

CHALLENGE NEWSLETTER: UNDERSTANDING THE LISTS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

Over the past decade, the federal government has sponsored the creation of several lists of research-based substance abuse and violence prevention programs that have been proven to be effective. What is the difference between these lists? Why is a program included on one list and not another? As part of an ongoing series on effective prevention programs, The Challenge will take a closer look at the lists and help explain how programs are nominated and selected for induction. In this issue, we begin with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices (NREPP).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' SAMHSA is the nation's lead agency focusing on the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and mental health disorders. SAMHSA created NREPP to help local communities understand and implement prevention and treatment programs that have proven to be effective.

Begun as a function of SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, NREPP initially reviewed and identified programs focusing solely on substance abuse prevention. Today, the expanded registry covers programs consistent with all of the core areas of SAMHSA's mission: substance abuse prevention and treatment, as well as the prevention and treatment of mental health disorders and co-occurring substance abuse and mental health disorders.

Identifying Effective Programs

NREPP's first function is to identify effective programs. How are such programs found? According to NREPP Project Manager Traci Schwinn, programs come to the attention of NREPP from a number of different sources. Some programs are identified in scholarly scientific journals. Others are brought to the attention of NREPP by expert reviewers who have their finger on the pulse of what's happening in the field.

But more recently, many of the programs submitted for review are submitted by the program developers themselves. NREPP encourages developers to submit information about their successful prevention efforts because programs developed by practitioners in the field are apt to reflect the everyday realities of life in a school or community setting in a manner that is not always possible in academic settings.

The Review Process

What happens after a program is submitted for review? According to Ms. Schwinn, each program is first assessed by the NREPP team to ensure that everything is in order for a complete review. Developers may not simply submit a narrative description of their program, but must offer scientific data supporting their claims.

Once the submission packet is complete, the program is assigned to a review team of experts. Reviewers independently review and rate the program on a number of factors and assess both its integrity and its utility.

"Integrity refers to the overall level of confidence that the reviewer can place in project findings based on research design and implementation," explains SAMHSA's Science to Service Coordinator

Kevin Hennessy. "A high score means that the reviewer believes that the research findings are sound."

"Utility refers to the overall usefulness of project findings for informing prevention theory and practice," he continued. "For example, a program may be very well-designed in terms of research, but have very little overall value to the community."

Programs are rated according to a five point scale:

- Effective programs are those with a score of 4.0-5.0 on both integrity and utility. Effective programs are those that are found to be well-implemented, well-evaluated, and to produce a consistent pattern of positive results.
- Promising programs are those with a score of 3.33-3.99 on both integrity and utility. Promising programs are those that have been implemented and evaluated sufficiently and have demonstrated positive outcomes. However, they have not yet been shown to have sufficient rigor and/or consistently positive outcomes required for effective program status.
- Insufficient Current Support is the designation used for programs with a score of 1.0-3.32 on integrity and utility.

Model Programs

Once a program has been identified as an effective program by reviewers, it is invited to be recognized as a SAMHSA model program. A model program is an effective program that can be taken to scale for national dissemination. The program's developers have agreed to participate in SAMHSA's dissemination efforts and are able to provide supporting materials, training, and technical assistance to others.

As Ms. Schwinn explains, "Every model program has been designated an effective program, but not every effective program achieves model program status. Some developers simply aren't in the position to disseminate their program nationwide. Perhaps they have moved on to a different area of scientific research, or their office is not equipped to handle a large number of calls. In order to be recognized as a model program, developers need to be able to provide intensive technical assistance. It can be quite demanding."

Model programs receive promotional support from SAMHSA in the form of fact sheets, recognition on the model programs Web site, and invitations to present at national conferences.

How Is NREPP Unique?

Frequently, those who work in the field of substance abuse and violence prevention ask, what's the difference between this list of promising, effective, and model programs and others? The NREPP team noted that there are several key distinctions. "NREPP is an active list rather than a one-time process," explained Ms. Schwinn. "You can submit your program and its evaluation results on a rolling basis, you can appeal a decision, you can ask questions during the process, and you can resubmit with additional data later. In addition, developers receive feedback from the reviewers rather than a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer. This feedback helps them improve their program for future submission." "NREPP is not static," Dr. Hennessy noted. "One of our longer term goals is to periodically re-review programs within a five-year time frame to account for the continual

evolution of science." "SAMHSA's vision is that NREPP serve as the leading national resource for practical, contemporary, and reliable information on effective interventions to prevent and/or treat mental and addictive disorders," he continued. "SAMHSA has made a firm commitment to promoting the current programs and to assisting new and emerging programs to move up the ladder of scientific evidence."

Using NREPP

Before selecting any science-based program or strategy, schools and other community groups must always first assess the needs of their school and community, examine what resources are available, and consider the training that is required to properly deliver a particular program with fidelity to the model.

How can educators use NREPP to assist in this process?

SAMHSA's Model Programs Web site (www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov <<http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov>>) offers a number of tools to help communities identify and select programs that best meet the needs of the problems or target populations they have identified. These include:

- A programs-at-a-glance chart that allows users to compare Model Programs by target population addressed, target setting, cost, and other factors;
 - Fact sheets that describe each Model Program in detail;
 - A list of Frequently Asked Questions about the NREPP process; and
 - Links to potential funding resources.
- To learn more about NREPP or to obtain detailed information about the SAMHSA Model Programs, visit www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov <<http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov>> or call 866-43NREPP.

(Source: The OSDFS Challenge Newsletter, Vol. 13, No. 1)

CHALLENGE NEWSLETTER: LISTS OF EFFECTIVE AND PROMISING PROGRAMS

At least ten different lists of effective and promising interventions for drug and violence prevention have been sponsored by the federal government. These include:

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence-Blueprints for Violence Prevention has identified 11 prevention and intervention programs that meet a strict scientific standard of program effectiveness. An additional 21 programs are identified as promising. Further information can be found at:

www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints <<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints>>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-CDC's Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action (September 2000) looks at the effectiveness of violence prevention practices in four key areas: parents and families; home visiting; social and conflict resolution skills; and mentoring. This publication can be found at: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm <<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm>>.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning-Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning Programs (March 2003), identifies 80 multiyear, sequenced Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs designed for use in general education classrooms. The guide is available at: www.casel.org/projects_products/safeandsound.php <http://www.casel.org/projects_products/safeandsound.php>.

Drug Strategies, Inc.- Making the Grade: A Guide to School Violence Prevention Programs (rev. ed., 1999), is a comprehensive guide that identifies key elements of drug prevention programs. The findings of 14 programs are compared. The guide can be ordered online at:

www.drugstrategies.org/pubs.html <<http://www.drugstrategies.org/pubs.html>>.

Hamilton Fish Institute-The 1999 Annual Report on School Safety, a joint report of the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, was researched and developed by the Hamilton Fish Institute. Chapter 3 presents summary information on school violence and related programs.

www.ed.gov/PDFDocs/InterimAR.pdf <<http://www.ed.gov/PDFDocs/InterimAR.pdf>>

Institute of Medicine-Reducing Risks for Mental Disorders - Frontiers for Preventive Intervention Research (1994), integrates research on the prevention of mental illness with recommendations for improving prevention research. It is available through the Institute of Medicine National Academy Press:

www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/rmrd <<http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/rmrd>>

National Institute of Drug Abuse-Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents: A Research-based Guide offers updated principles, questions and answers, program information, and

references and resources regarding the consequences, prevention, and treatment of drug abuse. It is available at:

www.drugabuse.gov/pdf/prevention/RedBook.pdf
<<http://www.drugabuse.gov/pdf/prevention/RedBook.pdf>>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices (NREPP)-SAMHSA's NREPP recognizes evidence-based programs in three categories: promising, effective, and model. More information can be found at: <<http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov>>.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (2002)-Safe and Drug-Free Schools Exemplary and Promising Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools Programs, 2001 identifies nine programs as exemplary and 33 as promising. The guide can be downloaded at:

www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/exemplary01/exemplary01.pdf
<<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/exemplary01/exemplary01.pdf>>

U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice (1997)-Denise C. Gottfredson's chapter 5, School Based Crime Prevention, in Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising, provides a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of school-based crime prevention strategies. www.ncjrs.org/works/ chapter5.htm
<<http://www.ncjrs.org/works/%20chapter5.htm>>

For more information about these ten lists of exemplary and promising programs, see the Southeast Comprehensive Assistance Center publication, 26 Scientifically-based Programs (Revised 11/19/2003).

<http://www.sedl.org/secac/sdfsc.html#ScientificallBasedPrograms>
<<http://www.sedl.org/secac/sdfsc.html>>

(Source: The OSDFS Challenge Newsletter, Vol. 13, No. 1)