

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



### TIP SHEET

### STRENGTHENING FAMILIES: FIDELITY AND ADAPTATION

#### FIDELITY AND ADAPTATION OVERVIEW

Balancing the concepts of fidelity and adaptation when implementing programs can be challenging. To properly deliver this program you need a solid understanding of these concepts and a plan for adhering to program fidelity and making purposeful adaptations.

Fidelity is defined as the degree to which a program is implemented according to its design. Rigorous evaluation studies of model programs indicate that implementing the program according to the program design will produce predictable outcomes. Delivering the program exactly as it is intended shows a high degree of fidelity. Implementing programs with a high degree of fidelity allows you to demonstrate accountability and predict the effectiveness of the program. The Strengthening Families curriculum is like a recipe; to get the best results, you need to do the following:

- Deliver the seven parent, youth and family sessions to parents of 10-14 year olds and youth ages 10-14.
- Teach one, two hour session per week for 7 consecutive weeks.
- Teach workshops sequentially
- Facilitate all activities and discussions included in each workshop.
- Use all the materials corresponding to each workshop.

Adaptation is defined as *modifications to aspects of a program or practice, including content, delivery method, and length of program sessions*. Sometimes it is necessary to make changes to the program to fit the needs of a particular situation or the needs of the target population. Changes that make the program more relevant to the parent's culture and the geographic setting can help create a better fit with the community. Adaptations can deteriorate program effectiveness and should be made with caution. Striking a balance that addresses both the need for fidelity to the original model program and the demonstrated need for local adaptation is an essential task for professionals to deliver well-run programs.

#### STRATEGIES TO BALANCE FIDELITY AND ADAPTATION

##### Understand the theory behind the program

Iowa Strengthening Families helps parents/caregivers learn nurturing skills that support their children, teaches parents/caregivers how to effectively discipline and guide their youth, gives youth a healthy future orientation and increased appreciation of their parents/caregivers and teaches youth skills for dealing with stress and peer pressure.

### **Understand how the facilitators' manuals are set up**

The facilitator's guide provides step-by-step instructions on how to facilitate each session. Each section of the guide includes five parts: (1) contents, (2) materials needed, (3) goals, (4) session activities and training tips (5) home practice. Throughout the manual you will find talking points, video transcripts and implementation highlights. Training tips throughout the manual provide important instructional techniques as well as answers to activities to help prepare facilitators and ensure sessions run smoothly. Adaptations should not be made if they take away from the objectives of the session or in any way change the skills taught during the session. In addition, Strengthening Families offers a supplemental teaching manual that includes the same content as the basic manual but changes the role plays from a video format to scripted role plays available in both English and Spanish. All printed materials that are necessary for parent and family sessions, including posters, handouts, and game cards, are also included in both English and Spanish.

### **Assess fidelity/adaptation concerns for the setting**

Determine which adaptations must be made to suit the need of the population or setting. Weigh the potential change against the goals of the program and objectives of each session and ensure that the program effectiveness will not deteriorate as a result of the change.

### **Consult the program developer**

As the facilitator, you are the key to the program's success. To be optimally effective, Strengthening Families parent and family sessions should be implemented as intended. Just as important as what is being taught, is how the session is facilitated. Training is available and required for all facilitators. For questions regarding training or program fidelity and adaptations, please consult Iowa State University.

### **Consult with the school or organization where the program will be used**

If partnering with a school or other community agency to host the program, it will be necessary to have critical conversations regarding the importance of fidelity and required adaptations. These conversations allow partners to provide valuable input on changes made to the setting that have been successful in the past and allows you to build sustained support for the program.

## **HELPFUL HINTS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Create a strong linkage agreement**

If working with a school or other partner, develop a strong linkage agreement. Partners need to know the details about implementation requirements and program information such as dates, times and lengths of sessions, and equipment needed. This agreement also allows you to ensure that partners have shared expectations and are clear on the roles and responsibilities of each party.

### **Observe the sessions to ensure program fidelity**

Consider having people who have been trained in Strengthening Families observe and provide feedback on sessions in action to measure whether the activities are carried out and the content is delivered as intended. Observers also provide valuable insight on the facilitator's delivery of content and how the activities are being introduced and run. Observers can be another facilitator or substitute teacher who is not facilitating that day, a coordinator who has a supervisory role and/or someone who is trained only to do observations. be donated from sponsors or local businesses, can be raffled off at each workshop, or at the final session for parents who attended each week as an incentive for completing the program in its entirety.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

For more information about technical assistance or the services we offer, please contact [providerservices@prevention.org](mailto:providerservices@prevention.org) or call 217-836-5346.

Iowa Strengthening Families Program Contact: Cathy Hockaday, Ph.D., Program Coordinator  
515.294.7601 [hockaday@iastate.edu](mailto:hockaday@iastate.edu)

Iowa Strengthening Families website: [www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp10-14/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/sfp10-14/)

SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – NREPP  
[www.nrepp.samhsa.gov](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov)