
Evidence-Based Programs 101

What are Evidence-Based Programs?

Evidence-based programs are programs that have been ***rigorously tested in controlled settings, proven effective, and translated into practical models*** that are widely available to community-based organizations. It is also important that the evaluations themselves have been ***subjected to critical peer review***. That is, experts in the field – not just the people who developed and evaluated the program – have examined the evaluation’s methods and agreed with its conclusions about the program’s effects. Ultimately, when you implement an evidence-based program, you can be confident you’re delivering a program that works and is highly likely to improve the health of your constituents.

Advantages of Evidence-Based Programs

Implementing an evidence-based program is widely considered a “best practice” strategy for community health promotion. Evidence-based programs can add value in many ways.

- Positively impacting the health of the program participants is more likely with an evidence-based program.
- Funders increasingly demand that programming be based on solid evidence.
- Agency leaders want to concentrate limited resources on proven programs.
- Program managers can concentrate their efforts on program delivery rather than program development. Allowing them more time to reach a larger population and have a great impact.
- Older adults are savvy and want to invest their time and money in programs that have been proven to work.
- The demonstrated outcomes of evidence-based programs are attractive to community members and potential partners, facilitating community buy-in and the formation of partnerships, especially with healthcare/clinical partners.

Important Distinction: Research-based ≠ Evidence-based

A common misconception is that programs that have been based on research can then be considered evidence-based. However, many research-based programs do not actually fit the definition of an evidence-based program as stated at the beginning of this document. Just because a program contains research-based content, or was guided by research, doesn’t mean that the program itself has been proven effective. Unless the program has been tested and shown to be effective, it is incorrect to call it “evidence-based.”

Sources:

www.evidencetoprograms.com

www.human.cornell.edu/outreach/upload/Evidence-based-Programs-Overview.pdf

www.ncoa.org/improve-health/center-for-healthy-aging/about-evidence-based-programs.html

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