Office of Population Affairs

TIP SHEET: EVALUATION STRATEGIES FOR VIRTUAL IMPLEMENTATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID

As schools and community organizations across the country have closed in response to COVID-19, Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPP) grantees have had to quickly assess the feasibility of virtual implementation and start planning for it. Transitioning quickly to online delivery can be challenging, but it's also an opportunity to test new approaches to providing content through a new platform. This tip sheet has some points to consider in transitioning implementation and evaluation online, including assessing need and demand, demonstrating feasibility, conducting continuous quality improvement, documenting lessons learned, and undertaking data collection. Also included are spotlights from TPP19 grantees who are in the process of or have already transitioned their programs online.

Assessing need and demand

The first step in going virtual is to determine whether it's feasible. This means reaching out to (1) your curriculum developer, as applicable, to understand whether it's possible to deliver the program online; (2) your partners, to assess their needs and desire to continue programming during the disruption; and (3) your participants, to determine their ability to join virtual sessions (both in terms of technology access and general stability of circumstances). Once you've made that initial assessment of feasibility, consider the following tips to help shape the design of your online program:

- Survey your participants about their constraints. Consider using this tool to document information they give you about constraints and any possible accommodations that could be made.[1] If participants are lacking Internet access, try to reach out via phone or mail. Though you may not reach everyone, try to collect responses from a good sample of your group. Be sure any data collection activities comply with your Institutional Review Board's guidelines. Information to collect includes (but may not be limited to):
  - What devices will they use to access the program?
  - What is their comfort level with the platform you're considering?
  - Do they have reliable Internet access or cell phone service?
  - What's their learning environment like? This is important given that young people are especially likely to need privacy to talk about these subjects. Will other family members be present or nearby? Are they able to find a private space to engage in sensitive conversations?
  - What is their ability to commit to the schedule? Will other family members be accessing the computer or phone during the day?
  - Other considerations might include access to supplies they need for activities.

[1] This design tool, along with additional resources, can be found here: https://uxdesign.cc/how-to-leverage-design-to-reimagine-your-class-online-f9b53de28c6a

- Take steps to ensure your partner is comfortable with your delivery approach. Depending on the circumstances, this could involve co-designing an approach or simply taking the time to share your plans with them. For an example of how San Diego Youth Services involved partners in its planning, see Spotlight 1.
  - If you've been partnering with schools and they can't accommodate your program via their distance learning, explore other ways your partner may be able to help. For instance, they may be able support your program by promoting it to their students and encouraging youth to attend outside of the school's distance learning hours.

> ***Grantee Spotlight 1: A collaborative approach to going virtual***
> **San Diego Youth Services (SDYS)**, a TPP19 grantee in southern California, partners with schools to deliver teen pregnancy programming. The team is moving to an online delivery format and will coordinate with their school partners to implement it on the same virtual platform used by each school. One of SDYS's challenges is ensuring its partners are comfortable with the implementation plans, so the team is planning **five-minute Zoom webinars** with individual partners to ensure school staff are comfortable with the logistics and to coordinate on planning. Check out the SDYS video here.

Some teams will assess feasibility and determine that continuing with the program is not feasible. In that case, many teams have invested in professional development opportunities to keep their staff engaged. Others are planning for Year 2 of the grant, laying the groundwork for recruitment or reviewing their data as part of a continuous quality improvement plan. Still others are investing time in building their social media presence online to expand messaging in the community about teen pregnancy and program offerings. Also important is staying connected with youth participants to help them feel supported. For an example of how Mission West Virginia is building out its supplemental components to continue serving the community while its core program is on pause, see Spotlight 2.

> ***Grantee Spotlight 2: Being creative with supplemental content***
> As some grantees work to move their content online, others have assessed demand and logistics and decided that virtual implementation is not possible at this moment. **Mission West Virginia**, a TPP19 grantee in rural West Virginia, arrived at this decision because teenagers do not have equal access to laptops and Internet in its delivery area. In the meantime, however, the team is focusing its energy on beefing up its supplemental component, including its educational component for parents and community members. MWV will develop an **e-learning site with archived webinars on topics of interest for parents**—for example, recordings made by its health educators and information on recognizing signs of drug use in children. Although MWV recognizes that not all parents will be able to access the site, the team sees its flexible supplemental programming as an opportunity to do what it can to continue serving the community. MWV is also developing an e-learning site for its staff, with resources for skill building and professional development.

Planning a delivery strategy

Planning a delivery strategy includes making decisions about the mode of delivery and technology platforms, developing plans for training facilitators on the new delivery approach, and determining how you will engage participants via the online version of your program.

Delivery mode and technology platform

- Programs may choose a synchronous or asynchronous approach to online delivery. Synchronous approaches involve live communication, such as videoconferencing, chat forums, or text-based communication. With asynchronous learning, participants won't necessarily be learning at the same time, but they can access materials when they are able to. This type of learning features produced videos, worksheets, discussion boards, or emails. While many teams are using online platforms to share materials, where Internet access is an issue, some teams have delivered hard copies of packets to young people. Grantees may also use a combination of approaches.
- The approach you choose is likely to depend on your partners' preferences for their ongoing learning approaches. For an example of how PATH decided on an approach, see Spotlight 3.

Grantee Spotlight 3: Selecting a delivery approach that meets partner needs
Though many grantee teams are considering delivering content in real time via synchronous learning like videoconferencing, another option—if it's possible to maintain fidelity—is to deliver prepackaged programming content, such as videos and worksheets (asynchronous learning). **PATH**, a TPP19 grantee in northwest Indiana, has chosen **an asynchronous approach** that works well for its school partners, because teachers can include online videos and worksheets related to the program as part of students' weekly assignments. To measure engagement, the team will examine key metrics, including the number of students who view the videos, and will ask students to self-report on whether they completed lessons.

- Similarly, if your partners are already conducting online education or programming, it is ideal to use the same technology, so participants don't have to toggle back and forth between multiple platforms. If you need to select a delivery platform or tools for enhancement, see this crowdsourced list compiled by OPA or this list from UNESCO.

Preparing staff for online delivery

- Make sure your facilitators are comfortable with the technology before going live. Ideally, you'll have time to pilot virtual delivery with a small group of young people. For an example of how LEADS piloted its virtual approach, see Spotlight 4.
- Facilitators could take time to adapt to the new online format, and technology glitches are inevitable. Be prepared to address concerns and issues as they happen. For example, Keiki O Ka Aina, a TPP19 grantee, checks in with its staff three times a day for five-minute sessions that focus on topics to troubleshoot problems or tools to enhance delivery.

Grantee Spotlight 4: A gradual approach to going virtual
LEADS, a TPP19 grantee in St. Petersburg, Florida, successfully launched virtual programming, but not without first implementing a pilot to work out the kinks. LEADS recruited two young people who had previously participated in an in-person session and **piloted virtual implementation**. The aim was not just to get a young person's perspective, but to hear feedback from youth who had experienced the program in person and could talk about how similar the online experience was. When LEADS was ready to launch, the team started with a group of six youth, then increased it to seven. Going forward, LEADS has decided to maintain a group size of 10 or fewer to allow opportunities for engaging discussions in the new online format.

- Another option to prepare facilitators are teach-backs, a strategy in which the person delivering information asks participants in the training or workshop to explain back the concept or skill that was just taught. This is a strategy that could be used with young people in your sessions but can also be used in trainings with facilitators on the new technology to ensure they understand processes and expectations and to correct anything that's not clear. This blog presents a succinct overview of teach-backs.

- If you need help learning about some of the common tools being used, see the linked resources below:
  - Google developed a site with training modules and resources to use its tools for distance learning. This includes a one-pager on Google Meet, a platform commonly used by schools.
  - Many programs and schools are using Zoom. This site provides tips and tricks for Zoom. Given the recent privacy concerns about Zoom, the company's blog discusses how to protect your meeting. This Google doc also has steps you can take to keep your meeting safe.
  - If you're using Microsoft Teams, check out this training site that includes a 5-day guide for shifting to distance learning.

Helping participants to adjust online

Young people could adjust instantaneously to online delivery, but that's not a given. To make the transition smooth, consider the following tips:

- Be upfront and clear about how much time and participation you expect.
- Don't assume that because young people tend to be technologically savvy, they won't need support on the new platform. One best practice from the field of e-mentoring is to conduct a training or walk-through of the platform with participants before launching it.
- Use virtual tools to create an engaging virtual experience. Adjusting to group discussion online can take time. You can help participants feel comfortable engaging by incorporating easy-to-learn tools, such as Kahoot (quizzes), Animoto (animated videos), Padlet (post board), and Mentimeter (polling).
- Think about the things that made your program a success when you were delivering it in person, and do your best to bring them into your online version. With so little time to plan for online delivery, programs might decide to focus on transitioning just the core curriculum. But if key enhancements or supplemental components were critical to the success of your program, you'll enhance your chances of success by bringing them online. To read about Keiki O Ka Aina's success in maintaining its parent component, see Spotlight 5.

> ***Grantee Spotlight 5: Maintaining an essential component online***
> **Keiki O Ka Aina** (KOKA), a TPP19 grantee in Hawaii, designed its in-person program to kick off with a two-hour parent orientation to describe the content of the program, connect with parents on a personal level about how to have conversations with their children, and respond to any questions or concerns. In moving to a virtual platform, the team strongly believed that **the parent component was essential to its success,** and adapted it to a 30-minute Zoom version, in which the aim is still to prepare parents for their role as trusted adults in supporting participants and also to cover some of the logistics of online delivery. As a result, instead of having concerns about how parents will react to the TPP programming once it's brought home, KOKA has found that parents have been supportive partners in encouraging their children to attend sessions each day. KOKA's experience speaks to the importance of maintaining critical enhancements or programmatic supplements in online formats, even if it takes extra planning.

- For thoughts from educators about maintaining engagement and building community online, see the following resources:
  - Maintaining relationships
  - Keeping students engaged
  - Building community
  - Using culturally responsive practices

- General tips for online success
- Resources and tips

Continuous quality improvement (CQI) and lessons learned

Programs have not had much time to plan for online programming, so they will probably have to go through an iterative process to develop a strong approach. To adopt a continuous improvement approach to online delivery, consider the following:

- Document what you're doing, and assess your online strategy. As early as your first lesson, it's a good idea to reflect on what went well and what could be improved on. You may want someone to observe the first few sessions to provide an independent perspective on how things are going. Some specific questions you could ask are:
  - ***For live delivery***
    - Are participants comfortable with the technology? Are they comfortable participating? Are online conversations moving along well, or are people talking over each other?
    - Was the facilitator set up with technology in advance so the session could start on time?
    - Were there any technological glitches? Does the facilitator make good use of platform features, like muting participants, allowing them to raise their hands, or incorporating chat features or polling?
  - ***Documents and videos***
    - How easy is it to access the documents and videos? Have staff who didn't set up the site explore and give feedback. If they have trouble finding course materials, participants might have trouble also.
  - ***General***
    - Does the facilitator give adequate instructions for how to use the learning platform?
    - For a template for conducting observations focused on improvement (not fidelity), see this resource.
- Put a mechanism in place to get rapid feedback from your participants. It's valuable to get feedback in real time as participants are experiencing your lessons. If you're using live delivery, you could opt to set aside five minutes at the end of each lesson to ask how things went or use built-in polling features with software like Zoom. If you're not delivering live or would prefer to get feedback anonymously, you could send a short feedback survey at the end of each lesson. Try to ask about various aspects of the online experience. Here are a few suggestions from Educause:
  - Technological issues: discomfort with the technology; unclear expectations about which applications to use; access to reliable Internet; access to reliable digital devices.
  - Learning issues: finding time to participate; concerns about whether lessons are translating well to remote environment; difficulty focusing or paying attention.
- While gathering feedback after every session is valuable, if it's not feasible, you could also incorporate questions about engagement and satisfaction online onto an existing participant or partner satisfaction survey, in order to gather feedback at the conclusion of each program cycle.

Data collection

Figuring out how to implement your program virtually is often the first step to transitioning to online delivery, but it's also important to consider how you will move and adapt your evaluation activities to an online platform. Below we share tips and methods for data collection to assess your virtual program. However, it's important to keep in mind that, as this is a time of transition, you don't need to collect everything at once. For instance, understanding whether youth are connecting to the virtual program – both in terms of technology and engagement - is critical; collecting pre-post information to understand changes in attitudes and knowledge is useful but could be phased in as you determine a plan for collecting higher priority data first.

Online survey

If you weren't already administering surveys online, you will need to choose an online survey program from the many that exist. Beyond taking this first step, you should also think through how online administration can be different from other forms of survey administration. A few options:

- If you're delivering lessons via live video, you could administer the survey verbally during the session with participants using an online survey form. This could be a good approach if you think you need to explain the questions to participants.
- You could send a link to the survey form in an email, and have participants complete it on their own.
  - Many of the online survey programs, such as SurveyMonkey® or Qualtrics, allow you to track who completed your survey if you take this approach. SurveyMonkey, for example, allows you to track the number of people who opened your email, read through the survey, and completed it. Even if you choose to track survey completion rates, you can still ensure the survey data are anonymous because tracking is tied to the emails and not the data responses.
  - With this approach, you will need to plan a strong process for following up with participants to ensure you get good response rates. Strategies include regular tracking to see who completed the survey, following up with nonresponders and emphasizing the importance and anonymity of the survey, and, if feasible, offering incentives for completion.
  - If your data collection was intended to be in the classroom, you may not have participant contact information. In that case, you may need to request surveys be sent out via the school or classroom teacher.
- You could also send a survey with a text messaging with SMS software. This is a potential approach for shorter surveys (up to 12 questions).

If you're administering pre- and post-surveys, you may have developed a solid system for linking surveys pre-to-post. But now that you're moving online, what are some options you have for linking?

- Many survey platforms allow you to link surveys when you send the links via email.
- Another option is to create a unique code for each participant and keep a separate list of the codes in an Excel sheet. You will need to send the unique code to participants when you share the link to the survey, and should set the survey up so they use the unique code to get into it.

Observations and attendance

Data collection may look much different for virtual programming when compared to in-person. For instance, assessing things like participant engagement, quality of discussion, and facilitator poise during observations may involve additional or different data points than what was used for in-person observations. Measuring fidelity when programming is delivered asynchronously will require rethinking what implementing with fidelity looks like in the new format.

- Programs should revisit their observation and data collection tools to reflect the virtual environment.
- Consider using website analytics to supplement assessments of live delivery or as proxy engagement measures for asynchronous programming. Although analytics available for tracking can vary by platform, a few to consider include:
  - ***Live delivery***
    - Attendance: You should track attendance just as you would for in-person delivery. The benefit of online delivery is that the attendance rosters keep a record for you!
    - Retention: How many participants stayed for the entire session? It's easier for participants to disengage from and leave an online session, so tracking retention during a session is important.
    - Interaction: You can observe the quality of discussion, but you can also supplement this assessment by noting the number of participants who responded in the chat feature or polls during the session.
    - Downloads: If you offered documents or worksheets to support the lesson, programs will often allow you to track the number of downloads.
  - ***Asynchronous programming***
    - Prerecorded videos:
      - Video views
      - Number of unique viewers
      - Number of impressions (or the number of times the page with the video was loaded)
      - Percentage of video watched
    - Worksheets/packets:
      - Number of downloads
      - Create your own mechanism (for example, PATH (spotlighted in Box 3*)* had students respond to facilitators about whether they completed a lesson, thereby creating a tracking mechanism.
    - Discussion board
      - Number of participant posts
      - Quality of participant posts (assessed by evaluator)
      - Number of peer-to-peer responses
  - For guides on analytics and reporting, see report guides for Google Meet or Zoom.

Fidelity

You should work with your curriculum developer, if applicable, to ensure your plans for virtual delivery allow you to maintain fidelity to the evidence-based program. Many developers have put out resources and guidelines for virtual implementation. Some additional considerations:

- You may need to make changes to your fidelity logs to include new fields. For example, was the session delivered in person or virtually? Was content delivered synchronously or asynchronously? It's also important to note adaptations that you made to program delivery given the new online platform (e.g., rather than small group work you did the activity as a large group.)
- Be sure to document any other factors that may have been different; for example, if a cohort of youth started with one facilitator in person but finished online with a different facilitator.
- To the degree that you have flexibility to adapt online, a strong approach is to consider the core objective and purpose of the activity being translated and think about how to fit it to a virtual environment. For example, an activity may call for youth to use beads, but now you can't provide beads to participants. Think about what the bead activity is attempting to convey and consider how to share that message without using beads.
- For a few examples of supports offered by curriculum developers, see the Dibble Institute's toolkit on online teaching or ETR's series of resources on transitioning to virtual program delivery.

Focus groups

Many grantee teams planned focus groups to get feedback from participants, parents, facilitators, partners, and community members at the end of Year 1. Focus groups provide valuable feedback for Year 2 programming. It is possible to conduct successful focus groups virtually using video conferencing. To plan such a group, consider the following tips:

- Make them smaller (six to eight participants) than an in-person group would be.
- You are likely to discuss sensitive topics, so be sure participants have a private place to participate.
- Ask participants to enter their first names only when they enter virtual sessions to maintain anonymity.
- If you need to collect consent forms, think about the most efficient method and check with your IRB about your plans (for example, email and scan, verbal consent via the phone, or digital signature with a program like DocuSign).
- For in-person groups, common roles are facilitator and note-taker; another useful role for online focus groups is technical lead, or someone who can help troubleshoot technical issues and run polls or other applications, if you intend to use them. You may also want to have a second facilitator to monitor and engage with participants via the platform's chat box.
- Tips for keeping participants engaged during virtual focus groups include using slides to communicate expectations and pose questions; asking round-robin questions, deploying online polls, and using the chat feature.

- Use emailed gift cards as incentives.
- Many programs will produce chat transcripts, which can supplement or serve as an alternative to audio recording.

For an example of how Project Vida's evaluation team conducted a focus group online, see breakout box 6. For more on virtual focus groups, see this guide from MDRC.

Grantee Spotlight 6: Moving focus groups to a virtual setting
Evaluators for Project Vida, a TPP15 and TPP19 grantee in El Paso, Texas, typically conduct focus groups with key project stakeholders at the conclusion of each year to inform programming. This year, Helix Solutions, the evaluation team working with Project Vida, moved its focus group with six TPP15 program facilitators onto Zoom. They typically use dot voting for in-person groups to gather information anonymously and found that the activity could be easily recreated online using Zoom's polling feature. Key takeaways included: 1.) **Encourage participants to use video rather than calling in**, as it allows observation of body language and fosters greater connection, 2.) **Do a trial run** with a few volunteers to test how any features (e.g., polling) work on different types of devices, 3.) Ensure privacy by **requiring a password to enter**. The evaluators are planning a similar group with TPP19 facilitators and is considering a student group, though noted a session with students would have added complications due to the sensitive nature of the conversation and questions of whether students have a private place to participate at home.

Other considerations

- Institutional Review Boards: Notify your IRB if you need to make revisions to research protocols and instruments. Revisions could include adding questions to your survey or adding a new data collection activity.
- Privacy: To keep privacy concerns to a minimum, especially with live videoconferencing, consider the following suggestions:
  - If you're thinking about recording sessions:
    - Consider the purpose for recording and whether there are ways to achieve this through other methods.
      - If you plan to record to share a session with your evaluation team, could the evaluator join the live sessions instead?
      - Are you recording sessions in order to share them with participants who were not able to attend? You can avoid privacy concerns by recording only the parts where the facilitator is speaking. Or, a tip from this article is to refrain from recording live sessions, but have the facilitator go into Zoom outside of the session and record themselves delivering the lesson.
    - If you decide to record a live session where youth participate, make sure you are following the privacy rules required by any school partners and your IRB.
    - For more guidance, this site contains tips related to virtual youth programming, including information about recordings and screen captures.
  - Be transparent with participants during live sessions:
    - Share upfront whether the discussion for the day will include any sensitive discussion topics.
    - Make sure participants are aware of who else in on the conference with them.
  - When considering which software to use for program delivery or data collection, make sure the company has a privacy policy and review it. This post has a list of questions to ask when evaluating an app or website. This site reviews and rates the privacy practices of popular applications.

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