

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, many evidence-based interventions have been developed that can be used to prevent or ameliorate mental health problems of children and adolescents. These interventions focus on child and adolescent emotional, behavioral, and social functioning. Unfortunately, the potential of these interventions has not been realized because their use in professional practice settings has been relatively low. This book addresses the process of bringing research to practice through the implementation of evidence-based child and adolescent mental health interventions, thereby improving child and adolescent mental health services. The book explores theory and research and their practice implications for the successful implementation of interventions in the organizational settings in which child and adolescent mental health services are typically delivered, such as schools and mental health agencies.

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Implementation of Mental Health Programs in Schools: A Change Agent's Guide, by S. G. Forman
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This book should be relevant to a range of professionals interested in improving the mental health of children and adolescents. Certainly school psychologists and child clinical psychologists should find the content herein interesting and useful. In addition, other types of psychologists and mental health services professionals who provide treatment in mental health service settings, as well as other professionals who provide services in schools—such as guidance counselors, school social workers, school nurses, educational administrators, and teachers—will find this book relevant to the challenges they address in their work. This book will move the reader beyond knowledge of what evidence-based interventions are to an understanding of how to ensure their appropriate and sustained use with clients in organizations.

The knowledge base related to implementation has grown rapidly over the past several years. Successful implementation of a new practice or program requires a specific knowledge and skill set. Hence these pages provide a road map—a research-to-practice implementation framework—for practitioners and academics who are interested in improving child and adolescent mental health by bringing evidence-based practice to the contexts in which mental health services are delivered to children and adolescents. I present an overview of the empirical literature in the field, as well as the implications for professional practice that are derived from this literature. Furthermore, I address the conceptual, historical, and theoretical underpinnings of the study and practice of implementation; the methodology used by those who create knowledge in this area and by those who evaluate implementation in professional practice settings; the role of mental health service providers, such as psychologists, in leading implementation efforts; and what we know about a range of factors that affect implementation success. Each chapter contains case studies that illustrate use of the concepts and research findings presented, as well as guidelines for professional practice.

Part I describes the elements and processes that form a foundation for implementation practice and research. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the area, defining implementation, identifying key components of implementation, and describing the stages in the implementation process. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the multidisciplinary historical roots of implementation and also addresses the theoretical roots of implementation in systems theory, behavioral psychology, and cognitive-behavioral psychology, as well as a variety of additional theories, models, and frameworks for implementation. Chapter 3 focuses on the purposes and methods of implementation evaluation and implementation science and emphasizes the importance of data-based decision making throughout the implementation process. Readers will gain an understanding of why and how implementation evaluation is conducted in professional practice settings, and why and how scientific knowledge related to implementation is created. Chapter 4 addresses the role of

mental health service providers, such as psychologists, with respect to leading implementation efforts and facilitating change in mental health service delivery organizations and those who work in them. The role of change agent is addressed, and models of leadership and change agent functioning, as well as research on organizational leadership, are explored.

Part II describes the phases of selecting and implementing interventions. Chapter 5 addresses the intervention characteristics that should be considered in the process of intervention selection. Development of implementer and other stakeholder support is examined in Chapter 6: With whom should a change agent communicate? What methods of communication should one use? What should the content of the communication be? The chapter explores how a change agent can work with stakeholders so that their attitudes and beliefs about new interventions are facilitative of implementation. Chapter 7 concerns the development of implementer competence in intervention delivery through effective methods of training and technical assistance or ongoing support with feedback. In Chapter 8, organizational characteristics and structures that have been found to facilitate implementation are discussed, as are the concept of “organizational readiness” for implementation and strategies for developing organizational support for implementation. Chapter 9 explores how *suprasystems*, or systems external to an implementation setting, can influence implementation. These systems include the local community, the state government, and the federal government. The chapter also addresses how these systems can be influenced through advocacy efforts.

In Part III, I discuss issues that cut across all phases of implementation. Chapter 10 explores the constructs of fidelity and adaptation—and the tension between the two. Strategies that the change agent can use to support both fidelity and adaptation, and to meet both client and organizational needs, are presented. Chapter 11 addresses the use of evidence-based interventions with diverse client populations and how they can be adapted so that they are culturally responsive while maintaining high-quality and positive outcomes.

Part IV looks past the initial implementation of evidence-based interventions to consider ways to promote their sustained and widespread use. Chapter 12 addresses sustainability and scaling-up. Chapter 13 summarizes the importance of planning for implementation and taking action to support implementation in several domains, including intervention selection, development of stakeholder support, training and technical assistance, a supportive organizational context, external systems, and data-based decision making. Finally, I present an agenda for the further development of knowledge related to evidence-based implementation and offer some future directions for graduate training and scientist–practitioner collaboration to advance the effectiveness of implementation efforts.