



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition
Supported By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



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In tough economic times, communities must carefully invest in proven and cost effective prevention programs. Evidence-based prevention programs have the most scientific evidence that they reduce negative youth outcomes, such as delinquency, violence, and substance use, and that they reduce financial burdens on taxpayers, such as prison, drug treatment, and social service costs.

A variety of terms are used to refer to programs demonstrating some level of effectiveness, such as science-based, research-based, and empirically supported; It is important to realize that programs promoted as “effective” may not be considered evidence-based. The Cochrane and Campbell Collaborations conduct the most thorough review of prevention programs. However, The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) publishes a list of Blueprints Model and Promising Programs recognizing the most proven, evidence-based prevention programs available. Operating in Centre County, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Life Skills Training Program, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, PATHS, Project Towards No Drug Abuse, and the Strengthening Families Program 10-14 are all from this list.

Evidence-based programs meet the following criteria:

- Program effectiveness has been demonstrated in a research study with scientific rigor. 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 has been demonstrated in large longitudinal studies or multiple independent replications. This allows researchers to determine if impacts are seen upon diverse populations, such as those of different incomes or racial backgrounds. It also allows researchers to determine if the impacts are seen in diverse settings, such as urban, suburban, and rural areas. This creates greater confidence that the effects have “generalizability” and that the same results can be generated across different types of populations, schools, and communities.
- Impact has been assessed immediately following the program and also after time has elapsed and significant and sustained effects have been proven. Unfortunately, many programs that demonstrate initial success fail to show long-term impacts. Others have delayed impact and the full effects are not seen by the end of the intervention. For example a youth attending the Strengthening Families Program locally may show increases in peer pressure resistance skills after the 7 week program, but the impacts proven through research of reduced alcohol and marijuana use may not be seen till future years. In addition, changes in youth development outcomes must be large enough to reasonably expect that the program can result in changes not only in individuals, but also at the population level. For example, the local Olweus Bullying Prevention Program is not

just targeting the behavior of bullies, it is creating school-wide changes and reducing violence, vandalism, and truancy through school policies and classroom meetings aimed improving the social climate of classrooms.

To learn more, the following Web sites are suggested:

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence's Blueprints: <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/>

The Standards of Evidence adopted by the Society for Prevention Research:

<http://www.preventionresearch.org/StandardsofEvidencebook.pdf>

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