What is implementation fidelity? What areas of focus can help me reflect on program delivery?

Implementation fidelity is the degree to which a program or curriculum is delivered as intended by the developer(s). The integrity of the delivery to its prescribed details (i.e., operating manual, instructor’s guide) can directly influence the outcomes, such as the extent of knowledge or skills gained or behavioral changes achieved, aimed for by the program or curriculum. The more closely aligned your delivery is to the program or curriculum model, the more likely your chances are of producing the same results as promised by the developer. When reflecting on your program(s), ask yourself how strongly your program adheres to the following evidences of effectiveness for that particular program.

- **Target Audience:** Check if the target audience varies from the one in the original curriculum or program design. The demographic, developmental, linguistic, or other population characteristics should be similar.
- **Setting:** Look to see if the setting is conducive to the instructional activities, projects, or application of knowledge as specified in the manual, work plan, or teaching module. The environment should be one that resembles the approach identified within the original model that suggests an optimal learning experience.
- **Materials:** Assess if the existing materials were used or if modifications were made. The content should match the learning capabilities of the audience you are working with, use language that is easily interpreted, and include examples that convey the ideas to be absorbed and practiced by participants.
- **Delivery:** Reflect on the consistency of delivery against the model. The instructional styles should be those illustrated in the instructor’s reference materials (e.g., skills modeling, coaching, etc.). Another component for review may be the sequence of delivery; the particular order of topics covered. For example, building on the skills from the class prior may be important to the overall skill achievement at the end of the program.
- **Dosage:** Probe to see if the program was delivered in the amount of time and with the frequency recommended. The number and frequency of lessons, as well as the length of time, should match the intended project duration. Simple questions to explore if all intended lessons were delivered may reveal some clues about how fully a program or curriculum was delivered. If the length of time for the instruction or practice as specified was curtailed, or a few lessons were picked to teach rather than the total amount, your dosage may be off.
- **Provider Qualifications:** Reflect to see if the educators’ qualifications promote the learning experience of the participants involved. This area of fidelity check should address any special credentials or other qualifications required of the person teaching the lessons. Investigate if a trained volunteer or program assistant can implement the program, or if a content specialist is needed to implement a segment of the required lessons planned.
- **Provider Training:** Assess what kind of training might be needed to deliver the content, skills, or subject matter to be taught. Examine the original published instruction manual, which should guide any training needs for the person teaching the lesson, to see if any training was missed.
IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY AND ADAPTION

WHAT IS IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY?
Implementation fidelity is the degree to which a program or curriculum is delivered as intended by the developer(s). Delivery can directly influence the outcomes of the curriculum. The more closely aligned your delivery to the model, the more likely your chances of producing the results promised by the developer.

WHEN REFLECTING ON DELIVERY, ASK YOURSELF HOW STRONGLY YOUR PROGRAM ADHERES TO THESE SEVEN AREAS THAT PROVIDED EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

1. Target Audience:
   Does your target audience match the one from the original curriculum? (demographics, developmental, linguistic, etc.)

2. Setting:
   Does your environment allow for optimal learning experiences?

3. Materials:
   Do you use the appropriate materials, or were modifications made?

4. Delivery:
   Does your planned delivery mode match that suggested by the model?

5. Dosage:
   Do you deliver the program the amount of time and with the frequency recommended?

6. Provider Qualifications:
   Do the qualifications of the educators promote the learning experience of participants?

7. Provider Training:
   Do the educators have adequate training to teach the subject matter?
WHERE CAN I MAKE PROGRAM ADAPTIONS, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME StAYING TRUE TO IMPLEMENTATION FIDELITY?

While we don’t want to stray too far from the developer’s recommendations, we understand that individual needs vary. Follow these tips when making or considering adaptations.

Tips for Success:
- Consult with the developer. They may already have information on how to best make adaptations.
- Document all changes.
- Include time to make changes or add evaluation activities to assess the impact of the adaptations.

ADAPTATIONS TO ACCOMMODATE

Adaptations that make the program or curriculum more available, understandable, and relatable to the audience may boost engagement. Some examples include:
- Language or cultural references of target audience
- Images of target audience within materials
- Aspects of delivery
- Enhancements within content

ADAPTATIONS TO AVOID

Removing, abbreviating, or reorganizing program content or composition may diminish the learning experience or interfere with outcomes. Some examples include:
- Dosage: Reducing number of lessons, amount of time, etc.
- Delivery: Using fewer educators, changing framework of programs, etc.
- Provider Training/Qualifications: Using staff or volunteers who are not trained.