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PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES LITERATURE REVIEW

Implementation of a program refers to the way the program is carried out in the community or organization. Implementation can be assessed using program evaluation methods (Durlak, 1998). Implementation evaluation is critical in verifying the connection between the intended goals of a program and the achieved outcomes after the program has been implemented. For instance, even a very good program might not show the intended outcomes if it's not carried out the way it's supposed to be carried out. Finally, implementation evaluation can provide researchers and the stakeholders involved in carrying out the program with information about the positive and negative outcomes of the program (Durlak, 1998).

Steps in Studying Implementation (adopted from Durlak, 1998)

1. Define Active Program Ingredients

- Define the goals and theories used in the program so you know exactly what you're doing.
- Make a logic model - <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/resources.htm#logic%20model> (<http://www.cdc.gov/eval/logic%20model%20bibliography.PDF> – more specific review)

2. Use Good Methods to Measure Implementation

- Observations by independent raters are usually preferred to self-reports by the researchers.
- Refer to literature (ex. Durlak & DuPre, 2008).
- For practical guide refer to <http://www.promisingpractices.org/> or Rosi, Lipsey, & Freeman (2004).

3. Monitor Implementation

- Program components, change agents, and participants should be assessed a number of times. Go to <http://www.promisingpractices.org/sd4b.asp> for more information.
- Important because detection of any problems could lead to possible adjustments that will lead to achievement of better outcomes.

4. Relate Implementation to Outcomes.

- Decide who or what will be the unit of analysis. Will the units be the people that receive the program or an entire organization? Go to <http://www.promisingpractices.org/sd4c.asp> for more information.

Factors Affecting the Implementation Process (adapted from Durlak & DuPre, 2008)

1. Community Level Factors

- Theory used for the program, Politics, Funding, and Policy.

2. Provider Characteristics

- Perceived need for the program (Do providers think the program is needed?)

- Perceived benefits of the program (Do providers think the program will benefit the organization or the population?)
- Self-Efficacy (Do providers think they can carry out the program?)
- Skill Proficiency (Are the implementers and providers skilled enough to carry out the program?).

3. **Characteristics of the Program**

- Compatibility with the community, organization, and population (Does the implementation evaluation encompass the culture of the population or mission and vision of the organization?)
- Adaptability (Can the program be easily modified to respond to unforeseen needs?)

Factors Affecting the Implementation Process – for organizations carrying out the program (adapted from Durlak & DuPre, 2008)

4. **Organizational Capacity**

- Positive Work Climate
- Organization's attitudes/norms about Change (ex. openness to change)
- Integration of new programming (How well did the organization adopt the program?)
- Shared Vision (shared mission, consensus, commitment, and staff buy-in)

5. **Specific Practices and Processes**

- Shared Decision Making (local input, community participation, local ownership, collaboration).
- Coordination with other Agencies (partnerships, networking, multidisciplinary work).
- Communication (frequent and open)
- Formulation of Tasks (workgroups, teams, effective human resource management).

6. **Specific Staffing Considerations**

- Leadership (leadership in all aspects of the project)
- Program Champion (internal advocate for the program)
- Managerial/supervisory/administrative support (how these groups support the program)

7. **Other factors – from Prevention Supports Systems framework**

- Training – of the staff/providers
- Technical Assistance (Resources offered to providers)

RESOURCES

Durlak, J. A. (1998). "Why program implementation is important." *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 17(2): 5-18.

Durlak, J. A. and E. P. DuPre (2008). "Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41(3): 327-350.

Promising Practices Network: <http://www.promisingpractices.org/sd3a.asp>

CDC Evaluation Workgroup: <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/resources.htm#logic%20model>

Texas Department of State Health Services <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/tobacco/bestpractices/implementation.shtm>