CONCEPTUAL MODELS FOR ADULTHOOD PREPARATION SUBJECTS WITHIN THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY EDUCATION PROGRAM (PREP)
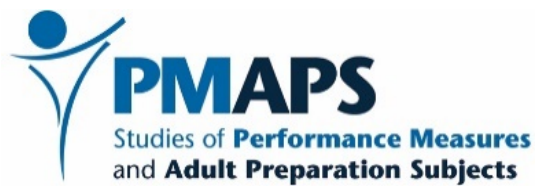
II. METHODS FOR DEVELOPING APS CONCEPTUAL MODELS

The goal of this study was to develop APS conceptual models and a description of the model and its supporting research. The conceptual models intend to help PREP grantees understand the APSs, select APSs for their programs, develop APS content, and understand how including APSs in PREP could affect youth outcomes. For developing the models, the study team created a systematic approach that could be replicated across subjects and was grounded in theoretical and empirical evidence.

The team developed the six conceptual models and the unified framework using a multi-staged, iterative process. For each APS, the study team followed several steps that incorporated multiple data sources to develop and then refine the conceptual model and description of supporting research (Table II.1). Throughout the process ACF reviewed the developing models. The steps involved:

1. Conducting a targeted review of research literature for each of the six APSs and summarizing information from the reviewed articles to develop the initial APS conceptual models.

2. Working with two consultants—James Jaccard (Professor of Social Work, New York University) and Peter Scales (Senior Fellow, Search Institute)—on the early stages of model development. These consultants are national experts on adolescent pregnancy prevention and reviewed initial working definitions and search terms for each APS and early drafts of the models and supporting narratives.

3. Interviewing selected PREP grantees and providers about their APS programming. Topics included how grantees chose which APSs to cover, whether they covered APSs through their existing curriculum for pregnancy and STI prevention or through additional resources, and who taught the APSs.

4. Coordinating a stakeholder review to solicit feedback on each conceptual model and supporting narrative. The team engaged PREP grantees, federal agencies, external organizations, and experts to ensure the models aligned with existing and best practices.

The resulting conceptual model schematics use a common template for consistency. Each schematic includes several common components:

- **Working definition:** A definition 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.

- **Theory of change:** The theory of change that justifies why including the APS may help prepare youth and young adults for the transition to adulthood.

- **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.

- **Topics:** A set of topics that PREP programs should consider including as part of the APS.

- **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.

- **Outcomes:** Two types of outcomes—those that focus on changes to 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 outcomes (expanded outcomes).

Table II.1. Sources consulted for model development, by APS

APS	Adolescent development	Educational and career success	Financial literacy	Healthy life skills	Healthy relationships	Parent-child communication
Review of research literature						
Number of articles reviewed	42	40	35	41	65	47
PREP grantee interviews						
Number of PREP grantees and providers interviewed	23	10	12	23	26	15
Stakeholder review						
Number of PREP grantees or providers who provided feedback	7	4	4	7	6	6
Number of agencies and organizations that provided feedback	7	5	4	6	5	5
Number of experts who provided feedback	2	1	1	2	1	2
Total number of stakeholders that provided feedback	16	10	9	14	12	13

A. Review of research literature

The purpose of the review was to identify research literature that was representative of, and summarized current knowledge about, each APS. The study team structured the review to support the development of the conceptual model components. For each APS, the study team conducted a separate review, but each review relied on the same process. The process included (1) searching literature, (2) screening potential documents to select those with most relevance to the components of the conceptual model, (3) reviewing the selected documents, (4) summarizing findings using a template that aligned with the components of the conceptual model, and (5) identifying additional literature, sometimes foundational articles for an APS, recommended by consultants, experts, or stakeholders.

Searching literature. To identify potential documents, the study team searched both academic journals and grey literature from the past 10 years, 2007 to 2016.[1] For the academic literature,

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[1] The study team included research literature published outside these dates when it was seminal, or if a stakeholder or expert recommended it.

the team searched a range of databases of scholarly literature, using a consistent definition of the population and primary and secondary search terms. Primary keywords had to appear somewhere in the text of the article along with one or more of the secondary keywords. See Appendix B for detailed tables about the search process, including the list of population definitions and primary and secondary keywords for each APS, as well as the databases searched.

Grey literature was comprised of reports and papers published by research organizations or government agencies. These documents often go through an extensive review process similar to peer review. To identify grey literature, the study team searched websites for selected organizations that conduct or publish relevant research, such as implementation studies of programs addressing one or more of the APSs. In addition to research conducted by Mathematica and Child Trends, the study team identified reports available on websites for similar organizations (see Appendix B).

Screening, reviewing, and summarizing documents. Together, these searches yielded more than 2,500 articles across the six APSs. The study team screened each article using a three-step process.

1. Junior staff screened out documents that were off topic (such as clinical health studies or parental interventions) or that focused on populations or programs outside the United States.

2. The study team reviewed the abstracts for the remaining documents and eliminated those in which the target population was either too young (elementary school or younger) or too old (college and up) for PREP. Exceptions were made if a document was particularly relevant to the APS study.

3. The team screened the remaining abstracts for usefulness to the development of the conceptual models. Prioritized articles either (1) discussed designing and implementing APS-related programs or (2) presented results for a relevant evaluation.

Following this process, for each selected article, the team conducted an in-depth review and abstracted information into a template aligned with the model components. The abstraction template asked reviewers to summarize key characteristics of the article, such as type of document, type of study, target population, relevant behavioral theory, and findings or results.

To ensure that each team member understood the full screening and review process and implemented the process consistently, study leaders trained all staff involved in reviewing documents and abstracting information into the template. After training, team members reviewed one document together to cement their understanding of concepts and use of the template. A senior team member completed quality assurance of the information summarized in the template.

Identifying additional documents. Along with the literature search, the study team identified, for review and abstraction, additional documents that were regularly cited in the original articles reviewed. The team added documents that were recommended by the consultants, external experts, or other stakeholders (such as foundational or cross-cutting articles). The team used the same process to review these documents by abstracting information into the literature review template.

Appendix A includes references, by chapter, for the documents reviewed for each APS.

B. Grantee interviews

Between February and April 2018, the study team conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of PREP grantees to understand how they covered the APSs, including the content of programming. The grantees represented (1) State, Tribal, and Competitive PREP funding streams; (2) a diverse mix of youth target populations served, such as youth in alternative schools or in juvenile justice or out-of-home care; and (3) a variety of implementation settings, such as schools and community-based organizations. The team contacted recommended grantees and asked them to identify a provider familiar with program implementation to participate in the interview.

The study team conducted a one-hour telephone call with key informants (either the PREP program manager or a provider working with participants) on one of three discussion topics: (1) design and implementation of APS programming when APS content was covered in the curriculum for pregnancy and STI prevention ; (2) design and implementation of APS programming when separate curriculum or materials were used to cover the APSs; and (3) youth receptivity to APS programming. Each topic had a separate discussion guide, though all respondents provided similar background information on the populations served, implementation settings, APSs implemented, and curriculum used for each.

The team spoke with 26 respondents from 19 states, representing 25 PREP grantees and providers. Respondents represented 16 State PREP, 7 Competitive PREP, and 2 Tribal PREP grantees.[2] The 26 respondents served youth in a range of implementation settings, including middle and high schools, alternative schools, residential or transitional living settings, juvenile justice settings, after-school settings, and community-based organizations such as YMCAs or homeless shelters. Most grantees that respondents represented served youth in multiple settings.

> On average, grantee respondents covered at least four APSs; six covered all six APSs.
> - All respondents covered healthy relationships
> - Nearly all covered adolescent development and healthy life skills
> - Over half covered parent-child communication
> - Fewer covered financial literacy and educational and career success

Most respondents reported serving low-income youth in middle or high school, eight respondents served older youth. Respondents also served youth who were in foster care, incarcerated, or attending alternative school. Other risk factors among the youth served were homelessness, being a pregnant or parenting teen, and identifying as LGBTQ, but youth with these characteristics were described by six or fewer respondents.

C. Stakeholder review

The study team also asked stakeholders to review the models and supporting narratives. The purpose of this activity was to (1) ensure that the revised conceptual models reflected existing theory and research on each APS; (2) confirm that the revised models reflected grantees'

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[2] As reported in the 2017-2018 PREP performance measures, there are 51 State PREP, 20 Competitive PREP, and 8 Tribal PREP grantees.

experiences with PREP programming; and (3) obtain feedback on whether the revised models plausibly linked to the expanded and enhanced outcomes.

The team engaged four groups of stakeholders:

1. **PREP grantees:** PREP grantees that incorporated APS into their programming.

2. **Federal agencies:** Representatives of federal agencies that worked on adolescent pregnancy prevention or youth programming related to the APS. These included staff or program officers from U.S. Departments of Education, such as the Institute for Education Science, and Health and Human Services agencies, such as the Children's Bureau, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

3. **External organizations:** Representatives of selected external organizations that address adolescent pregnancy prevention or youth programming. These people provided programming; supported organizations that provided it; or conducted related activities, such as research and policy advocacy on pregnancy prevention.

4. **Experts:** Experts with content knowledge on specific APS subjects.

In total, the team received feedback from 41 stakeholders: 17 representatives from PREP grantees, 8 representatives of federal agencies, 8 people from 6 external organizations, and 8 content experts.

At least one stakeholder reviewed each APS conceptual model. Representatives of federal agencies and external organizations were the only stakeholders asked to review the unified framework.

The team initially contacted stakeholders by email to request their involvement, and they provided feedback through individual or small-group calls. In addition to giving feedback during a call, all stakeholders had the option of providing written feedback to the team. In total, the study team held 14 calls to discuss stakeholder feedback: three group calls with grantees, one group call with representatives from federal agencies, one group call with representatives from selected external organizations, one call with representatives of one external organization who were unavailable at the time of the group call, and eight individual calls with content experts. The calls lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and occurred between September and November 2018.

During each call, the study team asked stakeholders to provide feedback on the models and discuss how to share them more broadly. For each stakeholder type, the study team developed a brief set of topics to cover during the call. Although the topics varied between stakeholder groups, they generally included:

- **Topics in conceptual models:** Whether the topics described in the models reflected what grantees covered in their programs, and whether the models accurately reflected the research on the subject

- **Improvements to conceptual models:** How the models might be improved to provide more support to grantees and what additional resources might help grantees use the models to plan and implement APS programming

- **Using the conceptual models:** How the models might help grantees plan and implement APS in their programming

- **Disseminating the conceptual models:** How to disseminate the models to PREP grantees

The study team revised the models based on the stakeholder review. Whenever possible, the study team implemented the stakeholder suggestions, if they were supported by the initial literature review. In some cases, the team reviewed new literature specifically recommended by the stakeholders, and then refined the models or the supporting narrative based on that information.