



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition
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In tough economic times, communities must carefully invest in programs that produce a significant return on investment. Understanding the criteria for judging the evidence of effectiveness of a prevention program becomes imperative. Programs recognized as "evidence-based" have met the criterion below and are proven to promote better youth outcomes, which reduce future costs for prison, drug treatment, social service and welfare usage, and increase tax revenue.

Program effectiveness should be demonstrated using a study design with sufficient scientific rigor, preferably randomized or time series control trials. This increases confidence that the results are from the program and not another factor that might be influencing a change in outcomes. It also increases confidence that the program does not produce any unintended harmful effects.

Effectiveness should be demonstrated in large longitudinal studies or multiple independent replications. Evidence of impact, seen upon diverse populations (e.g., different socioeconomic, racial, and cultural groups) and in diverse settings (e.g., urban, suburban, and rural areas), creates greater confidence that the same results can be generated across different types of populations, schools, and communities.

It is important to assess impact, immediately following the program and after sufficient time has elapsed to prove significant and sustained effects. Unfortunately, many programs demonstrating initial success fail to show long-term impacts or even show a decline in effectiveness. Other programs have delayed impact and the full effects are not seen by the end of the intervention. In addition, evidence-based programs aim to not only impact individual outcomes, but to change the population prevalence rates of a problem, so changes in youth development outcomes, such as aggression, youth violence, delinquency, substance use, and school failure, must be large enough to reasonably expect that the program can result in changes at the population level.

Different criteria have been used to identify "effective" prevention programs and a variety of terms have been used to refer to programs or approaches demonstrating varying levels of effectiveness, such as evidence-based, research-based, best practices, exemplary, model, and promising programs. It is important to realize that programs promoted as "effective" may not meet all of the above criteria. Comprehensive, enduring, and effective prevention programs have strong study designs and scientific evidence that they reduce negative outcomes and sustain positive impacts. The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence's Blueprints Model Programs are recognized as the most researched and effective evidence-based prevention programs.

As Centre County children begin the school year, many can look forward to participating in evidence-based programs that have been implemented in our schools and the community, including LifeSkills Training, Strengthening Families Program, Project Toward No Drug Abuse, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program,

Reconnecting Youth, PATHS, and the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. These programs have been shown to be effective in reducing the prevalence of risk factors and increasing protective factors that promote healthy development. Let teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and youth know that you support evidence-based programs. The attitudes, behaviors, and skills promoted through these programs make our schools, families, and communities safer and stronger.

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