ADAPTATION GUIDELINES[1]

Reminders on program selection:

- **Select programs with the best practical fit to local needs and conditions.**
  This will reduce the likelihood that you will need to make any significant adaptations.

- **Select programs with the largest effect size.**
  In general, a program with a large effect size is less likely to experience a reduction in their intended outcomes due to an adaptation, compared to a similar program with a smaller effect size.

General guidelines to follow when adapting a program:

- **Retain core components.**
  Evidence-based programs are more likely to be effective when their core components are maintained. Core components are those parts of a program or practice that are responsible for producing positive outcomes, and thus most essential and indispensable. Core components are like the key ingredients in a cookie recipe. We might be able to take out the chocolate chips, but if we take out the flour—a core component—the recipe won't work. However, understanding and adhering to the principles underlying each core component may allow for flexibility.

- **Be consistent with evidence-based principles.**
  There is a greater likelihood of success if an adaptation does not violate an established evidence-based prevention principle.

- **Build capacity before changing the program.**
  Rather than change a program to fit local conditions, consider ways to develop resources or to build local readiness so that it can be delivered as it was originally designed.

- **Add rather than subtract.**
  Doing so decreases the likelihood of important program elements (i.e., those that are critical to program effectiveness) getting lost.

- **Adapt with care.**
  Even when programs and practices are selected with great care, there may be ways to improve their appropriateness for a unique focus population. Cultural adaptation, for example, refers to modifications that are tailored to the beliefs and practices of a particular group and enhance the cultural relevance of an intervention. To make a program or practice more culturally appropriate, consider the language, values, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of focus population members.

- **If adapting, get help.**
  Knowledge experts, such as program developers, can provide information on how a program has been adapted in the past, how well these adaptations have worked, and what core components should be retained to maintain effectiveness. Members of the focus population can also suggest ways to enhance program materials or messaging to better reflect their concerns and experiences.

- **Increase accessibility.**
  Adapt program materials and delivery methods to accommodate diverse learning styles, literacy levels, language backgrounds, physical accessibility requirements, and digital access.

- **Train staff and test adapted materials.**
  Provide formal training to ensure that staff are equipped to deliver the adapted content and consistently adhere to the modified methods of delivery with fidelity.

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[1] This implementation tool—Adaptation Guideline—was initially created based on the 2013 document published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2013), which was subsequently replaced by the 2019 version. Although the original source is no longer accessible online, it continued to serve as a foundational reference for the development of this tool. The current version mainly borrowed guidelines from the following SAMHSA resources:
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2019). *A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework: Implementation Program Fidelity. Step 4: Implementation* (pp. 20–22). Retrieved from https://library.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/strategic-prevention-framework-pep19-01.pdf
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2022). *Adapting Evidence-Based Practices for Under-Resourced Populations* (SAMHSA Publication No. PEP22-06-02-004, pp. 15, 20–21). Retrieved from https://helpandhopewv.org/docs/PEP22-06-02-004.pdf