

Overview of Evidence-Based Programs, Policies, and Practices for Facilitator

What is EBPP?

Evidence-based programs, policies, and practices have been rigorously tested and are proven to be effective. This evidence has been reviewed by experts in the field who agree with its conclusions. These evidence-based strategies have been tested in the field and are shown to have their intended impacts with specific populations when conducted with fidelity, making the outcomes of the strategy relatively predictable. Ultimately, when you implement an evidence-based strategy with fidelity, you can be confident that you are delivering a strategy that works, that you will achieve outcomes promised by the strategy, and that you are providing the best possible strategy for your community.

What are the different types of research that support evidence-based strategies?

The more researched an evidence-based strategy is, the more confidence you can have that you will get the desired outcomes. We are highlighting some of the most common categories here, but please refer to the chart below for additional categories. In the chart, the higher the category, the stronger the evidence.

The highest level of evidence includes Meta-Analysis and Systematic Reviews. These methods combine multiple studies to assess the effectiveness of a program.

An “experimental” design may look very similar to the quasi-experimental (the next level), with the exception that the participants have been *randomized (or randomly assigned)* between groups who receive the intervention or strategy and groups that do not. Randomization of the participants strengthens the evidence in that there is no difference between the types of people who receive the intervention or strategy and those who do not. This would indicate that any changes seen have to be a result of the treatment itself, not some other outside factor or demographic. These are often referred to as “Randomized Control Trials.”

The next highest level is called “quasi-experimental” designs. This is when different groups are compared, but the people in each group were not randomly assigned. The study may compare those who received the strategy to those who did not, or two different types of strategies may have been compared.

Next are programs that have single case studies or pilot studies. The more people involved in the study over a greater period of time improves the strength of the evidence.

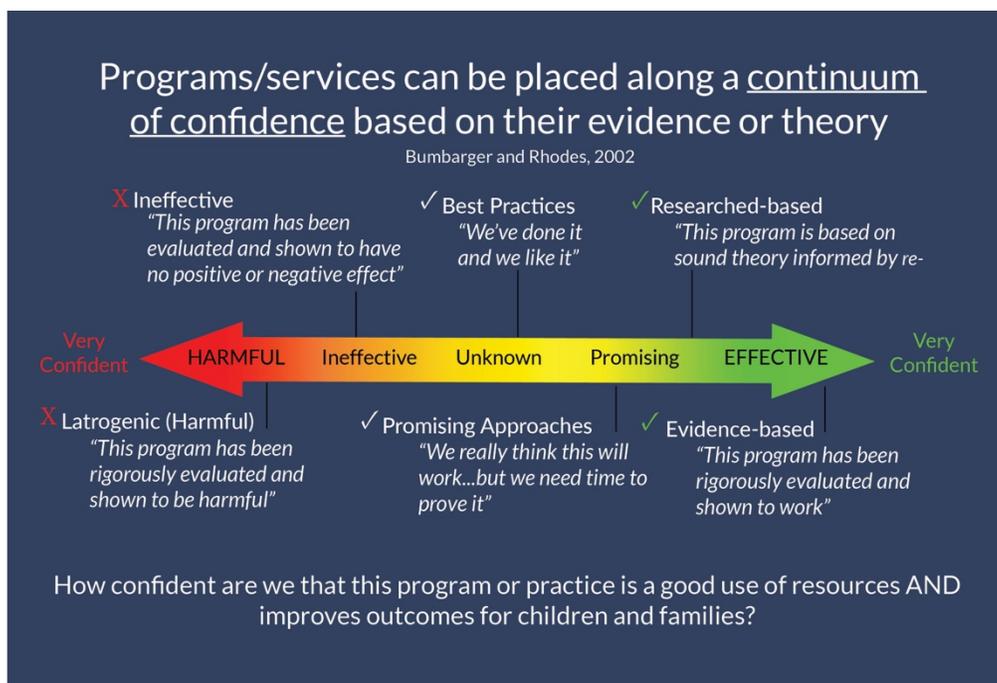


Closer to the bottom, or lower level of evidence, are articles based on expert opinion and theory. Many treatment manuals are based on strong theoretical information and written by experts in the field, but the strategy may not have been tested in the field to demonstrate that it actually works.

Lastly come ideas, editorials, and opinions. While this may seem obvious, it is not uncommon for people, organizations, and communities to see a problem and generate solutions based on what they think will work. While having expert opinions in the room can improve the chances of these types of strategies working, these tend to have the lowest success rate. It is challenging to attribute any successes, failures, or outcomes to these types of strategies due to the wide variety of other influences that could have caused the changes. Furthermore, sometimes these types of strategies can have *negative* impacts on the communities and, even when well-meaning, can cause more harm than good.

Criteria for Judging Research or Evidence for EBPP

When looking at evidence, it is often helpful to use the following scale or continuum to judge the strength of your strategy and compare it to others. As a reminder, the stronger the evidence, the more confidence you can have that your program will yield the desired results.



Finding EBPP

While there are a lot of choices for locating Evidence Based Practices, the simplest and easiest is the use of an Evidence Based Clearinghouse or Registry. There are several different registries available. A full list is provided in the Tool 4: List of Evidence Based Registries.

Pros:

- Straight forward and easy to use
- Outline multiple interventions at the same time for the purposes of comparison
- Typically cater to a subject area or population
- Provide a snapshot of the program including a review of the evidence and basic information

- about the program
- Offers clear recommendations about effectiveness and support of evidence

Cons:

- Offer only *brief* information about the program and methods used to evaluate it
- How they are used and rated vary based on site
- May not provide enough information about the program – there may be additional work involved to understand whether the program is the right fit for your population

Using the Clearinghouses and Registries to locate a program

1. Find the list of available clearinghouses in Tool 5: List of Evidence Based Registries.
2. Choose the clearinghouse that seems most appropriate. For example, if you are addressing issues surrounding delinquency, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (<https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/>) will likely have the best options. However, if your main concern is mental health, SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence Based Programs and Practices (www.nrepp.samhsa.gov) is likely going to be a better choice.
3. Most clearinghouses work like search engines. Enter your problem or issue. You can then limit it by demographics, levels of evidence, treatment setting etc.
4. Review the information provided including a description of the program, costs, training, and measured outcomes. Determine if these meet the needs and resources of your community.
5. Review the rating scales to understand the levels of evidence. Is this a new and less well studied program or is this something well known with lots of evidence behind it?
6. Enter it in Tool 6: Potential EBPP Tracking Tool to be reviewed by the group for fit.

What if we can't find an intervention at the highest level of evidence?

This might happen. Some areas are just not as well studied.

First choice: Utilize something on a clearinghouse or registry. Programs listed in their place are still well understood and likely to work.

Second choice: Turn to interventions reported with positive effects in academic journals. Be sure to use the charts from above to judge the strength of the strategy based on the type of research and field testing that has been conducted.

Last Resort: Rely on documented effectiveness. An outside evaluator has written a *comprehensive evaluation report* which includes:

1. A pre-post quantitative design using statistical analyses
2. A thorough literature review of the theoretical basis behind the approach
3. A comparison group
4. Positive findings