

The Incredible Years

Evaluation FAQs

Q: Why is my sample size smaller than I thought it would be?

A: This could be the result of a number of factors including:

- Participants dropped out of the program.
 - Participants were not present on the days you post-tested. *You might want to consider post-testing over two weeks near the end of the sessions.*
 - Participants who took the pre-test chose not to take the post-test.
 - Too many of the responses on a survey were missing. *This is tricky. In order to properly analyze the data there is a threshold which must be met (usually no more than 25% missing data.) Yet, you will always want to make sure that participants feel as if they can skip ANY questions. In the end, data cleaning and exclusion of some participants assures the highest quality and most accurate data results, so you can expect a few surveys to not be used because of too much missing data.*
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Q: Are there any ideas or tips for getting completed parent surveys?

A: Yes! Here are some ideas:

- Have a “paper party” a ½ hour before the first parent group starts.
 - Provide incentives such as a \$5 gift card to a local market.
 - Make sure parents know that it really helps families like theirs.
 - Feel free to say something like “It may seem like we’re nosy, but you will remain anonymous”.
 - Feel free to help the parents to read through it.
 - If you think they won’t have too many questions, let the parents take the forms home and return them the following week.
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Q: What is confidentiality and why can’t I get results if my sample size is smaller than 5?

A: Confidentiality refers to ensuring program participants that all of their survey responses are private, and only used for overall evaluation purposes. If data results can possibly be linked back to individuals (e.g. “oh, I know who answered that way”), it is a violation of their confidentiality to report those results. We have considered at least 5 surveys to be adequate to ensure confidentiality.

Q: What is effect size and why is it important?

A: Effect size shows how much of an effect a program had. Generally speaking, effect sizes of .2 or above reflect program “success”. The larger the effect size, the larger the effect! Effect sizes are important because they provide an indication of the amount of change regardless of sample size. That is, even if you only have a few participants (5 or more), you can determine the relative success of your program.

Q: Why is 15 the “magic number” for statistical significance?

A: Statistical significance tests are about “testing” the probability of events. Plain and simple, you need enough data available to in order to trust the test. While 15 isn’t a “magic number”, it is one that is most agreed upon by social researchers.

Q: The outcome results are not as good as I would have hoped. What might have happened?

A: There are any number of reasons, including:

- Your sample size (the number of participants who took your pre-test and post-test) was too small for a change to be detected.
- Participants weren’t completely honest in their responses. *Did you ensure confidentiality? Did you make sure participant names were not included on their surveys? (But, make sure that you have a tracking system in place!)*
- The program may not be sufficient to make a significant effect on the participants. *Were you implementing the program with fidelity? That is, did you deliver enough of the program in the way it was intended?*
- There was not enough “room for change” from pre to post tests. For example, you are looking for changes in positive parenting. As it turns out, at the beginning of your program, parents report very high positive parenting scores; leaving no room for even higher scores at post-test. This is often called a “ceiling effect.” *If you are targeting higher risk parents, do you need to think about recruitment?*

Q: I’d like to know more about the evaluation. Can I talk to the evaluators?

A: Absolutely! You can contact any member of the Incredible Years Evaluation team at OMNI Institute. The best way to contact us is to send an email to epic@omni.org (EPIC stands for **E**valuation of **P**revention **I**n **C**olorado.) If you are a phone person, call 1-800-279-2070 and ask for either Mary Jane Carroll or Carole Broderick.

Q: I need new copies of evaluation forms. How do I get those?

A: Many of the evaluation forms can be accessed online. You can go online to www.omni.org, and follow the links to the Incredible Years Evaluation Resource page. If you have any trouble, or if you need more scantrons, please send an email to epic@omni.org with your request.