

How Does the Prevention Services Clearinghouse Determine Which Studies Are Reviewed?

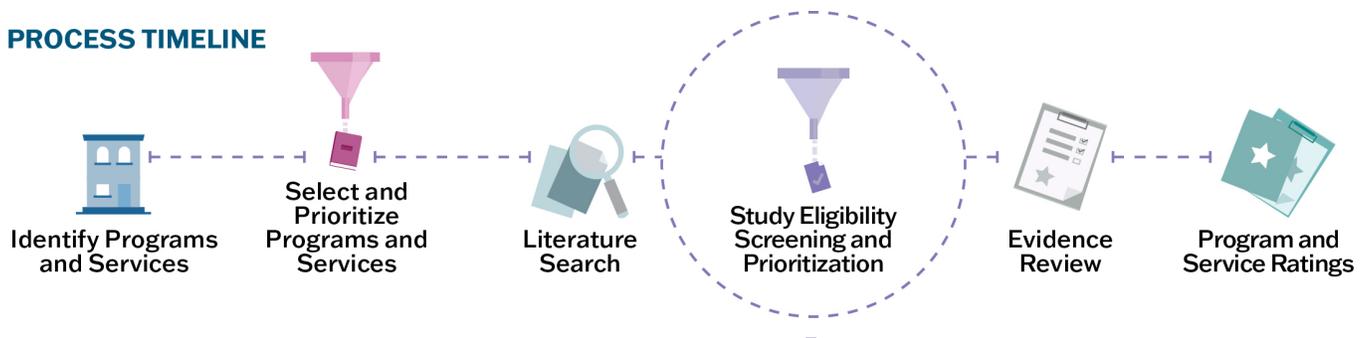


Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse conducts objective, independent, and transparent reviews of research on programs and services intended to provide enhanced support to children and families and prevent foster care placements.

The Clearinghouse uses a systematic review process implemented by trained reviewers using consistent, transparent standards and procedures outlined in the [Handbook of Standards and Procedures](#). Clearinghouse staff use this systematic review process to (1) identify programs and services for review, (2) select and prioritize programs and services for review, (3) conduct a literature search to locate research studies on the effectiveness of the prioritized programs and services, (4) screen studies for eligibility and prioritize them for review, (5) conduct an evidence review to rate the strength of evidence of the studies using the design and execution standards, and (6) rate programs and services as well-supported, supported, promising, or does not currently meet criteria.

This fact sheet focuses on step 4 in the process and explains how Clearinghouse reviewers screen studies to determine whether a study of a particular program or service is eligible for review. The Clearinghouse defines a “study” as one research investigation of a defined subject sample, and the interventions, measures, and statistical analyses applied to that sample.

PROCESS TIMELINE



Which studies are eligible for review?

To be eligible for review, the study must:

- Evaluate the version of the program or service currently under review
- Use a randomized or quasi-experimental group design with at least one intervention condition and a “no or minimal intervention” or “treatment as usual” comparison condition
- Measure and report program or service impacts on at least one eligible outcome
- Be published or prepared in or after 1990
- Be publicly available and published in peer-reviewed journals or in reports prepared or commissioned by federal, state, or local government agencies or departments, research institutes, research firms, foundations or other funding entities, or other similar organizations
- Be available in English

For more information about study eligibility criteria, see section 4 of the [Handbook](#).

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What are common reasons that studies are not eligible for review?

Studies may be ineligible for a variety of reasons, and some studies are ineligible for multiple reasons. The most common reasons that studies are ineligible are detailed below.

1. They do not examine the version of the program or service currently under review. To be eligible for review, studies of a program or service must all represent similar implementations of the program under review; that is, programs or services may not be substantially modified or adapted from the written protocol, book, manual, or other documentation (manual) or version of the program or service selected for review.

- If a study indicates that content was adapted (such as adding a new component or substantially changing the number of sessions) or the mode of delivery was adapted (such as changing from in-person to online), the Clearinghouse may determine that the study is not evaluating the program or service that was selected for review.
- If a study implements an older version of a program or service selected for review and the older version of the manual is substantially different from the manual selected for review, the Clearinghouse may determine that the study is not eligible for review.

Many manualized programs have formal adaptations available (i.e., alternative manualized versions of the original program designed to address particular issues or populations). When programs and services that are identified for inclusion in the Clearinghouse have multiple available formal adaptations or multiple treatment manuals, each is reviewed as a separate program or service.

Programs or services that go by different names in different local implementations but that clearly use the same manual are considered to be the same program for purposes of review. Minor modifications to programs or services that are not considered formal adaptations are addressed in Section 4.1.6 of the [Handbook](#).

2. The study does not use a design that establishes that the program or service, and not other factors, is responsible for the outcomes observed.

- Not all studies are designed to support causal inferences about a program or service. For example, studies that use a pre-post design in which all study participants received the intervention cannot isolate the effect of the program from other factors that may explain changes in outcomes, such as children maturing or symptoms naturally improving over time. In such cases, the Clearinghouse cannot be confident that the outcomes reflect the causal impact of the program.
- Eligible research designs include randomized or quasi-experimental group designs with at least one intervention condition and at least one comparison condition.

Chapter 4 of the [Handbook](#) provides a complete list of study eligibility criteria, and the [Reporting Guide for Study Authors](#) offers advice to help study authors describe their studies along all the criteria the Clearinghouse uses to determine if studies are eligible for review.

May 2022
OPRE Report 2022-104

Submitted to:
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Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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This report is in the public domain. Permission to reproduce is not necessary. Suggested citation: Jackson, C., Wilson, S. J., & Glenn, M. (2022). *How Does the Prevention Services Clearinghouse Determine Which Studies Are Reviewed?*, OPRE Report 2022-104, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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