

Fidelity and Adaptation

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Learning Objectives

- Define fidelity and adaptation
- Differentiate advantages and disadvantages of replication vs. adaptation
- Describe guidelines for adaptation
- Identify ways to monitor program fidelity and adaptation
- Examine fidelity/adaptation issues

What is fidelity?

A couple of definitions

“Fidelity of implementation refers to the degree to which . . . program providers implement programs as *intended by the program developers.*” (Dusenbury et al., 2004, p. 4)

“The degree of fit between the *developer-defined components* of a program and its actual implementation in a given organizational or community setting.” (Backer, 2001, p. 7)

What is fidelity?

Implementation of best practice

A prevention practice or program is judged to be evidence-based if “good” research (that is, research shown to be rigorous according to a defined set of criteria) demonstrates that:

- 1. The practice or program produced the expected positive results.**
- 2. The results can be attributed to the practice or program rather than to other factors.**

What is fidelity?

Fairly prescriptive instructions

ACROSS AGES

- ☑ Implementation of all 6 program components
- ☑ Mentors who are 55 years of age or older
- ☑ State-or agency-approved mentor training
- ☑ Eight to 10 hours of pre-service training and monthly in-service meetings for mentors
- ☑ Screening of mentors according to State-approved requirements
- ☑ Training and orientation for all participants
- ☑ Stipends for mentors
- ☑ Vigilant monitoring of youth-mentor matches
- ☑ Signed, written agreements between collaborating organizations.
- ☑ At least 1 full-time and 1 part-time staff person per 60 youth and 30 to 40 mentors
- ☑ A 12-month program dosage
- ☑ A strong institutional infrastructure to manage the program.

SAMHSA Model Programs

<http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov/pdfs/model/AcrossAges.pdf>

What is fidelity?

Not so prescriptive instructions

CMCA

- ☑ Hire a qualified community organizer
- ☑ Form a local strategy team
- ☑ Develop a specific organizing strategy
- ☑ Select alcohol policy and enforcement targets
- ☑ Mobilize citizens of the community to push for those targets
- ☑ Implement continuously for 4 or 5 years

University of Minnesota Alcohol Epidemiology Program, CMCA,

<http://www.epi.umn.edu/alcohol/cmca/index.shtml>

The benefit of fidelity: It increases likelihood of effectiveness

Lessons from school-based research

- **High fidelity of implementation → improved outcomes.**
- **Low fidelity → limited effectiveness.**

As summarized in Dusenbury et al, 2004

The problem with fidelity: It is seldom achieved

Due to the following:

- Program complexity and/or rigidity
- Limited organizational or community support
- Lack of materials and guidance from developer
- Poor fit or match between program and target population

Adapted from Dusenbury et al, 2004

Therefore, adaptation happens

- Between 23% and 81% of program activities may be omitted during implementation (Durlak, 1998).
- Only 19% of schools implementing research-based curricula with fidelity (Hallfors & Godette, 2002).
- Only 15% of middle schools' lead substance use prevention teachers followed the curriculum guide "very closely" (Ringwalt et al, 2003).

What is adaptation?

"The modification of program content [and delivery modes] to accommodate the needs of a specific consumer group."

Castro, Barrera, Martinez, 2004

What is adaptation?

Two basic forms of adaptation:

1. Modifying program content
2. Modifying program delivery
 - a. characteristics of delivery person
 - b. channel of delivery
 - c. location of delivery

From Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004

Is adaptation a good thing? One Perspective

“Fidelity is related to effectiveness and any bargaining away of fidelity will most likely decrease program effectiveness. There is very little experimental evidence on the impact of local enhancements or modifications on the effectiveness of programs.”

Elliott & Mihalic, 2004, p. 51

Is adaptation a good thing? Ways to enhance fidelity

Site readiness and capacity

- ☑ A well-connected and respected local champion
- ☑ Strong administrative support
- ☑ Formal organizational commitments and staffing stability
- ☑ Up-front commitment of necessary resources,
- ☑ Program credibility within the community, and
- ☑ Some potential for program routinization

Elliott & Mihalic, 2004

Is adaptation a good thing? Another Perspective

“Adaptation may render a program more responsive to a particular target population. Adaptation could increase a program’s cultural sensitivity and its fit within a new implementation setting.”

Schinke, Brounstein, & Gardner, 2002

Is adaptation a good thing? Sources of program mismatch

- Group characteristics (e.g., language, ethnicity, SES, urban-rural, risk factors, family stability)
- Program delivery staff (e.g., lay v. paid, culturally competent v. insensitive)
- Administration/community factors (e.g., community consulted, community readiness)

From Castro, Barrera, Martinez, 2004

Is adaptation a good thing? A third perspective

“Attention to BOTH fidelity AND adaptation is essential for successful implementation of science-based prevention programs.”

Backer, 2001, p. 41

Is adaptation a good thing? The right balance

Some guidelines

- ☑ **Define the fidelity/adaptation balance**
- ☑ **Assess community concerns**
- ☑ **Identify fidelity/adaptation challenges**
- ☑ **Examine science-based elements**
- ☑ **Determine resources needed**
- ☑ **Consider available training and technical assistance**
- ☑ **Involve the community**
- ☑ **Develop a plan for documenting fidelity/adaptation**
- ☑ **Include fidelity/adaptation issues in evaluation**
- ☑ **Conduct an ongoing analysis of fidelity/adaptation**

Adapted from Backer, 2001

How is fidelity measured? Key features of assessment

ASSESS:

- Fidelity to original or model program and to proposed (adapted) program
- Fidelity at intervals
- All aspects of the program
- Adaptations to evaluation methods
- Rationale for adaptation

How is fidelity measured? Nationally-recognized EBPs

EXAMPLES:

- Reconnecting Youth
- Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol
- Northland/Class Action
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program
- Families and Schools Together
- Across Ages mentoring program

How is fidelity measured? Other, promising RBPs

EXAMPLES:

- Reductions in alcohol outlet density (via zoning regulations)
- Alcohol restrictions at community events
- Social marketing
- Media advocacy
- Enforcement of Underage drinking laws

Additional guidelines for fidelity: “evidence-based practices”

- ☑ Examine the latest available research.
- ☑ Be consistent with underlying theories (and evidence) of causation and change.
- ☑ Contact the developers with any questions.
- ☑ When in doubt: Request T.A!
 - **Your OSA Project Officer**
 - **For help with environmental strategies:
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Small Group Activity Adaptation Guidelines

Case Studies
Determining Fidelity/Adaptation Issues

Reporting back

- What recommendations did your group have for the case study community?
- How did you reach those recommendations?
- What was the process like for you?
- What is one key “take-away” lesson that you’ll apply to your work?

Contact information



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