

Targeted Vs. Universal Intervention

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In the next few minutes I will...

- Give a very crude definition of the targeted and universal approaches
- Discuss some of the pros and cons of the two approaches
- Give an example of an interesting hybrid approach
- End with a few questions

Goals of Intervention?

- **Overall:**
 - Improve the lives of young children and their families
 - Improve long term productivity/output
- **More specifically:**
 - Raise “performance” for all children
 - Raise “performance” for some and reduce the gaps between the haves and have nots

Definitions

Targeted

- Services are provided to specific individuals based on their characteristics (targeting can be person or place based, or a combination of the two)

Universal

- Services are provided to all individuals in a given region/jurisdiction regardless of their characteristics

Pros and Cons of the Approaches

Targeted

- Lower total cost
- Smaller displacement of private spending
- Higher per child economic returns
- Administrative costs associated with determining eligibility

Universal

- Higher total cost
- Higher displacement of private spending
- Lower per child economic returns
- No administrative costs associated with determining eligibility

Pros and Cons of the Approaches

Targeted

- Children move in and out of eligibility because of changing family circumstances
- Eligibility rules often exclude children who can benefit

Universal

- Children remain eligible regardless of changing circumstances
- All children who can benefit are eligible

Pros and Cons of the Approaches

Targeted

- Not all eligible children enroll because of confusion over eligibility rules or stigma
- Possible negative peer effects if “at-risk” kids are segregated
- Programs often not fully funded or not funded at level required for high quality

Universal

- Participation may be higher and with greater integration within programs or classrooms
- No risk of segregation of “at-risk” kids
- Public or political support for fully funded high quality programs may be higher

Hybrid Approach

- Everyone gets some services
- More intensive services are provided based on needs
- Example -- Triple P Positive Parenting Program

Hybrid Approach

- Example – Triple P
 - Supports child development through parent/family education and supports
 - Extensive evidence base
 - 5 levels of intervention of increasing intensity
 - Child/Family needs assessments determine the level provided

Triple P Levels of Intervention

Level	Type of Intervention
1	<i>Community media/information campaign</i>
2	<i>Brief individual or group around a specific topic</i>
3	<i>4-week intervention around a specific topic targeting kids with mild to moderate behavioural problems</i>
4	<i>8-10 sessions, group or individual. Kids have more severe problems, parents need more intensive support</i>
5	<i>Intensive family intervention when child has behaviour problems and other family dysfunction is identified</i>

More questions than answers:

Targeted Vs. Universal interventions:

- What does the evidence tell us?
- What other factors might over-ride what the evidence tells us?
- What kinds of data/research designs do we need to be able to answer questions about when, how, whether interventions should be targeted, universal or a hybrid?