

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PREVENTION FIRST
Building community capacity to prevent substance abuse

TIP SHEET

BOTVIN LIFESKILLS TRAINING: 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.

Botvin *LifeSkills* Training (LST) curriculum is like a recipe; to get the best results, you need to do the following:

- Deliver the three year program beginning in 6th or 7th grade.
- Teach at least one lesson per week, or up to two lessons per week until all the lessons are complete.
- Teach lessons sequentially.
- Teach all activities included in the lessons.
- Use all the materials corresponding to the lesson.
- Teach booster lessons. Year 2 and 3 are booster sessions, while Year 1 is the core session.

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 student 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 program learning objectives. Rather than merely teaching information about drugs, the Botvin *LifeSkills* Training program consists of three major components that cover the critical domains found to prevent drug use. Research has shown that students who develop skills in these three domains are far less likely to engage in a wide range of high-risk behaviors. The three components are:

- Personal Self-Management Skills
- General Social Skills
- Drug Resistance Skills

Understand how the sessions are set up. Key unit information such as materials needed, timing, vocabulary, and special preparation is visible at a glance to aid in preparation. Summarized unit goals and objectives provide background information and information about what students will learn in each lesson.

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 and objectives of the program and ensure that the program effectiveness will not deteriorate as a result of the change.

Consult the program developer. In order to be optimally effective, Botvin *LifeSkills* Training program should be implemented carefully and completely. Just as important as **what** is being taught is **how** the program is taught. Training is available and highly recommended for all LST providers. If you have questions regarding the programs fidelity or an adaptation, please consult Botvin *LifeSkills* Training for guidance and assistance.

Consult with the school or organization where the program will be used. Communication about the importance of fidelity and required adaptations is necessary to garner sustained support for the program. These conversations can evoke valuable input on changes made successfully in this particular setting.

HELPFUL HINTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Create a strong linkage agreement. Strong linkage agreements allow for schools to know the details about the implementation requirements of LST. A strong linkage agreement allows you to detail the number of classroom lessons required, length of sessions, and any other necessary requirements to implement the program with fidelity. A strong linkage agreement also allows the school and the prevention provider to list and acknowledge shared expectations and roles and responsibilities.

Always have a back-up plan. School schedules can often times be unpredictable. Weather emergencies, school emergencies, practice evacuation drills, field trips, testing, and other planned and unplanned situations can occur in a school day that may shorten your class lesson or cancel your lesson altogether. It is a good idea to have an agreement with the school ahead of time, and include how you will make up shortened or cancelled lessons in your linkage agreement.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – NREPP – <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/>

Internet Assistance – www.lifeskillstraining.com

Botvin LifeSkills Training Curriculum and Implementation Assistance
Pauline Kalaj – pkalaj@nhpamail.com