Model Implementation Assessment: Results from the Common Sense Parenting® Trial

Research indicates that better implementation of evidence-based interventions is associated with better outcomes, thus the assessment of implementation is critical when evaluating the effectiveness of a given program. This article describes the implementation assessment results for a NIDA-funded trial awarded to Boys Town, in collaboration with the University of Washington, to test Common Sense Parenting (CSP), a widely-used workshop-based parent-training program developed by Boys Town. Since 2004, Boys Town has provided CSP training-of-trainers to agencies in four countries and 28 states, and in 2012 CSP served 3,509 children from 1,756 families across 11 Boys Town sites.

The Study

Participating families include a target parent and a target adolescent, in which the adolescent is an eighth-grade student attending one of five Tacoma, WA public middle schools. Over the course of two academic years (2010-2011 and 2011-2012), 321 families were recruited into the study and randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a standard six-session CSP program condition (n=108), a modified eight-session CSP Plus program condition (n=95), or a control condition (n=108). The CSP Plus condition consisted of the standard six-session CSP program plus two sessions in which parents and their adolescent attended to discuss strategies to improve the transition from middle school to high school (see figure).

Implementation data were collected from multiple sources, including objective observational ratings of videotaped program sessions by individuals not involved in intervention delivery. We assessed the following aspects of implementation: (1) adherence to key program content, (2) adherence to goal times for session learning activities, and (3) quality of intervention delivery. Adherence and quality were measured using implementation observation rating forms developed for each session. Each form contained several items describing the five primary session learning activities: (1) reviewing skills taught in the previous session, (2) instructing parents in new skills, (3) viewing and discussing videotaped modeled examples of the new skill, (4) practicing new skills using role-playing exercises, and (5) summarizing the session and assigning homework activities.

Ongoing Development of Common Sense Parenting® across Boys Town Sites

We interviewed Lauren Anderson, Fidelity Consultant, to learn more about her efforts in coordinating the implementation and ongoing development of the Common Sense Parenting Program (CSP).

Describe the three workgroups that were created as part of this ongoing development.

When organizing the workgroups, it was important to ensure that all the teams had a variety of experience and perspective. There are participants from each of the Boys Town sites with a CSP program as well as from several support services including the National Database, Information Technology, Training, Marketing, and the National Research Institute.

The Measurement and Data workgroup goals are to assess the data collection occurring at each Boys Town site and to identify what the vital program measurements are for CSP from a national perspective. This workgroup recently completed a proposal that includes recommendations of these measures for CSP (e.g., number of youth and families served, workshop leader model fidelity, participant satisfaction, parenting skill increases, child behavior problem decreases). Shay Sorrells is the leader of this workgroup.

The Outreach and Recruitment workgroup goals are to complete an outreach and recruitment analysis in order to identify what Boys Town sites across the country want and value. Then, the workgroup focused on ways to unify methods, integrate communication, and determine how to expand the scope of outreach and recruitment efforts of the CSP program. This workgroup submitted a proposal with recommendations to develop an outreach and recruitment planning packet to provide tools, support and assistance to sites. Bridget Barnes is the leader of this workgroup.
Model Implementation Assessment (cont’d)

on activities earlier in the session (i.e., review, instruction, modeled examples) than activities later in the session (i.e., skill practice, summary). One possible explanation for this result is that all workshop leaders were new to CSP and were likely still developing their time management skills with intervention delivery.

Time adherence data used in combination with content adherence data can provide some useful information. For example, during the first year of data collection, content adherence for the modeled examples (97%) and skill practice (95%) learning activities was high, yet their time adherence was 4 min, 12 sec over the goal time and 9 min, 52 sec under the goal time, respectively. This indicated that the content adherence strategies were in place, yet the amount of time spent on the content varied. Further examination of the videotaped sessions revealed that parents were usually eager to discuss live and videotaped modeled examples of skills they were learning, hence the extended amount of time spent on this learning activity.

Moreover, demonstrating new skills in front of other parents during the skill practice learning activity can be anxiety provoking for parents and for new workshop leaders to provide accurate and encouraging feedback. One potential reason for the lower skill practice time adherence is that both workshop leaders and parents may have avoided spending time on this essential yet at times difficult, learning activity. Of course, other factors such as group size can impact the amount of time spent practicing skills, with smaller groups needing less time to demonstrate mastery of a given skill.

Quality of delivery. Independent coder-rated quality of intervention implementation was high (average of 4 on a 5-point scale) for skill practice, workshop leader attributes, and overall quality. As with the adherence ratings, high quality ratings may be due to the effectiveness of the workshop leader training sessions in addition to ongoing supervision. While still meeting our quality standards, the first (Parents are Teachers), third (Preventing Problems), and fifth (Putting it all Together) sessions had the lowest quality ratings, suggesting that the content for these sessions may be slightly more difficult for workshop leaders to learn and/or effectively communicate to parents. These sessions may need additional attention when training and supervising new workshop leaders. For example, steps might be taken to improve the quality of delivery for these sessions by adding training components focused on intervention delivery techniques, such as skills for helping participants feel comfortable during practice and providing effective feedback.

Conclusion

There are several important lessons learned from the current study. The development of observation forms is a critical process in rigorous implementation assessment because the availability of scaled intervention manuals, in addition to consultation with CSP/CSP Plus program experts, helped us to identify core intervention elements for each session and keep the forms at a reasonable length. Whereas it is common to examine content adherence, our results showed that it also is valuable to examine time adherence; covered content can deviate from expectations in terms of time allocation, potentially resulting in reduced time for key components, such as skill practice. Finally, incorporating the observation forms in supervision meetings gives workshop leaders valuable performance feedback to help improve adherence and quality of intervention delivery.

Subsequent CSP trial analyses will be examining outcomes at 1- and 2-years post intervention. Look for these results in a future issue of Data News You Can Use!

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Development of Common Sense Parenting (cont’d)

The Engagement and Retention workgroup goals are to define engagement and CSP workshop completion, make recommendations for engagement and retention data collection, and recommend staff development activities to help trainers increase engagement and retention. This workgroup submitted a proposal with specific suggested strategies and resources to help parent trainers increase parental engagement as well as system recommendations that are related to recruitment, selection, training, and supervision. Linda Schuchmann is the leader of this workgroup.

In October 2013 the Oversight committee will review all the workgroup proposals and make recommendations for any needed changes.

How will these workgroups benefit youth and families served by Boys Town?

Incorporating performance and implementation measurements and data, CSP will have the same performance management system as the other models of care at Boys Town. This will lead to better performance and higher quality services. By focusing on outreach and recruitment, the workgroup’s recommendations will help sites and program staff to increase their efforts to obtain funding, outreach to parents, and build collaborative relationships with community partners. Ultimately, more children and families will be served. The engagement and retention workgroup focused their recommendations not only on specific strategies for individual parent trainers, but they also included recommended improvements to the training and supervision systems. Systems and systematic improvements to training and supervision will hopefully culminate in better quality services for children and families. Each of the teams has worked very hard and been extremely productive. Being on a workgroup can be a time management challenge as workgroup tasks and responsibilities are added to everyone’s already full schedule. The workgroup leaders, in particular, did a fantastic job facilitating their teams.