Key Ingredients of Effective Youth and Family Programs

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Principles of Effective Programs

Program Design and Content	Notes	Rating
a) Effective programs have clear goals and objectives.		
▪ Goals are realistic and well aligned with the needs of the targeted audience		
▪ Staff and stakeholders have a mutual understanding of the objectives that need to be met along the way		
b) Effective programs are theory-driven and research-based.		
▪ Risk and protective factors and assets directly related to program outcomes are targeted		
▪ Clear and logical program theory underlies program activities		
▪ Program activities and strategies have a research base and are tied to targeted outcomes		
c) Effective programs are of sufficient dosage and intensity.		
▪ Contact hours and duration of program match the severity of the issue being addressed		
▪ Booster/follow-up sessions reinforce newly learned behaviors		
d) Effective programs are comprehensive.		
▪ More than one setting (family, peers, school, workplace) or process (peer pressure, problem solving) is usually targeted		
▪ More than one stage of learning (knowledge, attitude, behavior, etc.) is targeted		
▪ Connected to the community and other programs		

e) Effective programs use a variety of learning approaches.		
▪ A variety of teaching methods are used to keep participants interested and active		
▪ Participants practice new skills throughout the program		
▪ New behaviors are appropriately modeled		

Program Relevance	**Notes**	**Rating**
a) Effective programs are developmentally appropriate.		
▪ Programs are designed for an audience of a specific age or stage of development		
b) Effective programs reach people when they are ready to change.		
▪ Program targets individuals or 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 can benefit from what the program has to offer		
c) 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	Notes	Rating
a) 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		
b) Effective programs are delivered by well-trained and committed staff.		
▪ Staff receive training prior to leading the program		
▪ Ongoing staff training, support and supervision is provided		

Program Assessment and Quality Assurance	Notes	Rating
a) Effective programs are evaluated at the right time using the right tools.		
▪ Different evaluation strategies are used at different phases in a program's lifecycle		
▪ Methods and measures follow evaluation questions		
b) Effective programs are well-documented and implemented with fidelity.		
▪ 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		
c) Effective programs focus on evaluation and refinement.		
▪ 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