

## **Evidence Criteria Used to Evaluate Resources in The Playbook: Better Care for People with Complex Needs**

### **Why did we develop evidence criteria for The Playbook?**

Most users of The Playbook will want to know how strong the evidence is for Playbook concepts, models, and tools before deciding whether or not to test or adopt them. To address these questions, all resources proposed for inclusion in The Playbook have been curated, and only credible or promising resources are included. Each resource — including formal trials and research studies, case studies, perspectives, and reviews — was assigned an evidence level based on the criteria described below. We have endeavored to develop a common language that users of The Playbook will find intuitive, practical, and rigorous.

### **The levels of evidence**

For all levels of evidence, adaptation for local context will be important. Additional background regarding approaches to testing, adapting, and spreading interventions can be consulted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Parry GJ, Carson-Stevens A, Luff DF, McPherson ME, Goldmann DA. Recommendations for evaluation of healthcare improvement initiatives. *Acad Pediatr*. 2013;13(6 Suppl):S23-30, and Perla R, Reid A, Cohen S, and Parry G. Health Care Reform And The Trap Of The “Iron Law”; *HealthAffairs Blog* April 22, 2015. <http://healthaffairs.org/blog/2015/04/22/health-care-reform-and-the-trap-of-the-iron-law/>

| LEVEL OF EVIDENCE         | TYPE                                                         | EXPLANATION/DESCRIPTION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Strong Evidence</b>    | For individual studies                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Randomized Control Trial (RCT)                               | Concept tested in rigorous, randomized effectiveness studies (including cluster randomized controlled trials and randomized step wedge, factorial, or quasi-experimental designs) <i>(Note: Studies with these designs offer very strong evidence and should be ready to implement with local adaptation.)</i> |
|                           | Non-randomized Trial with Comparison Group                   | Concept tested in effectiveness studies with comparison groups (including non-randomized trials, before-after studies, interrupted time series studies, and repeated measures studies) <i>(Note: may be ready to implement with local adaptation.)</i>                                                         |
|                           | For reviews of multiple studies                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Meta-analysis                                                | One or more meta-analyses of studies of an intervention showing effectiveness <i>(Note: these studies offer very strong evidence and should be ready to implement with local adaptation.)</i>                                                                                                                  |
|                           | Systematic Review (with evidence grading)                    | A systematic review of studies, giving a level of evidence for each study included <i>(Note: likely ready to implement with local adaptation.)</i>                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Moderate Evidence</b>  | For individual studies                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Rigorous Observational Study                                 | Concept demonstrated to be effective in one or more rigorous observational studies with comparison groups and appropriate adjustment for bias and confounding <i>(Note: may be ready to implement with local adaptation.)</i>                                                                                  |
|                           | For reviews of multiple studies                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Systematic Review (without evidence grading)                 | A systematic review of studies, not giving a level of evidence for each study included <i>(Note: may be ready to implement with local adaptation.)</i>                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Promising Evidence</b> | For individual studies                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Case study                                                   | One or more rigorous real-world case studies <i>(Note: promising idea ready for further testing and small-scale implementation with local adaptation.)</i>                                                                                                                                                     |
|                           | For reviews of multiple studies                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Non-systematic Review (with evidence grading)                | A non-systematic review of studies, with evidence grading <i>(Note: promising ideas ready for further testing and small-scale implementation with local adaptation.)</i>                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Expert Opinion</b>     | For individual reports                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Individual report, commentary or perspective                 | Expert or group of experts who, based on their experience, present a new idea, concept or model, which has not been formally evaluated <i>(Note: promising idea needing further testing or research)</i>                                                                                                       |
|                           | For reviews of multiple studies                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | A non-systematic review of studies, without evidence grading | Non-systematic review of studies without evidence grading <i>(Note: promising Ideas needing further testing or research)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                   |

## How the criteria were developed

We reviewed a range of systems for evaluating strength of evidence (including the [Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development and Evaluation working group](#) and the [Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care review group](#)). To the extent possible, we also evaluated resources according to sound epidemiological principles, including contemporary adaptations of Bradford-Hill's criteria for assessing causation<sup>2</sup>.

Some systems would not meet the needs of Playbook users, so we have used a system with adaptation of the logic of EPOC to ensure rigor, but embracing case studies, reviews, and other resources that predominate in the field of improving care for patients with complex needs.

For example, we looked for credible comparison groups (whether randomized or not) to assess secular trend; time-ordered data display and analysis with clear timing of interventions; plausibility and consistency with theory; magnitude of the claimed effect; dose-response; and generalizability across diverse contexts. We paid particular attention to potential sources of bias, as recommended by EPOC<sup>3</sup> and where appropriate, adjustment for confounding. For all resources, we caution that some adaptation for local contexts<sup>4</sup> and conditions will be necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/83/10/792.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>

[http://epoc.cochrane.org/sites/epoc.cochrane.org/files/uploads/16%20Summary%20assessments%20of%20the%20risk%20of%20bias%202013%2008%2012\\_2.pdf](http://epoc.cochrane.org/sites/epoc.cochrane.org/files/uploads/16%20Summary%20assessments%20of%20the%20risk%20of%20bias%202013%2008%2012_2.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.squire-statement.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&PageID=471>