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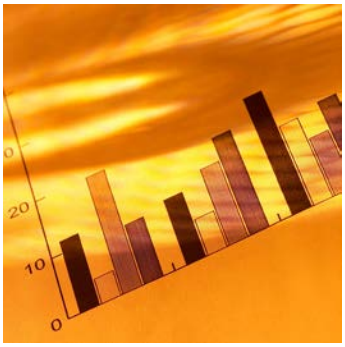
RESEARCH SUMMARY

Implementation of Crime Prevention Programs



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BUILDING A **SAFE** AND **RESILIENT CANADA**

A high-quality implementation is an important determinant in achieving results for evidence-based crime prevention programs

QUESTION

What do we know about the implementation of evidence-based crime prevention programs?

Impact evaluation studies have shown that some programs, despite their level of effectiveness, have not achieved the expected results. Difficulties encountered during program implementation are often the source of these mixed results. The following are examples of concrete and frequent situations that affect a program's achievement of results: lack of program fidelity; difficulties in recruiting participants in the target group and maintaining their participation; turn-over and shortage of qualified staff to deliver the program; lack of technical assistance and training.

Numerous factors affect the implementation of a program and, by extension, the achievement of results: external factors (e.g., socio-economic and policy situation, partners' engagement, availability of resources, etc.), internal factors (e.g., organization's management style, staff, organizational values) and factors linked to the program itself (e.g., complexity of delivery, educational requirements, technical assistance and training). Given the variety and multiplicity of these factors, the implementation of evidence-based programs requires paying attention to the way a program is selected and implemented.

Implementing programs and achieving results should not be considered as two separate processes; rather, they should be viewed as complementary mechanisms. For example, a promising program implemented in favourable conditions with access to effective implementation strategies is more likely to achieve positive and significant statistical results than a model program that faces a number of implementation challenges.

METHOD

This report presents a review of the literature on program implementation, and suggests planning tools and effective strategies to assist local stakeholders in the implementation of crime prevention programs.

ANSWER

Program implementation is a process carried out over a period of two to four years and contains four steps: 1– exploration and adoption; 2– preparation and installation; 3– initial implementation; and, 4– complete implementation. Each of these steps has a set of key activities, and the tools presented in the Implementation Guide enable local stakeholders to conduct a self-assessment of their situation and identify the activities to be carried out. These implementation steps are not linear in nature; back and forth movement from one step to another is sometimes necessary when difficulties arise. For example, difficulties with retention (of staff and/or participants) may preclude the program from reaching the "complete implementation" step and may require a return to an earlier step in the process. Effective strategies can be used in order to facilitate the implementation process. For example, key components of the implementation process must be present. They have a positive influence on implementation and they refer to the organization's capacities, infrastructure and operations. To date, research has identified eight key components: 1– staff selection; 2– training; 3– coaching; 4– performance evaluation and fidelity; 5– linkages with

other networks and partnerships; 6– engagement from management; 7– the use of an information management system in decision making; and, 8 – leadership. These key components form an integrated model and, depending on conditions, a given component may demand more or less attention.

Research also demonstrates that another effective strategy is to identify and establish an implementation team. The role of this team is to focus on key implementation activities and to monitor them. Lastly, establishing a structured implementation plan represents another effective strategy that can be used to identify certain potential difficulties and to proactively find solutions.

IMPLICATIONS

1. Implementation science holds an important place in program implementation, and it is vital to pay attention to the selection of an effective program as well as the use of effective implementation strategies.
2. The greater the fidelity to the program model, the more likely the program's results will be achieved, as research shows that a number of challenges stem from the adaptation of a program's core components (e.g., changing the dosage and duration of a program, non-compliance with the characteristics of the target clients, non-compliance to staffs' educational requirements). Some adaptations are acceptable as long as they do not affect the program's core components and jeopardize the achievement of results (e.g., cultural adaptations, modification of a program's illustrations and terminology). The so-called risky adaptations must take place in collaboration with the program developers to avoid program drift and failure.
3. Studies on the implementation of crime prevention programs are necessary. As many of these programs are intended for specific populations, with involvement in the justice system for example, they need to be implemented within this context and with specific conditions. A better understanding of these conditions would help to determine and select appropriate implementation strategies that are specific to crime prevention programs.

SOURCE

Savignac, J. and Dunbar, L. (2014). *Guide on the Implementation of Evidence-Based Programs: What Do We Know So Far?* Research Report, Public Safety Canada, Ottawa (Ontario).

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