



Evidence-Based Practice Initiative

A core value of the Department of Behavioral Health and Mental Retardation Services (DBH/MRS) is that a recovery oriented system of care is one that provides the highest quality and most effective behavioral health services -- so that all persons may share equally in access to effective services and experience positive outcomes that lead to a fulfilling and contributing life. As such, the Department is committed to developing a system of care that is grounded in evidence based practices.

The term evidence-based practice has been referred to as the process of “turning knowledge into practice.” The idea is to convert what we know based on scientific evidence into what we do. One of the most popular definitions is: “Evidence-based practices are interventions for which there is consistent scientific evidence showing that they improve client outcomes.” The DBH/MRS however, recognizes that there are numerous challenges to implementing EBPs in the real world. Among these are: implementing new strategies with limited resources, attempting to utilize practices that are not normed on populations similar to the population being served in Philadelphia, and the fact that many community based organizations that do achieve excellent outcomes, do not have the resources to conduct empirically based studies that validate the evidence base of their services.

As a result of these real world challenges, the DBH/MRS endorses an expanded view of evidence which not only acknowledges that evidence occurs on a continuum, but which also emphasizes the importance of the role that persons in recovery and family members play in identifying which services are most effective for them. Consequently, the definition of EBPs subscribed to by the DBH/MRS is **“practical and specific clinical interventions and supports that are designed for specific groups of people in a particular setting and that are determined in collaboration with consumers to enhance their recovery.”**

Research shows that it takes about 15 years for scientific practice to become incorporated into health care settings. Research also shows that training and education alone do not have a significant influence on practice behaviors. Consequently, the Department will align resources, policies, and technical assistance to support the ongoing transformation of our system to one that promotes and routinely uses evidence-based practices.

Initiatives in process that involve the promotion of evidence-based and promising practices include the Trauma Transformation Task Force, Certified Peer Support Specialist Initiative, Day Program Transformation, Health Disparities Workgroup, and First Friday Series. Other initiatives and evidence-base practice pilot programs are planned.