Balancing Fidelity & Adaptation: A Best Practices Guide for Evidence-based Program Implementation

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Washington State Prevention Summit
November 6, 2018
Yakima, WA
Who are you?

- Prevention/treatment provider
- School personnel
- Government agency
- Law enforcement
- Policymaker
- Youth service provider
- Coalition leader/member
- Counselor/Social worker

Hello
I am

Working to improve my community!
Our Workshop Objectives

- To present the science on the fidelity-adaptation debate
- To present best-practices and guidelines for adaptation
- To facilitate the application of this information to your experiences implementing programs in your community

BUT, what are your objectives?
What are your workshop objectives?

- **Goal**: Get to know your colleagues & to put the objectives of this workshop into your context.

- **The Questions**:  
  - What is one big program implementation challenge you face?  
  - Why did you come to this workshop & what do you hope to learn?

- **The Structure**: Introduce yourself to someone new, respond to the questions (2 mins per person), and repeat 3 times.

Activity modified from Liberating Structures:  
http://www.liberatingstructures.com/2-impromptu-networking/
Our Agenda

- 1) Overview of Fidelity-Adaptation Research & Theory
- 2) Best Practices for Finding Balance
- 3) Case Study Activity
  - How can you apply these strategies and tips to your work?
Fidelity & Adaptation

What can we learn from Prevention Science?
What is Prevention Science?

What is the problem?

Etiology

What causes it? (risk & protective factors)

Efficacy

What program, policy, practice works to prevent it?

Effectiveness

Wide-scale dissemination

Evidence-based Programs (EBPs)

Improved Public Health

Epidemiology
Fidelity vs. Adaptation?

The Cake Metaphor

Modified from Kemp (2016)
The **Fidelity** Argument

- Best not to tinker with a proven-effective program.
- If making changes, cannot be assured to achieve same positive outcomes.
- Should take advantage of the researchers’ expertise about the EBP.
The Adaptation Argument

- In the real-world, adaptations happen!

- Programs should be adapted to meet the unique conditions and needs of the local community.

- Practitioners’ expertise about local community should inform local implementation of an EBP.
The Middle Ground

- Adaptations can occur within the context of low or high fidelity.
- Not all adaptations deviate from the programs’ original design and theory.
The Theory: A Recipe for Success!

High Fidelity

High Quality of Delivery

Adaptation Best Practices

Positive Participant Engagement & Responsiveness

Positive Participant Outcomes

Modified from Berkel et al. (2011)
Integrated Model of Program Implementation
The Evidence

- Higher = better outcomes (Durlak & Dupre, 2008)
  - Adherence, dose, quality of delivery

- Cultural adaptations = positive impact on recruitment/retention, and some impact on outcomes (e.g., Kumpfer et al., 2002)

- Global fidelity is a weak predictor of participant outcomes (Berkel et al., 2013; Hill & Owens, 2013)
Strategies for Finding Balance

How can you stay true to the evidence, but still meet the needs of your community?
Best Practices for Balancing Fidelity and Adaptation

1. Select EBP that meets your needs
2. Determine core elements that make EBP effective
3. Assess the need for adaptation
4. Adapt EBP using best practices
5. Develop continuous quality improvement plan
Best Practice 1: Select the EBP that meets your needs

- Are targeted outcomes relevant & acceptable?

- Strong evidence with targeted population?

- Will content & methods be accessible & appealing to targeted population?

- Pick a program that will need the least amount of adaptation and one whose developer is willing to work with you
Best Practice 2:

Determine the key elements that make EBP effective

- Ideally, you can get this info from the program developer

- Gather program materials
  - Statement of goals, summary of underlying theory, facilitator guide

- Develop program logic model
  - The Community Toolbox offers excellent resources for this at http://ctb.ku.edu/en
Best Practice 3: Assess the need for adaptation

- Identify & categorize mismatches
  - Program goals/objectives
  - Characteristics of target population
  - Characteristics of implementing agency
  - Characteristics of community

- In consultation with developer & using best-practice guidelines, decide if adaptation is necessary.
Best Practice 4:
Adapt the program using Best Practices

- If needed, make adaptations in consultation with program developer.

- Acceptable vs. risky adaptations
  - See handout

- Stay true to duration, intensity, and key elements of the program.
Best Practice 5: Develop continuous quality improvement plan

- Document and discuss progress regularly
  - Fidelity
  - Adaptations
  - Participant engagement
  - Participant outcomes

- Use implementation monitoring tools

- Stay up to date on program revisions
How do you apply the Best Practices to real-world scenarios?
Case Study Activity

Form small groups to review how to apply one of the Best Practices to a specific case study.
References & Resources