

# The Road to Evidence- Based Programming

ATTAIN, SUSTAIN, ENGRAIN

# Evidence-Based: The Basics

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**What is evidence-based?** Evidence-based programs are programs that have been rigorously tested in controlled settings, proven effective, and translated into practical models that are widely available to community-based organizations. It is also important that the evaluations themselves have been subjected to critical peer review.

**Why become evidence-based?**

- Positively impacting the outcomes for program participants is more likely with an evidence-based program.
- Funders increasingly demand that programming be based on solid evidence.
- Agency leaders want to concentrate limited resources on proven programs.
- Program managers can concentrate their efforts on program delivery rather than program development.
- The demonstrated outcomes of evidence-based programs are attractive to community members and potential partners, facilitating community buy-in and the formation of partnerships, especially with healthcare/clinical partners.

- Stop 1: Set priorities
- Stop 2: Readiness assessment
- Stop 3: Critical stakeholders
- Stop 4: Decide to adopt or adapt
- Stop 5: Train and implement
- Stop 6: Evaluate

# Levels of Evidence

## Well Supported

- The practice is superior to an appropriate comparison practice using conventional standards of statistical significance
- Rated by an independent systematic review for the quality of the study design and execution
- At least 2 rigorous randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in different usual care or practice settings have found the practice to be superior to an appropriate comparison practice

## Supported

- Was rated by an independent systematic review for the quality of the study design and execution and determined to be well-designed and well-executed
- Have found the practice to be superior to an appropriate comparison practice
- The practice has shown to have a sustained effect of at least one year beyond the end of treatment
- Established that the practice has a sustained effect (when compared to a control group) for at least 6 months beyond the end of the treatment

## Promising

- At least one study utilizing some form of control (e.g., untreated group, placebo group, matched wait list) that has established the practice's benefit over the comparison.

# Evidence- Based Practices

Steps Along the Way



# Stop 1: Set Priorities

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Identify what you are hoping to achieve and what is prompting your interest in becoming evidenced-based.

Discuss with a group of internal stakeholders the impact of your current program, service gaps, and access your current program logic model and revise as needed.

Bring together key stakeholders you have identified and provide training on the EB process and why you are undertaking it. This is needed to build support and information on the process.

Consider hiring a consultant to prepare your team for the road ahead.

## Stop 2: Are You Ready?

Conduct a readiness assessment. If you are to adopt evidence-based practices, are you ready for the changes that will be necessary?

Is there a willingness to do things differently?

Consider using the “Organizational Readiness to Change” scale, which looks at motivational readiness, institutional resources, staff attributes, and organizational climate.

# Stop 3: Critical Stakeholders

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Decide on your critical stakeholders.

- Who needs to “buy in” for the process to go smoothly?
- Who can help with you navigate through your blind spots?
- Who can help with resource development and asset allocation?

Ensure your stakeholders represent all levels of those who have impact on the program: staff, administrators, funders, managers, board members, and constituents who utilize the service.





# Stop 4: Ready, Set, Research!

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Adapt or adopt: Your research should tell you if it is better to adopt a program already in existence that will best suit your clients, or if you can adapt evidence-based practices into your current program

Ensure whatever direction you go, the program fits into your organizational culture and community climate and fits the characteristics of your participant base.

Examine if the program:

- Has the outcomes you intend for your participants.
- Aligns with your program mission.
- Is culturally appropriate.



# Stop 4: Adapt

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Steps necessary to make your program existing program evidence-based:

Adapt, or make an existing program evidence-based:

- A rigorous evaluation to demonstrate that the program produces intended results.
- Demonstrate that it was your program that produced the outcomes rather than extraneous factors.
- A quasi-experimental design, which is characterized as having a non-randomized control group.
- Submit and have an article accepted by a peer-reviewed journal.
- Submit your program information and available studies to one of the evidenced-based clearinghouses for a second review by experts to determine if the research is strong enough to receive their stamp of approval.

It will be necessary to have a research partner and consider the cost of this strategy. It can be exciting to make your program evidence-based, but it is a long process that will require serious data collection and the experience of a team who has experience.



# Stop 4: Adopt

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In order for an intervention to be reimbursed by FFPSA the program you adopt must:

- Have a book, manual or other available writings that specify the components of the practice protocol and describe how to administer the practice.
- There is no empirical basis suggesting that, compared to its likely benefits, the practice constitutes a risk of harm to those receiving it.
- If multiple outcome studies have been conducted, the overall weight of evidence supports the benefits of the practice.
- Outcome measures are reliable and valid and are administered consistently and accurately across all those receiving the practice.
- There are no case data suggesting a risk of harm that was probably caused by the treatment that was severe or frequent.



# Once You Adopt a Program

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Seek information, technical assistance and program consultation.

- Go online to seek additional information or reach out to an agency providing the same program to gain an understanding of their process and how the program is working for them.
- Your research should yield program manuals, core components for desired outcomes, program fidelity criteria and staff training guidelines.
- Make sure after all of your research–this is still the right program for your agency!
- Find a program expert to consult with you if at all possible.

# Stop 5: Train Staff and Implement

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Training staff to implement the program is one of the most critical factors of program success.

Ensure you have the resources needed, including the finances and time to adequately train.

Train all staff who have any engagement with the program, from direct staff to administrators.

An implementation plan should include changes to policies, procedures, operations, and staffing.

The plan should include a handbook for staff and separated into stages.



# Stop 6 : Conduct Ongoing Evaluation

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- Incorporate evaluation into your implementation design.
- Use process data to inform continuous improvements.
- If changing the EBP, do fidelity assessments to ensure tweaks haven't negatively impacted the model.
- Use feedback loops encouraging staff and participants to share their experiences with the program.
- Continuously train and ensure new staff receive adequate training and resources to maintain program quality.



# References

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Intervention Evidence Standards for the Family First Prevention and Services Act. *Casey Family Programs*.

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