FEATURE RESOURCE
FREE Learning Tools for Evidence-Informed Youth Violence Prevention

The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) has developed a series of online learning tools called Understanding Evidence to help you use evidence-based decision-making in your youth violence prevention efforts.

This resource will help you learn about different types of evidence and the standards that make up the best available research evidence. You will also learn how to identify sources and ways to collect different types of evidence, and identify the key stages of the evidence-based decision-making process.

This approach can benefit your organization through:
• adopting the most effective and cost efficient interventions
• making careful use of limited resources (money, time, human resources)
• attaining better health and social outcomes for the people you serve

We encourage you to visit this resource and consider ways to add these concepts into the planning and decision-making within your organization. The learning tools can be completed in a group session, during team meetings, or individually followed by a group discussion about ways to use the concepts in your daily work.

The CDC's learning tool is available at:
http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/evidence

UPCOMING EVENTS
Making Connections:
Collectively supporting marginalized and racialized Peel youth to succeed

Hosted by Peel Region, United Way of Peel and Peel Children's Aid, this forum will feature presentations and a networking session with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Date: October 16, 2013

Time: 8:00 am-4:00 pm

Location: Mississauga Convention Centre

Evaluation Workshop Series

We will present a 3-part series on learning how to plan and evaluate your programming.

Part 1: September 13, 2013
Part 2: September 20, 2013
Part 3: September 27, 2013
RSVP by phone: 905-791-7800 ext. 2174

Registration required for both events
Email: Pat.Rosati@peelregion.ca
For more info, visit PeelThinkshare.ca

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT
How to Successfully Implement Youth Mentoring Programs

A warm supportive relationship with a positive adult role model is a protective factor for youth violence. Mentoring programs based on this theory match a young person with a caring adult from outside the family.

The evidence for mentoring as a youth violence prevention strategy is not as strong as others, partially because it has not been evaluated as widely or as rigorously as other types of strategies. Depending on the review and the program, mentoring programs have been rated as either promising or effective for reducing youth violence.

Here are key things to consider when implementing youth mentoring programs:

• Programs that adhere to recommended guidelines for effective mentoring practices have been found to be more effective.

• Poorly implemented mentoring programs may not only be ineffective, but could do more harm than good.

• Mentoring may not be a good strategy for highest risk children/adolescents with severe behavioural or emotional problems as they require professional care.

• There is currently minimal evidence on the effectiveness of cross-age peer mentoring (e.g. a high school-aged mentor paired with an elementary school-aged child). Cross-age peer mentoring should proceed with caution as the potential to do harm is magnified as both mentees and mentors are vulnerable to negative outcomes. Key program design factors for the appropriateness of cross-age peer mentoring need to be considered such as the setting, match structure, mentee age and the desired outcomes for both mentors and mentees.

General guidelines for implementing mentoring programs:

Program Design and Content:

• Contact must be frequent and it is a long term commitment
• Activities should be structured
• Mentor should develop a relationship with key persons in the youth's life ▶

Region of Peel
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Program Relevance:

• Youth from higher-risk environments tend to benefit more from mentoring

• Screen academically at-risk students so that mentors can target academic needs

• Carefully screen for a match between the mentor and the youth

• Girls respond better to relationship-based mentoring; boys respond better to activity-based mentoring

Program Delivery:

• Mentors with a background in helping roles/professions tend to be more effective

• Well-trained mentors are more effective (e.g. understanding of developmental issues and the context in which their mentee lives)

• Supervision by program staff increases the duration and success of mentoring

• Adequate training of program staff can ensure appropriate supervision and support of matches between mentors and mentees

Adapted from: Small, S.A. (2008)

Additional resources:

The Center for Evidence Based Mentoring:
http://www.umbmentoring.org/index.html

Adapting Programs to Suit Your Community

Making an evidence-based program work in your local context without reducing its effectiveness can be challenging. This issue of staying true to the original program design is called fidelity. With program planning and implementation it is important to maintain program fidelity, while making appropriate adaptations to your local context if necessary.

Program adaptations that are typically acceptable, risky or unacceptable are:

Acceptable:

• Changing language—translating and/or modifying vocabulary

• Replacing images to mirror the target audience

• Replacing cultural references

• Modifying some aspects of activities such as physical contact

• Adding relevant, evidence-based content to make the program more appealing

Risky/Unacceptable:

• Reducing the number/length of sessions or how long the participants are involved

• Lowering the level of participant engagement

• Eliminating key messages or skills learned, or removing topics

• Changing the theoretical approach

• Using fewer staff/volunteers than recommended

• Using staff/volunteers that are not adequately trained or qualified

How to minimize the risk of reducing program effectiveness:

Remember to review programs with a critical eye to assess the curriculum, recruitment materials, and appropriateness for your target audience. Try to choose a program that will meet your needs and require minimal adaptation.

Find the key elements that make the program effective by:

• Contacting the developer for information about the program's theory and assumptions

• Reading an external review of the program by an agency, evaluator or review in the academic literature

• Assessing the need for cultural adaptation at both the surface level (e.g. visuals, language and activities) and at a deeper level (e.g. program structure and goals or the targeted risk factors). Be aware of programs that may require adaptations at a deeper level. If this is the case, it is probably better to search for a program more relevant to your target audience.

Remember to stay true to the duration and intensity of the original program as this is important to replicate the effects of evidence-based programs. You can avoid program drift by using tools to track and monitor program implementation.

Overall, program adaptation is a careful balance between maintaining the core components of a program, while adapting surface level aspects to make sure the program fits your target audience.

Adapted from: O'Connor, C., Small, S.A. & Cooney, S.M. (2007).

FEATURE AGENCY / PROGRAM

Second Step

See how Fallingdale Public School in Brampton is using the Second Step program to help students develop their social and emotional awareness. This evidence-based program has been proven to help prevent youth violence, and is available for preschool, grades K to 5, and 6 to 8. See it on PeelThinkShare.ca

One Voice, One Team

If you haven't already heard about this wonderful local organization, see how One Voice, One Team helps encourage youth to stay on the positive track through active participation. See it on PeelThinkShare.ca

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