

What is evidence-informed practice?

This resource will help you, as a practitioner, to understand what evidence-informed practice is and what opportunities exist for you and your service to enhance evidence-informed practice.

Other resources in this series include:

- [What is evidence implementation?](#)
- [What is evidence-informed practice?](#)
- [Evidence-based practice reflective questions for services](#)

In Queensland, the *Domestic and family violence services: Practice principles, standards and guidance* (Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, 2020) have been developed to guide practice for all Domestic and Family Violence funded services. Practice principle 3 – “services are evidence-informed” – sets the standard for this work. Services are asked to ensure staff are informed on current frameworks and best practice, understand the meaning of evidence-based practice, and maintain currency through learning and development opportunities.

Key terms

“Evidence-based practice” and “evidence-informed practice” are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably.

Evidence-based practice first emerged in the health sector and refers to making use of the best and most current research evidence and expertise to make decisions (Sackett, 1996). People sometimes use the phrase “evidence-based practice” to indicate that they are only talking about rigorously evaluated and peer-reviewed programs and practices (The Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, 2016).

Evidence-informed practice is a term often used by people who want to include more sources of truth, such as work-based trial and error, practitioner experience and expertise, and the lived expertise of the people accessing services (Alla & Joss, 2021; Oxford Review, 2023). Using “informed” rather than “based” also recognises that there are limitations in the evidence base; that evidence where it does exist requires adaptation to local contexts; and that there may be other inputs that shape the practice of an organisation or service, such as cultural considerations, legislative requirements and organisational policy.

Evidence-based decision-making is achieved when you use the best available research evidence, information about the place and people you are working with (contextual evidence), and the experience and expertise of practitioners (experiential evidence; Puddy & Wilkins, 2011; The Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, 2016).



[Adapted from the Puddy & Wilkins 2011]

Research types

Not all research is created equal. Systematic reviews, where many research papers are reviewed to reveal what the sum of the evidence tells us, are often considered the evidence type that is most robust and least subject to bias. At the other end – or the bottom – of the evidence hierarchy are expert opinion, anecdotes and case studies. These may still be important sources of knowledge, but they are more subject to bias and are less reliable or generalisable across different contexts (The Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody, 2016).

The evidence hierarchy



How WorkUP can help

WorkUP can work with you to identify your evidence-informed strengths and opportunities for improvement. You can find out more about how WorkUP can help you by submitting a [knowledge translation enquiry](#).

Key references and further reading

Alla, K., & Joss, N. (2021) *What is an evidence-informed approach to practice and why is it important?* [Short article]. Australian Institute of Family Studies. <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/short-articles/what-evidence-informed-approach-practice-and-why-it-important>

Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women. (2020) *Domestic and family violence services: Practice principles, standards and guidance*. <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/service-providers-resources-for-violence-prevention/resource/366f94a8-1122-42ff-9c19-d968fd21c173>

Puddy, R. W., & Wilkins, N. (2011). *Understanding evidence part 1: Best available research evidence: A guide to the continuum of evidence of effectiveness*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/UnderstandingEvidence.html>

Sackett, D. (1996) Evidence-based medicine: What it is and what it isn't. *British Medical Journal*, 312, 71–72. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.312.7023.71>

The Oxford Review. (2023). *The Essential Guide to Evidence-Based Practice*. <https://oxford-review.com/evidence-based-practice-essential-guide/>

The Resource Center on Domestic Violence: Child Protection and Custody. (2016). *Moving towards evidence-based practices: A guide for domestic violence organisations*. RCDV:CPC. https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/RCDV_Moving_towards_Evidence_based_practices.pdf