



Evidence-Informed Documentation: Key Elements for Guidelines

The NC Legislature requires that Smart Start funding be used for evidence-based and evidence-informed (EB/EI) activities. On July 26, 2011, The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC)'s Board of Directors adopted the following definition for evidence-informed programs and practices:

An evidence-informed practice is one that is guided by child development theory, practitioner wisdom, qualitative studies and findings from basic research and has written guidelines, a strong logic model, and a history of demonstrating positive results. They may be rated as "Promising" or "Emerging" by at least one source that rates evidence based programs.

Smart Start local partnerships need to have documentation supporting each component of the evidence-informed definition. One of those components is written guidelines.

Written guidelines are necessary to assure the strategy or activity is implemented consistently by different staff and consistently over time. Program effectiveness is dependent on this consistency. While the precise format of guidelines may vary between activities or local partnerships, all guidelines should contain the same basic information.

To assist local partnerships (LPs) in developing and enhancing their guidelines, NCPC staff reviewed program standards and guidelines available from a variety of state and national programs.¹ NCPC staff also reviewed the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) model for necessary elements needed to support implementation as well as documentation supplied by some LPs.

Based on this review, key elements for program guidelines fall into five main categories:

- Staff / Service Provider's Qualifications and Professional Development
- Customer / Targeted population
- Program Implementation
- Program Management / Evaluation / Monitoring / Continuous Quality Improvement
- Community Partnership / Collaboration

NCPC anticipates that guidelines for each program will address each of the five categories mentioned above. Examples of key elements related to each category are provided below. Some of these items are likely to be universal, applying to nearly all programs (e.g. qualifications, etc.). Other items may only be appropriate for certain programs (e.g. retention efforts, fees, etc.).

¹ Programs reviewed include Parents as Teachers, Reach Out and Read, American Heart Association, Nurse Family Partnership, Circle of Parents, and Incredible Years. The last three were reviewed with the assistance of Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina.

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Local partnerships can determine the format for their guidelines. If the guidelines are not formatted as one comprehensive document, the source document(s) for each of the key elements for program guidelines should be noted so staff implementing the program and monitors can access the information easily. LPs are encouraged to develop and enhance their guidelines to reflect the content appropriate for each activity. LPs may add other key elements as appropriate. NCPC staff created a “Checklist” to facilitate this process (see Attachment I).

Key Elements for Guidelines

Staff / Service Provider's Qualifications and Professional Development

- Required minimum education
- Required minimum experience
- Other skills (interpersonal skills)
- Professional development plans
- Specific program training (certification, licensure)
- Supervision/coaching/TA; supervisor's qualifications
- Support staff requirements
- Ongoing supports (TA, coaching)

Customer / Targeted Population

- Qualifications for participation (risk factors, income levels, attendance)
- Minimum/maximum number of participants
- Recruitment efforts
- Retention strategies
- Completion or “graduation” guidelines
- Customer fees

Program Implementation

- Program goals and objectives
- Specific types of services provided
- Dosage - how many sessions; how often meetings are held
- Duration - length of program and length of each session
- Location of services
- Legal/policy requirements; program policies and procedures
- Grant criteria and disbursement information

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Program Management / Evaluation / Monitoring / Continuous Quality Improvement

- Record keeping and data collection
- Reporting requirements
- Demonstration of program fidelity
- Assessments
- Continuous Quality Improvement process
- Output / outcome measures; measurement tools

Community Partnership / Collaboration

- Advisory board
- Community education, awareness, and involvement
- Community support system
- Program sustainability / long-term, stable funding
- Community referrals