# SEARCHING THE EVIDENCE GUIDELINES

## *Search Strategy*

**Internet Search.** Start with a broad search to orient yourself to your topic and define and identify appropriate search terms for your policy or program of interest.

**Search Published Literature.** Next, use your key words to look for relevant literature. Systematic reviews and peer-reviewed literature often provide the most scientifically sound information.

**Search Other Resources.** Grey literature and organizations that assess policy and program effectiveness (rating organizations) can also provide useful information. Resources will vary by health factor, policy, and program.

**Screen and Review Articles.** Review what you've found, and identify the most relevant, recent, and rigorous reviews, articles, and summaries from rating organizations. Summarize key findings, and look for consistent themes.

## DEFINITIONS

**Systematic Reviews.** A systematic review is a literature review that attempts to identify, appraise and synthesize all the empirical evidence that meets pre-specified eligibility criteria to answer a given research question.[1] Systematic reviews of randomized controlled trials are considered the gold standard of evidence.

**Peer-Reviewed Literature.** Under peer-review, all articles submitted for publication have gone through a rigorous process of evaluation by editors and possibly external reviewers.[2]

**Grey literature.** This type of literature includes documents produced at all levels of government, academics, business, and organization in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing.[3]

**Rating Organizations.** Rating organizations assess the effectiveness of policies and programs using a pre-defined set of criteria and labels. Criteria and labels vary substantially from organization to organization.

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[1] The Cochrane Library: About Cochrane Systematic reviews and Protocols.
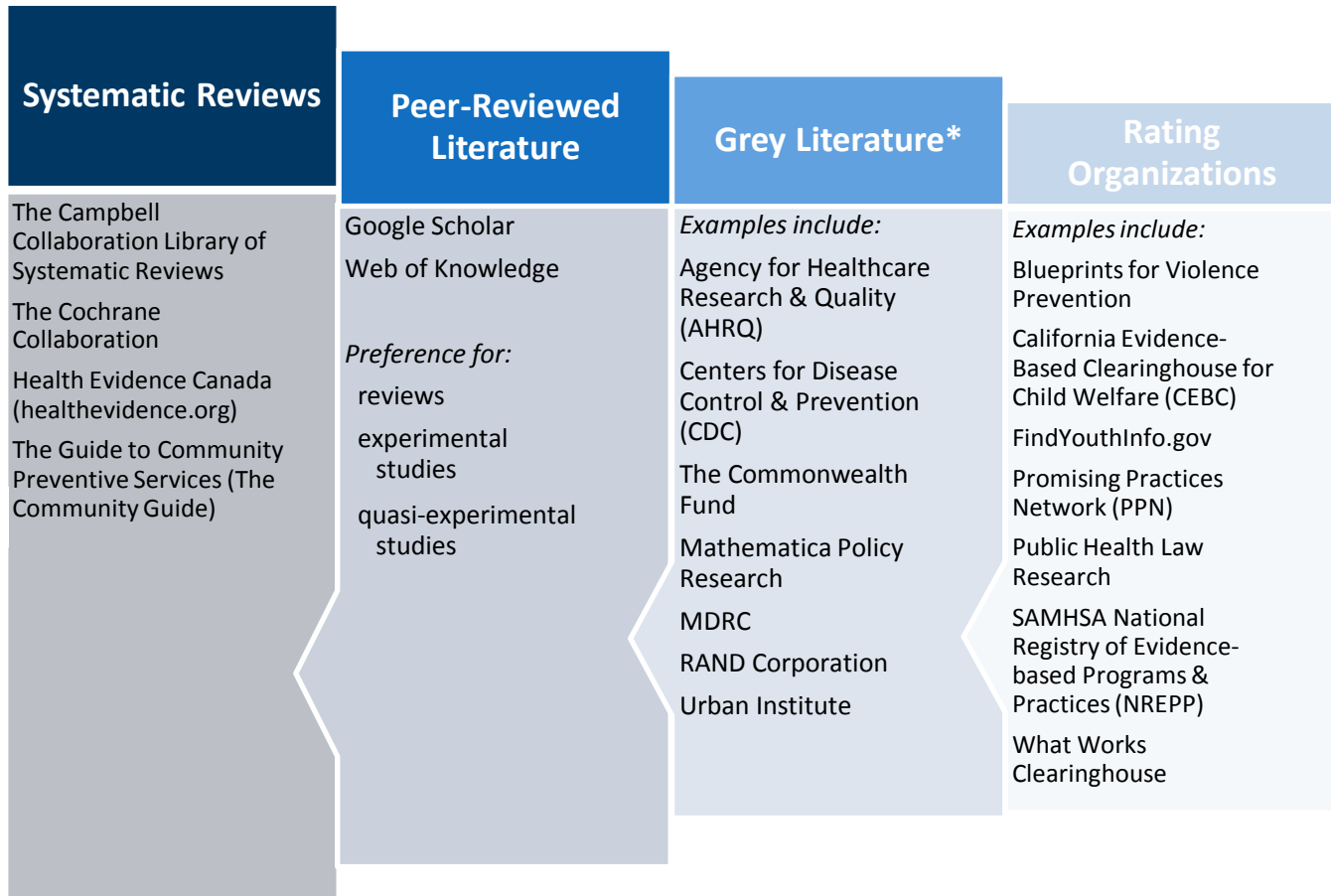http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/AboutCochraneSystematicReviews.html (accessed 2/24/12)
[2] Suffolk University library guides. Peer Review and Primary Literature. An Introduction: What makes an Article "Peer-Reviewed" or "Primary"?.
http://suffolk.libguides.com/content.php?pid=155492&sid=1317776 (accessed 3/7/12)
[3] GreyNet International: Grey Literature Network Service. http://www.greynet.org/greynethome.html (accessed 2/24/12)

# SEARCH STRATEGY & SOURCES

| Systematic Reviews | Peer-Reviewed Literature | Grey Literature* | Rating Organizations |
|---|---|---|---|
| The Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews | Google Scholar | *Examples include:* | *Examples include:* |
| The Cochrane Collaboration | Web of Knowledge | Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality (AHRQ) | Blueprints for Violence Prevention |
| Health Evidence Canada (healthevidence.org) | *Preference for:* | Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) | California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) |
| The Guide to Community Preventive Services (The Community Guide) | reviews | The Commonwealth Fund | FindYouthInfo.gov |
| | experimental studies | Mathematica Policy Research | Promising Practices Network (PPN) |
| | quasi-experimental studies | MDRC | Public Health Law Research |
| | | RAND Corporation | SAMHSA National Registry of Evidence-based Programs & Practices (NREPP) |
| | | Urban Institute | What Works Clearinghouse |

- Entities listed as producers of grey literature often also publish literature in peer reviewed formats.