



INFORMATION SHEET 4.3

Guidelines for Adaptation

Adaptation refers to how much, and in what ways, a program, policy, or practice is changed to meet local needs and circumstances. It is important to balance adaptation with fidelity. Fidelity refers to the degree to which a prevention program is implemented as its developer intended. Be aware that any change or adaption to a program can compromise its results.

Here are some general guidelines to follow when adapting a program:

- **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.
- **Change capacity before changing the program.**
It may be easier to change the program, but changing local capacity to deliver it as it was designed (e.g. through training, mentoring) is a safer choice.
- **Consult with the program developer.**
Consult with the program developer to determine what experience and/or advice he or she has about adapting the program to a particular setting or circumstance.⁶
- **Retain core components.**
There is a greater likelihood of effectiveness when a program retains the core component(s) of the original intervention. The program developer or your evaluator can identify these core components.
- **Add, rather than subtract.**
It is safer to add to a program (e.g. more activities, increased length of time an intervention is offered) than to modify or subtract from it.⁷