

# Assessing Fidelity: A Necessary Component of Effective Implementation



*Child Care Policy  
Research Consortium  
Annual Meeting 2009*

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FPG CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

# What is Implementation?

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The act of accomplishing some aim or  
executing some order

To put into practical effect; carry out

Pursue to a conclusion

– Dictionary.com

# Stages of Implementation

**Major Implementation Initiatives occur in stages:**

**Exploration**

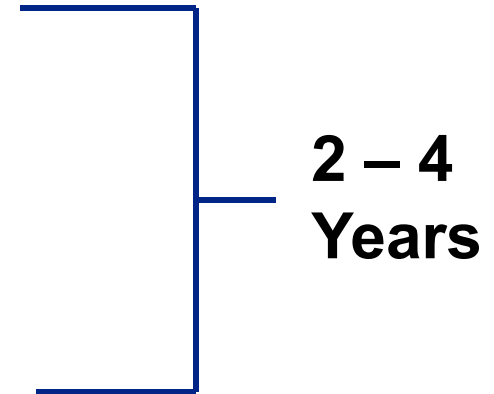
**Installation**

**Initial Implementation**

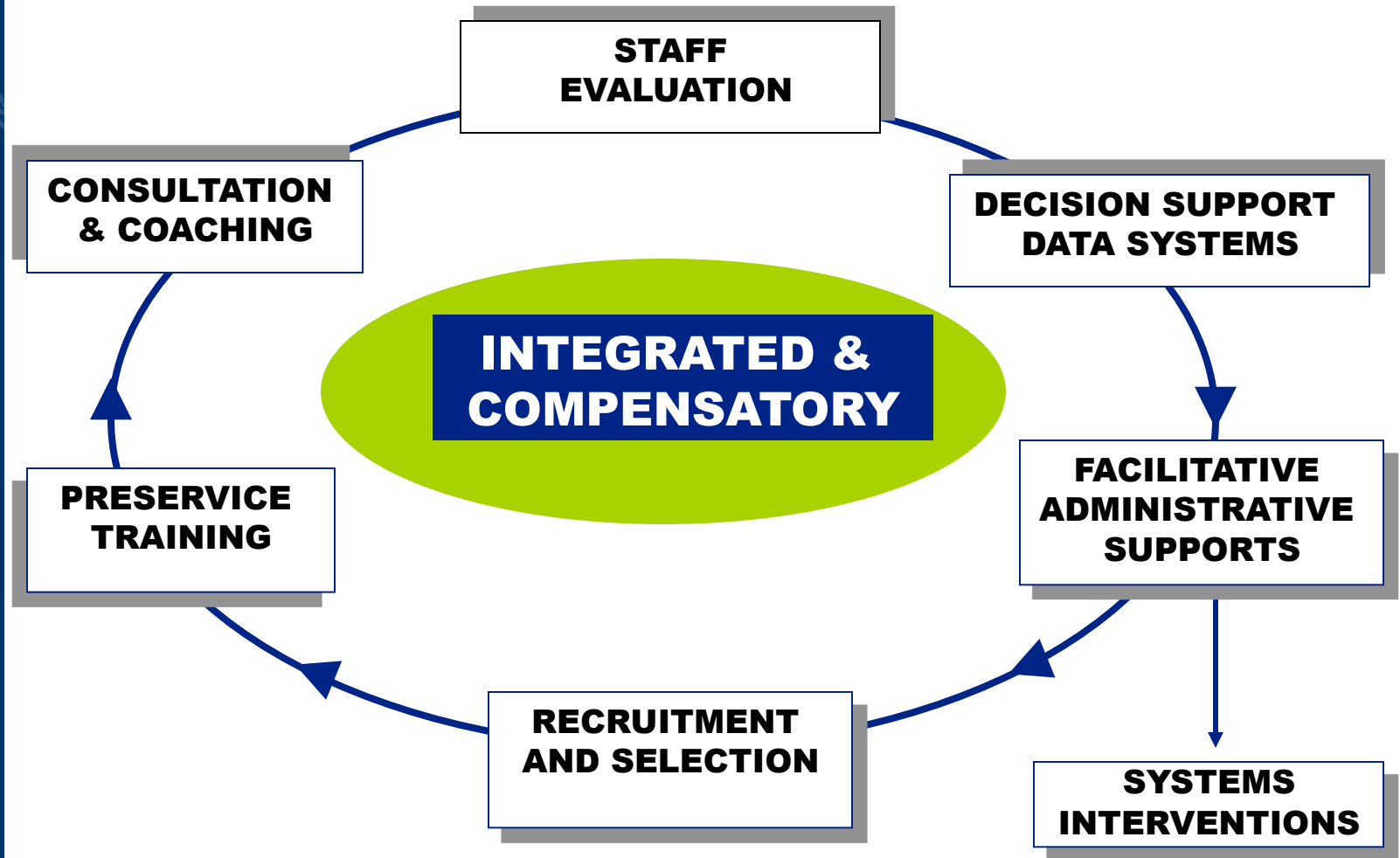
**Full Implementation**

**Innovation**

**Sustainability**



# Implementation Drivers (Processes)



# Implementation and Fidelity

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“The bridge between a promising idea and the impact on students is implementation, but innovations are seldom implemented as intended” .

-Berman & McLaughlin, 1976

# Fidelity and Fidelity Measures

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Fidelity is the degree to which a program as implemented corresponds with the program as described.

*(Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman & Wallace, 2005,*

*National Implementation Research Network)*

Fidelity measures are tools to assess the adequacy of the implementation of the program as described.

# Fidelity in the Field: The Prevalence

- ✓ Implementation efforts in the ‘real’ world, are often unsuccessful and highly variable both in terms of the fidelity and sustainability of the program or practice. (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004).
- ✓ About 23%-81% of program activities may be omitted during implementation (Durlak, 1998).
- ✓ “Surprisingly, many of the highest-quality programs fail to take adequate steps to monitor and verify program integrity...This weakens the conclusions that can be drawn regarding the program outcomes and reduces the likelihood that replications will resemble the original program” (Domitrovitch and Greenberg, 2000).

# Why is Fidelity Important?

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- ✓ **Basis for program effectiveness**
- ✓ **Helps to avoid Type III Error**
  - Promotes Internal and External Validity**
- ✓ **Research has linked fidelity with positive outcomes**

**Adult Mental Health- ACT; Children's Services- FFT, MST, Wraparound; Medicine- DOTS, Texas Algorithm**



# Why Measure Fidelity?

Measure Fidelity AND Outcomes BECAUSE  
you need to know:

**Are we having an implementation problem?**

Low fidelity + Poor outcome =

**Implementation problem**

**Are we having an effectiveness problem?**

High fidelity + Poor outcome =

**Effectiveness problem**

# Common Dimensions of Intervention Fidelity

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- ✓ **Adherence**
- ✓ **Dosage/Exposure**
- ✓ **Quality of Program Delivery**
- ✓ **Participant Responsiveness**
- ✓ **Program Differentiation**

(e.g. Dane & Schneider, 1998; Dusenbury, 2003)

# NIRN's Fidelity Dimensions

✓ **Context**

Pre-requisites and pre-conditions for a program to operate.

✓ **Compliance**

Extent to which practitioner uses intervention processes prescribed by the program and avoids those proscribed by the program.

✓ **Competence**

Level of skill demonstrated by practitioner while delivering services or treatment to the consumer.

# Fidelity Assessments

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Fidelity assessments should include aspects of :

- ✓ **Structure**

The framework for service delivery.

- ✓ **Process**

The way in which services are delivered.

# Methods to Develop a Fidelity Assessment

Requires the specification of a theory of change; core components of intervention need to be identified and measured.

- ✓ Drawing from a specific program model with proven efficacy and effectiveness
- ✓ Gathering expert opinion

Survey of experts and/or literature reviews to identify active ingredients or the core components of the program.

- ✓ Opinions of users and advocates regarding what works or site visits of diverse currently operating programs.

# Measuring Intervention Fidelity

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Most common methods:

- ✓ Ratings by experts, based on project documentation, client records, site observations, interviews and/or videotaped sessions.
- ✓ Surveys or interviews completed by the individuals delivering the services or those who receive them.



# For More Information

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<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nirn/resources/publications/Monograph/>

# For More Information

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Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231).

*Download all or part of the monograph at:*

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~nirn/resources/publications/Monograph/>

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