

Key Ingredients of Effective Family Programs

Stephen Small & Mary Huser

University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension

<i>Program Design and Content</i> - The first category of principles is related to the structure and content of a program.	High	Medium	Low	Unsure
◆ Effective programs are theory-driven.				
-Targets research-proven risk & protective factors and assets directly related to program outcomes				
-Clear and logical program theory underlies program activities				
◆ Effective programs are of sufficient dosage and intensity.				
-Contact hours and duration of program match the severity of the issue being addressed				
-Booster or follow-up sessions reinforce newly learned behaviors				
◆ Effective programs are comprehensive.				
-Targets more than one setting (family, peers, school, workplace, neighborhood, etc.)				
-Targets more than one stage of learning (knowledge, attitude, behavior, etc.)				
◆ Effective programs use active learning techniques.				
-A variety of teaching methods are used to keep participants interested and active				
-Engages participants in practicing new skills throughout the program				

<i>Program Relevance</i> - In effective programs, materials and activities are intentionally designed to reflect the targeted population's characteristics and needs.	High	Medium	Low	Unsure
◆ Effective programs are developmentally appropriate.				
-Designed for an audience of a specific age or stage of development				
◆ Effective programs reach participants when they are ready to change.				
-Targets families at critical transitions such as birth of a first child, entering new school, divorce or separation				
-Attempts are made to meet participants' most pressing needs (housing, food, addiction treatment) so they are prepared to benefit from what the program has to offer				

◆ Effective programs are socio-culturally relevant.				
-Program activities and information honor and build on participants' values, culture and life experiences				
-Staff respect and understand the cultural nuances and traditions of the targeted groups				

Program Delivery - The effectiveness of a program is as much a function of how it is delivered as what is delivered.				
	High	Medium	Low	Unsure
◆ Effective programs foster good relationships.				
-Activities respect participant privacy; personal information is not asked before trust is established				
-Trust is built over time between staff and participants				
◆ Effective programs are delivered by well-trained and committed staff.				
-Staff receive training prior to leading the program				
-Ongoing training, support and supervision is provided to staff				

Program Assessment and Quality Assurance - Effective programs have an evaluation system in place that can not only assess whether a program is making a difference but also provide ongoing feedback so that the program can be continuously improved.				
	High	Medium	Low	Unsure
◆ Effective programs are well-documented so that staff can consistently implement it from one session to the next.				
-Written curriculum materials document the program and are shared with staff, funders and supporters				
-All staff follow curriculum materials to ensure consistency in how the program is delivered				
◆ Effective programs focus on evaluation and refinement and are continuously learning and improving.				
-The type of evaluation conducted is matched to the appropriate needs of the program.				
-Impact evaluation occurs after other types of evaluation have shown the program is functioning well				

For additional resources on evidence-based programs and principles, visit the website, *What Works Wisconsin: Effective Prevention Programs for Children, Youth and Families*: <http://whatworks.uwex.edu>