Using the MICROSOFT ACCESS® Database of Evidence-Based Interventions and Practices in Children’s Services

Frequently Asked Questions

Steven R. Howe and Associates, LLC
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About Using MICROSOFT ACCESS® Database of Evidence-Based Practices in Children’s Services

By Steven R. Howe and Associates, LLC
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Introduction

This brief guide will help the user who knows how to use Excel make effective use of the Microsoft Access® Database of Evidence-Based Practices prepared as the major product for the Systematic Research Review for Children’s Protective Services. While the explanations will enable the user to make use of a few Access features that would not be available if the entire database were exported to Excel, the basic approach is to keep things as simple as possible. Access has many advanced features that would allow an experienced Access user to do far more than is explained in this FAQ, including all of those things that can be done using Structured Query Language (SQL) and the creation of reports.

Getting Around the Data Base

When you first open Access, the view you will see is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
In the “left-hand navigation” area of the screen is a list of all tables. This FAQ will only discuss tables that end in “: Table.” In other words, it ignores those tables that end in “Query” or nothing because those are not tables created through data entry but are tables created by joining selected data from selected tables through the use of SQL. Thus, it can be seen that there are five tables in the database: **Interventions**, **Citations**, **Compendia**, **Portals**, and **Practice Resources**. Each of the five major sections of this FAQ discusses in turn one of these five tables. Each section begins with a brief orientation to the contents of the relevant table.

If you go ahead and **double-click** on each of the five tables of interest, you will see they open up and are identifiable by tabs that are the reverse of the tabs for Excel worksheets: they are at the top of the screen, not the bottom. And unlike Excel, where right-clicking on a worksheet tab offers you the opportunity to delete the worksheet, in Access the only thing this FAQ assumes you will do when you right-click a table’s tab is to close the tab; that does not cause the table to be deleted from the database! **So go ahead and open all five tables and then right-click on any of their tabs and close them individually or all at once.**

**Finding an Intervention**

The FAQ in this section all address the **Interventions** table (partially shown in **Figure 2**), which has many rows, each of which represents an evidence-based intervention, or at least an intervention that is reputed to be evidence-based. The **first column (Intervention ID)** is an arbitrary number, or key, that can be used to link information about the intervention to other information in other tables. Specifically, if you look in the **Citations** table or the **Portals** table, you might see one or more rows that have the same Intervention ID which you see in the Interventions table.

![Figure 2](image-url)
Other fields in this table give the name of the intervention, the population for which it was designed or can be used, and then three columns of ratings of the effectiveness of the intervention. The vast majority of the interventions in this table have ratings from the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (CEBC) or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA). The Our Rating column is an automatic function of the SAMSHA rating, where one exists, which explains why CEBC ratings are only included in the database when SAMSHA does not have a rating for the intervention in question. There is also a field indicating whether an intervention is grounded by design in the context of Children’s Services and then 15 more flags indicating the appropriateness of the intervention for various problem areas (e.g., PA Sub Abuse refers to the Problem Area of Substance Abuse).

**How do I find information about an Evidence-Based Intervention if I know its name?**

Click on the “Intervention” column header. This will cause the entire column to be highlighted. Now right click on the header and there are two items that are on the pop-up menu that will help you find an intervention. You can either click Find and search for a word or phrase, or you can click Sort (up) or Sort (down) to alphabetize the list.

**How do I limit the interventions to those that are considered most effective?**

Go to the Our Rating column. Instead of right clicking in the column heading, look for the small symbol that looks like a combination of a small triangle and an up arrow. This is just one icon; you don’t have to try to hit either the triangle or the arrow. What you will see is shown in Figure 3.
This is the familiar “filter tool” from Excel, but whereas in Excel you have to manually apply filters and take care in making sure they apply to all of the columns of materials from which you might be sorting or selecting, Access automatically provides the filter tool for all columns of every table.

Suppose you want just the very most effective evidence-based interventions, those that correspond to Our Rating values of 4 and 5. Use the filter tool to uncheck the values of 1, 2, and 3. Please take care to note that after you have done this, there will be a different symbol in the Our Rating column header. Now it is an up arrow and a funnel. While subtle, it is important to recognize when your column have been filtered! Look carefully at Figure 4.

To turn off the filter, go back to the filter tool and click on “Select All.”
How do I limit the interventions to those that are for a given problem?

Go to the **PA Substance Abuse** column. Use the **filter tool** (see previous answer) to **select only those EBP that are “Yes”** (i.e., the box is checked).

How do I limit the interventions to those that meet multiple criteria?

See the two previous answers. Any number of columns can be filtered simultaneously.

Finding a Citation

The database does not provide citations for all interventions, but for nearly every intervention rated 3, 4 or 5 there will be one or more citations to published reports in the scientific literature.

The complete bibliographic reference for each citation is not part of the database, but is instead found in the list of References for Interventions that is attached to this document.

How do I find citations directly from the Interventions table?

The easiest way to find citations is directly from the **Interventions table**. Observe the small boxes with + symbols to the left of an Intervention ID. Click on it and a new window will open on top of the Interventions table that will contain all of the citations in the data base for that intervention as seen in Figure 5.

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**Figure 5**
How do I find citations for a given Intervention by looking in the Citations table?

First find the **Intervention ID** of the intervention you are interested in. Let’s suppose that ID value is 3 (Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy). Now open the citations table, highlight the filter at the top of the Intervention ID column and clear all the boxes except 3. The result is shown in **Figure 6**.

![Figure 6](image)

**How do I find citations if I know the name of an author?**

Go to the **Citations table**, highlight the column, and then hit CTRL-F (the standard Microsoft Office search key). Let’s suppose you wish to find citations on which Dakof is an author. It is important in the search box to indicate that you want to match “Any Part of Field” (by default, Access tries to match the whole field) and that you want to search “All” (as opposed to just “Up” or “Down”). See **Figure 7**.
How do I find citations by research design?

Now that you know how to filter tables, you can simply go into the Citations table and select from the Research Design field only those studies that are of interest. These might be randomized clinical trials (RCT), for example, or meta-analyses.

Using the Compendia Table

The Compendia table contains URL for 21 online resource sites that were the primary places from which interventions and practices were identified for this project. These sites are updated frequently and represent important resources for people interested in accessing the latest thinking on what works in children's services.

The scientific literature is archival but the web is not. There is no guarantee that these portals will still be available or contain the information you are seeking.

Using the Portals Table to find a Website

In many cases, though not all, you can learn more about an intervention of interest by going to an online portal listed in the Portals table. To use this table, you have to have identified the Intervention ID of an intervention. If you are interested in Intervention 3, then you will find it associated, in the Portals table with the following URL: http://tfcbt.musc.edu/

Finding a Practice Resource

The systematic research review did not identify only evidence-based interventions. It also identified 111 best practices for children’s services work, such as how to engage families, do assessments, etc.

The complete bibliographic reference for each best practice is not part of the database, but is instead found in the list of References for Best Practice at the end of this document.

For all but 8 practices, there was a webpage from which the cited reference can be obtained or (in a few cases), from which additional information about the practice can be obtained.
Interventions Reference List


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Best Practices Reference List


Health Service Executive (2011).

Holland, S., & O’Neill, S. (2006), ‘We had to be there to make sure it was what we wanted’: Enabling children’s participation in family decision-making through the family group conference. *Childhood, 13*, 91-111.


Mississippi Division of Family and Children’s Services (2004b). *Supervisor’s Guide to Implementing Family-centered Practice*.


NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (undated). *Case Management Standards Toolkit.*


ProtectOHIO Consortium FTM Workgroup (March 2011). *Practice Manual for ProtectOHIO Family Team Meetings*.


Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (June 2009). *Family Care Community Partnership (FCCP) Practice Standards*.


SPHERE Institute (March 2006). *Analysis of Team Case Planning Practice in San Mateo County*. Submitted to County of San Mateo, Human Services Agency, Belmont, CA.


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Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners, Healthy Children Committee (2012). *Blueprint for a Comprehensive and Aligned System for Screening and Assessment of Young Children*.

