Paving the Road for Teen Pregnancy Prevention:
Conducting a Needs Assessment with Tribal Communities

Moderator: Deb Yatsko
Speaker: Genevieve Martinez-Garcia
February 29, 2012
3:00-4:30 p.m. ET

Operator: Good afternoon. My name is Cassandra, and I will be your conference operator today.

At this time, I would like to welcome everyone to *Paving the Road for Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Conducting a Needs Assessment with Tribal Communities*. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. After the speaker's remarks, there will be a question-and-answer session. If you would like to ask a question during this time, simply press star, then the number one on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key.

Thank you. And now, I would like to turn the call over to Deb Yatsko. You may begin.

Deb Yatsko: Good afternoon, everyone. I want to welcome everyone today to our *Needs Assessment* webinar. We're very pleased to have with us someone from the Healthy Teen Network (HTN) to present our webinar today; this is Dr. Martinez-Garcia. I'm going to turn it over to her to give a brief introduction of herself and also of Healthy Teen Network. Dr. Garcia.

Genevieve Martinez-Garcia: Hi, good afternoon, everybody, and thank you so much for joining us today to discuss how to conduct needs assessment in the tribal community.

By the end of this webinar you should be able to provide two examples of a needs assessment framework. You may be able to describe the four steps of conducting a needs assessment; to increase trust in the research process among community leaders, list data collection methods that may be appropriate to your community, and describe the process of interpreting the result.

As Deb mentioned, my name is Genevieve Martinez-Garcia and I'm the Senior Researcher at Healthy Teen Network. Healthy Teen Network is a national membership organization that supports professionals in the field that are working in the area of adolescent reproductive health—more specifically teen pregnancy prevention and pregnant and parenting teens. As their Senior Researcher, I am responsible for all of HTN's program evaluation and research activities.

In this webinar, we're going to introduce the basic concepts of a needs assessment in tribal communities. Mainly there are going to be four steps that we're going to be talking about: how to establish a research workgroup, developing data collection strategies, analyzing the data, interpreting the result.

But there's something that I really want to emphasize and I will repeat over and over again throughout this Webinar. We are aware that the participants that are joining this call today have very different levels of skills and experience.

Some might have conducted a needs assessment before and will have a lot of experience working in the community. Others might not have any experience doing so or might be new to the community. This webinar will offer a general overview of a needs assessment and will also summarize the best practices with tribal communities. If by the end of the webinar, you feel you need more support in conducting a needs assessment, please talk to your project officer. We're going to be discussing some concepts that are pretty basic but we're also going to be entering into some details to help you move the process along.

Another thing that I would like to emphasize is that this webinar will summarize research practices that have been shown effective with tribal communities. However, this does not mean that they will work with your specific community.

One thing that I want you to remember once we go into the discussion is that any tool, strategy, idea or approach that you design in data collection must be guided by your community and the advisory group that you created, to ensure that they are appropriate, acceptable and applicable.

What has worked best for a rural tribal community might not work so well in an urban setting. Also each community has a different culture and history, so any tool and strategy you use must be reflective of this. And this is something that I just wanted to share with you at the beginning before we start entering into the details of the needs assessment.

As you know this webinar will be conducted between 3:00 and 4:30 PM. The presentation will take about 60 minutes and we're also going to entertain some questions.

Throughout the webinar, we're going to have some question breaks and this will allow you to ask questions pertinent to the steps that we're going to be discussing. For these questions, because you're in audio mode right now, I will appreciate that you enter your question in the chat. If you see your screen in the upper right corner of your screen, you're going to see a chat tab. In the bottom of that tab, you're going to see a text box. You can enter your question there at any time during the webinar and during the question break I will entertain your questions.

I am very sorry if I'm not able to address every single question because of time constraints, but you will also be welcomed to share your questions at the end of the webinar; when we're going to be opening the line so you can speak up and ask any questions or share any experience that you might have.

So let's get started. What is a needs assessment? A needs assessment is a systematic process of gathering information about a community's physical, spiritual, and environmental status and resources to identify its strengths, needs and potential for growth.

The way I look at a needs assessment, I look at it as a puzzle. Each piece, meaning each data point you collect, represents one piece of this puzzle. Some pieces may be more critical than others, more informative than others. But all of them, when you take them together, will take you a step closer at deciphering the full picture of the community. It will give you a sense of the community status, its strengths, and its attributes. And it is fundamental to conduct a needs assessment to strategically plan a program as well as evaluate any program or intervention.

In a needs assessment, the outcome—that means the overall findings of the needs assessment—is as important as the process. The outcome will inform you about the strength and the needs and may help guide a program. However, the process will lay the groundwork to actively engage the community into making sustainable and long term changes.

And I'm very sorry, I've been reading from my notes and I missed passing on the slides.

So the process of a needs assessment is iterative and cyclical. It's inclusive of community members, is dependent on a community research partnership and is respectful of the community's diverse culture. So what do I mean by iterative and cyclical?

The process is iterative because the data gathered might lead to other questions that will force you to interview other people again, maybe going back to the same interviewee to gather more data or to clarify some of their statement. [You might have to] do further iterative review or seek additional guidance from the advisory group.

Also during the research process, researchers might discover problems in their initial approach and would need to revisit the research planned or change questions in their interview guide.

The needs assessment is cyclical because findings from the needs assessment might prompt additional questions or raise issues you were not contemplating before. Some of these questions or issues you might find might [are] worth investigating. Now, you know, you are all in a deadline and you have to stick within budget, so a needs assessment cannot go on forever, it needs to stop at some point. Some of the questions that might emerge to the needs assessment, you might need to decide if they are worth pursuing for this project in order to guide your program planning and evaluation or if it's better to leave those questions or those issues that emerge for future projects.

Now, this leads to a third characteristic of a needs assessment. Although a needs assessment is considered research, it is very different from traditional academic research.

When a needs assessment is conducted as part of program-planning, like you will do, researchers tend to be more flexible in adapting or changing the data collection instruments or strategies during the assessment. This will ensure that they will get all the pieces of the puzzle that they need and that they are effectively recruiting and retaining the population. This flexibility is very common in community-based and action research strategies.

Now, I would like to take a quick poll. Who from the participants that are joining us today, have conducted a needs assessment before?

I am making Megan the presenter so she can lead the polling.

Megan: Thanks, Genevieve. All right, I'm going to be opening this poll and you will see a poll on the bottom right hand portion of your screen, momentarily.

OK. So now you can all click in to respond to the questions that Genevieve has posed. I'll give you a few seconds to go ahead and do that.

It looks like we have about 18 people that have responded. OK, I am going to close the poll now and post the results.

It's still tracking a few additional last-minute clicks that I think some folks have clicked in, and here we go. There are the results.

OK, Genevieve, I'll turn it back to you now.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: OK, thank you.

OK. So this is pretty interesting.

So for the first question, Have you conducted a community needs assessment before? We have a fairly similar distribution of the people that have conducted a needs assessment and the people who have not. That means that, many of you have, again, different levels of experiences and skills in conducting a needs assessment.

For those of you who have not conducted a needs assessment before, some of the information that we present you might consider it a little bit daunting or confusing so please do not hesitate in contacting your project officer, if you feel that you need more support.

And for those of you who have a lot of experience conducting a community needs assessment, particularly in that community, every needs assessment should come with a fresh perspective and an effort to see the data in different ways and see the community in different ways. Sometimes when you research the same community, or you know the community a lot, you might miss some of the information. So that, you know, sometimes it's very valuable to get somebody that might not be that familiar with the community to get that fresh perspective.

In the second question, Have you worked with your target community before? Again, that's a fairly equal distribution between the ones that have a lot of experience working with the community and the ones that have not.

For the ones that have not had experienced working with the community, please pay attention to the first step of the needs assessment which is entering the community and gaining support. This first step is really critical in making sure that the rest of the steps and the rest of your data collection process, analysis, and data interpretation runs pretty smoothly.

So why do we assess our communities? We assess our communities because we need to identify priority population. As you recall from your program, you need to identify a target population and implement an evidence-based program. It is very important to know, What is my target population? Particularly, what youths am I going to target? If it's only going to be girls, [or] girls and boys in the schools, in the community, what fits better? What population fits better to the program that I have?

Also, we identify the strengths, the needs and the opportunities. What resources exist and what resources and services or programs we need to develop in the community. We can identify the factors that affect the quality of life, specifically those factors that impact teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection.

We can plan and implement a project more strategically. But also we can establish a baseline to evaluate your project. All the projects will need to be evaluated and you can have your outcome at the end but you need to compare that outcome with baseline data. And that data you will be gathering through a needs assessment process.

Almost every program-planning model that is developed has a needs assessment step. This needs assessment will inform what type of program you need and how to implement that program better informed and more strategically to respond better to the needs of the community.

One of such programs is Getting to Outcomes (GTO). Many of you might have already attended a presentation [that offered] a brief overview of the Getting to Outcomes Model. Getting to Outcomes is a framework that helps project managers and implementers plan, implement and evaluate their program in order to effectively get to outcomes, hence the name.

GTO, the acronym for Getting to Outcomes, has 10 steps. The very first step is identifying those needs and resources through a thorough assessment.

The second step is goals, then best practices, fit, capacity, plan, process evaluation, outcome evaluation, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), and sustainability.

GTO fits very well with teen pregnancy evidence-based programs. And in this next slide you are going to see the framework and again, you are going to see that the framework is cyclical and a little bit iterative.

And you can see that the first step, number one, is the needs assessment and the needs and the resource assessment. When you have the data for the needs assessment then you're going to be able to establish the goals of your program and identify the evidence-based program or the best practices that better fit your population.

A second model that is very popular is the Community-Readiness Model. The main difference between the Community-Readiness Model and the GTO model is that Community-Readiness Model wants to move the community towards sustainable action. So they have basically a process of change where you want to move and engage the community from not being aware of an issue to full professionalization where the community members are actively engaged in sustaining such changes in the community.

Although needs assessment is not a defined step in this model, you really need to have the information from an assessment in order to identify in which step of this readiness the community is in order to move forward.

Another example of a program is a Precede and Proceed Model. Green's well-known Precede-Proceed Model is a program framework that identifies the needs of a community; help plan the program and evaluate the process and outcome of any program or intervention. And it proposes a very comprehensive needs assessment to identify the social, political and ecological factors that affect the community.

In this framework here you're going to see all the phases of the assessment. The social assessment which is phase one, epidemiological assessment for phase two that even includes the genetics, behavior and environmental factors; the educational, ecological assessments as well as the policy assessment.

This is very comprehensive in terms of the level of a needs assessment. And I truly apologize that many of these images, the font is very small and hard to read because there were images I was not able to change. However, at the end of the presentation I'm providing you with a link to the pages for each of these models so you can get more information about them as well as a better image if you need to use them.

These models are just examples of many models that are out there and that you can use. I just wanted to emphasize that all of the program planning models include this needs assessment phase because the information is used throughout every step of the program planning and evaluation.

Once you have your needs assessment with your program planning program, you need to use some guiding principles that have been shown to be best practices in the tribal communities. That any tribal needs assessment should be guided by a community-based participatory research principles as well as tribal participatory approaches.

The basic needs assessment model should include garnering community support, developing and implementing data collection strategies, analyzing the data, and interpreting the result. This model we created specifically for this webinar and this is how we envision the cyclical and iterative nature of a needs assessment.

The first step you garner community support, in the second step you develop and implement data collection strategy, you analyze the data and finally you interpret the results. However, the community strength is at the center of this model because it is the community that's going to guide every step of the needs assessment process. So what is community-based participatory research?

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is a research approach in which community members are equal partners of the project. Community members are actively involved in all decisions regarding the research strategy and project implementation and they own the process.

This is a research methodology that really is born and developed within the community. It draws from the community unity and strength and communication to make the project work.

CBPR has been identified as a best practice when working in tribal communities. It has a potential to make the project culturally-appropriate, inclusive of communities, more effective and more sustainable.

Another best practice is a tribal participatory approach which follows the same principles as CBPR but it emphasizes social change, community empower and reduction of health disparities.

It acknowledges the community's history with research. It incorporates the community's world view, and the research methods are culturally appropriate and that are best practice for the individual community. Again, this – (resuming) back to what I said in the beginning of the presentation, even if a method has been identified as a best practice for one tribal community, you really need to use the community's knowledge and wisdom to see if it works for your particular community.

So the first step in your needs assessment will be to develop strong relationships with your community and this is a message particularly for the participants that have not conducted a needs assessment before or do not know the community that well.

Developing strong relationships is key, because that will ensure that your program will gain the support from the community and you're going to see the program being implemented from beginning to end.

The first step will be to enter the community and earning the community's trust. In entering the community, you need to define the community. Many of you might have already done this, particularly if you have conducted research with this community in the past. But in order to define the community, you have to see what your target population is. For some communities that have specific geographic boundaries, it might be easier to define what your community or where your community is and who the members are.

However, if you are targeting youth in urban setting, you must set some criteria to define who exactly will be the target of your needs assessment. Will the community be defined as a specific member of a tribe or will you plan to implement your program in community with the high population of Native American families regardless of tribal membership. For some of you it might be easier to define your communities; for others, it might not be as easy.

Once you define your community. Identify the community organizations that work with your target population. Identify some of the leaders in that community. Share with them the goals of your project and try to gain their support and they're going to be able to guide you through the community and give you access to other community members.

Another step toward earning the community's trust, particularly in a research project of this nature, is to assign an advisory group. An advisory group must be approved by all project partners and as I had mentioned before, it will guide and inform the process of needs assessment.

A second very important step will be to create a joint research agreement that will specify data ownership and use. I'm going to talk more about this a little bit later.

So I'm going to turn over to (Megan), so for the polls.

Megan: OK, we have another poll and we'd love to get your feedback. So if you'll again look to the bottom right hand corner of your screen and respond to the poll we've posted here, "Do you have an established advisory group for this project?"

And we'll take a couple of seconds as people click in. It looks like we'll give you about 15 more seconds. OK.

And I will show the poll results here for you Genevieve.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: Thank you.

OK, great. So according to your answers, many of you, 33%, have already established an advisory group for this project and about 20% have not.

For those of you who have established an advisory group for this project, it may well be that because of your experience working in the community, you already had an established advisory group that have been working together to address other health and social issues. If that is the case, I would suggest inviting people that might have not participated in the group before, that might bring a fresh perspective to address teen pregnancy issues. That, sometimes, is very useful for advisory groups that have been working for a long time and might have never addressed issues such as teen pregnancy or youth sexual health, bringing an extra one or two extra people that bring a different opinion or a fresh perspective might help keep the advisory board on track on, you know, what the community needs and what the community view on the project is.

For those who have not established an advisory group, the next slides are going to be very useful for you and will help you to understand what you need to do to establish an effective advisory group.

So for the next slide, what is the purpose of this group? Sometimes people believe that, you know, the researchers know best or the implementers know best and you can come to the community and implement a project, you know, holding the community's best interest. However, when you have an advisory group comprised not only of the researchers and program managers, but you have a heavy membership of community members and community leaders, that will make your project more effective. You will have more trust in your community and you're going to keep your community engaged.

The purpose of this advisory group is to establish the core values of the project, the goals of the project, which if you're going to be using the GTO Model, it is going to be the second step.

They will also provide guidance on the best data collection strategies. Many of the members of the community might have already have experienced conducting research in their own community and can tell you what strategies have been working well with the community and what strategies do not work well.

It will also ensure cultural appropriateness for the methods. Not every method will work in every community or with every community member. They will help you in the cultural interpretation of the result and will also give you communication advice on how to frame youth sexual health to other community members.

When you establish an advisory group, you can include anyone in the community to join. You can include community members such as leaders, elders, parents, other caregivers, and youth. You can include community clinicians and teachers for their perspective. Basically, anyone that will have knowledge, that will help you get the community engaged, but will also offer a different and refreshing perspective of what the community needs and what the community wants.

The advisory work group should also include program and project managers and implementers that may know a little bit more about the programs that you're about to implement. Some of these can be the educators and the trainers, some of the evaluators, clinicians that are outside of the community, researcher outside of the community, as well as school administrators.

In order to – in order for an advisory group to work well, you need to establish some operational principles. That means, they should establish when, where and how the meetings will be held. They should establish the roles and the responsibilities of each member. If you have a very large group, you might decide to establish a steering committee with your members to address project issues.

I have participated in advisory groups before that have over 30 members and in order to keep the workload a little bit manageable and be more effective in decision-making, sometimes you have a steering committee of only five people representing the different members of the entire advisory group. Again, you need to define the structure, the best way that will fit your community.

One of the most important things at the advisory work group that you have to do very early on in the needs assessment process is develop agreement on how the data will be used, how it will be distributed, if it's going to be distributed, and the publication.

The American Indian Law Center actually has many resources that will help you identify what type of agreements you should draw ahead of time. And these agreements will also help you guide not only the data collection methods but also the analysis and the interpretation at the end of your needs assessment.

OK. So I'm opening up the line – the chat for questions.

If any one has any questions that you would like me to address right now, you're certainly welcome to do so.

And I would like to remind you that the chat is completely private, so if you submit a question, I'm the only person that is going to be reading your question. OK.

Megan: There are no questions at this time.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: Yes, I don't see any questions at this time. So we can continue.

The second phase of the needs assessment is development and implementation of a data collection strategy. And this has, again, also four steps: designing your data collection plan; identifying the best data collection method; the best recruitment strategy and addressing research ethics.

The data collection plan includes assessment questions; the source of the information or basically who or what can help you answer the question; as well as the method – what will be the best way to answer the question; the special considerations, you know, things that you need to keep in mind to make your data collection more effective, the lead person or the person responsible in collecting the data, and your timeline.

For the assessment question, many of the program planning models that you select, sometimes they already have some of the assessment questions that you may consider. You should assess some of the demographics. You know, what is the composition of your community? What is the prevalence of teen birth or sexually transmitted infection, the prevalence of certain risks and protective factors? And you can address behavioral, social, educational risk factors.

Some research has addressed the community definition of youth success and health, existing programs and resources for youth in your community. And this is only an example of some of the assessment questions that you might want to consider. When you go and you consult with your advisory group, they might give you a whole list of assessment questions. And as a researcher, it's very tempting to try to address and answer every single question, especially when you don't have the opportunity to gain access to the community and interview them or conduct a survey with them.

Just a word of caution for the participants that have never done a needs assessment; the needs assessment will provide this opportunity, but you have to be cautious in limiting the assessment questions to the questions that will help you gain the information that you actually need for program planning, and that is establishing your baseline that your evaluators are going to use to assess whether the program was effective or no. Also they will help you in the selection of the most appropriate evidence-based intervention.

So in addressing these assessment questions, please have that in mind and make sure that you are focused and that you consider time and budgetary constraints.

The second step is to identify the source. Once you have your assessment question, what person, what publication, what place or organization might help you answer that question? Remember that every source holds an important piece of the needs assessment puzzle.

Some of the sources might give you a lot of information. Others might give you limited information or just a different perspective. But all the sources are equally important.

The sources can be individuals, such as teachers, youth, elders, and other community leaders. It could be publications such as national statistics, reports that have been compiled by local organizations. So you can start looking either doing a lit search through published articles, Internet search, or identifying those key individuals in the community that can help you answer those assessment questions.

Usually, national statistics work well to establish some of the demographics or the prevalence of pregnant teen birth and sexually transmitted infections. Unfortunately, for many tribal communities, the national statistics don't work that well, and you are more likely to find either incomplete or biased data, or data that reflect very low numbers just because of the nature of the size of the community and how it is defined.

So in the needs assessment, many researchers conducting research in tribal communities find the need of engaging in surveys to address some of the questions that other communities might easily find in national or local statistics.

Third will be the method, which is a specific data collection tool that you can use to access the source and collect the data. For example, I'm referring to surveys, talking circles, interviews, observations, or any secondary data analysis. Remember that the source can be published data. So don't focus on individuals in the community or people that you can talk to, but there is also a value in conducting secondary data analysis.

For the special considerations, when we identify the best methods, we also need to account for events or situations that might affect our data collection efforts. Researchers should seek advice on these events or situations that can hinder or facilitate the research efforts, just so they can plan accordingly.

For example, if you consider that you want to conduct a survey at a central location where youth spend their spare time, if you think that is the best method, you might want to see how and where youth spend their time, if data collection will take place in the winter, if you were planning on going to a park and conducting the survey there, or maybe the winter might not be the best place if your community suffers from harsh winter climates.

Also, the community might have several activities during which people might not be available to sit for an interview or perhaps that would be the ideal event to poll people or to recruit them for the survey, because they're going to be coming together anyways. So, again, you have to go back to your advisory board and decide if a data collection method is appropriate for the community and which is the best time to collect the data from them, and be very aware and acknowledge all the community activities in doing so, (the lead and the timeline) that refers to the individuals who are going to be responsible and the due date, the time by which the data collection must be completed.

This data collection plan that you have in front of you is a table. This is only an example of how a data plan might look like. Again, if you are considering using a specific program planning model, some of them already suggest how to develop this data collection plan and might refer to it with different names. This data collection plan is an example that we put together so you know how to best organize some of the questions, the source, the methods, and the special consideration.

Unfortunately, due to the limitations of space, I could not include the timeline, but the timeline is another factor that you might want to consider. Feel free to use this table, recreate it, adapt it to your needs, add more columns as you consider necessary, or delete columns if you don't need them. This is just an example of how your data plan can be comprised.

Are there any questions right now? And, again, feel free to type your questions in the chat box.

Megan: Genevieve, one question was typed in.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: Yes?

Megan: "What does it mean to publish needs assessment results? Do they have to be published?"

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: Do they have to be published? The needs assessment results don't need to be published. The main goal of the needs assessment is to address your program needs, to help managers plan and implement the program. Now, there are many people, many researchers that decide to publish the needs assessment, and that is perfectly OK, as long as it aligns with the data use agreement that was created at the beginning of the project.

Depending on the methods – and I'm talking based on my experience – depending on the methods that you use, you might find that your needs assessment might be easy or hard to publish. As I mentioned at the beginning of the presentation, because you want to create this picture, many researchers when they conduct a needs assessment, they try to be creative and to adapt the methods to fit the need of the population.

And when you try to translate those results into a peer-reviewed journal, if you want to publish your results in that category of publication, some people might view your data collection strategy as being flawed, because you're not as rigorous as academic research.

However, I have been able to publish needs assessment data, and that's something that you might want to think about at the very beginning. You know, is this going to be published? And who are we going to be addressing in that publication? Do we want to publish it in a local publication for other communities? Do we want to do it in a tribal peer-reviewed journal or how that data is going to be used?

Megan: And then one other question came in, Genevieve. “How far do we consult published sources about our target population during needs assessments?”

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: I'm sorry, Megan. Can you repeat that again?

Megan: Sure. “How far do we consult published sources about our target population during needs assessments?”

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: How – OK. You might find and this depends on the community, on the very specific community, and how much research has been done and published on that community. For some tribal communities, you might find that there is a wealth of information out there because maybe of the size of the community or the level of research interest in that particular community.

And you might find that you will be able to gain a lot of information for your needs assessment from already published data. Just make sure, if you do find that, make sure that the methods that they use are still applicable. Sometimes people read past research to identify best methods and best practices with that community and try to replicate that methodology.

But for many communities, it might be the case, whether you go into peer-reviewed journal and other publications, you might not find that much information about your community. And, again, if you do find it, make sure that the information that they publish, it is relevant.

Something that I have noticed in my own literature review of research in the tribal communities is that most of the research in peer-reviewed journals is being published in journals that address mental issues and drug and alcohol abuse, so some of the issues that are being addressed in that research may or may not sit with the needs assessments that you are proposing. So also, be very careful on the intentions of the research that has been published.

Megan: There are no other questions at this time.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: OK. Thank you. So we can move on.

So when you try to identify the best method to collect the data, many people conducting needs assessment, they like to use a mixed methods approach. And mixed methods approach refers to using qualitative and quantitative methods in order to complete that puzzle. Qualitative refers to methods such as interviews, focus groups, talking circles. On the other hand, quantitative methods refer to survey, that usually generate the number data; the qualitative generate more text data.

Each of the methods is perfectly fine to use, and you might not be able to use mixed methods. You might go into your community and learn that your community members prefer survey approach or come from an oral tradition and they have really preserved qualitative methods, such as talking circles and interviews.

So although using mixed methods has a lot of advantages, always, you know, guide your message space on what works best for your communities.

First, let's take a closer look at the surveys. I'm sorry, this is the comparison between the data collection methods, if you had any questions about what are the advantages of using one method versus the other.

But let's take a closer look at surveys. A survey is a set of closed-ended questions, and you can establish the prevalence or the incidence of attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, perception of skills in the community. You can identify the risk factors and social demographic correlate for these risk factors.

You can survey anyone you want, basically youth, or caregivers. You can have surveys only for females or only for males, parenting or pregnant teens. You can survey the elders in the community or the clinicians.

The main factor affecting the surveys is if the survey is the best method for the population you're trying to reach. And depending on your setting and your community, you may find that youth may be more open to surveys, and you can administer them online, if you want, or face-to-face. However, when it comes to elders, maybe the elders will prefer a different method. So every time that you select a method, make sure that it aligns well with the preferences of the community member you're trying to recruit.

In order for the surveys to work well, it's always best to keep them short and simple. And, again, as a researcher, we feel very tempted to ask all the questions. You know when you have the person in front of you and you want to ask a lot of things and collect a lot of data, however, the longer the survey the person is going to experience respondent fatigue. So the quality of the data that you get as the survey progresses will start to decline.

So instead of compromising the quality of your data, keeping the respondent engaged, try to keep the survey short, and it should address the questions that you specifically need them to address.

Also, use an appropriate reading level, and this really depends on the population. The elder reading level might not be the same as the youth's reading level or even the vocabulary that you use in the instruments might change. So make sure that the person that is supposed to read the survey understands not only the vocabulary, but it's an appropriate reading level.

Usually, a sixth-grade or an eighth-grade reading level might be appropriate to a community, and there are many methods to identify what level you should be using in your survey.

Make sure that any materials that you produce, such as consent forms, the survey, any information about the research, that you give your respondents during the recruitment is in the appropriate language. Depending on the community, you might prefer it in the community's language of choice. It might be English. It might be a different language. Just make sure that you are sensitive to the linguistic variety and diversity of your population.

And always, before administering the survey, make sure that you conduct a cognitive test of the survey, the entire instrument to make sure that the target population understand the survey and is answering, you know, appropriately.

And you may also want to pilot test with a small sample of the target population.

Any survey that you designed, make sure that you have the correct analysis capacity. Sometimes as researchers, we like to go overboard, and we try to collect a lot of data, putting many different questions that should be analyzed in a specific way, when the data comes, you might not have the organizational capacity and the staff with the analytical skills to analyze the survey as it should. So depending on your organizational capacity, you should design your survey accordingly.

In terms of the recruitment, make sure they use culturally component peer recruiters from the community. Later in the presentation, we're going to be talking about the benefits of using internal and external recruiters and researchers. Some researchers find that it is good to offer an incentive for participation, if it's allowable in your budget and if your advisory group thinks it's a good idea in your community. Sometimes self-administered surveys will enhance confidentiality. Again, members in your community might have different preferences in terms of how the survey is administered. Also, be aware of the season and the school year. If you want to use the school as a recruitment place, make sure that you respect the academic calendar to be able to have access to your participants.

And then we have the interview, which is an in-depth discussion with one person. The interview generally tends to be structured or semi-structured. And you use the interview when you want to gain an in-depth information about a particular issue, and you can interview anyone you want in your community, youth, parent-teachers, nurses, for example. When you recruit the person, make sure that you conduct the interview in a place where they feel safe and they feel comfortable talking to you.

Focus groups are group discussions. They're structured and they're moderated by a facilitator. And they elicit information, but it's not used for consensus building. Focus groups should be relatively small, between 6 to 8 participants, no more than 10, and you should invite key informants in your community. That means people that can provide good information.

However, they should be diversely homogenous. For example, if you want to talk about sexual attitudes in your community, don't include people with different powers in the community. For example, don't include adults with children or adults with leaders in the community, because that power and balance might hinder the ability of some of the participants to feel safe and be able to participate.

Talking circles is another strategy that can be used not only to generate data for your needs assessment, but it could be used as a strategy to conduct meetings. The talking circles is a group discussion where only one speaker has the floor at a time, giving the opportunity for everybody to express their ideas and contribute.

And, again, you can use it in multiple venues, advisory group meetings. It could replace focus groups. It does not have that limitation of number of people. The discussion doesn't have to be as structured as a focus group, so you might find that some community members will prefer the talking circles over an interview or focus group.

In order to make any of these methods work, the people facilitating either the interview, focus group, or talking circle should be culturally and linguistically competent. Sometimes you might not find a person that can facilitate and that feels comfortable speaking the language of the community, and you might have some members of the community that want to join in but don't feel comfortable speaking in English. Just make sure that you make accommodations for either bilingual facilitation to make sure that everybody feels comfortable or that you're engaging all the members in the community.

You should build rapport with the participants. One strategy that has been identified as best practice is to allow some extra time at the beginning or at the end of group discussions, such as focus groups or talking circles, and allow people to socialize and gather before or after the discussion.

Also, the facilitator may be close to their age. And, again, this is depending on the preference of the community and the community members. Some youth might prefer a facilitator who is close in age or is the same gender as the focus group, so they would feel more comfortable, but for other community members, this might not be an issue.

The facilitator should be experienced to keep the conversation on track. And if you're eliciting information from young participants, you should be creative and using fund ways to keep them active, because some of them, depending on the community, might not respond equally as adults and might feel intimidated by some of the questions.

OK? The one-shot question, I personally I really like this method of the one-shot question. Pat Sun, he's a renowned program evaluator – he commented in his book that he recalled this experience where he drove miles and miles and miles to find a farmer to interview him about policy, local policy on his farm, but when he got there, the farmer was walking out the door and did not want to talk to him. So he said, well, can you answer just one question?

The question was provocative enough that the farmer could not stop talking or at least he was able to give him the information that he needed for his study. I'm not saying that you should come up with a very evocative question and go around the community, but if you feel the need that you want to poll people on their attitudes on their beliefs and a survey might not be suitable for your community, maybe you can use the one-shot question approach. For example, you can address people in a central location and ask them, what do you think will be the best service that you need? Or how do you think the program should do X, Y, Z?

And, you know, you have to come up with the best question, and the question has to be very focused, very specific. It cannot be double-barreled. You cannot have two questions in one. It cannot be threatening, and it cannot be sensitive. It could be a question that people will generally be comfortable speaking in the public, because that's usually where you administer the one-shot questions. And, again, this may be suitable for your community, or it may not be suitable for your community.

Finally, our observations, which is a method that ethnographers tend to prefer. And observations are basically just a walking tour. Some people call them the windshield tours, where the researchers will gain a sense of the environmental and physical context of your community. You're able to map your community and locate where the resources are in relationship to where youth spend their time. Some people might be able to identify the places where risk behavior takes place or even where youth gathered.

For example, if you want to administer a survey outside of the school, and you want to find that place where all the youth gather so you can recruit them there or invite them for a focus group, a walkthrough the community might help you identify where those youth are or where the elders spend their time, so you can recruit them there.

So the observations can serve several purposes. It should not be a standalone, and it should not drive your needs assessment efforts, but it may well complement your needs assessment, and it will provide another layer of information that surveys, interviews and focus groups are not able to provide.

OK? So making the one-shot questions and observation work. Observations use combination of a community member or an external person to the community, and there are some advantages and disadvantages of using a community member or an external person. Having an external survey may not be appropriate to all communities.

Also, in order for them to be effective, the process, you know, how you conduct that question or how you conduct the observations cannot be threatening or sensitive to the community. For some communities, having an external person walking around might be threatening and might not be a good idea.

Also, verify with the advisory group about the appropriateness of either method in the community. For some communities, it might work well, and for others, not that well.

Our next slide is a table with the list of the data collection methods that we discussed and the potential constructs that each of them may address. And, again, this is just an example, just to get your mind going and thinking about all the things and all the issues and the constructs that you might be able to address in each of these tools.

Not every tool is suitable to address every single question, so you have to have a perfect marriage between the tool, the construct, and the target population that you would like to recruit.

When conducting a needs assessment, there are several things that you need to consider. We already talked about the preferred language for data collection and for facilitation for surveys, also acknowledge the community's past experience with research with evaluations and assessments. Not everybody in the community might be eager to talk to you based on that history. They might distrust external researchers or evaluators, and you have to acknowledge this and plan accordingly.

The data collection should align with the season, if the season might hinder data collection activities with the school calendar, as well as with the community calendar.

Community experts should help with qualitative data analysis, as they can provide an interpretation and translation of the concept. And just a brief example of this: When I conducted a needs assessment with Asian-American population, we had members of those communities revising the transcript and giving us their interpretation of some of the words and terminologies and activities they were describing that some of the facilitators were not aware of, because they were either in a different language or they were something very, very specific for that community. So this is a part of the data analysis process where a community expert or a community researcher will be very, very helpful.

So, Megan, would you like to facilitate the poll?

Megan: Sure. I've opened it up on the right side of your screen. So which data collection do you think will be most effective in your community? If you'll go ahead and click in, on the bottom right-hand side of the screen, and I'm just going to give it a couple more seconds, just because, in the interest of time, Genevieve, so – got about 10 seconds left until it wraps up.

OK. I'm going to show you the poll results now.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: OK. So most – so we did not get a lot of the responses. Let's see 18 percent, OK, so survey and focus groups you think might work better. And actually, these are two methods that are very popular for needs assessment.

And, again, make sure that, for those of you who are planning to conduct a survey that the survey is suitable for the population that you're planning to recruit. Again, it might well work very well for youth; it might not work for other members of the community, if you're planning to survey other people in the community.

OK, great. OK, another consideration is what I mentioned before of the internal and the external researchers. By training community members in data collection, you will help increasing the research capacity in the community and teaching new skills, which is generally a good thing. They will also be able to understand the point of view and have more background to explain the attitudes or events interviewees are expressing. That's if you're using them to facilitate or to conduct the interview itself.

However, some respondents or some community members might feel that their privacy or confidentiality is not protected. If there is an internal facilitator or a community member, they might feel that because they might know that person, they might not want to share that much of their life, of their behaviors, and, again, this really depends on the level of sensitivity of the data.

So on the other hand, an external researcher, somebody that is not a member of the community, they can provide that sense of confidentiality, because people generally would not know them. And members may feel that an external researcher is less likely to share their information with other community members.

The external researcher might also offer a new perspective on data results, since they see the data from a different point of view. However, community members might also distrust people from outside the community and might be reluctant to participate.

If possible, when designing your data collection strategy, you may have a combination of internal and external researchers to complement each other. Your advisory group might help in the selection of the most appropriate person for each data collection method and the population being recruited.

Do you have any questions so far? You can type them in, in the chat box.

OK? So if there aren't any questions, let's move on with the third step of our needs assessment, which is analyzing the data.

When you analyze the data or when you plan to analyze the data, it is very important to know who will use the results of the findings. Depending on your data collection plan, you may use one of the models listed on the slide. And there are many models to plan for the analysis. These are just examples of how some of the data can be used and analyzed.

In the first model, which is the model most people use, given the limitations of budget and time, it consists of conducting a lit review and then conducting your data collection. The lit review sometimes helps identify the best methods and strategies. Some literature is – and I'm addressing the question that was asked a few minutes ago. If you find research that has been conducted from your population, it might give you some background that you did not know. And then you can use that literature review to construct your questions for the focus groups and interviews and your survey.

The second model is used when you first need to identify the attitudes, beliefs and knowledge through a qualitative method, such as interview and focus group, and you use that data in order to craft a survey. For example, you want to assess the attitudes in a community, but you first need to identify what those attitudes are.

The best way of generating that information is through a qualitative method. Once the people inform you of those attitudes, you translate them into a survey. Once you administered your survey, you will be able to identify the prevalence of those attitudes in the community.

The third method builds on model two, because it provides a space after your quantitative method and asks for feedback from the community that will help you interpret your findings. The needs assessment model that we are proposing today, it's very similar to model one, where you use literature review, and then you combine qualitative and quantitative methods the best way possible. But we are also providing a space at the end of the research to interpret the results and give a voice – give space to the community to help you interpret the results.

The data analysis model you choose depends on the organizational capacity. Do you have the organizational capacity for data entry? That might mean transcription of recordings, the adequate data analysis skills, as well as the software that you need.

Remember that findings might generate more questions. You might see worth pursuing those questions with more data collection, or you might decide to leave those questions aside and pursue them in a different project.

The final step is interpreting the results. In the interpretation of the results, you're enlisting the help of specific members in the advisory group and other members in the community to react to the findings. And you can do that through meetings, talking circles, or other focus groups, or other ways that community members can get together and discuss the results.

It will provide more context to the results, the cultural interpretation. You will be able to explore alternative views, depending on the community members. And you're going to learn more about the community's attitudes about the issues.

While interpreting the results, you might want to discuss how the findings will be used for program planning, how they're going to be used for selection and adaptation of the selective evidence-based program, and if it warrants the development of additional educational material.

Also, you have to discuss how the findings will be shared outside the community. Preferably, you're going to be discussing this at the very beginning when you draft the data research agreement. But some of the guiding questions that you can use, well, can the results help or hurt the community?

You can use the results to mobilize financial resources. How are you going to frame the results to protect the integrity of the community? Some of the results might be misinterpreted if they go outside the community. And this goes back to what we were saying about the publication of the data, which, you know, it might contribute to the overall body of literature, but the community has to feel comfortable in sharing and publishing the data that is generated from the needs assessment and find the best venue to do so.

In the interpretation, you will be able to identify the additional research questions, and you have to decide what to do with those research questions. Are you going to pursue data collection? Or are you going to use them for other projects and for grant-writing for a future funding?

Remember, although the needs assessment must end in order to serve its original purpose of informing the program planning, but in order for program implementation to begin.

Finally, you have the research ethics. All the research that concerns human subjects must go through an institutional review board, and the institutional review board ensures that human participants are protected and that they're fully informed of the benefit or any harm that can come from participating in the research.

There are different IRBs that you might consider. Most of the IRBs are part of universities. Some of them are parts of hospitals or large research institutions. There are some tribe-specific IRBs or IRBs that address different tribal communities. And you also have independent IRBs that will review your application for a fee.

You have to decide, depending on your project at your community, which IRB is more suitable for your particular project. Some academic IRBs require that the principal investigator is part of the university. So you need to see what works best for your community.

Some of the documents that you should consider when you pursue the IRB are the informed consent and assent (for minors), confidentiality certificate that you can obtain from NIH. The confidentiality certificate basically protects the researchers from forced disclosure of identifying data.

It is a good practice not to collect any identifiable information. However, you might feel a need to do so, and that's up to the researchers. But any identifying information should be protected.

Also, every IRB has different application formats and requirements, so you should get familiar with all of them and make sure that you can provide all the information that they require. Some IRBs are open to discuss your research and (needs assessment) design ahead of time, and I will help you write that IRB application. However, be aware that, depending on the IRB, some of the members might not know your community and might not be aware of tribal participatory methods, so some of the recommendations might not be well-suited with your community. So that's another thing that you should be aware of.

And, finally, in order to be suitable for the IRB, the research protocol must take every step to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, not collecting identifiers. All the data collection should be anonymous, and the data should be locked and protected. Any data that is shared should be shared as an aggregate and all the identifiers, if any have been collected, should be removed from the data set, from interviews, and focus groups. This is the best way to protect the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants.

So, finally, we have elaborated a list of resources. Some of these resources are going to be fully extended in the tip sheet that we are preparing, and this is just to get you started. In this first light, you can get resources freely available on the Web on their Website. And the final resources are for some of the program planning models that we discussed at the beginning, and these are the links to their Web pages, so you can gain access to the models, framework, and more information, if you need that information.

And, again, we're going to open the line for questions. I understand that you can press star and the number one in order to get into the Q&A queue. If you have any further questions, you might refer to your project officer. If you need specific resources, again, you can refer to your project officer, and we'll be happy to send any information that you need.

Thank you very much. And feel free to either type your questions in your chat box or press star, one to ask any questions directly.

Operator: Again, ladies and gentlemen, in order to ask a question, please press star, one. Your first question comes from the line of Jan Benslike.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: Hi, Jan. What is your question?

Operator: Jan, your line is open. You may need to unmute your end.

Jan Benslike: Hi, thank you. I was asking a question about the IRB. Given that that process can often be lengthy, can take several months, how does that fit in with the timeframe of the needs assessment?

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: That is true. An IRB can take several months. And that's something that you should incorporate in your project timeline. I would like to refer to a project officer. Maybe they can give you some ideas on what to do.

Generally, the IRB is a good idea. You can and you should definitely pursue an IRB if you're going to be collecting data from human participants.

Something that you could do, however is, you can call the IRB, discuss the methods, and check on the timeline. Some IRBs might have different timelines, depending on how complex your design is and how often they meet. That also might also compromise your timeline.

You may want to start with some methods that do not include data collection from participants, maybe secondary data analysis and lit review at the beginning while you get IRB clearance. But definitely check with your project officer for their advice on how to move forward with this.

Jan Benslike: Thank you.

Operator: Again, if you would like to ask a question, please press star, one.

Megan: While we wait for that question, Genevieve, we have another question that's been typed in. Do you have any recommendation on how to sample the community?

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: OK, recommendations on how to sample the community. Well, there are many different strategies on how you can sample the community, and it will depend on your target population. I know that's where, for academic research, if you want to be very rigorous, you want to have a random sample.

For many needs assessment, people have found that a convenient sample might work better, again, because of, you know, how you can gain access to the community, convenient sample might be better. And the way that you can do it is you can either go to the school and ask for permission to administer a survey there or to recruit participants there. Community organizations that work with youth might help you recruit people from their own services to answer a survey.

Again, it might not be as rigorous as a random sample, but it is convenient. And if you have a large sample, it might represent different sectors of the community. But you have to be very specific on the target community, if you're targeting elders, if you're targeting caregivers, or you're targeting youth.

Operator: There are no further questions from the phone line.

Megan: There was one more chatted question in. And that was right after you broke for a question earlier, and that was, how many people are usually interviewed or surveyed?

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: OK, good question. Well, the number is very different. For the interviews, the rule of thumb, you can interview between 5 to 10 people. You stop interviewing when you achieve saturation of your data, and saturation means that every time that you interview, you see the same themes emerging over and over again.

At that point, you might decide, well, I have interviewed different key informants. They might represent different aspects of the community, and they're saying the same thing. I am not gaining any new information. I'm going to stop.

However, if after five or six interviews you find that every person is bringing new issues, you might want to keep on interviewing until you achieve that saturation. At some point, you need to stop, but when you decide on the number of people, you have to be strategic. First of all, it depends who the target population is. If you are interviewing clinicians, you might want to get a good distribution of the clinicians in the community and interview two or three on each category.

The same thing for focus groups. The rule of thumb is two focus groups per variable of interest, and that means you want to have an idea of the attitudes about teen pregnancy in the community, and you want to compare what the girls say versus what the boys say. Well, you should have two groups for the girls, two groups for the boys.

And the same thing applies. If the groups are saying the same things and you see the same themes emerging, then you can stop. You don't have to conduct any more focus groups.

Now, for a sample for a survey, it really depends on your end. It really depends how many people are in your community that you're able to reach. And because many people use a convenient sample, they try to survey 100 and 200. It really depends on the total number of that population in your community, and if you're working with the evaluator, the evaluator can tell you if they're trying to look for any statistical significance, if they're trying to compare or use any sort of scale that you need a minimum number in order to achieve the statistical analysis outcomes, plan that they have.

I don't know if that would answer your question.

Megan: There's one more question that was just typed in, and it says, Is the IRB required during needs assessment data collection phase of the grant or during Phase II implementation when working with minors?

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: OK, generally, the IRB will not matter for the data collection aspect. Any research done with human subjects, that's when you have the

IRB, not necessarily for the implementation. However, if you're going to have an implementation, you're going to be collecting the data pre and post, then certainly the IRB will come into play.

As far as the IRB requirement for this specific project and for your community, I would like to refer to the project officer for their guidance.

Olivia: Hey, Genevieve, this is Olivia at RTI. Can I just add a couple of comments about IRBs from our experience?

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: Oh, absolutely.

Olivia: Because I know this question's come up today, and it came up yesterday with the state PREP grantees, as well. I just wanted to share our experience at RTI. We do a lot of research. We're the training and technical assistance contractor for PREP, but we also do a lot of research and evaluation.

Our rule at RTI is we always have to contact the IRB when we're going to collect data. We never begin contacting people in the community without first asking the IRB what the rule is.

What we've learned at RTI, though, is unless we are actually doing research for a study, like an evaluation, our IRB can grant us a waiver if we are collecting, say, needs assessment data or key informant interviews that are informing program planning.

And I'm not saying that every IRB is this way, but I think it's worth grantees checking with the IRB that they would be working with to ask them about what their rules are. As long as the grantee is checking with the IRB and getting something in writing, it can be an e-mail saying you're authorized to proceed with a waiver or you don't need to come to us, sometimes if you're getting anonymous data, the IRB will grant a waiver and say you don't need to get IRB clearance as long as you're not linking information to names.

They may give a waiver and expedite that process. Some IRBs may not do that, but typically for things like data collection for an evaluation, where we want pre- and post-test data from the same child and we want to be able to link that, so we need an identifier, that's where the IRB requires a lengthy review.

But sometimes for needs assessment data or for anonymous data, or key informant interviews, our IRB grants a waiver. So I just wanted to put that suggestion out there that folks talk with their IRB, as well as their project officer, to see if that's an option.

Hope that's helpful.

Genevieve Martinez Garcia: Thank you for the clarification, Olivia. That was very helpful.

So it is 4:30 right now. If there aren't any other questions, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your participation and for your attention, and I would like to turn over to Deb or anyone else at FYSB that would like to say a few words.

Deb Yatsko: Thank you, everyone, for participating today. And I just wanted to remind you all also, that if you have any additional questions now about needs assessment in your community, please contact your project officer directly. I hope all of you have a great afternoon.

Operator: This concludes today's conference call. You may now disconnect.

END