OPA EVALUATION TA

Supplementing Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs to Meet Community Needs: Lessons Learned from TPP19 Grantees

Introduction

Organizations implementing Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) programs often want to enhance programs with add-on or supplementary components to better meet the needs of their populations. This brief highlights the experiences of three former Office of Population Affairs (OPA) grantees that added supplementary components to existing TPP programs. The brief concludes with tips all grantees could consider when supplementing TPP programs.

Three organizations—the Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power and Potential (GCAPP), Change Happens, and Shaping Lives for Tomorrow—took unique approaches to supplementing TPP curricula offered to three different populations. GCAPP embedded Reducing the Risk in a peer-to-peer mentorship model that provided prosocial supports for youth by using a culturally responsive approach rooted in shared context, lived experience, and value systems. Change Happens supplemented the Love Notes curriculum with services provided by a risk assessment specialist who assessed the needs of youth and then met with them to offer support and referrals. Shaping Lives for Tomorrow supplemented the Teen Outreach Program (TOP) curriculum by holding group sessions on anger management. Figure 1 shows each grantee's program models.

Figure 1. Implementation details for the three TPP curricula offered by the grantees

		GCAPP: Reducing the Risk	Change Happens: Love Notes SRA	Shaping Lives for Tomorrow: Teen Outreach Program
	Targeted outcomes	Delay the initiation of sex or increase the use of protection against pregnancy and STD/HIV	Reduce factors that contribute to risky sexual behavior by improving goal setting, healthy relationships, and decision-making skills	Develop healthy behaviors, reduce teen pregnancy, and develop life skills
	Program length	16 sessions over 6–8 weeks	13, 30-minute sessions	25 weekly meetings and 30 hours of community service
	Facilitators	Subgrantee staff (mentors)	Grantee staff	Grantee staff
	Setting	Public schools, private schools affiliated with churches, and churches	High schools and community sites	High schools and middle schools
	Population served	193 youth served	498 youth served	570 youth served

GCAPP = Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power and Potential; SRA = Sexual Risk Avoidance.

Address non-TPP needs to improve TPP implementation

Supplementing a curriculum with services that address needs outside of TPP can help reduce barriers to active program engagement while building trusting relationships between program facilitators and participants. Grantees said their participants faced personal challenges that TPP curricula do not address

The GCAPP mentor model was a vehicle for TPP programming. GCAPP worked with a partner agency to employ mentors for young men of color, their primary population. Mentors were local men of color who serve as prosocial role models and facilitators for the Reducing the Risk curriculum. After delivering program material as intended, mentors spent additional time bringing the program to life, making it culturally relevant, and enhancing the program's teaching by sharing about their personal lives and lessons they have learned. Mentors were also matched with participants one-on-one, which involved frequent contact with youth via check-in calls that continued after the program ended. Through regular contact, mentors learned of challenges youth and their families faced, such as difficulty paying for rent or groceries,

parents' difficulty managing their teens' mental health, and other stressors. Mentors then connected families with community resources as needed.

Change Happens addressed participants' basic needs by providing support for youth to address academic and behavioral issues. Change Happens hired a risk assessment specialist to gain insight into challenges youth were facing and connect them with direct resources to meet those needs. Specifically, the risk assessment specialist collected data through a survey of youth enrolled in the program, used the survey to assess students' needs, and then met with students to discuss potential resources available to help meet their needs. Program staff recognized that without addressing these basic needs, they were not going to get far with participants.

> *"Because, you know, when you have so many things going on … a teen pregnancy prevention program is essentially an extracurricular activity at that point … when you're not, you know, getting enough resources, when your basic needs are not being met, there becomes a disconnect…"*

The grantee described the communities it served as being in "survival mode" after experiencing extreme weather events, illnesses and deaths resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the associated emotional and financial challenges. Many students were not able to attend Love Notes because they had to work to support themselves and their families. The grantee described the TPP curriculum as being low on the list of youth's priorities, so to engage them as participants, Change Happens sought to first address their higher priority needs.

Shaping Lives for Tomorrow developed an anger management component to address youth partici-pants' disruptive behavior. Shaping Lives for Tomorrow described a series of isolated behavioral incidents that disrupted classroom implementations of TOP. Key program staff who were trained in anger management began a pull-out anger management program for small groups of youth who exhibited problems during implementation or who were identified for the program by guidance counsel-ors. The project director led these meetings for about eight weeks. Meetings focused on identifying and discussing stressors and effective skills for managing those stressors. By adding an anger management component, Shaping Lives for Tomorrow met an immediate need of youth while removing a barrier to TOP's implementation.

Go beyond TPP to build trust and expand program reach

By addressing youth needs with supplemental components that were tailored to the population, grantees established trusting relationships with communities and had higher levels of youth engagement with their TPP curricula.

GCAPP's mentoring model served as a recruitment and retention tool. Mentors themselves functioned as a recruitment incentive because they were young men known as leaders and role models in their communities. For instance, two mentors were local religious leaders and already knew most of the youth who were eligible for program participation.

> *"A lot of these interventions are not super exciting to these young brothers. They come because they care about mentors, and they stay because they care about mentors."*

During its funding period, GCAPP refined its recruitment approach by promoting some youth who had completed Reducing the Risk to become youth leaders. The mentors worked with youth leaders to recruit new youth into the program. GCAPP felt that by embedding the TPP curricu-lum into this mentoring model, it had insulated the program in a way that furthered the impact on youth. The mentors made the content more relevant and worked to retain youth by maintaining strong and trusting relationships with them, thus making it more likely youth would receive all of the curriculum. Simultaneously, mentors built a recruitment team of young men in the community who had participated in the program and continued to stay engaged after they completed the program.

Change Happens addressed low program attendance by focusing on other challenges youth faced. Although Change Happens was not able to achieve high program attendance, the staff felt their approach to supporting youth's needs had benefited its relationships and role in the community. Through these efforts to support youth, Change Happens established trusting relationships with the schools and district.

> *"…we want to be so intentional with our approach to the students [to] let them know, 'Listen, we're here to help. We care. We're not just trying to be one of those programs that come here to try and give you surveys and just come here for our program, then we up and leave…'"*

Ultimately, the grantee believed, the trust it had built would be an essential foundation to support recruitment and engagement of youth in future programming.

Shaping Lives for Tomorrow refined supplemental components to holistically support youth in response to youth's emergent needs. Shaping Lives for Tomorrow sought to support youth by offering multiple components in addition to TOP. The grantee identified key youth needs as a starting point for developing additional components that would be most relevant. First, after observing behav-ioral issues in TOP classrooms, the grantee worked with school guidance counselors to offer a pull-out program, in which youth who struggled to behave during the ses-sions participated in a small-group anger management component. Next, the grantee noted academic challenges for students in TOP. It planned to hire a tutor to offer

youth academic support services. Unfortunately, Shaping Lives for Tomorrow was not able to hire a tutor because of limitations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, program staff received additional training in preparation for the expected youth mental health challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tips for grantees

✓ **Consider whether the population you serve with TPP programming can meet their immediate needs.** If youth are experiencing unmet immediate needs, consider strategies to meet those needs, as youth will likely prioritize meeting them over participating in any TPP program you intend to implement. If you cannot directly address those needs, prepare to connect youth with resources in the community that have potential to fulfill these needs.

✓ **Consider other unmet youth needs as opportunities for supplemental components.** There are a variety of approaches to supplementing TPP programs, such as offering mentoring; providing risk assessment specialists; and linking to community resources, problem behavior support, or academic support. Assess the challenges to implementation and youth engagement as potential opportunities for supplementary program components that might fit your population's needs.

✓ **View supplemental components as a strategy to build and maintain trust with a community.** Although the effect on program engagement might not be immediate, offering services that go beyond the TPP curriculum might help grantees establish relationships with communities, schools, and faith establishments that will be beneficial when the youth are ready to engage in TPP programming.

Overview of study

The Office of Population Affairs (OPA) in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awards annual grants to support teen pregnancy prevention (TPP). In 2018, OPA awarded 14 organizations two-year Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Phase 1 Tier 2 grants to refine, implement, and formatively evaluate their innovative program models to prepare for a potential summative evaluation. In 2019, OPA awarded another 29 organizations two-year TPP Phase 1 Tier 1 grants to select, refine, and implement evidence-based programs (EBPs). Additionally, the 2019 TPP Tier 1 grantees were expected to use continuous quality improvement processes and conduct process evaluations to support the refinement of the EBP for their community while establishing evidence for broader implementation, and possible OPA support for a summative evaluation.

OPA awarded Mathematica a contract to design and conduct an external cross-site implementation study. The cross-site implementation study had two goals: (1) to document the process that grantees followed to get their programs and staff ready to implement the program and (2) to identify lessons to help future grantees ensure their programs are ready and appropriate to implement in their communities.

Suggested citation