



Teleconference Summary: Implementing Evidence-Based Interventions with Fidelity

In April 2007, Wayne Harding, leader of the National Center's evaluation team and director of Social Science Research and Evaluation, Inc., facilitated a teleconference titled "Implementing Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs) with Fidelity." During the event, Dr. Harding pointed out that:

- In many cases, the reason a program fails (or is not as effective as expected) is because it was not implemented with fidelity—that is, used as its developers intended—but was changed in some way that affected its ability to produce the intended results.
- In the past, researchers assumed that any departure from fidelity decreased effectiveness. Now, some claim that adaptations—intentional departures from fidelity—can increase the effectiveness of an EBI. Such an adaptation might be made to respond to the culture of a specific target audience, for example.
- Programs should carefully track adaptations as well as any variations between the actual implementation and the original implementation plan. This information is essential to understanding why the program did or did not work.
- Evaluations can also be affected by fidelity. A program that was implemented with complete fidelity might not yield the anticipated result if the evaluation methodology differed from that used by the developer to measure the program's effectiveness.

Dr. Harding also offered seven adaptation guidelines:

1. Select programs for the best fit to local needs and conditions. This will minimize the need for adaptation. People often select EBIs based on "brand recognition" rather than for how well the program fits their audience or purpose.
2. EBIs that have shown the largest effect size are likely to be less affected by an adaptation than EBIs with a smaller effect size. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to get the effect sizes for EBIs.
3. It is often more difficult to change the local capacity for delivering a program than to adapt a program to fit that capacity. However, changing capacity is more likely to preserve the program's effectiveness than is adapting the program.
4. Consult with the developer of an EBI before adapting it and find out if they have any experience or advice about adapting the program for a particular circumstance or audience.
5. Adaptations should retain the core components of an EBI to preserve its effectiveness. The program's developer can tell you what these core components are.
6. Adaptations should be consistent with science-based principles. For example, the science demonstrates that peer-delivery can be effective in prevention programming.
7. It is safer to add components to EBIs during adaptation than to eliminate components of the program.

For additional notes on and materials from the "Implementing Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs) with Fidelity," go to <http://learn.aero.und.edu/pages.asp?PageID=98924>.