

TOOLS FOR PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS AND REDUCING DELINQUENCY

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Appendix B

Criteria for Evaluating *Tools*

Ideally, the tools selected for inclusion in "*Tools for Success*" should represent evidence-based practices. Evidence-based practice (EBP) has been assigned various definitions by specific groups. For example, the Evaluation Center at the Human Services Research Institute defines EBP as an approach to mental health care in which consumers, mental health professionals, and policy-makers use the most appropriate information available to make clinical decisions. The Institute of Medicine defines it as the integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values. Drake, et al. (2001) add that EBP includes clinical or administrative interventions or practices for which there is consistent scientific evidence showing that they improve client outcomes (Hyde, Falls, Morris, & Schoenwald, Fall, 2003).

The U. S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences has established the "What Works Clearinghouse" (WWC) to assist educators and education policymakers to incorporate scientifically-based research into their educational decisions. The "evidence standards" adopted by WWC are used to "identify research studies that provide the strongest evidence of effects: primarily, well-conducted randomized controlled trials and regression discontinuity studies, and secondarily quasi-experimental studies of especially strong design" (available at: <http://www.w-w-c.org/reviewprocess/standards.html>).

We believe that these standards are so restrictive they would eliminate all but a handful of practices from inclusion in the *Tools*. Therefore, for our purposes, the following definitions have been used.

Best Practices. Best practices are the best direct intervention, administrative practice or approach given the situation, the student's or family's needs and desires, the evidence about what works for this situation/need/desire, and the resources available. Sometimes, the term "best practices" is used synonymously with the term "evidence-based practices." The scientific evidence that warrants an intervention or

administrative practice or approach being identified as a “best practice” includes these elements:

- a) the use of a sound experimental or evaluation design and appropriate analytical procedures;
- b) empirical validation of effects;
- c) clear implementation procedures;
- d) replication of outcomes across implementation sites; and
- e) evidence of sustainability.

These elements are documented through a synthesis of research studies involving experimental or quasi-experimental research designs.

Promising Practices. Promising practices are interventions, administrative practices or approaches for which there is considerable evidence or expert consensus and which show promise in improving student outcomes, but which are not yet proven by the highest or strongest scientific evidence. An intervention, administrative practice or approach may be classified as “promising” if it includes each of the elements described above, but the evidence supporting each is not as compelling (e.g., fewer studies or replications of effects, less rigorous designs, less evidence of sustainability).

Emerging Practices. Emerging practices are new innovations in direct intervention or administrative practice that address critical needs of a particular program, population or system, but do not yet have scientific evidence or broad expert consensus support. An intervention, administrative practice or approach may be classified as “emerging” if scientific evidence is beginning to be accumulated regarding its effectiveness, vis-à-vis the elements described above.

References

Drake, R. E., Goldman, H. H., Leff, H. S., Lehman, A. F., Dixon, L., Mueser, K. T., Torrey, W. C. (2001). Implementing evidence-based practices in routine mental health service settings. *Psychiatric Services*, 52(2), 179-182.

Hyde, P. S., Falls, K., Morris, J. A., & Schoenwald, S. K. (Fall, 2003). *Turning Knowledge into Practice: A Manual for Behavioral Health Administrators and Practitioners about Understanding and Implementing Evidence-Based Practices*. Available at <http://www.openminds.com/indres/ebpmanual.pdf>.