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

Karoly, 2009
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

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