Reviews of Collections of Programs, Curricula, Practices, Policies, and Tools: Evaluated According to Evidence

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For more information, see: http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/reviews

This collection originated as part of the Results for Kids: Resources library of The IDEA Partnership which transferred early contents to NIRN in 2009.

Positive Youth Development

Community-Based Approaches for Supporting Positive Youth Development in Youth and Young Adults with Serious Mental Health Conditions

Pathways Research and Training Center (RTC) at Portland State University, Portland, Oregon. (2011). J. S. Walker & L. K. Gowen.

The goal of this paper "is to describe empirically-supported and promising community-based programs or approaches that are designed to promote positive development and to achieve better outcomes for young people with serious mental health conditions. (The authors) begin by providing more detail regarding the nature of challenges that these young people face, as well as some of the challenges that systems and providers currently face in trying to serve the population. (They) then go on to describe recent theory and research on positive development, particularly as it applies to older adolescents and young or 'emerging' adults. The next sections describe a series of empirically supported and promising programs, including programs specifically designed to serve highly vulnerable populations of transition-age young people, such as those who are homeless and those who are transitioning out of the juvenile justice system."

Full text – Community-Based Approaches

Elements of Effective Practices for Mentoring™ -- Third Edition

MENTOR, Alexandria, Virginia. (Circa 2009).

MENTOR's keystone publication on mentoring standards has been recently updated and released to include the latest research and practice wisdom available to help mentoring relationships thrive and endure. . . . This new publication includes six evidence-based standards addressing mentor and mentee recruitment; screening; training; matching; monitoring and support; and closure. Each standard offers benchmarks for day-to-day operations, and they are applicable in stand-alone mentoring programs, as well as programs where mentoring is one element. Each standard also offers enhancements that program staff can incorporate, based on the experience of outstanding mentoring practitioners. Further, this resource includes a section on practical advice in building a new mentoring program or strengthening an existing one." It focuses on program design and planning; program management; and program evaluation. References are listed at the conclusion of each standard.

Full text – Elements of Effective Practices for Mentoring

Evidence-Based Practices for Children Exposed to Violence: A Selection from Federal Databases

U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2011).

"This package of information summarizes findings and evidence from federal reviews of research studies and program evaluations to help localities address childhood exposure to violence and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities. These evidence-based practices should be reviewed and incorporated as practitioners and policy makers work in multi-disciplinary partnerships to plan and implement services and activities to prevent and respond to children exposed to violence. . . . In general, evidence is drawn from social science research, statistics, and program evaluations, and is distinguished by the systematic methods used to isolate relationships (e.g., between an action and a consequence, or a service and an outcome). . . . In each case, programs and practices that are reviewed are supported by multiple research studies or program evaluations."

Full text – Evidence-Based Practices for Children Exposed to Violence

Evidence-Based Programs to Prevent Children From Entering and Remaining in the Child Welfare System: Benefits and Costs for Washington

Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Olympia, Washington. (2008).
S, Lee, S. Aos, & M. Miller.

"The Washington State Institute for Public Policy was directed by the 2007 Washington Legislature to estimate whether 'evidence-based' programs and policies can 'reduce the likelihood of children entering and remaining in the child welfare system, including both prevention and intervention programs.' . . . The Institute found and analyzed 74 rigorous comparison group evaluations of programs and policies. . . (The authors) then estimated the monetary value of the benefits if these programs were implemented in the state. They examined factors such as reduced child welfare system expenditures, reduced costs to the victims of child maltreatment, and other long-term outcomes to participants and taxpayers, such as improved educational and labor market performance and lower criminal activity." Effective programs identified by this study include (a) Chicago Child Parent Centers, (b) Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, (c) Nurse Family Partnership, (d) Family Preservation Services -- and others.

Full text -- Evidence-Based Programs to Prevent Children from Entering and Remaining in the Child Welfare System

Experimental Studies of Welfare Reform and Children

Future of Children. (2002). Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and the Brookings Institution, Washington DC.
M. J. Zaslow, K. A. Moore, J. L. Brooks, P. A. Morris, K. Tout, Z. A. Redd, & C. A. Emig..

The authors point out that experimental evaluations of welfare reform programs "have extended their studies to examine the impacts on children. . . . This article provides a synthesis of findings from the first seven of these studies to release results concerning child impacts." Discussion and impact evidence are

included for (a) Florida's Family Transition Program; (b) Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project; (c) the New Chance Demonstration (16 sites in ten States); (d) the Teenage Parent Demonstration (Chicago, Newark, and Camden); (e) the Minnesota Family Investment Program; (f) the New Hope Project (Milwaukee); and (g) Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) nationwide.

Full text -- Experimental Studies of Welfare Reform and Children
[Click on the fifth title]

Focusing Juvenile Justice on Positive Youth Development: Issue Brief

Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. (2005).   J. A. Butts, S. Mayer, & G.R. Cusick.

"The concepts underlying positive youth development are beginning to have an impact on how policymakers, practitioners, and community members think about adolescent development and the methods of encouraging youth to achieve healthy transitions to adulthood. Despite the growing acceptance of these goals by some sectors in the social services system, juvenile justice programs are largely focused on the traditional goals of law enforcement -- detection, suppression, supervision, and punishment. This issue brief examines how juvenile justice agencies might draw from the growing body of evidence on positive youth development to improve services for youthful offenders."

Full text – Focusing Juvenile Justice on Positive Youth Development

Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches

From a symposium conducted under contract for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007).
P. A. Toro, A. Dworsky, & P. J. Fowler.

"In this paper, the authors cite research indicating that youth may be the single age group most at risk of becoming homeless, yet comparatively little research has been done in the past decade on this vulnerable population. Some important progress has been made, including longitudinal studies on youth 'aging out' of foster care. After reviewing the characteristics of homeless youth, the authors review recent research findings on the homeless youth population and interventions developed to address their housing and service needs. These include interventions directed at youth themselves (education, employment, social skills training) as well as family-focused strategies. The authors conclude with future directions for both research and practice."

Full text – Homeless Youth in the United States

Kids Count Data Center

The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland. (Continuing Collection).

 "This site provides access to hundreds of indicators of child well being. Data are available by state, including community-level data, with searches by location or topic. Data across states are also available, including data spanning the U.S. and comparison of states or cities." Topics include (a) community environment data; (b) child welfare data; (c) economic well-being data; and (d) data for children in immigrant families.

[Search the Data Center](#)

Lessons From Family-Strengthening Interventions: Learning From Evidence-Based Practices

Harvard Family Research Project, Cambridge, Massachusetts. (2006).   M. Caspe & M. E. Lopez.

"The purpose of the brief is to help educators, service providers, and local evaluators in schools, intermediary and community-based organizations, and social service agencies become more effective by highlighting the best program and evaluation practices of family-strengthening intervention programs. (The authors) searched the database of effective interventions developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. . . . First, (they) conducted a content-focus category search for model programs that promoted either children and youth's academic achievement and/or social-emotional competency. Next, (they) narrowed these programs down to those that contained a family-strengthening component and incorporated a measure of family change in the evaluation. This scan yielded 13 programs. (They) then systematically reviewed each of these 13 programs, integrating information from various sources, including evaluations, peer-reviewed journal articles, the SAMHSA database, program websites, and information sent to us directly from programs. . . . The results address two questions: (a) What outcomes can rigorously evaluated family-strengthening programs successfully target and affect? and (b) What are the best program and evaluation practices of well-evaluated family-strengthening intervention programs?" The 13 programs are described in Appendix A.

[Full text -- Lessons From Family-Strengthening Interventions: Learning From Evidence-Based Practice](#)

Literature Support for Outcomes Used to Evaluate Culturally- and Community-Based Programs. Indicators of Success for Urban American Indian/Alaska Native Youth: An Agency Example

Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, with the National Indian Child Welfare Association. (2010).
B. J. Friesen, L. K. Gowen, P. Lo, A. Banduragga, T. L. Cross, & C. Matthew.

This document "is based on an extensive literature review designed to explore the relationship between community-identified 'value-based' variables relating to well-being for Native American/Alaska Native

(AI/AN) youth and outcomes that are associated with evidence-based programs, or are widely accepted as desirable distal outcomes. . . . Through several focus groups, program participants, providers, youth, parents, elders, staff members, and other stakeholders met with researchers to define what success and well-being look like for urban AI/AN youth. . . . Focus group members also identified eight indicators of success that were highly valued by this urban Indian community, but are not widely acknowledged in research and policies addressing evidence-based practices. These are: (a) community mindedness, (b) conflict resolution, (c) cultural identity, (d) hope, (e) perceived discrimination, (f) positive relationship with an adult, (g) school belongingness, and (h) spirituality. A review of the research literature was conducted to examine possible links between each of the eight intermediate, value-based variables and indicators of youth well-being that have been studied as outcome variables in published research."

Abstract and full text -- Literature Support for Outcomes

Meeting the Basic Needs of Children: Does Income Matter?

National Poverty Center, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. (2009).   L. A. Gennetian, N. Castells, & P. Morris.

The authors reviewed "existing research and policy evidence about income as an essential component to meeting children's basic needs — that is, income represented as the purest monetary transfer for moving families from living below a poverty threshold to living above it. Social scientists have made great methodological strides in establishing whether income has independent effects on the cognitive development of low-income children. (The authors) argue that researchers are well-positioned for more rigorous investigations about how and why income affects children, but only first with thoughtful and creative regard for conceptual clarity, and on understanding income's potentially inter-related influences on socio-emotional development, mental and physical health. (They) also argue for more focus on income's effects across the childhood age span and within different family structures. (They) end with a description of two-generation and cafeteria-style programs as the frontiers of the next generation in income-enhancement policies, and with the promise of insights from behavioral economics."

Full text -- Meeting the Basic Needs of Children

Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis

Child Trends, Washington DC. (2002).   S. Jekielek, K. A. Moore, & E. C. Hair.

"This synthesis examines the role that mentoring plays in helping youth develop a broad array of strengths and capacities in the following three domains of child well-being: (a) education and cognitive attainment; (b) health and safety; and (c) social and emotional well being. It is also worthwhile to consider the influence of mentoring on a fourth domain, self-sufficiency, as youth age into the early adult years. This report seeks to answer the following questions: What do mentoring programs look like? How do mentoring programs contribute to youth development (i.e., what resources do mentoring programs provide that support youth development)? What youth outcomes can we realistically expect

mentoring programs to achieve? and What are the characteristics of effective mentoring?" Ten programs are covered." Their profiles with summaries of research studies are shown in Appendix A.

Full text -- Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis
[Click under Programs for Teens Full Reports]

On the same page, see "Civic Engagement Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis

National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well Being (NSCAW) -- Wave 2 Report: Child Well Being

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2012).
C. Casanueva. E. Wilson, K. Smith, M. Dolan, H. Ringeisen, & B. Home.

"The second National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW II) is a longitudinal study intended to answer a range of fundamental questions about the functioning, service needs, and service use of children who come in contact with the child welfare system. . . . It examines the well-being of children involved with child welfare agencies; captures information about the investigation of abuse or neglect that brought the child into the study; collects information about the child's family; provides information about child welfare interventions and other services; and describes key characteristics of child development. Of particular interest to the study are children's health, mental health, and developmental risks, especially for those children who experienced the most severe abuse and exposure to violence. . . . Wave 2 is a follow-up of children and families approximately 18 months after the close of the NSCAW II index investigation. The NSCAW II cohort of children who were approximately 2 months to 17.5 years old at baseline ranged in age from 16 months to 19 years old at Wave 2. Data collection for the second wave of the study began in October 2009 and was completed in January 2011."

Full text – NSCAW Wave 2 Report: Child Well Being

Reducing the Impact of Children's Exposure to Violence: Results of the National Evaluation of Safe Start Promising Approaches – Research Highlight

RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California. (2011).

 "Given the risk to children's health and well-being from children's exposure to violence (CEV), there is a real need for effective prevention and intervention programs.. . . . The need both to develop better CEV programs and practices and to demonstrate that they can work in community settings was the impetus for the Safe Start Initiative launched by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in 2000 as a community-based initiative focused on developing, fielding, and evaluating interventions to prevent and reduce the impact of CEV. The initiative consists of four phases, including a first phase (completed in 2006) involving demonstrations of various innovative, CEV-related promising practices in the system of care. The RAND Corporation was selected to conduct the national evaluation of the second phase — the implementation of 15 Safe Start Promising Approaches (SSPA) CEV programs in

community settings — to identify how well such programs work in reducing and preventing CEV's harmful effects. This research highlight summarizes the results of the process and outcome evaluations published in two RAND reports."

Full text of Research Highlights – Reducing the Impact

Resilient Children: Literature Review and Evidence from the HOPE VI Panel Study – Final Report

Urban Institute, Washington DC. (2005).   E. Cove, M. Eisman, & S. J. Popkin.

 "The HOPE VI program targets the nation's most distressed public housing-impoverished communities with substandard housing and extreme levels of drug trafficking and violent crime. Created by Congress in 1992, the HOPE VI program was designed to address not only the bricks-and-mortar problems in distressed public housing, but also the social and economic needs of the residents and the health of surrounding neighborhoods. . . . The HOPE VI Panel Study addresses the questions of whether the HOPE VI program has met its goal of providing residents with an improved living environment and how HOPE VI families have fared as relocation and revitalization have proceeded. The study tracks outcomes for original residents at five sites where redevelopment activities began in 2001. . . . In this report, (the authors) first review existing research from a range of social science disciplines to identify key factors that seem to be related to resiliency and understand the ways in which these factors act to protect children from negative outcomes. Then, using data from the HOPE VI Panel Study, (they) explore which of these factors are related to resiliency in the sample of children from HOPE VI developments. Finally, (they) discuss the potential implications of this research for policy. An annotated bibliography on resiliency is included in appendix A."

Introduction and link to the full text – Resilient Children

Review of Three Recent Randomized Trials of School-Based Mentoring: Making Sense of Mixed Results

Social Policy Report. (2010). Society for Research in Child Development.
M. E. Wheeler, T. E. Keller, & D. L. DuBois.

"Between 2007 and 2009, reports were released on the results of three separate large-scale random assignment studies of the effectiveness of school-based mentoring programs for youth. The studies evaluated programs implemented by (a) Big Brothers Big Sisters of America affiliates, (b) Communities In Schools of San Antonio, Texas, and (c) grantees of the U.S. Department of Education's Student Mentoring Program. Differences in the findings and conclusions of the studies have led to varying responses by those in practice and policy roles. . . . In this report, (the authors) present a comparative analysis of the three studies. (They) identify important differences across the studies in several areas, including agency inclusion criteria, program models, implementation fidelity and support, and criteria utilized in tests of statistical significance. When aggregating results across the studies using meta-analytic techniques, (they) find evidence that school-based mentoring can be modestly effective for improving selected outcomes (i.e., support from non-familial adults, peer support, perceptions of

scholastic efficacy, school-related misconduct, absenteeism, and truancy). Program effects are not apparent, however, for academic achievement or other outcomes."

Full text – Review of Three Recent Randomized Trials of School-Based Mentoring
[Click on No. 3 under 2010]

School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2009).

"The strategies and actions recommended in this publication are based on the *Wingspread Declaration on School Connections* and a synthesis of school connectedness and related research from the fields of education, health, psychology, and sociology. Materials in the review include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports from government agencies and non-governmental organizations, and web sites. Information from these sources was summarized to identify policies and practices that demonstrated an impact on students' sense of connectedness to school. In addition, recommendations were informed by the opinions of expert researchers, public health practitioners, and educators. This process identified six evidence-based strategies that could be implemented to increase students' sense of connectedness to school, along with specific actions that can be taken to implement each of the strategies."

Full text – School Connectedness
[Click under "Strategy Guide on Fostering School Connectedness" – and see related resources on this page]

Synthesis of Research and Resources to Support At-Risk Youth: OPRE Report 2011-22

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2011).
H. Koball, R. Dion, A. Gothro, & M. Bardos (Mathematica Policy Research); A. Dworsky, J. Lansing, & M. Stagner (Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago); and D. K. Djakovic, C. Hererra, & A. E. Manning (Public/Private Ventures).

"Interventions that draw on a foundation of research and build on evidence-based programs can help at-risk youth improve their well-being, make positive choices, and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to get and stay on a path toward self-sufficiency. This report provides a synthesis of research and existing ACF resources for serving at-risk youth. It describes what we know from research about at-risk youth. It then describes how at-risk youth are currently being served by ACF programs and by programs outside of ACF that have been shown to put youth on a path toward self-sufficiency. Based on the review of research and resources, it identifies issues to consider in creating conceptual frameworks for developing and enhancing ACF programs that can or do serve at-risk youth."

Full text – Synthesis of Research and Resources

The Impact of Youth Development Programs on Student Success

National Collaboration for Youth, National Human Services Assembly, Washington DC. (2011).

"Beleaguered school leaders, city officials and parents may be overlooking powerful colleagues and resources in their reform efforts. Willing partners are operating in virtually every community in America. They are community-based, positive youth development agencies that are mentoring, training, educating, coaching, supporting, and guiding children and youth outside the schoolhouse door." This paper presents brief reviews of results of a number of these programs, with citations from the supporting research literature. Among these programs are (b) Boys and Girls Club Education Enhancement Project; (b) Teen Outreach Program; (c) Across Ages; (d) 4-H; (e) Boys and Girls Club; (f) Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL); (g) Quantum Opportunities Project – and others.

Full Text – The Impact of Youth Development Programs
[Click under Friday, July 15, 2011]

What Works for Parent Involvement Programs for Children: Lessons from Experimental Evaluations of Social Interventions

Child Trends, Washington DC. (2009).   K. Mbwana, M. Terzian, & K. A. Moore.

"Parents can play an important role in helping their children acquire or strengthen the behaviors, skills, attitudes, and motivation that promote physical and mental health and overall well-being in childhood, adolescence and well into their adulthood. Acknowledging this, a variety of programs and interventions seek to engage parents in efforts to achieve one or more outcomes for their children: (a) academic achievement and attendance; (b) a reduction in internalizing behaviours such as depression and anxiety' (c) a reduction in externalizing behaviours or acting out such as aggression or delinquent behaviours; (d) an awareness, reduction, or avoidance of substance abuse; (e) awareness or avoidance of risky sexual behavior; and (f) achieving/maintaining health and fitness. In this Fact Sheet, Child Trends synthesizes the findings from experimental evaluations of parent involvement interventions for children ages 6-11 years old to identify the components and strategies associated with successful programs and interventions. . . . . (The authors) present lessons learned from parent involvement programs that work, don't work, or have mixed results for children aged 6-11."

Full text -- What Works for Parent Involvement Programs
[Click on the title under Program Approach]

On the same page also see – What Works for Parent Involvement Programs for Adolescents

Youth Development Programs and Educationally Disadvantaged Older Youth: A Synthesis

Child Trends, Washington DC. (2003).   E. Hair, T. Ling, & S. W. Cochran.

"This synthesis examines the role that programs designed to serve educationally disadvantaged older youth can play in promoting positive youth development and subsequent self-sufficiency in adulthood. Specifically, the synthesis addresses the following questions: What do programs for older youth look like? What resources do they provide to promote healthy development? What impacts do they have? What positive outcomes are achievable through programs designed for older youth? What characteristics are associated with effective and ineffective programs? To answer these questions, this report focuses on 12 programs that have all undergone rigorous evaluation."

Full text -- Youth Development Programs and Educationally Disadvantaged Older Youth: A Synthesis
[Click under Programs for Teens Full Reports]

National Implementation Research Network