

12 Practical Tips for Implementing *Bright Futures Guidelines* at the State or Community Level

After assembling a team of local stakeholders dedicated to implementing the recommendations in *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, it's time to develop an implementation strategy. The 12 tips below were developed based on the experience of primary health care professionals who have implemented preventive services related to health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and ADHD. When designing your strategy, these tips can help ensure success.

1. Start Gradually: State- or community-wide implementation can be daunting if taken on all at once. Instead, many states have implemented smaller changes at multiple levels. An implementation project that has been completed on a small scale can be modified as necessary and replicated for a different or larger audience. Effective data collection and analysis are particularly useful for programs looking to scale up their implementation efforts, because successful elements or innovations can be highlighted and expanded, while less successful activities can be improved before the next round of implementation.

Furthermore, health care professionals may find efforts to implement all recommendations in the *Bright Futures Guidelines* at once overwhelming. Introducing Bright Futures implementation activities in stages eases the transition and encourages practices to spread gradually. Focusing on individual elements of Bright Futures also allows their efficacy to be evaluated more effectively.

States and communities may consider allowing practices and other clinic settings to decide on their own the elements and order of *Bright Future Guidelines* components that they will integrate. For states and communities that follow a stepwise

implementation strategy, comparisons of baseline data with those collected after implementation can be especially useful for practices that are considering implementing additional aspects of the *Bright Futures Guidelines*.

2. Include Families at All Stages of Implementation: Families are crucial partners when implementing Bright Futures components in a state or community and can be helpful at all stages of implementation. They can help assess the existing level of family-centered care, serve as advisors or consultants to plan implementation projects and provide feedback on implementation plans, help set realistic goals, and spread the word about any changes to pediatric care.

ABOUT BRIGHT FUTURES

Bright Futures is a national health promotion and prevention initiative, led by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration. The *Bright Futures Guidelines* provide theory-based and evidence-driven guidance for all preventive care screenings and well-child visits. Bright Futures content can be incorporated into many public health programs such as home visiting, child care, school-based health clinics, and many others. Materials developed especially for families are also available. Learn more about Bright Futures and get Bright Futures materials by visiting brightfutures.aap.org.



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- 3. Include the Community:** Involving community partners in relevant implementation activities allows health care professionals to create valuable referral relationships. These referral relationships are especially useful for practices implementing Bright Futures screening recommendations.
- 4. Work With Existing Initiatives:** Efforts should be made to leverage the strength of existing partnerships, mechanisms, and initiatives before developing new ones. For example, health care professionals currently involved in medical home implementation efforts can provide avenues for Bright Futures implementation. More information about medical home initiatives is available at the National Resource Center for Patient/Family-Centered Medical Home website (www.medicalhomeinfo.org).
- 5. Encourage Practices to Engage Their Entire Office Staff:** Implementation may involve physicians, nurse practitioners, medical ancillary staff or assistants, child development specialists, nutritionists, and administrative office system staff. Working together, these individuals help ensure that Bright Futures components permeate the entire practice during and after implementation efforts.
- 6. Adapt Bright Futures Tools:** The AAP encourages states and communities to adapt the recommendations in the *Bright Futures Guidelines* to fit their specific needs. Implementation partners may modify Bright Futures visit forms to the unique geographic considerations of their audiences. For instance, states in warm climates may emphasize Bright Futures guidance on swimming safety. States may also modify Bright Futures materials for cultural appropriateness or literacy level or adapt Bright Futures forms for use with electronic health records. Implementation efforts that modify Bright Futures materials based on input from partners demonstrate a responsiveness that strengthens relationships and encourages participation from all stakeholders.
- 7. Create Health Care Professional Buy-in:** Every effort should be made to support health care professional buy-in and tailor implementation activities to the needs of local practices. Involving health care professionals as planning partners is one way to increase buy-in. Another is to use data collected at the practice level in an improvement project to identify gaps. These efforts can increase the number of practices that participate in implementation activities.
- 8. Understand Health Care Professional Barriers:** Implementation projects that focus on health care professionals take into account the unique challenges facing them. Among these may be lack of funds to support practice-wide change, inability to participate in scheduled meetings or events, unwillingness to implement new elements into practice, and lack of time to engage in implementation activities. Wide-ranging and responsive implementation partnerships may be able to leverage existing resources or services to address these concerns.
- 9. Update the Practice's Website:** To make it easy for health care professionals and others in your state to access the Bright Futures materials needed to properly implement the guidelines, practices should keep their website up to date and easy to use. Sites should provide updated links to the latest Bright Futures/AAP Periodicity Schedule and to the official AAP Bright Futures website (brightfutures.aap.org), which is the source for the most current Bright Futures materials, including pocket guides, toolkits, and multimedia presentations.
- 10. Keep It Interesting:** Interactive learning, onsite training, and in-person conferences encourage practice participation and sustain implemented changes. The Implementation Models section of the Bright Futures website (brightfutures.aap.org) presents examples of successful projects.
- 11. Use Measures to Evaluate:** Gathering data that describe the baseline level of implementation and monitor progress is critically important. These data can be used to identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of current preventive services delivery and provide a scientific basis for implementing the *Bright Futures Guidelines*. Data measures also increase accountability. All partners working on Bright Futures implementation can use these data in aggregate form to demonstrate progress on children's health goals—for example, when preparing Maternal and Child Health Title V reports.

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Bright Futures implementation projects can start by establishing a test or pilot group to collect evidence that supports spreading and sustaining the project's changes. States and communities are encouraged to work with implementation partners at the outset to identify agreed-on indicators that can be measured throughout the project—for example, rates of developmental screening, use of recall and reminder systems, or family satisfaction levels. More information on Bright Futures measures and quality improvement is available at the Quality Improvements section of the Bright Futures website (brightfutures.aap.org).

- 12. Contact the AAP Bright Futures National Center:** The AAP Bright Futures National Center provides training and implementation assistance, materials, and advice that may be helpful during practice-focused implementation activities. Contact the Center to discuss goals and priorities and to explore ways that it can assist you.



Contact us by email or telephone at:
brightfutures@aap.org | 630/626-6783

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