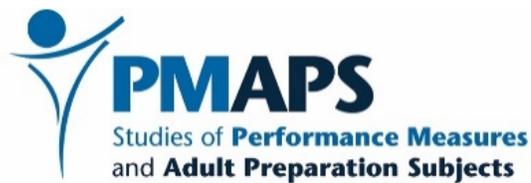


# CONCEPTUAL MODELS FOR ADULTHOOD PREPARATION SUBJECTS WITHIN THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY EDUCATION PROGRAM (PREP)



PREP: Studies of Performance Measures and Adulthood Preparation Subjects  
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## I. INTRODUCTION TO APS CONCEPTUAL MODELS FOR PREP

The Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP), authorized by Congress in 2010 as part of the Affordable Care Act, is one of the largest federally funded programs designed to address adolescent pregnancy. PREP provides \$75 million annually for evidence-based and promising adolescent pregnancy prevention programs, most of which states receive through formula grants. A set-aside of funding is also awarded competitively to Tribes and Tribal organizations and local organizations. PREP is administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

PREP grantees have discretion to design their programs, as long as they adhere to four requirements in the legislation to: (1) implement evidence-based or evidence-informed curricula; (2) provide education on both abstinence and contraception for the prevention of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and HIV; (3) educate youth on at least three of six adulthood preparation subjects (APSs); and (4) focus on high-risk populations, such as youth residing in geographic areas with high teen birth rates, adjudicated youth, youth in foster care, minority youth, and pregnant or parenting teens. PREP grantees are also required to implement a positive youth development (PYD) approach in their programs. PREP grantees have discretion in how to meet these requirements, which allows them to tailor their programs to fit the needs of the targeted populations and their priorities.

PREP legislation requires grantees to incorporate into their programs content on a minimum of three of the six APSs specified in the authorizing legislation. The intention of supplementing pregnancy prevention programs with additional content is to further prepare youth for the transition to adulthood. It is hypothesized that incorporating the APS content will strengthen the ability of programs to reduce sexual risk behaviors and expand the range of outcomes that programs affect.

FYSB and the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within ACF contracted with Mathematica and its partner, Child Trends, to develop conceptual models to help PREP grantees, as well as other practitioners, implement the APSs. This report presents conceptual models for each of the six APSs, and a unified framework that identifies commonalities across the models and provides guidance for including a PYD approach in APS programming.

This report is a first step toward helping PREP grantees understand issues of integrating and implementing APSs into their programming. The information presented here reflects grantee perspectives and published literature on the APSs. This report aims to help PREP grantees to:

### Adulthood preparation subjects as specified by PREP legislation

1. Healthy relationships, including, marriage and family interactions.
2. Adolescent development, such as the development of healthy attitudes and values about adolescent growth and development, body image, racial and ethnic diversity, and other related subjects.
3. Financial literacy.
4. Parent-child communication.
5. Educational and career success, such as developing skills for employment preparation, job seeking, independent living, financial self-sufficiency, and workplace productivity.
6. Healthy life skills, such as goal setting, decision making, negotiation, communication and interpersonal skills, and stress management.

Source: U.S. Congress, Social Security Act, Section 513.  
Available at [https://www.ssa.gov/OP\\_Home/ssact/title05/0513.htm](https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title05/0513.htm)

1. **Understand APSs.** Each conceptual model is designed to help PREP grantees define the APS, understand the topics and related content areas, and design, implement, and integrate programming for the subjects within their existing programming.
2. **Choose APSs.** Grantees can use this report to determine which APSs are best suited to include in their PREP programming. Grantees can compare the topics they cover related to sexual health and their current APSs with the topics listed in the APS conceptual models. Grantees can then choose to cover their current APS topics in more depth, or cover topics they do not already include in their programming.
3. **Develop APS content.** Once APS topics are chosen, grantees can use the conceptual models to design and deliver that content within their PREP programs. The conceptual models can serve as tools to support grantees with addressing APSs in a comprehensive and purposeful way.
4. **Target specific outcomes.** Grantees who know which outcomes they want to target can use the conceptual models to identify how programming for specific APSs might lead to intended outcomes. Alternatively, grantees can use the unified framework to determine which APSs to target to try to achieve specific outcomes.

### **A. Overview of PREP and the APS Conceptual Models Study**

Although the PREP legislation required grantees to address APSs, little research has been done on how to integrate APSs with adolescent pregnancy prevention programs. Moreover, to date, there has been no rigorous research on how combining content on APSs and adolescent pregnancy prevention influences program effectiveness. For example, the limited research on the effectiveness of healthy relationship curricula for youth (Kerpelman et al. 2010; Antle et al. 2011) does not focus on the effect of incorporating this content into adolescent pregnancy prevention programming. The purpose of the APS conceptual models study is to begin to fill this gap by reviewing existing research literature and gathering practice knowledge from grantees to inform how to design and implement programming on APSs.

For the APS conceptual models research, the study team developed conceptual models for the six APSs, then created a unified framework to identify similarities across subjects. Together, the six conceptual models and the unified framework intend to help ACF support effective programs by providing PREP grantees with guidance on:

1. What constitutes adulthood preparation programming?
2. What infrastructure is needed to support it?
3. How could such programming be offered within or in coordination with adolescent pregnancy prevention programs?
4. What outcomes are anticipated?

While the conceptual models and unified framework are useful tools for PREP grantees, there are limitations to the guidance the models can provide. This is due in part to the variety of populations, settings, and potential approaches used by PREP grantees. No models could cover all possibilities or provide guidance for all situations that PREP grantees and providers will need to consider. As such, these models may not serve as detailed implementation guides. Also, the

study team did not (1) conduct a systematic review of intervention literature that would support drawing conclusions about the causality of specific interventions relative to the outcomes identified in each model, or (2) identify the exact amount of programming that should be provided to achieve those outcomes.

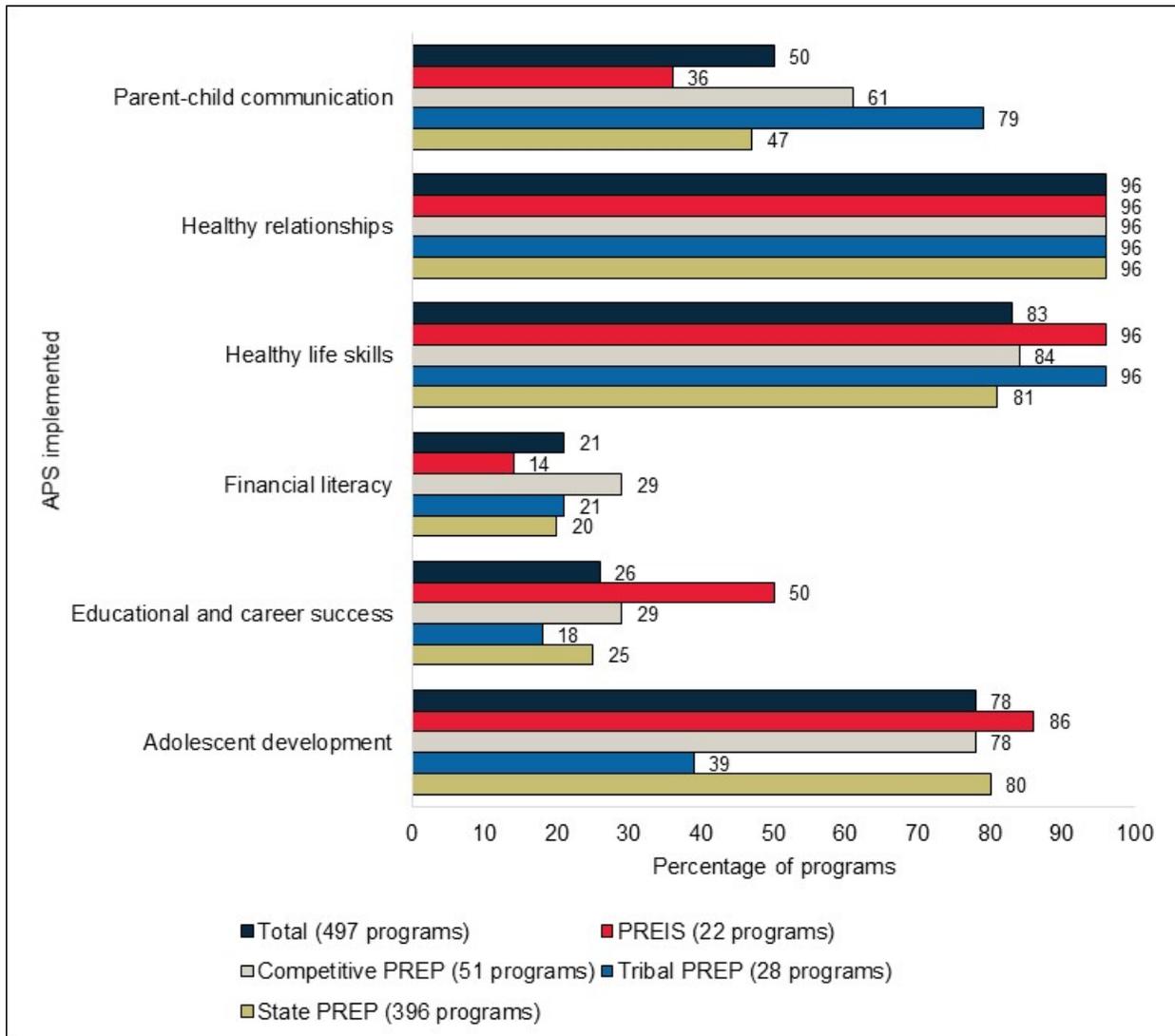
**PREP grantees and APS implementation.** PREP programs offer the six APSs with varying frequencies (Figure I.1). The subject healthy relationships is most commonly addressed, incorporated by 96 percent of PREP programs in 2017–2018. Healthy life skills and adolescent development are also popular, incorporated by 83 and 78 percent of PREP programs, respectively. Educational and career success and financial literacy are less commonly addressed (26 and 21 percent, respectively). The prevalence of APSs varies somewhat across programs under different PREP funding streams. For example, more Competitive PREP programs incorporated educational and career success into their programming than grantees of other PREP funding streams; 29 percent for Competitive PREP programs compared to 21 percent among all PREP programs. Similarly, more Tribal PREP programs incorporated the subject of parent-child communication than grantees in other funding streams.

PREP grantees typically take one of three approaches to offering adulthood preparation content:

- Selecting a curriculum for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections among youth (hereafter, referred to as a ‘curriculum for pregnancy and STI prevention’) that significantly covers topics related to selected APSs
- Supplementing an existing curriculum for pregnancy and STI prevention with existing APS curricula
- Developing separate, stand-alone APS programming that is not integrated with the pregnancy prevention curriculum

Grantees that select a curriculum for pregnancy and STI prevention that covers APS topics often focus on the three most commonly selected adulthood preparation subjects: healthy relationships, adolescent development, and healthy life skills (Zief et al. 2013). Some curriculum for pregnancy and STI prevention cover these topics, making this approach popular with some PREP grantees; however, in certain cases, the curricula do not cover the APS content in depth. Therefore, some grantees choose to supplement the curricula by offering content on the subjects either as part of core programming or through stand-alone programming. The three remaining adulthood preparation subjects—parent-child communication, educational and career success, and financial literacy—are less commonly covered by curriculum for pregnancy and STI prevention. Grantees that choose to focus on these subjects typically have to supplement existing curricula with additional material.

**Figure I.1. Percentage of programs implementing each APS, by funding stream**



Source: PREP performance measure data for the 2017–2018 reporting cycle.

Note: PREIS stands for Personal Responsibility Education Program Innovative Strategies.

**B. Overview of models**

This report presents seven models: six APS conceptual models and a unified framework. Together, these models can help grantees implement APSs. Each APS conceptual model contains six components, which first were populated through a targeted literature search, then revised based on grantees’ experiences implementing APSs, and finally revised based on feedback from a group of experts and stakeholders (this process is described in Chapter II). Two components (topics and program design and implementation) focus on operationalizing APSs in PREP. The components of the conceptual models are:

1. **Working definition:** A definition that describes the subject and what it means in the context of PREP. The study team created the definition to guide the literature search and

initial model development. Over time, the study team refined the working definition based on feedback from reviewers. Each model presents the subject's final working definition.

2. **Theory of change:** A theory of change that articulates why including the APS may help prepare youth and young adults for the transition to adulthood.
3. **Precursors:** A list of precursors that may affect youth prior to or as they enter the program. Precursors include developmental tasks relevant to adolescents and the specific subject as well as risk and protective factors that may affect how practitioners provide programming to adolescents.
4. **Topics:** A set of topics that PREP programs should consider including as part of the APS.
5. **Program design and implementation:** Several program design and implementation considerations that PREP programs can use to think about how to deliver, and who should deliver, the APS programming.
6. **Outcomes:** Two sets of outcomes—those that focus on changes to the core outcomes related to the prevention of pregnancy and STIs among youth targeted by PREP (enhanced outcomes), and outcomes not related to the prevention of pregnancy and STIs among youth (expanded outcomes) in the models.

The unified framework is a consolidated model that identifies the commonalities between the precursors and outcomes in the individual APS conceptual models. It differs from the APS conceptual models in that it does not include a definition or theory of change, as it was developed to show the overlap between the APSs. The unified framework is intended to help PREP grantees understand how the addition of APS content, including use of a positive youth development (PYD) approach, can improve outcomes for participating youth. Grantees may use the unified framework to support selection of APSs or to see how APSs are related.

### **C. Road map to the report**

This report is divided into 10 chapters so that readers can select the ones of most interest or use. Chapter II describes the process for developing the conceptual models. It includes an overview of the literature review and screening process and a discussion of how the team engaged grantees, stakeholders, and other experts to inform development of the models.

Chapters III through IX present the individual APS conceptual models and supporting literature for readers who want to understand an APS in greater detail:

- Chapter III Adolescent Development.
  - Chapter IV Educational and Career Success.
  - Chapter V Financial Literacy.
  - Chapter VI Healthy Life Skills.
  - Chapter VII Healthy Relationships.
  - Chapter VIII Parent-Child Communication.
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- Chapter IX Unified Framework.

Finally, Chapter X provides additional considerations for grantees using the models to select and implement the APSs. This chapter is relevant for all current and future PREP grantees, as well as for policymakers and technical assistance providers who work with PREP grantees to deliver PREP programming.

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