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# Training in Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs): What are school psychology programs teaching?

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## Abstract

This study examined the degree to which school psychology programs provided training in Evidence-Based Interventions (EBIs). Survey data were collected from 97 school psychology training directors to assess their familiarity, level of student exposure, and perceived importance of EBIs. This study also examined the contextual factors that interfere with EBI training, and whether students are taught to apply the criteria developed by Divisions 12, 16, and 53 of the APA when evaluating outcome research. Results indicated that relatively low percentages of respondents were familiar with the EBIs included on the survey, exposure to EBIs occurred more frequently in coursework than practical experiences, and EBIs were rated as either somewhat important or important. Lack of time was rated as the most serious challenge to EBI training and a high percentage of directors reported students were taught to apply the criteria developed by professional organizations in psychology and education when evaluating outcome research.

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## Introduction

The field of school psychology, having a vested interest in developing the knowledge base regarding EBIs, created The Task Force on Evidence-Based Inter-

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ventions in School Psychology (hereafter called the Task Force), sponsored by the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 16 (School Psychology), the Society for the Study of School Psychology (SSSP), and endorsed by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). This Task Force is charged with reviewing and coding prevention and intervention studies for children, youth and families, and identifying interventions that have sound research support (Kratochwill & Stoiber, 2000, 2002; Stoiber & Kratochwill, 2000). A primary goal of the Task Force is to close the gap between research and practice by disseminating useful information to school psychology training programs and practicing school psychologists regarding intervention and prevention programs with strong empirical support. The ultimate goal of identifying and disseminating information regarding EBIs is to improve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes for all learners.

### *Training in EBIs*

One way of facilitating practitioners' exposure to and competence in EBIs is to ensure that school psychology graduate students entering the workforce are trained in interventions with demonstrable efficacy. School psychology students with training and expertise in EBIs are more accountable for their services, more prepared to meet the demands of their current job, and are ultimately in a better position to improve student outcomes (Kratochwill & Stoiber, 2000). Although there is a strong interest in training psychologists to use EBIs, according to a recent survey of clinical psychology training programs and internships, training in these interventions remains limited (Crits-Christoph, Frank, Chambless, Brody, & Karp, 1995). This survey included 25 psychosocial interventions categorized as well-established or probably efficacious, and clinical psychology training directors indicated which interventions were taught in didactic courses and for which interventions they offered practicum experience. Results indicated significant variability in students' exposure to different treatments and that, on average, programs provided didactic instruction for 46% of the interventions listed (range=0–96%). Similarly, an average of 44% of the 25 interventions were offered in practicum (range=0–92%). Crits-Christoph et al. also found that more than 20% of the doctoral programs surveyed did not provide minimal coverage (25% of the interventions listed) of EBIs in coursework. Based on this survey, it appears that the knowledge base regarding EBIs has not generalized to the training of clinical psychologists in these interventions.

### *Challenges to EBI training*

Graduate programs face several obstacles in providing training in EBIs. Faculty support for EBI training, for example, is considered a primary factor in determining how, when, and whether these interventions are included in coursework and practica (Calhoun, Moras, Pilkonis, & Rehm, 1998). Faculty support includes not only being competent to teach the interventions and supervise students' use of EBIs, but the ability to convey an objective attitude about the overall strengths and limitations of EBIs. Without core faculty trained in EBIs, programs must rely on outside experts to provide this training, which can be costly. In addition, there is the financial burden of

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