
Evidence-based practice (EBP) requirements help the state to provide high quality services for children and families across Texas. At present, the Texas Family Code (TFC) definition for EBP prevention and early intervention provided by the Prevention and Early Intervention Division (PEI) is written narrowly, excluding practice-based services that have evidence of positive outcomes. In order to ensure Texas provides the best possible prevention programming and services, the definition should be updated to include all high quality services that have evidence of their effectiveness.

BUILDING ON EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Texas Legislature has been diligent in supporting EBP by programs that help strengthen families to prevent negative outcomes for children. The Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Division has been faithful in implementing legislative requirements and assisting providers in establishing and maintaining use of EBPs, including by providing links to databases and federal resources and by providing training and technical assistance.

Now PEI and other stakeholders want to ensure that all prevention and early intervention services that are proven to produce positive outcomes for children and families can be considered EBPs. In addition, changes to the Texas Family Code are needed to ensure that other practical EBP guidance is in place. For example, in the case of crisis counseling, individual therapy, family therapy, clinical services and other recognized professional practices, needed changes include:

- “providers must meet any state requirements for professional licensure or certification” and
- “practices must have empirical evidence to support their effectiveness.”

Recommendations:

In order to maximize the effective programming provided to Texas children and families, the Legislature should strengthen Texas Family Code language in sections 265.101-103 to:

- Include practices and not only strictly structured programs
- Expand applicable research to include nationally recognized clearinghouses for effective programs and practices
- More clearly define the combination of factors that defines services as evidence based
- Update outcome metrics to include more directly relevant findings