

# MODEL PROGRAMS



## TIP SHEET

Best Practices often include recommendations regarding “model” programs to use. We hear about model programs all the time and sometimes finding the right model program can seem like the ultimate solution to research-based program design issues. This tip sheet discusses the benefits and pitfalls of model programs and is meant to give you some idea what to look for in choosing a model program, or what to watch out for if one is being foisted upon you.

### Replication and Model Fidelity

A model program is like a research design. There is a protocol to follow, there are specifications and criteria and interacting elements. When a program has been selected as a model, ideally it means that it met some performance criteria in terms of having specified outcomes and demonstrating certain target improvements in the measurements associated with those outcomes. A program may have several components, and the temptation is to see it as a smorgasbord when in reality it is an ensemble that may not deliver the promised results unless it is done in exactly the same way as the original program.

Many fidelity instruments of model programs are highly detailed, daunting measurement tools. The extent to which maintaining fidelity and achieving outcomes are correlated has not been conclusively determined either by individual program or in general. Documenting deviations from the model program you adopt must occur on two levels: 1) document where your program diverges from the model at the outset; and 2) as an ongoing process in the evaluation of your program, where unforeseen changes occur in the implementation of the program. Given limited evaluation resources, it is of the utmost importance to capture the outcomes of your prevention activities.

For further information about replicability, please see WestCAPT’s tips on model fidelity: <http://www.unr.edu/westcapt/bestpractices/bpadapt.htm>, [http://www.unr.edu/westcapt/Tiplist/TIP11\\_02.doc](http://www.unr.edu/westcapt/Tiplist/TIP11_02.doc) and [http://www.unr.edu/westcapt/Tiplist/TIP12\\_02.doc](http://www.unr.edu/westcapt/Tiplist/TIP12_02.doc).

### Costs

Sometimes model programs are very expensive. When evaluating whether a model program is affordable for your community, consider the following factors:

- Personnel – are there available existing personnel or sufficient funds to hire personnel to oversee the program?
- Training – how much training is necessary for personnel to run the program?
- Purchasing – cost of the actual technical program/curriculum
- Cost effectiveness – what is the cost per unit or per participant? This can be determined by looking at the information about the program, which should give the total cost and approximate number of people it is designed to serve.
- Sustainability – can this program continue for a long period of time without significant ongoing expenditures?
- Evaluation – what is the cost of measuring outcomes, evaluating the effectiveness of the program – is that built into the cost of the program itself or will additional expenditure of time or money be required?
- Replicability – can the program be easily replicated in your situation? Can it be replicated in more than one location or situation to increase cost effectiveness?

## When and When Not To Use a Model Program

The things to examine in determining whether a particular model program is right for you is:

- Are the conditions under which it succeeded the ones in which you will implement it?
- Are the specified outcomes and the target improvements the ones you have determined are needed in your community?
- Can you replicate the model completely, not just pieces of it?
- Will you get the most “bang for the buck” with your prevention dollars by spending them on that particular program?