

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PREVENTION FIRST
Building community capacity to prevent substance abuse

TIP SHEET

LIONS QUEST SKILLS FOR ADOLESCENCE: 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.

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. Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence is based upon the research-based rationale that identifies two major outcomes as critical for promoting young people's healthy development and reducing their risk for health-compromising behaviors, such as misconduct, drug use, and violence. These two outcomes are:

- Positive social behaviors that include self-discipline, responsibility, good judgment, respect for self and others, and an ethic of service.
- Positive commitments to family, school, peers, and community.

The program's conceptual model integrates key findings of youth development and prevention research studies. According to this model, if certain external and internal conditions are met, young people will be more likely to exhibit positive social behaviors and develop positive commitments in key areas of their lives.

Use the core component analysis to guide adaptations. A core component analysis outlines essential program elements for Skills for Adolescence. Accurate normative beliefs, personal commitment to non-use, positive social influences, resistance skills, pro-social skills, knowledge of negative effects of drug use, and bonding with pro-social peers and caring adults are the core competencies interwoven throughout the program. Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence has a Competency Correlation Guide that shows the link between the lessons and the particular skills acquired. Adaptations should not be made if they take away from these competencies.

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, the Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence 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 Lions Quest providers. If you have questions regarding the program's fidelity or an adaptation, please consult Lions Quest 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 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 Lions Quest. 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 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.

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

Lions Quest Internet Support and Resources – www.lions-quest.org

Lions Quest Curriculum and Implementation Assistance

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