

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PREVENTION FIRST
Building community capacity to prevent substance abuse

TIP SHEET

TOO GOOD FOR DRUGS: 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.

Too Good for Drugs (TGFD) offers a fidelity model, which is their recipe for success. Here's the recipe:

- Lessons are taught sequentially and all activities within the lesson are taught.
- Lessons are taught the entire length of time: 30-60 minutes for 5th-8th grade.
- All materials that correspond with the lessons are used.
- Student workbooks are used with lessons.
- Family involvement is integral to the Too Good program. After each lesson there is a "Looking for More" section that includes Home Workouts. Home Workout assignments are designed to increase parent-student interaction and to reinforce the social and emotional learning in the home.
- While the framework for the Too Good for Drugs curriculum is school-based, it also involves families and communities as equal partners. The Mendez Foundation believes effective prevention is collaborative; it promotes health by focusing on students and their socializing environments.

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 theory behind the program. The theoretical foundation of Too Good for Drugs includes elements of the Social Learning Theory (Bandura), Problem Behavior Theory (Jessor), and the Social Development Model (Hawkins, et al.). The 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute) also contribute to the theory on which the program is based. The Too Good programs are designed to prevent complex problems with many contributing factors, thus, they are multifaceted and based on several theoretical constructs which have been strongly supported by research in the prevention field. This Theory of Change shows how a program's developers believe the program can change the trajectory of a child's life.

Understand how the sessions are set up. Each session has a title, rationale, objectives, list of activities with time needed to complete the activity, materials needed list, and a checklist. Adaptations should not be made if they take away from the objectives or the rationale of the session or in any way change the skills taught during the session.

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

Consult the program developer. The Mendez Foundation is committed to continued success of the program and offers guidance for making necessary adaptations. The Mendez Foundation can offer input on successful adaptations and suggestions based on programs being implemented in similar settings.

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 in this particular setting that have been successful.

HELPFUL HINTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Create a strong linkage agreement. Strong linkage agreements allow for schools to know the details about the implementation requirements of TGFD. A strong linkage agreement allows for 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 for 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 that agreement in your linkage agreement, as to how you will make up shortened or cancelled lessons.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

TGFD Fidelity and Adaptation Assistance, Alison Oxford – The Mendez Foundation, 1-312-350-1320 or aoxford@mendezfoundation.org

TGFD Internet Support and Curriculum Support – www.mendezfoundation.org

SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – NREPP www.nrepp.samhsa.gov