Frequently Asked Questions About
Conducting Research on Conscious Discipline

There are two main purposes of collecting data: 1) monitoring implementation and 2) conducting research.
1. **Implementation data** can guide coaching, continuous improvement, and program decision making.
2. **Data to support research** are collected systematically to draw conclusions that are applicable to other settings.

This handout is designed primarily to answer questions for those conducting research.

How does Conscious Discipline work?

Conscious Discipline (CD) is a school-wide intervention aimed at helping staff and families recognize and manage their own emotional state so they can more effectively interact with and support children, helping them develop positive social and emotional skills. CD's **theory of change**, **logic model**, and **implementation framework** explain the pathways from training, to administering the program, to the outcomes associated with full implementation.

What types of research study designs should I consider?

Study design options are listed below. Identify your research question(s) and desired outcome(s) to help you select the most appropriate type of study.

- **Descriptive** - for a small sample size, without enough power to achieve statistical significance
- **Case Study** - when studying a single classroom, family, child, or sub-method [e.g., home visits]
- **Pre-post quasi-experimental** - using a comparison group that was not selected at random
- **Randomized control trial** - RCT; when the subjects are randomly assigned to either experiencing the program, business as usual, or an alternative intervention[1]

What types of data should I collect?

Data collected may vary depending on the focus of the study. In addition to basic demographics about study participants (e.g., age, gender, socio-economic status, educational background), recommended staff, program, child, and family level data are listed below. Where referenced, "social-emotional skills" may include: social competencies (e.g., using words to articulate needs and solve problems); emotional competencies (e.g., recognizing and managing strong feelings); and/or self-regulation (calming down; impulse control).

Staff	Program	Child	Family
• CD training exposure and intensity (number of hours and types of events) • Openness to trying new method (using the CD **"Are you ready?"** assessment) • Social-emotional, executive function, or stress outcomes (self-report or direct assessment) • Work attendance	• Classroom climate, quality, or other environmental scale ratings • Implementation fidelity (**Rubric Progress Assessment**) • Family or staff satisfaction ratings	• Social-emotional, executive function, and/or academic outcomes (via teacher or parent report, or direct assessment) • Rates of behavioral referrals • School attendance	• CD training exposure and intensity (number of hours and types of events) • Social-emotional, executive function, or stress outcomes (self-report or direct assessment) • Parent-child relationships (e.g., warmth and attachment) • Parenting skills (e.g., discipline, problem solving)

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[1] *Please contact **Conscious Discipline** or their research partner **Child Trends** if you are considering an RCT.*

What types of measures or assessment tools should I use?

Data collection tools include surveys (for adults and older children), direct assessments (for adults and children), qualitative interview protocols (for adults and older children), and observational measures (for classrooms, adults, and children). CD's **Research Guidelines & Recommended Assessment Instruments** lists many valid and reliable tools to select from.

When and how often should I collect data?

Data for each research participant (i.e., staff, child, family member, or classroom/program) should be collected from at least two time-points (pre- and post-test). For the best chance of finding meaningful results:

1. **Pre-test:** Assess research participants before administering the program (e.g., for staff – before they receive CD training; for children – within the first month of school; for families – before they participate in the parenting class series or home visits).
2. **Post-test:** Assess the participants again at the conclusion of the program. For parents, follow up several months after receiving CD's parenting curricula is also recommended to assess longitudinal change.

Please also be sure to follow proper research ethics or get IRB approval before conducting research.

How big a sample size is needed to find meaningful results?

The sample size will vary depending on your research study question and design). You can determine the sample size required for your specific project by conducting a power analysis. There are several good on-line tools available for this purpose that can be found by searching for "power analysis calculator."

Why is fidelity of implementation important? How do I check or ensure fidelity of implementation?

Conscious Discipline advises that the quality of implementation may vary greatly depending on the level of training, coaching, and personal commitment/willingness to embrace CD principles and practices (referred to in the curriculum as "the seven powers & structures"). CD anticipates that teachers, parents, and children will not experience all of CD's benefits if it is implemented poorly or partially. For example, teachers who create a safe place and display the Feeling Buddies – but who do not consistently, actively model and teach safety, connection, and problem solving – are unlikely to see meaningful changes in their students' behavior. This **webpage** offers currently available individual, classroom, and program level self-reflection and fidelity assessment tools (free after signing up for a membership). If your program needs training or consultation regarding implementation, please **contact CD**.

What age groups/school levels are the curriculum and research tools appropriate for?

The curriculum and other materials were initially developed with early childhood and elementary programs in mind, but have been successfully adapted up into middle school. The assessments, rubrics, and evaluation tools are applicable to all ages and can be tailored as needed for your circumstances.

How can I share my research?

Conscious Discipline wants to know about your research project or completed research papers! To notify CD about your work, please complete the **research query form**. You may also consider publishing your findings to help extend the evidence base for CD. We look forward to hearing from you!

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