Tip Sheet

SRAETTA
Sexual Risk Avoidance Education
Training and Technical Assistance

STAY FAITHFUL TO PROGRAM MODELS WITH FIDELITY MONITORING

Introduction

Remaining faithful to the program model is critical to Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) programs. This tip sheet can ensure your program is as effective as possible by helping you maintain fidelity to proven strategies. The following information can serve as an overall guide for thinking through the important components of program development and implementation, supporting your efforts to meet the expectations of your board, funders, partners, and curriculum developers.

1 2 3 to Risk Free Optimal Health

1 Fidelity to SRAE components in the FOA

2 Fidelity to SRAE curriculum

3 Fidelity to program goals through Continous Quality Improvement (CQI)

FIDELITY MONITORING OVERVIEW

Fidelity is a key component of any program and defined as maintaining uniformity in all aspects of the program and service delivery. It is multilayered and can include a mission statement, purpose statement, congressional intent, curriculum, and program implementation. The way a program is implemented influences its outcomes and success rates, and fidelity monitoring policies and protocols can keep the program on track and improve the likelihood of replicating its effects. Therefore, it is vital that grantees monitor their programs and their subawardees and that subawardees also monitor their own programs.

HOW DO WE ENSURE FIDELITY IN FEDERAL GRANT MANAGEMENT?

It is important to consider the statutory and funding opportunity announcement (FOA) requirements. For SRAE grantees, the purpose of the funding as defined in the legislation for all funding streams is "to implement education exclusively on sexual risk avoidance (meaning voluntarily refraining from sexual activity)" and to "ensure the unambiguous and primary emphasis and context for each topic, i.e. normalizing the optimal health behavior of avoiding non-marital sexual activity." Fidelity to this purpose is critical.

To comply with the FOA, grantees can implement either an evidence-based program (EBP), meaning it has been proven through rigorous evaluation to be effective at changing sexual risk-taking behavior among youth, or an evidence-informed program (EIP), which has shown effectiveness but has not undergone a rigorous evaluation process. Core components of an evidence-based program must be kept intact when the program is replicated or adapted for it to produce program outcomes similar to those demonstrated in the original evaluation research.

HOW DO WE ENSURE FIDELITY TO CURRICULUM?

Curriculum Design is the content or the **"WHAT"** being taught.

Content involves the knowledge, attitudes, values, norms, and skills addressed in the program's learning activities. This component also is referred to as **"adherence"** to the implementation environment for which it was designed or written (i.e., hospital, clinic, school, etc.). Curriculum design also involves **"dosage,"** meaning the amount of content as prescribed by the developer in number of lessons and sequence of the lessons.

RISKY BEHAVIORS

RISK-FREE STATUS

Instructional Design is the delivery or **"HOW"** content is taught.

Instructional design organizes the teaching and learning activities into a delivery plan. The plan should consider the instructional level of the students and motivate them to learn the desired outcome.

INSTRUCTION DESIGN CONSIDERS THE FOLLOWING COMPONENTS:

- Teachers
- Students
- Materials
- Learning environment

Pedagogy is how you get there, the methods and strategies used to make the learning happen. An intentional instructional plan involving each of the design components is crucial to student learning and program success.

Consistency in implementation is largely responsible for successful program outcomes. This uniformity in implementation can yield the desired outcomes and makes it easy to replicate the results with a different audience. Lack of uniformity in implementation can and often does lead to poor results and diminishes the positive impact of the intervention. Committing to a faithful implementation approach also allows for feedback and opportunities for continuous quality improvement. Accordingly, programs can develop a tool to monitor the integrity of implementation as part of their overall processes of valuation and contract compliance. Consistency includes fidelity to the content, dosage, delivery setting, and facilitation methods.

MONITORING FIDELITY

Following are the key basic steps for monitoring implementation fidelity.

PLANNING

- **Understand** SRAE requirements and the topics that should be covered. These topics can be found in the FOA. Make sure your curriculum addresses each of the SRAE-required topics.

- **Read** and understand the curriculum, including all the complementary materials such as handouts, activities, worksheets, game materials, videos, and music. Pay attention to the prescribed number of lessons, sequence of lesson plans, and the accompanying materials. Be aware of the knowledge, attitudes, values, norms, and skills addressed in the program's learning activities.

- **Develop** a framework to foster behavioral change. This structure will help staff follow and embrace program fidelity and conduct program lessons as intended by program developers.

- **Develop** and establish a simple system to monitor program fidelity that will not be burdensome to the staff. Design a tool to gather a high level of detail.

Example focus areas of a fidelity monitoring tool:

- Delivery setting (gym vs. classroom)
- Length of lesson
- Adherence to the lesson content
- Order of lessons
- Unplanned interruptions (fire drill)
- Facilitator/student engagement
- Ease of use

- **Find** an easy-to-use evaluation tool for future adaptations.
- **Ensure** staff receive proper fidelity monitoring training for the program.
- **Know** which lessons or activities can be changed to suit a particular audience. Reach out to the curriculum developer or FYSB FPO for guidance on appropriate adaptations. Use this guidance to establish red, yellow, and green light adaptions and share that information with your staff.
- **Begin** monitoring fidelity before implementation by including it in your initial planning.

CONDUCT THE LESSONS

- **Identify** challenges, noting what is working and not working in each session.
- **Note** external influences on the lesson, such as:
    - Morning classes versus evening classes
    - A fire drill or other disruption interrupts a lesson
    - A class period is shortened
- **Support** staff with ongoing training, technical assistance, supervision, and encouragement.
- **Account** for the unexpected at all times.

POST-DELIVERY

- Facilitator can document what was taught from each lesson unit.
- Conduct frequent observations.
    - Suggest an observation within 90 days.
    - Use the tool.
    - Complete the fidelity monitoring forms.
    - Share the forms with the facilitator within three days of observation.

- Have an evaluator and other committed champions review fidelity monitoring forms at the end of each program implementation cycle.
- Assess the adaptation process and the success of the adaptation.
- Examine whether adaptations may have improved the delivery of the sessions.
- Adaptation is ONLY for the target audience, to facilitate better learning, not for staff comfort level.
- Provide ongoing training and technical assistance.
- Evaluate findings and plan program improvement.

CONTINUALLY IMPROVE QUALITY

Based on fidelity monitoring, it is important to reflect on lessons learned and incorporate them into future program implementation. Pay close attention to ensure fidelity throughout all aspects of your program. The effort can strengthen your organization and its programs and help you better serve your participants.

References

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Additional Resources

- ISAP Program Site Implementation Plan. AMTC & Associates. https://dta0yqvfnusiq.cloudfront.net/amres79214468/2018/09/2-5ba10b9455628.pdf

- Getting to Outcomes. Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL259/introduction.html

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