



# FIDELITY MONITORING TIP SHEET



## Fidelity Monitoring Overview

Fidelity is the faithfulness with which a curriculum or program is implemented. Research tells us that the way a program is implemented influences the outcomes of the program. Implementing a program with fidelity improves the likelihood of replicating program effects with participants.

As PREP grantees and their sub-awardees implement evidence-based programs, this Tip Sheet will provide information that can be utilized to monitor program fidelity. The Tip Sheet can serve as an overall guide in thinking through this important component of program development and implementation for all types of programs.

## What is an Evidence-Based Program (EBP)?

An evidence-based program (EBP) is a program proven through rigorous evaluation to be effective at changing sexual risk-taking behavior among youth.

Although there are countless teen pregnancy, STI and/or HIV prevention programs implemented throughout the United States and internationally, not all have been proven effective in changing sexual risk-taking behavior. The US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office contracted with Mathematica Policy Research, in order to identify EBPs that have been researched and scientifically proven to effectively change sexual risk-taking behavior. ([www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/prevention/research/programs/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/prevention/research/programs/index.html)).

Evidence-Based Programs on the DHHS list demonstrate:

- Evidence of a positive, statistically significant impact on at least one of the following outcomes:
  - Sexual activity (initiation; frequency; rates of vaginal, oral and/or anal sex; number of sexual partners)
  - Contraceptive use (consistency of use or one-time use, for either condoms or another contraceptive method)
  - Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
  - Pregnancy or birth
- A positive, statistically significant impact for either the full analytic sample or a subgroup defined by (1) gender or (2) sexual experience at baseline.

EBPs have typically been proven effective with specific populations (e.g., race, ethnicity, age, and grade-level) and in a particular setting (e.g., schools, clinics, communities). Knowing which population and setting were used in the original evaluation study or replicated studies is important when selecting the most appropriate program for youth, the organization, and achievement of health goals.

Grantees are not limited to selecting one of the 28 model EBPs identified in the DHHS study. Additionally, grantees have the option of replicating EBPs or substantially incorporating elements of effective programs that have been proven on the basis of rigorous scientific research. (See State PREP Funding Opportunity Announcement, Section I.3.ii.)

## What is Fidelity?

**Fidelity** is the faithfulness with which a curriculum or program is implemented; that is, how well the program is implemented without compromising the program's core components.

**Core components of an evidence-based program** are the characteristics that must be kept intact when the program is being replicated or adapted, in order for it to produce program outcomes similar to those demonstrated in the original evaluation research (i.e., the essential ingredients of an evidence-based program).

Core components are separated into three categories:

1. **Content:** WHAT is being taught
  - Content involves the knowledge, attitudes, values, norms, and skills that are addressed in the program's learning activities and that are most likely to change sexual behaviors.
  - This component is also referred to as "**adherence**," or whether program was delivered or implemented as it was designed or written.
2. **Pedagogy:** HOW the content is taught
  - Pedagogy involves the teaching methods, strategies, and youth-facilitator interactions that contribute to the program's effectiveness.
  - This component is also referred to as "**quality of program delivery**," or the manner in which a facilitator delivers/implements the program (e.g., what were the facilitator's credentials, skills in using the methods prescribed in the programs, enthusiasm, preparedness, attitudes, etc.). For this component, fidelity includes the interactive processes that are used to provide the information, such as class discussion, role-plays, modeling, etc.
3. **Implementation:** LOGISTICS that are responsible for a conducive learning environment
  - Logistics involve the program setting, facilitator-youth ratio, dosage, and sequence of sessions.
  - This component includes "**exposure**" or "**dosage**" - the number of sessions implemented, length of each session or the frequency with which program techniques/methodologies were implemented; or, amount of material received.
  - This component also includes "**participant responsiveness**," or the extent to which participants are engaged or involved in the activities and content of the program.

## Why is Fidelity Important?

Effectiveness research tells us that the way a program is implemented influences the outcomes of the program. Implementing a program with fidelity improves the likelihood of replicating the same program effects with participants as the original study. Poor implementation or lack of implementation fidelity can, and often does, change or diminish the impact of the intervention. Ultimately, States will develop a systematic means to monitor the integrity of programs as a facet of their overall process evaluation and/or contract compliance. An additional consideration is how States might encourage sub-awardees to use the steps as the offer planned interventions.

Fidelity monitoring enables documentation of program successes and challenges. It allows for feedback and improvement, as well as opportunities for quality assurance and continuous quality improvement. Fidelity monitoring also assists program implementation by regularly identifying planned and unplanned adaptations.

## How is Fidelity Monitored?

The following steps provide detailed guidance on how to best monitor implementation fidelity of evidence-based programs. Steps describe recommended activities to conduct before, during and after program implementation.

### Before Implementation

1. Identify and fully understand the program's **core components**.
  - Thoroughly read the printed curriculum and be familiar with handouts, activities, worksheets, game materials, videos, music and all related program materials.
  - When reading through the curriculum, gain an understanding of how the program progresses in terms of knowledge and skill building.
    - Note how activities progress from the first few lessons to later lessons.
    - Note the importance of the first lesson in setting up a positive and safe learning environment.
  - A thorough understanding of the program supports effective program monitoring and implementation.
2. Gain a good understanding of the program's **theory of behavioral change or theoretical underpinning** (i.e. how and why the program works).
  - Activities and lessons are thus directly tied to achieving outcomes. This understanding helps program facilitators and educators to comprehend the importance of program fidelity and helps them to conduct program lessons as intended by program developers.
3. Identify or create a fidelity monitoring tool that **can be easily used** by facilitators.
  - It is essential that the fidelity monitoring tool is easy to complete.
  - The fidelity monitoring tool must capture detailed information about:
    - How each lesson was conducted;
    - How much time it took to conduct each activity; and
    - What happened that impacted the length of time it took to conduct the activity.
4. Identify or create a **fidelity monitoring process form**.
  - The fidelity monitoring process form must capture the demographic information of the participants and track program attendance for each lesson.
5. Provide proper **fidelity monitoring training** for program facilitators.
  - Understand the importance of fidelity and adaptation.
  - Understand the proper use of fidelity monitoring tools.
6. Identify lessons or activities that will be **adapted**.
  - Identify why and how these lessons or activities will be adapted.
  - *See the PREP Program Adaptation Tip Sheet for further information regarding this subject.*
7. Have a plan for monitoring fidelity **before implementation**.
  - Understand the benefits of replicating a program with fidelity. This will help all program facilitators and educators adhere to the program design and use program fidelity monitoring tools consistently and effectively.

### During Implementation

1. **Conduct the lessons.**
  - If feasible, have an observer take notes as the lessons progress.
2. Track **what is implemented** during each session.
  - Complete the fidelity monitoring progress form at the conclusion of each lesson.
  - Note planned and unplanned adaptations.
    - Record unplanned adaptations (how and why) for each lesson
  - *See the PREP Program Adaptation Tip Sheet for further information regarding adaptations.*
3. Identify **problems** with implementation as they unfold.
  - Note what worked and what did not.
4. Provide **on-going training, technical assistance and supervision.**
  - Program facilitators must receive ongoing support from administrators, coordinators, and other key players.
  - As a result, participants will be more likely to demonstrate behavioral outcomes resulting from quality program implementation. This will increase the likelihood of community impact.

## **After Implementation**

1. Ensure that all fidelity monitoring forms have been completed.
  - Collect the forms from the facilitators on an on-going basis.
  - Do not allow too much time to elapse between the session and collection of the forms from the facilitators.
2. Schedule an appointment with the evaluator and a team of **vested individuals** to review fidelity monitoring forms at the end of each program implementation cycle.
  - In this way, many people are involved in the process of continuous quality improvement, and each program cycle results in increased implementation quality.
3. Identify potential issues impacting less than optimal outcomes.
  - How much is attributed to not selecting/using the most effective/appropriate evidence-based program (EBP)?
  - How much is attributed to an effective EBP not being implemented well?
4. Evaluate the adaptation process and **measure of success** of adaptations.
  - Identify if adaptations may have improved the delivery of the sessions.
  - Work with evaluators to develop an easy evaluation tool for future adaptation if the adaptations improved program outcomes. Remember:
    - Adaptations should not be made if they are only for the convenience or comfort level of a program facilitator,
    - Successful adapting results in an intervention that is a better fit for the program participants.
  - *See the PREP Program Adaptation Tip Sheet for further information regarding adaptations.*
5. Continually improve quality.
  - Plan for future program implementation by revising lesson plans based on fidelity monitoring outcomes and evaluation findings.

## Online Resources

- BDI Logic Model and Online Course, ETR Associates:  
<http://www.etr.org/recapp/documents/BDILOGICMODEL20030924.pdf>  
<http://www.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ProfessionalCreditsDetail&pageID=226&PageTypeID=17>
- Compendia of Science-based Programs: [www.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ebphome](http://www.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ebphome)
- Diffusion of Evidence-based Intervention (DEBI) on CDC's Division of HIV and AIDS Prevention website: <http://www.effectiveinterventions.org/en/home.aspx>
- Evidence-Based Programs from the Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ReCAPP): <http://www.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ebphome>
- Evidence-Based Resource Center, Healthy Teen Network:  
[http://healthyteennetwork.org/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC={5E80FC23-E52F-4B64-8E81-C752F7FF3DB6}](http://healthyteennetwork.org/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={5E80FC23-E52F-4B64-8E81-C752F7FF3DB6})
- Kirby, D. (2007). Emerging Answers 2007: Research Findings on Programs to Reduce Teen Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Disease. Washington, DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/ea2007/>
- Kirby, D. et al. (2006). Sex and HIV Education Programs for Youth: Their Impact and Important Characteristics <http://www.etr.org/recapp/documents/programs/SexHIVedProgs.pdf>
- Little Promoting Science Based Approach (PBSA) to Teen Pregnancy Prevention Using Getting to Outcomes (GTO): [www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/adolescentreprohealth/PDF/LittlePSBA-GTO.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/adolescentreprohealth/PDF/LittlePSBA-GTO.pdf)
- Manlove, J., Romano Papillio, & Ikramullah, E. (2004). Not Yet: Programs to Delay First Sex Among Teens. Washington DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.  
<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/works/pdf/NotYet.pdf>
- OAH Pregnancy Prevent Research Evidence Review (List of EBPs):  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/prevention/research/programs/index.html>
- OAH PowerPoint Presentation for Tier 1 Grantees:  
[http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/prevention/grants/ta/tpp\\_tier\\_1/tier\\_1\\_slides\\_4-14-2010.ppt](http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/prevention/grants/ta/tpp_tier_1/tier_1_slides_4-14-2010.ppt)
- Program Archive on Sexuality, Health & Adolescence (PASHA). Los Altos, CA: Sociometrics.  
[www.socio.com/pasha.htm](http://www.socio.com/pasha.htm)
- Putting What Works to Work. (2010). Washington DC: National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. <http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/works/PWWTWabout.aspx>
- Science and Success: Science Based Programs that Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections among Hispanics/Latinos. (2009). Washington DC: Advocates for Youth. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/sslatino.pdf>
- Science and Success: Sex Education and Other Programs That Work to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, HIV & Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United States. (2008). Washington DC: Advocates for Youth. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/sciencesuccess.pdf>
- Tools to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs  
<http://www.etr.org/recapp/documents/programs/tac.pdf>
- Tools to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs (in Spanish): "Herramienta de Valoracion de Programas de Educacion Sexual para la Prevencion de VIH y Las ITS" <http://www.etr.org/recapp/documents/programs/TACspanishVersion.pdf>
- United Nations "International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education"  
<http://www.etr.org/recapp/documents/programs/InterGuidanceSexualityEducation.pdf>