

Step 4

# Measure Implementation Fidelity

The checklist below on measuring implementation fidelity is the fourth checklist in the series of eight and is designed to support jurisdictions in determining how well they are implementing evidence-based practices (EBPs). Fidelity, or the extent to which the EBP is implemented according to its original research-based model, is critical for effective implementation because the best outcomes are achieved if the EBP is implemented as intended. Measuring implementation fidelity allows agencies to monitor how interventions are carried out and modify them, as needed, to align with the original model. Many EBPs have their own tools for monitoring and measuring fidelity, and some agencies develop their own fidelity tools as part of quality assurance. Examples of fidelity tools may include direct observation, review of videotaped sessions, or scored evaluations.

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## Identify the inputs and processes of the EBP (e.g., training, materials, staff time to perform the EBP, etc.) to measure for fidelity.

*(Note: it is important to differentiate core components from current practice so it is clear which components to measure for fidelity.)*

### 1. Are the necessary inputs and processes for implementing the EBP clear from the logic model?

- Revisit the research on implementing the EBP to update your logic model so that it reflects the necessary and appropriate inputs and processes.
- Compare the inputs and processes to the studied EBP. Identify gaps in how core components are handled.
- Identify the resources needed to implement the core components.

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## Identify a fidelity tool for the EBP.

### 2. Is there an available fidelity tool that is relevant to your setting and to the population that you plan to serve?

- Select a fidelity tool that is appropriate for your setting (jail, prison, probation/parole office, treatment clinic, etc.) and population (people with mental illnesses, women, etc.).
- Select an intervention tool that is appropriate for the EBP, such as motivational enhancement approaches, cognitive behavioral interventions, focused deterrence, peer support services, etc. Refer to the resource list below for some public domain tools.

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## Train staff on how to use the fidelity tool(s).

### 3. Is there a staff member or team identified to conduct assessments using the fidelity tool?

- Identify staff to administer the fidelity tool(s).
- Train staff on how to use the fidelity tool(s) to monitor implementation.
- Have a procedure for certifying trainers (many EBPs have “train the trainer” protocols that should be followed).
- Ensure that the training is consistent with the procedures used for fidelity assessment (see item 4).

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## Identify procedures for measuring fidelity.

### 4. Are there procedures to assess staff implementation of the EBP?

- Identify the frequency of quality assurance procedures.
- Identify how data will be collected (i.e., via videoconferencing, surveys, audio recordings, etc.).
- Identify how the data will be shared with staff and/or teams.
- Identify how the fidelity assessments will be used by the agency.

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## Identify how discrepancies in fidelity will be addressed.

### 5. Are there procedures to address differences between the actual performance of the EBP compared to the expected performance?

- Review how the core components of the EBP are being implemented.
- Identify gaps that occur in what is implemented compared to what should be implemented.
- Assess the impact of these discrepancies on the quality of the EBP implementation.

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## Identify resources for improving implementation fidelity.

### 6. Are there resources to address performance issues that affect EBP fidelity?

- Identify resources needed to address the gaps between your agency’s implementation of the EBP and the ideal implementation of the EBP.
- Identify funding sources for the resources (e.g., federal, state or local government funds, Medicaid, or foundation funding).
- Establish a plan that specifies short and long-term priorities for improvement (e.g., short-term: enhance data collection, long-term: present the EBP to the county commission to seek funding).

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## Develop coaching opportunities to support staff in implementing the EBP.

### 7. Will coaching be provided to the team and/or individual staff?

- Prioritize coaching for staff who desire it or need skill development.
- Select the coaches or train staff to be coaches.
- Ensure that coaching is not used only in annual performance evaluations but rather on a regular basis.

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## Develop process and performance measures for implementing the EBP.

### 8. Are there progress benchmarks for implementing the EBP?

- Identify a core set of process and performance measures or progress benchmarks for the EBP.
- Compare these benchmarks and relevant outcome measures (e.g., Interface Process Measures in the resources section below) to ensure that the measures are appropriate for gauging fidelity.
- Identify the distribution list for the benchmarks.
- Ensure that the benchmarks are shared with staff and stakeholders.
- Identify how the benchmarks will be produced and in what timeframe.

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## Develop an action plan for measuring quality.

### 9. Is there an action plan to ensure that agency staff are making progress and adhering to quality?

- Designate one person to be responsible for an action plan to improve fidelity and implement the fidelity assessment plan.
- Update the action plan quarterly.
- Identify unmet needs at least once a year.

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## Update the implementation team and larger interagency workgroup on EBP implementation progress.

### 10. Is there a staff member who is responsible for reporting on the progress of the EBP?

- Identify what information will be shared with leadership, staff, and stakeholders.
- Ensure that constructive feedback to staff implementing the EBP includes action steps to improve the practice.
- Ensure that staff who are implementing the EBP are aware of any positive feedback from colleagues and who gave this feedback.

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## Resources

**Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature** [↗](#) summarizes the research literature on implementation across fields.

**Implementation Science Toolkit: Equipping Justice Agencies with the Tools to Facilitate the Change Process** [↗](#) provides strategies to help practitioners learn to adopt and adapt evidence-based practices and treatments for their agency and ultimately improve agency outcomes.

**Process Measures at the Interface Between the Justice and Behavioral Health Systems** [↗](#) develops guiding principles and process measures that can help guide cross-systems delivery of service.

**Solving Puzzling Probation Problems with PDSA** [↗](#) provides the background and evidence supporting the use of “Plan Do Study Act” (PDSA) and uses community corrections examples to translate ideas for the justice field.

**What Strategies Are Used to Build Practitioners’ Capacity to Implement Community-Based Interventions and Are They Effective?: A Systematic Review** [↗](#) contributes to further development of the Evidence-Based System of Innovation Support (EBSIS) by systematically reviewing empirical studies of capacity-building interventions to identify (1) the range of strategies used, (2) variations in the way they were structured, and (3) evidence for their effectiveness at increasing practitioners’ capacity to use evidence-based prevention interventions.