Preventing Substance Misuse: A Qualitative Case Study of Implementation Strategies in Colorado

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Context: Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG)

- Nationally, this block grant accounts for ~29% of all publicly funded state expenditures for prevention

- Includes 20% mandatory set aside for primary prevention of substance misuse

- Colorado received $73,329,862 in block grant funds in FY 2021, and $33,296,290 in FY 2022
  - Under-Resourced High Needs Programs
  - Priority Population Programs
  - **Evidence-Based Programs and Policies**

Research Aims

- How is evidence-based prevention defined by prevention professionals delivering substance use prevention services?

- **What are the barriers and facilitators to successful implementation of evidence-based substance use prevention programs within the context of the Substance Abuse Block Grant in the state of Colorado?**

Methods

- 1:1 semi-structured 1-hour interviews with 20 participants representing:
  - state-level program officers
  - agency program managers
  - external evaluators and technical assistance providers
  - academic partners
  - those delivering services
- Demographics
  - Ages 23-61
  - 4 identified as male, 1 as non-binary, and 15 as female
  - 2 identified as Latina, 18 identified as white
- Deedose v. 9.0.90
  - Three levels of coding including thematic analysis

Findings

- Four themes were identified and compared with the findings from the Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change (ERIC) project (Powell, et al., 2015)
  - Systemic Barriers
    - Inconsistent definitions of evidence-based prevention
    - Policy environment
  - Capture and Share Local Knowledge**
    - Visit other sites**
  - Promote Adaptability**
    - Identify elements that can be tailored to meet local needs
    - Many perceived evidence-based programs as outdated and lacking relevance to current issues
  - <u>Build Community Consensus</u>
    - Identify and prepare champions**
    - Build a coalition**

Building Community Consensus

- 65% referenced partnerships as a major facilitator
  - *"We have a little informal collective of nonprofits in the school district that do some programming together, and our part of that has been the Botvin and Project Alert, and then there's a suicide prevention, a sexual violence and relationship organization. There's a few others that are partners and we all kind of come together to each fulfill a piece."*
- 80% identified buy-in as critical. Lack of funding to support foundational activities that promote buy-in was often referenced.
  - *"I would suggest providing more funding for the early stages, the community readiness assessments, and then also the later stages of evaluation. All anyone wants to fund is the actual program or the implementation, not the evaluation that it takes to make sure it's having the impact, not the readiness assessment to make sure your community is even ready for you to plop this evidence-based program down in their community."*

Implications

- The Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change (ERIC) project offers useful strategies that can be tailored to project-specific implementation goals

- Structure funding mechanisms to include dollars and time to support early planning and assessment activities

- Promote the recruitment and retention of local implementation "champions"

- Offer additional implementation support to grantees
  - Implementation teams
  - Include academic partners and local leaders

Questions

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