

Policy Report
Summer 2018



2017-2018 PREP Evaluation

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Introduction

The Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) is a federally funded initiative in the United States to educate young people on abstinence and contraception. The desired outcome is to prevent unintended pregnancy and transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. PREP programming targets at-risk youth ages 10-19 that are homeless, in foster care, live in rural areas or in geographic areas with high teen birth rates, or come from racial or ethnic minority groups. PREP programming models are based on evidence-based practices that have shown to be effective in delaying initiation of adolescent sexual activity, increasing contraceptive use, and reducing rates of unintended pregnancy. PREP curricula may also address topics related to healthy relationships, adolescent development, healthy life skills, parent-child communication, financial literacy, and educational and career success. The U.S. Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) awards individual states with funding for implementation of PREP programming. States may choose which programs are implemented under PREP from among 35 evidence-based programs selected by the federal government. In the state of Iowa, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) is the administrator of state PREP funding. IDPH awards contracts to community-based organizations and agencies through a competitive grant process. Each site must demonstrate the need for PREP funding in their community and their capacity to deliver an evidence-based program to the adolescent population. The state of Iowa currently offers funding for the implementation of two PREP curricula: the Teen Outreach Program (TOP) and Wise Guys, described in more detail below.

TOP

The Teen Outreach Program® (TOP) is a comprehensive, evidence-based youth development curriculum that promotes the positive development of adolescents aged 12–18 years through a combination of group discussion and community service learning. Core activities across the curriculum include values clarification, healthy relationships, communication, goal setting, decision-making, development, and sexual health. The most unique aspect of TOP is the community service learning component, in which youth engage in 20 hours of service over the nine-month implementation period. These service projects have included making dog toys for animal shelters, helping to organize a community-wide AIDS walk, and developing a bullying awareness project.

WISE GUYS

Wise Guys is a 12-week curriculum designed to prevent adolescent pregnancy by educating and empowering 11–17 year-old males to make informed sexual decisions. The evidence-based program is designed to empower young male participants with the knowledge and skills needed to make educated decisions, encourage participants to respect themselves and others, helping participants to understand the importance of male responsibility, and improving communication with parents, educators, peers, and others.

Methods

Attendance

PREP facilitators tracked attendance data using a form developed by the evaluation team. Attendance data were reported to the evaluation team following the completion of programming.

School Administrative Data

The evaluation team worked with one school district to identify whether any existing school administrative data are collected and available for evaluation purposes. The evaluation team also sought to identify any publically available data that could be used for these purposes.

Facilitator Survey

The evaluation team developed an online survey for facilitators to assess the needs of PREP communities and the perceptions of the curricula offered for PREP programming and entered the survey into Qualtrics survey software. The evaluation team sent the survey to ten facilitators at nine sites in the state of Iowa.

Community Stakeholder Survey

The evaluation team developed an online survey for community stakeholders to assess the needs of PREP communities and entered the survey into Qualtrics survey software. The evaluation team sent a link to the survey to ten PREP facilitator in the state of Iowa who then forwarded the link to other individuals in their community working for youth serving organizations.

Summary of findings

Program Attendance

All programs were completed within the period of August 1, 2017 and July 31, 2018. A total of 998 participants attended at least one program sessions. Between eight and thirty-four program hours were delivered per cohort for an average of fourteen hours. For all cohorts, 80.6% of programs met the number of intended hours and 96.8% of program hours intended were delivered. Of the 998, 499 (50.0%) participants attended at least 75% of the intended program hours. Nine hundred and ten participants attended sessions in school during school hours, 55 attended sessions in school after school hours, and 33 attended sessions in a clinic.

School Administrative Data

We received administrative data from one school, but we are unable to complete the analysis and comparison of PREP participants and non-participants due to issues related to small sample size and maturation of the sample. The evaluation team will continue to work with these data to determine if it is usable for evaluation purposes. Student level data on health outcomes (i.e. Iowa Youth Survey results) does not appear to be available, and the publicly available data would not be appropriate for evaluating the PREP program because it is only available at the school level or higher. School level data could potentially be used for evaluation purposes if appropriate comparison schools could be identified and provided data.

Facilitator Survey

All facilitators who were contacted responded to the survey. Four facilitators facilitated TOP only, five facilitators facilitated Wise Guys only, and one facilitator facilitated both during the current year.

Community Needs Assessment

Facilitators identified the top five challenges they believed youth face in their community (Table 1). Poverty, mental health, sexual health and sexual education, issues related to school and education, substance use, unemployment, and unstable environments were the most frequently cited challenges youth face.

Table 1. Perceived top five challenges facing their community identified by PREP facilitators

Challenge	Number facilitators who listed challenge was in their community
Poverty	6
Mental Health	5
Sexual Health/Education	4
School/Education/ Evaluations	4
Substance Use	4
Unemployment/Economic stability	4
Unstable Environments	4
Bullying	3
Lack of Activities	3
Food Insecurity	2
Transportation	2
Meaningful Adult Relationships	2
Knowledge/Dissemination of Available Resources	1
Peer Pressure	1
Unstable Environments	1
Counseling Availability	1
Issues Associated with Social Media	1
Lack of Education and Resources for Healthy Decisions	1
Health Care for Teens	1

Facilitators were also asked about resources in the community that youth use and resources that are not available to youth that could help meet unmet needs (Table 2 and Table 3). Local health departments, mental health centers, community-based organizations' programming, family planning/sexual health clinics, and food assistance programs/food banks were identified as resources that youth use. Facilitators consistently identified mental health resources, sexual health resources, and mentoring programs as resources that could help meet unmet needs of youth in their community.

Table 2. Resources in communities for youth identified by PREP facilitators

Resources	Number of facilitators who named the resource
Local County Health Department	6
Mental Health Center	3
Community Food Pantry	3
Faith-Based Youth Organizations	3
Reproductive Health and Family Planning Clinic	3
Federally Qualified Health Center	2
School Counselors	2
Local Recreation and Wellness Center	2
Community Health and Medical Clinic	2
WIC	1
ISU Extension and Outreach Programs	1
Area Convention Center	1
PREP-funded Programming	1
Substance Use Treatment Center	1
School System Mentorship Program	1
Department of Human Services	1
Women's Health Department	1
Youth-focused Non-profit	1
Youth Substance Use Treatment Facility	1
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Agency	1
Homeless Shelters	1
Food Assistance Programs	1

Table 3. Resources not available to youth in PREP communities as identified by PREP facilitators

Resources	Number of facilitators who identified the resource as not available
Mental Health Resources	6
Sexual Health Resources	5
Mentoring Program	4
Mentoring Program	4
After-School Programming/Youth Center	3
Family Support Resources	1
TIC/ACES Support for Teachers/Youth Serving Adults	1
Housing Services and Emergency Shelter	1
Teen Outreach Programs at Every School	1

Curriculum-Teen Outreach Program

One facilitator delivered the Teen Outreach Program for the first time, three for 2-5 years, and one for 6+ years. Three of the facilitators delivered the program in school; two delivered the program in a juvenile detention setting, with the remaining facilitator based in an alternative school.

Positive characteristics of the TOP curriculum identified by the facilitators include: covering a variety of topics, flexibility to select the most relevant lesson plans, the frequency of meetings, and providing experience outside of the classroom through the community service learning projects.

Facilitators have implemented adaptations to the programming that included utilizing guest speakers from community organizations, developing handouts for parents that summarize the current events in the program, and including videos and materials from other curriculums that could supplement lessons. Facilitators stated that guest speakers provide more knowledge on particular subjects than the facilitator could. When asked about how the program may not be suited to their communities, two facilitators described the programming as a better fit for larger communities that have more resources.

Recommendations to improve the current curriculum included two facilitators suggesting more extensive training be available for facilitators, one suggesting longer session times, and one suggesting updating session topics to be more relevant/useful to PREP participants. Training improvements identified by facilitators included annual refreshers and more interaction with other program facilitators to develop lessons and share best practices. Three of the facilitators stated the number of sessions was adequate and agreed that they were able to cover all the materials sufficiently within the given sessions. All five of the facilitators were able to describe successes they experienced with the service learning component including giving back to the community, allowing community members to interact with students in a positive way, students enjoying the activities such as visiting nursing homes or reading to elementary school students, and students finding employment or other opportunities in the community. However, two facilitators also expressed the need for more time and two other facilitators expressed the need for transportation to improve service learning. Suggestions for ways to better support the service learning component of TOP include aiding in finding service learning opportunities in PREP communities, being more flexible with requirements, such as the amount of time that needs to be completed, and providing additional funding for service learning opportunities.

Curriculum-Wise Guys

Three facilitators had been delivering the Wise Guys curriculum for 2 to 3 years, two for 2-5 years, and one for 6+ years. All facilitators delivered the program in school, with one also delivering the program after school and another through a community based organization. Five out of six facilitators agreed that Wise Guys fits the needs of their community saying Wise guys fills a gap in sexual education for young men specifically, with one facilitator not responding.

Positive aspects of the Wise Guys curriculum include: being male centered, having relatable activities, having experience delivering the curriculum in the past, covering a variety of topics, flexibility to address topics through adult preparation subject lessons, and the length of the program.

Adaptations that facilitators have implemented include being more inclusive to LGBTQ students and students of color, moving lesson order or combining lessons, adapting activities to work better with the participants, and incorporating lessons or ideas from other curricula. Facilitators noted that some topics were too “awkward” for younger students to take seriously while some lessons may be too simplified for older teens.

In order to improve the curriculum, two facilitators each suggested updating the materials, updating the topics and having longer lesson times. Five facilitators described the number of sessions as adequate, with one facilitator not responding. Four facilitators described the length of the program as adequate, while one facilitator describing them as too short and another did not respond. Five facilitators stated that they were able to cover all the material sufficiently in the sessions delivered, and either agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions were easy to coordinate with the schools, the material was flexible enough to address the needs of the youth, and that the participants thought the topics covered were important.

Other Curricula

Eight facilitators identified additional curricula they would be interested in delivering. Be Proud! Be Responsible! Be Protective!, Get Real, Love notes are all suggested curricula that are listed on the Office of Adolescent Health’s Evidence-Based Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs website (<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/grant-programs/teen-pregnancy-prevention-program-tpp/evidence-based-programs/index.html>). Facilitators also suggested FLASH (<https://www.etr.org/flash/>) and Power through Choices (<https://powerthroughchoices.org/>) as curricula that they would be interested in delivering. One facilitator stated they like TOP and did not feel the need for additional curricula and one did not respond.

Community Stakeholder Survey

A total of 50 individuals initiated the survey. Sixteen respondents did not respond to any questions, leaving a final sample of 34 respondents. Perceptions of the strengths and challenges facing youth in PREP communities are shown in Table 4. The perception of the availability, awareness by adolescents, and accessibility of services in PREP communities are shown in Table 5. It is important to note that for every service listed, respondents reported a higher level of availability than awareness by adolescent.

Table 4. Strengths and challenges in PREP communities identified by community stakeholders

	Strength in their community	Challenge in their community
Supportive and welcoming environment for all youth	9	11
Access to healthy food	15	13
Supportive family life	8	21
Adequate job opportunities	8	21
Access to recreational activities	17	9
Good school attendance	15	10
Supportive and welcoming environment for immigrants and refugees	11	9
Access to English as a second language services	14	7
Residential stability	7	17
Access to mental health treatment	14	17
Access to substance abuse treatment	15	12
Access to alcohol abuse treatment	15	12
Limited access/use of tobacco & e-tobacco	5	14
Limited access to alcohol	5	13
Safe neighborhoods	13	13
Presence of engaged adults	21	11
Adequate bullying prevention and reactionary services	6	14
Racial/ethnic inclusion	7	13
Sexual/gender minority inclusion	9	13

Table 5. Frequency of community stakeholders answering “Yes” to questions about service availability, awareness, and access

Service	Available in the community	Adolescents aware of service	Adolescents can access	
			Without parental consent	With parental consent
Tutoring services	14	8	5	11
Mentorship programs	21	14	2	19
Afterschool programs	24	23	2	18
Financial literacy services	12	7	2	6
Affordable primary health care	21	15	2	15
Affordable dental care	17	12	1	14
Services to combat food insecurity	20	14	8	9
Substance abuse counseling	21	9	4	18
Emergency substance services/detox centers for minors	2	1	0	5
Sexual health/family planning services	20	12	11	7
Mental health services	25	13	2	20
Language support/ESL classes	16	11	8	5
Community support for immigrants and refugees	10	5	1	6
Domestic violence services	22	7	11	6
Suicide prevention services	16	12	11	4
Emergency housing for minors	7	3	2	4
Resources for homeless youth	8	4	6	3
Gang involvement prevention	3	4	3	3
LGBTQ supports	8	2	5	1

When asked an open ended question about what resources are not accessible to youth, facilitators further noted that their communities would benefit from: free or low-cost afterschool, weekend and summer programs that provide mentoring, education (such as financial literacy, life skills, etc.), and meals, safe places for adolescents to “hang out”, substance abuse and rehabilitation services, sexual health and family planning services, mental health services, daycare services, transportation, housing assistance, and employment opportunities.