

EVALUATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UPDATE

for OAH & ACYF Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Grantees

January 2011

EVENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The recent Teenage Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Tier 1 and Tier 2/PREP Innovative Strategies grant awards made by the Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) and the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reflect broader initiatives within the federal government to support the implementation of evidence-based programs and to produce new effectiveness evidence. The TPP grants program supports these goals in two important ways.

First, most of the TPP grant funding is tied to prior, rigorous evidence of effectiveness. Nearly three-quarters of the grantees (Tier 1) received funding to replicate program models identified as effective through a systematic review of the evidence conducted by Mathematica Policy Research under contract with HHS.¹ The second way this program supports broader federal initiatives is through the production of new evidence on program effectiveness. Approximately half of the TPP grantees (Tier 1 ranges C and D and all Tier 2/PREP Innovative Strategies grantees) are required to conduct a rigorous and independent effectiveness evaluation.

OAH and ACYF expect that these evaluations will be designed and implemented to meet the criteria established by the Pregnancy Prevention Research Evidence Review (PPRER) and other best practices for high-quality effectiveness evaluations. To assist grantees and their local independent evaluators in fulfilling this requirement, OAH contracted with Mathematica and its subcontractors, Child Trends and Concentric Research and Evaluation, to provide evaluation technical assistance (TA) to the TPP Tier 1 and Tier 2/PREP Innovative Strategies grantees administered by OAH and ACYF who have rigorous effectiveness evaluation requirements.

WHO IS THE EVALUATION TA CONTRACTOR?

Mathematica has been conducting policy research and studying policy issues related to youth, families, and other important populations for 40 years. Mathematica's work is guided by a commitment to providing the highest-quality, objective evidence and information in support of sound public policy decisions. In addition, Mathematica's work is rooted in a broader commitment to improving evidence quality by sharing our expertise and developing new methods and approaches for solving complex problems.

The TPP evaluation TA team is led by Susan Zief. Dr. Zief is a Mathematica senior researcher and assistant director of Mathematica's Center for Improving Research Evidence. She has experience managing complex TA projects, including an effort to provide research and evaluation support on behalf of the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education to the Regional Educational Laboratories. Dr. Zief has also conducted a number of rigorous evaluations of interventions targeting at-risk youth, including an experimental study of the Girls Inc. Will Power/Won't Power pregnancy

¹<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/prevention/research/index.html>

The evaluation TA team is committed to helping TPP grantees and their evaluators design and implement rigorous evaluations that align with OAH and ACYF priorities, the evidence review standards, and best practices for effectiveness evaluations. Much of this support will be provided on a one-on-one basis by a TA liaison connected to each grantee and its evaluator.

prevention curriculum. She has completed multiple systematic reviews of the effectiveness evidence in various fields, including a review and meta-analysis of the impacts of after-school programs for the Campbell Collaboration.

Brian Goesling and Jean Knab will assist Dr. Zief as project leaders. Dr. Goesling has been leading the PPRER and is the deputy project director for HHS' *Evaluation of Pregnancy Prevention Approaches*. He also has conducted secondary data analysis of early predictors of adolescent sexual activity and substance use behaviors. Dr. Knab currently oversees systematic reviews of education research for the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), a major ongoing effort to assess and improve the evidence base for education programs that formed the foundation for the PPRER. As part of her work on the WWC, Dr. Knab has provided training and operational and technical oversight to more than 100 staff working in multiple WWC topic areas.

The three key project leaders will be supported by more than a dozen multidisciplinary researchers and data collection experts at Mathematica, Child Trends, and Concentric to deliver the highest-quality evaluation TA to TPP grantees and evaluators. The evaluation TA team will also draw upon the expertise of nationally renowned experts in evaluation.

WHAT WILL THE EVALUATION TA CONTRACTOR DO?

The evaluation TA team is committed to helping TPP grantees and their evaluators design and implement rigorous evaluations that align with OAH and ACYF priorities, the evidence review standards, and best practices for effectiveness evaluations. Much of this support will be provided on a one-on-one basis by a TA liaison connected to each grantee and its evaluator. The TA liaison for each grantee will be available to answer questions, hold regular telephone calls to discuss evaluation designs and implementation, and meet with the grantee and the evaluator at the national conference. The TA liaison will also connect the grantee and the evaluator with additional resources as necessary, including experts in specific evaluation areas, such as Institutional Review Boards and measurement.

The TA team will also support the grantees and their evaluators through a variety of group activities, including:

- Webinars on timely evaluation topics
- Updates that address frequently asked questions
- Evaluation Briefs on timely evaluation topics
- Presentations at the annual TPP conferences (see the list of scheduled presentations for the upcoming 2011 conferences on the first page of this update)
- A TPP Evaluation TA website that includes an Evaluation Technical Assistance Request System (ETARS)

Importantly, TA topics and opportunities are not set in stone; they will be developed as the program's first year unfolds and the evaluation TA team learns more about the grantees' evaluation needs and requests.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Under the direction of OAH and ACYF, the evaluation TA team is currently reviewing the evaluation plans submitted with the grant applications, along with the supplemental information grantees recently submitted to their project officer in response to comments noted in their Summary Statement. Following the review of these materials, the evaluation TA team will be communicating with grantees and evaluators to (1) learn more about any recent revisions to the evaluation plans, and (2) provide feedback on revisions that are necessary to ensure that the design plans are consistent with standards for high-quality effectiveness evaluations and with OAH and ACYF's expectations. In some cases, the team will also provide grantees and their evaluators with additional considerations that could further strengthen their designs. Within the next month, we will release the first *TPP Evaluation Brief* that will describe the criteria used to assess the evaluation plans and provide guidance to support the requested revisions to the plans.

HOW CAN YOU REACH THE EVALUATION TA TEAM?

In the near future, a project-specific website will be available for grantees and evaluators to submit questions and suggestions for evaluation TA topics and access helpful resources. You also will soon be introduced to your TA liaisons. As you register for the upcoming national conferences, please sign up for one-on-one meetings with members of the evaluation TA team during the designated time slots. Until then, the evaluation TA team is available at 1-866-336-3880 (toll free), or you can request assistance through your project officer.