

Evidence-based Practices in Child Welfare: Opportunities & Challenges for the Workforce (Webinar, February 2013)

What are these resources?

- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare provides easy access to information about child welfare-related programs through user-friendly website; brief and detailed summaries for each reviewed program rated on level of scientific support. Programs reviewed for relevance to child welfare populations and if has outcomes related to Safety, Permanency, Well-being.
- Use information to determine if program is consistent with family/client values and fits with what clinical experience says is needed.
- Topics covered: Anger Management, Domestic Violence, and Substance Abuse; Behavior Management including Parent Training; Core Child Welfare Services including Placement and Reunification; Engagement and Parent Partnering Programs; Mental Health; Prevention and Early Intervention; Support Services for Youth in the Child Welfare System.
- Also includes: reviews of commonly used screening/assessment tools, training materials, implementation resources.
- Review of IPIS Phases of Implementation as one implementation approach: Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment.

What are the critical findings?

- Less is known about Evidence-based Practices (EBP) in child welfare than other areas (medicine; mental health).
- Factors for successful uptake of EBP: careful planning before deciding what, if anything, to adopt; data-driven decisions; training and on-going monitoring and reinforcement, such as coaching and refreshers.
- Dramatic increase in number of solid research studies on interventions relevant to child welfare and in use of EBPs over the past decade.
- Funders are requiring the use of EBPs and Implementation Science is emerging to support use of EBPs.
- There has been increased recognition of the role of trauma in development of individual and family problems and use of that insight in development/testing of intervention models.

What are the implications for our work?

- EBPs influence workforce recruitment by showing that the agency is a learning organization offering high quality services and professional development opportunities.
- EBPs affect the practice/supervision of child welfare staff by offering clear expectations to workers/supervisors regarding high performance and fidelity with high quality interventions.
- EBPs impact organizational climate and retention by showing agency's dedication to professional development and building a learning organization; EBPs motivate staff to perform and make a difference.
- Need clear definition of what is meant by EBP and determination of how much evidence is enough before implementing.
- Importance of assessment and referral pathway, power of change agent and sustained effect.
- Focus on overcoming implementation challenges (new focus on implementation science).
- Look to partner with other sectors.
- Workforce challenges: match of skill set, compatibility, culture/climate, training staff in multiple models, turnover/retraining, fidelity and drive over time.
- Explore funding streams and how to incorporate into social work curricula
- Determine if EBPs are applicable with diverse groups (e.g. adaptations needed for cultural/ethnic groups).