sheet: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/prep-making-adaptations-ts.pdf