Defining Levels of Evidence: Evidence-Based Practices, Promising Practices, and Emerging Practices

Definitions for Levels of Program Evidence

Evidence-Based Programs are supported by strong evidence of effectiveness based on experimental design (i.e. randomized controlled trials) or multiple highly rigorous quasi-experimental design (i.e. non-randomized trials). Although not required to be considered an evidence-based practice, additional considerations included sustained effect of the program, publication of results in a peer-reviewed journal, and multiple site replication.

Promising Practices are supported by a moderate level of evidence for effectiveness. These programs may be based on a quasi-experimental design of weak to moderate rigor. These practices primarily rely on evidence derived from a literature review (i.e. expert opinion) as well as the program's manual, logic model, and evaluation plan.

Emerging Practices are supported by a low level of evidence for effectiveness. These programs lack a high or moderate level of external validity, relying exclusively on evidence derived from a literature review (i.e. expert opinion) as well as the program's manual, logic model, and evaluation plan.

Evidence Standard			Evidence-Based Practice	Promising Practice	Emerging Practice
Evaluation Framework	Program Literature Review		✓	✓	✓
	Program Logic Model		✓	✓	✓
	Program Manual		✓	✓	✓
	Program Evaluation Plan		✓	✓	✓
Study Design	Non-Experimental Design	Conducted Internally			✓
		Conducted Externally		✓	
	Quasi-Experimental Design[1]	Weak to Moderate Rigor		✓	
		Highly Rigorous	✓ [2]		
	Experimental or Randomized Controlled Trials		✓		

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[1] Strength of design determined by length of study, number of sites, sample size, and strength of control group
[2] Evidence-based practices must be based on two or more highly rigorous quasi-experimental designs or at least one experimental design.