Fidelity Monitoring

Easy Way To Track Fidelity of a Prevention Program

Many evidence-based programs and "home-grown" programs do not have any tools available to help practitioners track fidelity. We have developed a straightforward way to develop your own tool to do this. The primary requirement is the availability of program materials that states what the program will do—the more detail the better. For example, a program curriculum that specifies all the activities of a certain session is ideal. Then, each major activity within a session is made into a statement to be rated with:

Did not cover this in the session 1	2	3	4	Covered this fully in the session 5

All the checklist items are then summed and divided by the number of items for an average score (can be done within a session—then all the sessions are averaged).

Above is an example of an actual fidelity tool, called a "checklist" here, for a session of a substance abuse prevention program.

Key features of the tool:
- There is space for the session's date, the session leader, the name of the group, and the person completing the form. These are all important details to record.
- By looking at the curriculum, notice how there is a checklist item for each major activity in the session AND also an item for the major ideas to be conveyed in the session.
- There is space next to each statement for the 1-5 rating to be made.

What is the process for making ratings?
Ratings are made immediately after the completion of the session or activity. Those who are implementing the program should discuss ahead of time what is meant by each rating choice (1-5) on this scale. When choosing who make these ratings, there are three possible options: The program deliverers, the participants, outside raters. Here are the pros and cons of using each.

Program deliverers
Pros
- Inexpensive because they are already there in the room
- Are supposed to know the program enough to rate what should be happening
- Staff have stated that the checklists help them plan their programs

Cons
- Could produce biased ratings
- May resent the extra work involved in making the ratings

Program participants
Pros
- Inexpensive because they are already there in the room
- Are able to rate the “feel” of the program (e.g., Did the session allow for participant discussion?)

Cons
- Do not know the program enough to rate what should be happening (regarding content)
- Could take time away from program implementation

Outside raters (either through live observation or by watching videotapes)
Pros
- Will likely make the most unbiased ratings

Cons
- Requires additional resources: training in making ratings, extra staff, and possibly videotape equipment

Additional fidelity questions
In addition to the presence of the key activities and ideas of the program, there may be other features of a session or activity that would be important to rate and they are listed in the table below:

Features	Possible response choices		
Participant interest	1=not at all interested	4= ½ were interested	7=all or almost all were interested
Degree of participation	1=None or very few participated	4= ½ participated	7=all or nearly all participated
Classroom control	1=very poorly controlled	4=moderately controlled	7=very well controlled
Teacher ability to get a participant response	1=not at all	4= ½ the time	7=all of the time
Use of positive feedback	1=not at all	4= ½ the time	7=all of the time
Respecting participants	1=not at all	4= ½ the time	7=all of the time
Conveying the purpose of the session	1=very poorly	4=not quite satisfactory	7=very well
Lesson preparation	1=poorly prepared	4=moderately prepared	7=very well prepared

Other examples are perceived understandability, credibility, and believability of the program; empathy and warmth of presenter; interactivity of the discussion. “Open-ended” questions (ones that require responses in the form of written text or spoken words) can also be asked such as:
- Did the session or activity seem rushed?
- Were there any significant interruptions that affected the session or activity?

Example of fidelity tracking tool

Session 9 Checklist: Step Five: Social Influences and Decision-Making-Part One

Group Name:____________________________ Group Leader Name:__________________

Person completing this form:______________ Date of Session 9-A:__________________

We would like your feedback about this session in the curriculum. After the session, please rate each activity from "1=did not cover this in the session" to "5=covered this fully in the session."

Did not cover this in the session 1	2	3	4	Covered this fully in the session 5

Introduction
___1. Define peer as a friend or someone your own age, and pressure as a force or an influence; write both definitions on the board.
___2. Define peer pressure; write definition on the board.
___3. Instructor shares a personal story of peer pressure.
___4. On the board, list student examples of situations in which they have felt pressure (positive and negative).
Joe's Problem
___5. Hand out "Joe's Problem" and have a student read it aloud.
___6. Show students the Decision-Making Poster and ask what steps they think Joe should take.
Diagramming Peer Pressure
___7. Using "Joe's Problem," diagram how peer pressure works by writing Xs on the board/newsprint.
___8. Describe in more detail another peer pressure situation generated by the students, OR show a movie/TV clip that displays peer pressure, OR describe in detail a famous historical example of peer pressure.
___9. Have a student diagram the situation described in number 8.
___10. Ask: How does the subject of the example feel in that situation? What does he/she want? What are some things he/she can say or do?
___11. Ask students what they think they would do in that situation and why.
Assertiveness
___12. Define the passive person.
___13. Define the aggressive person.
___15. Ask, "How can we let people know that we are not aggressive or passive and that we are serious about what we are saying?"
___16. Describe assertive behaviors.
___16. Trainer reviews Aggressive, Assertive chart
___17. Set up a role-play with the passive person, the aggressor, and the assertive person each saying, "No, I don't want to do that." Ask the students the benefits and disadvantages of each style of response.
___18. Ask students how they felt when they heard the passive person? The aggressive person? The assertive person?
___19. Trainer models examples of each behavior.
Choice of Alternative Activity
___19. a). One Liners: Give Us Your Best Shot" activity: Students respond to sample propositions assertively.
OR b). Eight Ways To Say No activity

Wrap Up

___20. Go through a complete summary of the main points of the session.

Recommendations

This is the most realistic for programs is to

1. Have the program deliverers complete a checklist after all sessions or activities
2. Have participants complete a form that asks about "feel" of the program after each session (use questions listed in the above "Additional fidelity questions" section)
3. Perhaps have outside raters observe a sample of sessions or activities (use questions listed in the above "Additional fidelity questions" section)

If there is more than one program deliverer, they can serve as outside raters by observing each other's sessions. Undergraduates, graduate students or other similar affordable staff can be easily trained to look for the key features of program sessions.