General Advice on Evidence-Based Programs

*OAH has compiled lessons learned and advice related to implementation and cost implications of **evidence-based programs (EBPs)** from TPP grantees. The information below is intended to provide useful tips and overall feedback that organizations should consider when choosing and implementing an EBP.*

Program components

- Be sure you **identify your target population** before looking at the characteristics of the different curricula. Some curricula were designed to be implemented with specific populations.
- **Access curricula and videos, whenever possible, prior to purchasing** to ensure that the materials are a good fit for the community and that the program will meet the needs of the participants.
- Engage with community leaders and representatives to **assess the fit** of the curriculum with the intended target population. This can help you with buy-in later on.
- Familiarize yourself with your **state's policies** about sexual health education classroom requirements or restrictions ahead of time. You may need to adapt the program to make it compliant with your state's policies, especially regarding information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and contraceptive methods.
- Familiarize yourself with your **local school district's policies on condom demonstrations prior to selecting a program**. If your site does not allow a condom demonstration, it is best to select a program that does not include this component rather than trying to adapt a program that requires it.
- **Try to anticipate any adaptations in advance** to the best of your ability. If numerous adaptations are needed, it may be necessary to select a different program.
- Don't expect adaptations to be approved quickly; it can take time to go through the **OAH adaptation review process**.
- Develop **relationships with the program developer.** This will be critical to ensure that requested adaptations are consistent with the program's core components.
- Consider making changes to the gendered language and names in the role plays to **make the program more inclusive of LGBTQ youth**.
- Consider minor adaptations to make programs that have been designed for a particular racial or ethnic group more **culturally relevant** for other groups (e.g., generalizing information to be inclusive of different racial and/or ethnic groups, changing the names in role plays). This may not be possible for culturally specific EBPs such as *¡Cuídate!*, *Aban Aya Youth Project*, or *SiHLE*.

- Consider **translating program materials** if you are working with youth or families whose primary language is not English. Keep in mind that translating materials requires approval from the developer/distributor and OAH.
- Consider making minor adaptations to make programs more **culturally appropriate** for the youth you plan to serve (e.g., updating slang terms, making handouts visually engaging).
- Consider adding **ice-breaker activities and satisfaction surveys**. These activities can help keep participants engaged and make them feel like they are involved in the program.

Staffing and professional development

- **Assess your training needs** and seek out trainers who meet your needs (e.g., offers training of trainers, trains on multiple topics, provides an online booster).
- Compare training options between several organizations, when possible, to ensure you receive training that will best meet your needs. In addition to **cost**, compare the **quality**, the availability of technical assistance and **support after the training**, and the **qualifications and experience** of trainers.
- **Ask questions about the content and focus** of the training to ensure the training will cover what you need. Also, inform the trainers of particular cultural norms that are relevant to your population so that the training will meet your needs.
- Clarify the **requirements** for becoming a master trainer before investing in training. Trainers may need to have a special certification.
- Contact your distributor to **ensure the trainer you selected is qualified to train your organization**. Individuals that have completed a TOT may not be qualified to train staff outside their agency.
- **Ask for references** from training organizations or your OAH project officer so that you can get a sense of the quality of the training and availability of support after the training. Make sure to contact references before committing funds.
- **Partner with other organizations —** especially other TPP-funded grantees **—** to coordinate training. Consider contacting the training organization to gather information about other organizations that are seeking trainings for the program to coordinate training together. This helps reduce costs for each individual organization and helps build partnerships and collaboration across organizations.
- Hire **trainers who are familiar with implementing programs with your target population** and within your particular community context.
- Plan for professional development and training for staff beyond training on the program model. Consider providing **ongoing professional development** on a wide range of topics necessary to ensure effective implementation of programs and engagement of youth.
- Carefully consider **which staff need to attend** different trainings to ensure the best use of resources and time. It may assist with stakeholder buy-in to send administrative partner staff to a training, but make sure to follow up with them afterwards; don't send staff *just* to fill the needed number of seats.
- **Adequately budget** for both initial and ongoing staff training. It can be challenging to find both the funds and the time for staff training.

- Provide staff with **media training** so they are comfortable answering questions about sexual health in various online formats (e.g., social media, text messaging).
- Provide staff with **cultural competency trainings** so they are familiar with how local customs influence program implementation. These trainings can help staff connect with participants and further engage them.
- Consider providing potential staff with an **understanding of what fidelity** is during the interview process. This ensures that people understand what will be required when implementing the program.
- Provide staff with **opportunities to identify and overcome their personal biases** prior to delivering program content.
- Make sure to find out ahead of time if there are any **requirements from the implementation site** that staff need to fulfill before they can start implementing the program (e.g., **finger printing, medical records, background checks, educational attainment, and professional certifications**). Failure to do so can delay your start date.
- Make sure staff understand **school requirements and policies with regard to physical, sexual, and emotional violence**. Staff should know the laws about child maltreatment and be familiar with resources within the school and/or community to provide help for youth.
- Hire **community outreach coordinators** who can provide information about the program to parents of the youth being served to increase student participation in school.
- Hire **staff who are flexible, positive,** and are willing to try different things to ensure the program is going to work.
- Consider **hiring facilitators who youth can identify with**, such as hiring male facilitators to work with young men. Having mixed gender program facilitators can make it easier to answer personal questions students raise. Keep in mind that all new hires must meet the requirements of the EBP (e.g., educational attainment, professional certification).
- Develop **mock classroom sessions** for new hires to ensure that they are comfortable delivering sexual health information to youth. This can help to reduce staff turnover as well as reduce the costs associated with training new hires because this ensures that new hires understand what will be required of them when implementing the program.
- Be sure to hire front-line **staff who can effectively engage young people**. Make sure to contact references and/or provide opportunities for potential hires to teach a sample lesson in order to assess their skills.

Stakeholder and parent buy-in

- Consider **creating relationships with multiple stakeholders** within the school district early on. These individuals can serve as advocates and support systems for the program if the implementation site experiences staff turnover.
- Develop **relationships with school officials, administrative staff, and faculty** to have your program's curriculum approved by the school board. This can assuage concerns and fears about the program's activities that school administrators and parents may raise.

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- **Build trust** with school officials and faculty by being transparent about the curriculum's components (e.g., be forthcoming with information about condom demonstrations).
- Develop **relationships with trusted community liaisons** who are able communicate information to parents about what the program entails.
- Host **orientation sessions for both the parents and the community-based organization staff** to help them understand the program and to get buy-in. This is particularly important if your program focuses on sexual behavior or includes a condom demonstration.
- Emphasize the breadth of skills covered by your program, **and how these skills can** be applied to youth's everyday lives. This can help with getting buy-in from the schools and communities.
- **Provide parents with feedback** on how best to have conversations with their child about sex and sexuality so that they are prepared to handle the conversations that may arise as a result of their child's participation in your program.
- Consider having **parental consent** forms even when not required by the implementation site, with the option to opt-in or opt-out from the program to get parental buy-in. Keep in mind that you must be in compliance with local laws and regulations (e.g., state or school regulations and/or the Institutional Review Boards).
- Cultivate relationships and partnerships with organizations that might be able to **refer youth** to your program (e.g., school districts, school-based clinics, and other organizations in the community).