

DYC's Evidence Based Principles

1. Assess Actuarial Risk and Needs
2. Enhance Intrinsic Motivation
3. Target Interventions
4. Use of Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment Models
5. Increase Positive Enforcement
6. Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities
7. Measure Relevant Processes and Practices
8. Provider Measurement Feedback

Elements Common to All Principles

1. Strong Therapeutic Relationship
2. Program Fidelity
3. Do No Harm
4. Transition Focused Case Planning
5. Strength Based
6. Skilled Staff
7. Multi-Disciplinary
8. Stakeholder Commitment
9. Transparency

Division of Youth Corrections Evidence Based Practice Guide for Senate Bill 94

Principles and Elements

The term Evidence Based Practice (EBP) is shared across many disciplines, but is not uniformly defined. This makes comparisons of programs and treatment strategies difficult. Some programs also offer scant evidence that they are actually based on research-validated outcomes, yet claim to be Evidence Based.

The Colorado Division of Youth Corrections defines Evidence Based Practice according to a set of principles which in combine to enhance the likelihood of good outcomes for treatment services. (See text box to the left.)

Additionally, there are several overarching elements which assure the principles are fully and accurately applied. They are common to one or more principle and help inform strategies for applying the principles.

Rationale

In theory, the degree to which committed youth are treated in programs that meet all these principles, the more likely positive outcomes will result. By fo-

cus on principles, it allows state operated treatment facilities, contract providers, and SB94 programs to create strategies that meet their needs.

In addition, the Division wholly embraces existing programs that have been documented as producing positive outcomes and documented by sound scientific research.

The goal is to allow flexibility in program design while providing sufficient rigor to promote good outcomes.

For Senate Bill 94

Senate Bill 94 programs focus on compliance and court appearance, rather than recidivism reduction. Therefore, funding programs that, at minimum, are demonstrated to reduce Failure to Appear and Failure to Comply with court orders. They may not have "treatment goals," but do assure that youth comply with conditions of supervision.

For programs that attempt to reduce recidivism, the short

term duration in SB94 precludes application of many evidence based programs. Even for detention sentences, the length of sentence—up to 45 days—hinders the application of any real research supported programs.

When not using services validated through research to be evidence based, SB94 programs should demonstrate the degree to which purchased services align with EB principles.

For simpler pretrial outcomes, such as guaranteeing a youth's appearance in court or compliance with bond conditions, data supporting proposed strategies will demonstrate whether intended outcomes can be reached.

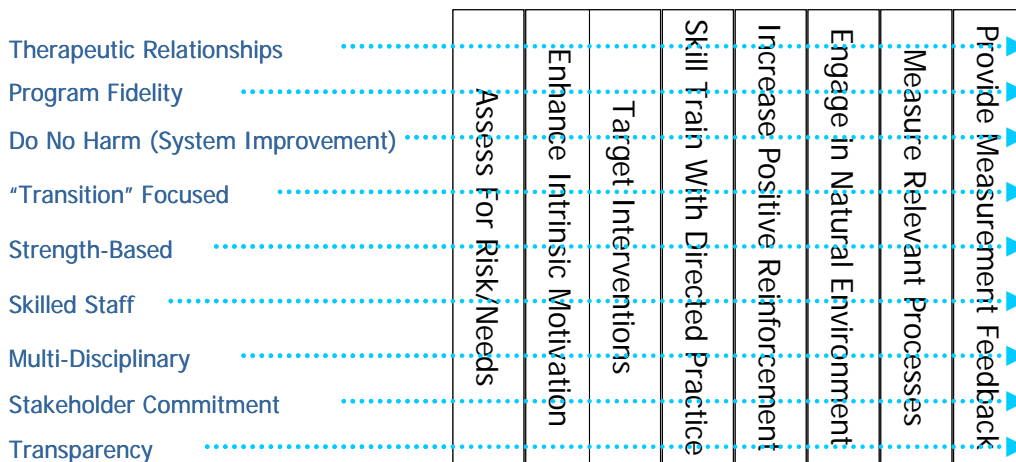
It is not possible to fully impact a youth and family during the short time Senate Bill 94 interacts with most youth. So alignment with principles, or selecting programs which have the ability to safely manage youth awaiting trials, is the intention for SB94 programs.

Division of Youth
Corrections

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Elements

Principles



Applying EBP Principles in Senate Bill 94

Evidence Based Programs

When funding a program or service in Senate Bill 94 that is designed to reduce recidivism, alignment with principles of EBP is a requirement. A JSPC can fund programs already demonstrated by research to impact expected outcomes (e.g., Multi Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, or other programs for which a case can be made that it is evidence-based). Questions such as these can be asked to determine if the project should be funded: Has the program been demonstrated as successful through peer-based evaluation studies? Who says it is successful and why? Is the JSPC planning on using the model in the manner it is designed? By responding to these types of questions in the SB94 plan, the likelihood of plan approval increases significantly.

Alternatively, programs that are promising or align with principles of evidence based research can also be funded.

Compliance with Terms and Conditions of Pretrial Supervision

Much of the work funded under SB94 is intended merely to assure that youths will appear in court as required while being supervised in settings that serve as alternatives to secure detention.

For such programs, questions like these can be posed to determine funding validity:

- What documentation exists to demonstrate that outcomes will be achieved?
- Has the jurisdiction had success with this alternative in the past?
- Does it represent a cost effective alternative to detention?

Aligning with Evidence-Based Principles

But, JSPCs may wish to create new programs that have not yet been fully validated as research-supported, but show promise in fulfilling intended outcomes for Senate Bill 94 youth. Aligning with the principles of EBP is essential to assure funding approval. The principles are summarized here, with some questions that can help JSPCs and Coordina-

tors understand the degree to which they comport with the EBP principles.

1. Assess for risk and need.

The program or service should rely on one or more research-based and statistically validated objective assessment instruments to ascertain levels of risk and need. Increased objectivity in assessment processes increases the likelihood that the right services will be provided. Consider these questions:

- What type of actuarially derived assessment is conducted?
- For what population is the assessment intended?
- Is the population assessed appropriate for the instrument?

2. Enhance Intrinsic Motivation

Motivation and readiness are predictors of program success; non-motivated clients should be deferred to alternative programs; motivation should be assessed using a statistically valid assessment

process and an intake interview by a trained case manager. Motivational processes should be used to enhance client readiness.

- What readiness measures or efforts are taken to ensure a youth is prepared to work on his outcomes?
- How are clients not ready for the program prepared?

3. Target the Interventions to Risk and Need

Risk. Program strategies should be targeted to the types of clients who are most likely to benefit and avoid net-widening or creaming; prescreening or assessments which rely on statistically validated tools should be applied.

- What types (or areas) of risk/need are assessed?
- How is risk level determined?
- What are the risk levels?
- Is the level of supervision appropriate for the level of risk? Has the level been validated?
- Are Supervision and treatment resources targeted to appropriate offenders?

Need. The program should target needs which are predictors of criminal behavior. If three needs are targeted, all must be criminogenic; if four are targeted, at least three should be criminogenic; if five or more are targeted, at least 80 percent should be criminogenic.

- When clients first come to the program, what kinds of problems do you most often see?
- Are interventions targeted to criminogenic needs?

Responsivity. The program should reflect the temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender of the offender.

- Is the program responsive to cognitive abilities, background, and other characteristics of the offender?
- Do you assess a client's dynamic characteristics that are associated with possible recidivism?
- Do you assess a client's personal characteristics, attributes, and styles of interaction? (e.g., intelligence, verbal ability, level of anxiety)
- Does the program match the type of

treatment with the characteristics of individual clients?

- Does the program have the ability to match/move clients to different case managers based on responsivity?
- Do clients have a mechanism whereby they may provide input into the structure and rules of the program?

Dosage. In order for a program to have long lasting effects and develop cognitive changes, the high risk clients must be involved in the program for 40 to 70 percent of their time for a minimum of three months and as long as nine months. In SB94, this may not be possible, so creating alternative strategies to enhance duration is important.

- How much of the client time is involved in program specific activities?
- What is done to ensure the client receives adequate dosage of treatment services prescribed by the intervention?

Treatment Requirements. The treatment requirements should be built into the sentencing requirements of the court orders.

- Do court orders reflect treatment requirements?
- If not, what is done to ensure participation in the program as it is designed.

4. Skill Train with Directed Practice

Because of criminal thinking issues, cognitive or cognitive/behavioral treatment methods are most likely to have a long-range impact.

- Does the program use skill training with directed practice?
- Does the program teach the clients to plan or rehearse alternatives to problem situations?
- Does the program train the clients to practice new behaviors in increasingly difficult situations?
- What changes in the person and life circumstances does the program target?

15. Increase Positive Reinforcements

Research demonstrates that case management should include six to eight positive reinforcements for each consequence or

punishment applied for negative behavior.

- Does the program use punishers/consequences/sanctions?
- What is the ratio of reinforcements to punishers for your successfully terminated clients?
- What incentives and rewards are used to encourage program participation and compliance?

6. Engage in Natural Environments

The program should include use of active and ongoing support in natural communities, including families, peers, work, treatment communities, and similar.

- To what degree are natural support communities engaged and participating in the treatment plan?

7. Measure Relevant Processes

In order to determine whether the program has the intended impact, data should be collected to measure process and outcomes.

- Are clients surveyed each year as to their satisfaction with the service being provided?
- Are there objective, periodic, standardized assessments of clients on target behaviors?
- Is reconviction (recidivism) data gathered on clients 6 months or more after leaving the program?
- Have any formal evaluations of the program been carried out?

8. Provide Measurement Feedback

It is not adequate to simply collect evaluation data; the findings must be disseminated and used to adjust the program when shortcomings are discovered.

- Is there a formal process to disseminate data and adjust the program?
- Do supervisors provide quality assurance assessments such as a file review, client feedback or other within program checks that monitor the treatment process?

Relevance of the Overarching Elements

The successful application of Evidence Based Practice is dependent on the application of several elements that are common to all the principles.

Therapeutic Relationships

Effective clinical, support, and supervision work with adolescents requires the context of positive relationships. Without such a relationship, any messages will be inhibited as the youth's mistrust may block mental processing of the contents of the communication.

Program Fidelity

Programs require that all staff have received minimum levels of training in the program work and are able to be consistent in covering issue areas and prescribed activities and interventions.

Do No Harm (System Improvement)

In addition to applying interventions that show positive outcomes, each program should be reviewed for practices that are known to enhance risk factors, so that such practices can be eliminated if not required for program effect. For example, connection with delinquent peers is a known risk factor, so each program should take whatever steps possible to reduce this contact. If treat-

ment does not need to be completed in a group setting, it will be more effective when done individually.

Research has shown that youth who enter detention settings are far more likely to return than those who do not, and that longer placements predict greater recidivences. Therefore detention use should be minimized for any youth who does not require it. Surveillance without treatment intervention is a common cause of continued law violations, so programs should take steps to avoid this also.

"Transition" Focused

All programs must be designed in a way that honors and supports the next steps in personal development, and the return to unsupervised interactions with family and peers. This may be paraphrased as "beginning with the end in mind."

Strength-Based

The strengths-based element values the protective factors as highly as known risk factors in the process of treatment planning. While targeting interventions to mitigate the predominant risk domains, it is equally important to identify how the treatment plan will support the strengths or protective factors in the youth's life.

Skilled Staff

Even when staff members have been trained and are consistently supervised within a program structure, it is normal that the general and specific skills of each staff person will vary.

Multi-Disciplinary

Just as delinquent behavior has a great variety of causes within each individual, it is important to ensure that each youth's developmental needs are met through the attention and support of professionals from a variety of backgrounds. Health, cognition, education, social skills, and some of the areas of care that may need professional review and assistance in order to ensure proper care and good outcomes for youth served within any program.

Stakeholder Commitment

A key element of any program's success is commitment from the various stakeholders in the program and treatment process. These stakeholders include the youth's immediate and extended family, as well as the members of the youth's community, especially including those who have been victimized by the youth's delinquent behaviors. Another level of stakeholders are agents of other organizations that have

roles in responding to delinquent behaviors, such as law enforcement, prosecution, and the courts. The representatives of other institutions such as schools, training programs, workforce centers, etc. have an interest in effective rehabilitation and transition of delinquent youths. All of these stakeholders as well as others who are directly and indirectly involved in individual cases must be able to understand the program, its purpose, and why it has been an appropriate and reliable intervention preceding the youth's return to unsupervised community living.

Transparency

Transparency refers to the extent to which the program is easily observable outside of its management and organizational structure. A "closed" program is one in which the activities of program staff are difficult to view and monitor. A healthy transparency of program operations means that all staff are able to explain the program's purpose and their roles to any appropriate outsider. Transparency is important in gaining program credibility and support from direct stakeholders, and also from groups that are tasked to evaluate the efficacy of programs.

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