

Addressing Controversy in Communities

- Dr. Kineka Hull: [00:03](#) Welcome to Elevate Youth Programming, a podcast for adolescent pregnancy prevention programs and other youth serving agencies. In each episode, we will discuss best practices, tips, and strategies to strengthen your programming. Each episode will cover a specific topic discussed with experts in the field. Listen along as our guests join me to discuss these relevant topics. I'm your host, Dr. Kineka Hull.
- [00:32](#) In this episode, we sat down with APP grantees, Lashantynia Clayton, Ginger Harris, and Zoa Schescke to discuss challenges and successes that their agencies have experienced with preventing and addressing misinformation in communities. Ms. Clayton is a certified health education specialist who serves as the Georgia PREP Program Specialist in the Prevention and Community Support section at the Georgia Division of Family and Children's Services. She has over five years of experience in sexual health education and pregnancy prevention.
- [01:08](#) Ms. Harris is the Tennessee PREP Program Youth Engagement Coordinator for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Offices of Independent Living. She oversees PREP sub awardees, and coordinates the Tennessee Young Adult Advisory Council, which is a group of young adults that have aged out of foster care, that do foster care and youth programming advocacy work.
- [01:34](#) Ms. Schescke serves as the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative Manager for the Colorado State Department of Human Services PREP Program. So welcome to the Elevate Youth Programming Podcast, Ginger, Lashantynia, and Zoa. How are you?
- Ginger Harris: [01:34](#) Doing well, thank you.
- Zoa Schescke: [01:51](#) Doing great, thanks.
- Dr. Kineka Hull: [01:52](#) Glad to have you all here today. I am looking forward to discussing the phenomenal things your agencies and APP programmings are doing to engage young people, and to address community information. And so what I'm going to ask is that you each tell me a little bit about your agency and your program. So I know for Georgia, Lashantynia, we're going to be talking about the My Goals, My Life campaign. And in Tennessee, Ginger, you will be highlighting the Young Adult Advisory Council. And Zoa, for Colorado, you're going to be talking about the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative. And so I'm just looking forward to sharing with our listeners, who are predominantly other APP grantees and youth serving agencies, the wonderful work that you are doing in ways that they may be

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able to implement something similar at their organization.
Lashantynia, do you mind going first?

Lashantynia Cla...: [02:45](#) Sure, absolutely. As Kineka stated, I'm Lashantynia Clayton. I am the state's PREP grantee in Georgia. We are in about 16 different counties. We have 11 different sub-recipients who are responsible for implementing PREP programming. The curricula models that we primarily use are Making A Difference!, Making Proud Choices!, and then we also utilize core lessons from the Family Life and Sexual Health curricula.

Dr. Kineka Hull: [03:11](#) I am familiar with My Goals, My Life campaign that you produce, I guess that's the best word for it, and how it actually uses young people from your program and the community to give their opinions, their thoughts and experiences, when it comes to dating and relationship, and pregnancy prevention. Can you tell us a little bit more about that campaign?

Lashantynia Cla...: [03:36](#) The My Goals, My Life campaign actually started because we wanted to expand our digital reach here and we wanted to do that by not just implementing campaigns, but we also implemented a few other factors, as in branding and call to actions. But for the purpose of this discussion, I'll focus on My Goals, My Life campaign.

[03:53](#) So it's a video campaign, it's for all teens in Georgia, so it aims to empower middle and high school students to make safe and positive decisions that protect themselves and others when they're dating, and then to of course model those behaviors for their peers. So the way that this actually came about, we were implementing in a particular high school down in Gwinnett County, in Georgia, and we heard a lot of different interesting conversations that young people were having about relationships, and what's a healthy relationship, dating practices and preventing pregnancy. So we wanted to bring to life this conversation, but we also wanted it to look like a student-made production, where peers were just discussing those topics that I mentioned earlier.

[04:37](#) So we conducted about four different focus groups with these high school students, and those focus groups took place during their lunch breaks. They lasted about 25 to 30 minutes, and we had maybe about three to nine high school students in each focus group. And the focus group itself was pretty diverse, students ranged from different ethnicities, sexual orientations, race and gender, so on and so forth.

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- Dr. Kineka Hull: [05:03](#) That sounds wonderful. I love when we can get young people involved, which is why this next initiative really stood out to me, and that is the Tennessee Young Adult Advisory Council. So I liked how Georgia took real time information from young people to produce something that was applicable and relatable to other young people going through the exact same thing. But I also liked about the Tennessee Council, where they reached back with their young adults. So Ginger, can you tell us about the Young Adult Advisory Council?
- Ginger Harris: [05:37](#) Yes. So my name is Ginger Harris, and I work for the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. And we're a public child welfare agency in the state of Tennessee, and I am the Youth Engagement Coordinator for the Office of Independent Living. And so we have created a Young Adult Advisory Council, and we really wanted to start this group to reach back out to foster youth who have any foster care experience. And we basically network with the community, we want to make an impact on the community, and change policies and practices that impact youth.
- Dr. Kineka Hull: [06:12](#) I always love when you can get young people involved, especially when they have gotten a little older and maybe a little wiser, and understand really the important and the significance of the information that you're providing to them, and are able to reach back to current participants, and let them know how applicable this will be as they continue to mature. Can you tell us about some of the activities that you do with the Young Adult Advisory Council?
- Ginger Harris: [06:39](#) Our purpose of the council is really to educate the community about foster care, and the youth currently in care and aging out of foster care. A lot of times they have certain perceptions about young adults in foster care, or just people or young adults or youth who have experience with foster care. So we really want to change the perception, and make it a more positive perception for people in the community. So some of the things that we do, we have our young Adult Advisory Council members, they can do peer-to-peer mentoring with youth that are currently in foster care. We're working on developing a community resource guide for youth aging out of foster care, so that when we have young people that are in foster care getting ready to make their transition, we give that guide to them so they'll be aware of the resources that are available in the community. So we think that's really important for them to have that.

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[07:34](#)

We network with our community partners, and that really allows us to make an impact to change policies that impact youth and foster care. So those are some of the things that we're currently doing. We also have some of our members that participate in foster care panels, so they are able to talk to foster parents, which is a huge goal for us, is to make sure that they realize the importance of fostering teens that are in foster care. And so we definitely connect with them, and we do that. I would say every other month we have the panels, and they're able to participate and be the youth voice on that panel. So those are just some of the things that we work on doing.

Dr. Kineka Hull:

[08:16](#)

Excellent. I love every opportunity that we get to elevate youth voices, especially youth from marginalized populations. And so I want everyone that's listening to check, there is a federal resource guide for foster care parents and guardians that gives them information on how to talk to their young person about sexual or reproductive health. And so that is a totally free training that you can use within your agency or for personal use, to make sure that foster care parents and guardians are equipped with the knowledge needed to help teens with their resilience, their decision making, and pregnancy prevention.

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And so not only am I ally and a fan of elevating youth voices, I am a ally and fan of meeting young people and parents where they are. And that takes us to our third guest who is Zoa, who's coming as a representative from the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative. And you guys do some fantastic things. And so I'm going to let you tell us a little bit about your program, but especially about your Askable Adults workshop, which is great for making sure that parents and guardians and youth serving professionals are again, equipped with the knowledge needed to support young people, but also young people who are marginalized. So we're looking at youth who are in foster or other public systems of care, as well as our LGBTQIA2S+ youth. So tell us about what you do, Zoa.

Zoa Schescke:

[09:53](#)

In Colorado, we are the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative for CoSHI, and we are part of the Colorado Department of Human Services. So with that, we mainly work with those systems impacted youth, and we have a unique opportunity to do that, because we sit in the Office of Children and Families. And so we work with the division of Child Welfare and the Division of Youth Services, which is really those young people who are, youth services are correctional facilities. And so we have lots of grantees across the state, I think we're at 15 this year, and while some of them are in school settings the majority of them are community partners who are working with our county human

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service agencies, and providing services to those young people in care.

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With that, we identified a real need to train the county human service agencies, the staff there, and the foster parents on how to have these conversations with their young people as they're going through the curriculum. Because questions are arising from those young people, and they ask them, and then the parents or the foster parents or the staff are thinking, "I don't know how to answer those questions." And so, it created some awkward moments. And it's a two-hour curriculum that, as we know everyone's really busy, especially staff in residential and DYS. Getting staff off the floor to do any sort of training is really tricky, so we had to make it fast. And foster parents can get the training hours as part of their foster parent training requirements, in Colorado, so we made sure that it could be eligible for that kind of training.

[11:26](#)

We offer it on a monthly basis, usually two times a month. We offer some during the day, and now because we can do things virtually when we are facilitating in our Division of Youth Services facilities, it's a requirement that all staff participate before we start implementing any curriculum. So that everyone's really aware of what's going to be taught to the young people, so that everyone is aware of what kind of conversations we're having. And so that if there's any of that fear around what's actually being taught is allayed, that we aren't teaching anyone how to have sex, we're not doing any of those things. We're talking about the facts. We're talking about abstinence, we're talking about how to protect, and how to talk about consent, health relationships, and all of those values questions are being answered in a way that for some, this is how they feel about things. For others, this is how they feel about the value. And then for the young person, they need to identify how they're going to feel about that value, and they need to go back to their trusted adult.

[12:26](#)

And that's how we want staff and foster parents, and anyone else who's a professional working with these young people, to answer those questions. We definitely are not here to put our values onto those young people, that's a very important part of the training, and we also provide time for them to practice. So we have compiled hundreds of anonymous questions in our anonymous question boxes over the years that we've been facilitating education. When it's in person, we have them take out those questions and they get to practice answering actual questions that young people have had. So it's a lot of fun, because some of those questions, as you can imagine, and as

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you probably have all seen, some of those anonymous questions, can be a little bit difficult to answer sometimes.

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And our young people have really great questions, and sometimes the answers are hard to figure out. So we give them opportunity to figure out how they're going to answer them, in a safe space where they can ask us, and they can talk through, "Why is this being asked?" Or, "What do you think was behind this?" And without a young person there looking at them, making them feel like, "Oh my goodness, what am I going to do?" So they can say all those things, and think all those things and feel all those things, so that when it actually happens they're a little more prepared.

Dr. Kineka Hull:

[13:38](#)

I agree with being values neutral. I know that's something that's always hard, but it takes some practice for us facilitators and health educators to do. I love a good role play, whether it's with a parent, a guardian, or young people. I think practice makes perfect. It's very hard sometimes for anybody, any age, any education level, to sometimes think on their feet. And so when you are prepared and armed, it makes that question and answer period with a young person a little bit more comfortable for you both, because if a young person sees that you're shocked and you know may be judgemental or not values neutral to their question, we all talk about that trusted adult role, right? Part of that comes with being comfortable and safe and secure in that conversation, so anything that we can do to make facilitators or parents and guardians a little bit more comfortable in that role, definitely opens up the lines of communication.

[14:34](#)

And so I'm very excited to have the three of you all on this episode to talk about youth engagement and misinformation, and making sure that you get the right positive messaging and branding out, from three different type of lenses. All of the lenses are needed to make sure that you're preventing misinformation as much as possible, and countering misinformation.

[14:58](#)

So with the current young people who are saying, "This is what we need, this is how we feel, this is what we are experiencing," and seeing it from other young people, which makes it relatable. To the older young people with the council, who are coming back and saying, "Hey, this is what was valuable to me then, and now, that I didn't think was going to translate into this young adulthood," as we're going through different things. And then talking to the parents and saying, "Hey, we agree that you should be the young person's first line of defense. Let us help you be prepared to address some of these questions, as they're

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coming from our programs, or if they're not able to join our programs, you'll be able to be their first line of defense when it comes to their successful health outcomes."

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So each of you has talked about how your program started, so addressing a need, realizing a gap, and immediately coming to task to make sure that you were filling that need for young people and parents. Were there any challenges that you met, as you were starting your initiative or your program? Can you tell us what those are, and how you may have overcome them in your planning process, or during your implementation process? And I'll just let anybody jump in. Who'd like to go first?

Ginger Harris:

[16:12](#)

So I'll just talk about some of the challenges that I've faced since working with youth. A lot of people get discouraged because when they attempt to engage youth, sometimes if you schedule a meeting, you may have one participant, you may have two. You might plan for 10, and then you may have one that shows up. And that can be discouraging, I know it's been discouraging for me in the past. I would say when it comes to inconsistency with the young people, you have to keep trying. It's very important to first build a rapport with that young person, you have to get that relationship established in the beginning. Once you build the rapport, and you can establish a good relationship, it will take off from there. You have to gain that young person's trust. And then once you gain their trust, things will improve over time.

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And that's just with working with that young person in general, not just for a young adult advisory council or youth group, I would say you have to meet the young person where they are and you have to ask them questions, let them use their voice. I always ask my young people, "If you saw me or you met me, what would interest you in joining a council? What would it be that I could say to your peers that would pique your interest in joining a young adult advisory council, and advocating for other youth?" And so, usually, that works out pretty well. I like to engage and get feedback from everyone, but I would say there have been months where I've had two people, and then another month I'll have 10.

[17:51](#)

So to keep the consistency, I feel that incentives are very important, and you don't want to incentivize youth and then have that be their motivation every single time. But it is nice to give them things, or to have them look forward to something. And incentives could look like gift cards, I mean, you have to get creative with that. So you can come up with ideas on how to, I would say, reward them. And I hate to use that word, but I

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mean that's really what it is. So I would just say, be creative. You can't continue to do the same thing and expect a different outcome, so if you see one idea is not working, try something else. And don't be afraid to try something new. Creativity is so important, when working with young adults.

Dr. Kineka Hull:

[18:41](#)

I agree. And I know gift cards go far, but sometimes young people just like the opportunity, right? And so maybe you could just give them a certificate, or something they can't put on their resume, or if they need volunteer hours for a job, or school, or something like that. That's also something that is very attractive for young people. But for a lot, just like us, they like the opportunity to be heard and to impact other people, especially if they have had a excellent experience in some of our programs. And so, I like that.

[19:12](#)

I love a good youth advisory council, because they can come back and say with a keener eye, "When I did an evaluation as a participant, was the person engaging?" "Yes." "Did you enjoy the session?" "Yes." And of course, a lot of times when people are giving those answers, some of them are subjective, but now that they have a little life experience they can come back and say, "You know what? This is really something that I really found valuable, and I really did enjoy." Or, "Now that I've experienced, maybe some of the things that we talked about, here are some ways that things can be improved." And translate that back to the facilitator and other young people, like a Gay Council.

[19:49](#)

And so with that, Lashantynia, I know that you take some of that information from current and past participants, and you've made it into this social media campaign, including My Goals, My Life. So can you tell us about some social media marketing that you may have done with youth influence, that may actually help address misinformation?

Lashantynia Cla...:

[20:10](#)

Sure. So actually I would like to highlight that in the campaign itself, when you see those young people in the campaign interacting, discussing, those were active PREP participants, and we wanted to use PREP participants so that they could feel involved in something much bigger than just their normal sex education curricula that they were learning in the high school. Another way that we also wanted to reach other participants who weren't in the campaign, we developed a discussion guide. And we wanted a discussion guide to facilitate, obviously discussions with other young people and their facilitators, just to reinforce the messaging behind the campaign and to get other young people involved about what they view as healthy

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relationships, dating experience, what they've learned from the program.

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So that's kind of how we wrapped everything into it, and so, one of the other initiatives outside of just viewing the campaign or the PSA, and outside of the discussion guide, was creating a campaign for young people in Georgia to participate. So we created the hashtag, #MyGoalsMylife. And what we wanted was, we wanted young people to record themselves talking about, what does a healthy relationship look like to them? And we got a lot of great feedback. A lot of young people participated, they used the hashtag, they uploaded their videos, they were in the comments talking and discussing. Saying, "Oh, this person is from my school," or, "I'm familiar with this program." So that was really helpful for us as well as our partnership with Banyan Communications, which is an agency who was responsible for filming the PSA, as well as editing it.

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So we had the campaign run on different platforms, so we utilized YouTube, where we know young people are. It ran as an ad, so we had the longer PSA version, which is about three minutes, and then we had a shortened version, which is about 25 to 30 seconds, that ran as a YouTube ad. We also ran it on Instagram, another place where young people are. And then we also decided to do it on Facebook, where a lot of the parents, caretakers and caregivers would be, so that they could also see. And that was really helpful, and we got a lot of great feedback about the campaign on the social media platforms. We were able to see which platform had more engagement than others, which was actually YouTube. Typically, when a YouTube ad comes on, we have the option to skip the ad. We didn't get a lot of skips on our campaign, so our audience were actually watching the campaigns. And I think it helped that we used very relatable young people, who were very open and honest, unfiltered about their responses and their takeaways from being in the PREP program.

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So that was kind of what we did, and we run the campaign almost every year, typically around Valentine's Day, to talk about healthy relationships and things of that nature. And we encourage our facilitators and our educators in the field to utilize the discussion guide to facilitate those conversations in the midst of programming, just to get the conversations flowing. As we know, young people sometimes can be a little reserved, so we were hoping that the discussion guide could kind of get them to open up a little bit more and ease that nervousness that maybe the facilitators or educators might have felt when they were enforcing these different topics.

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- Dr. Kineka Hull: [23:37](#) I feel like sometimes, even as adults, we need a good talking point to kind of get us started and get our creative juices flowing. Thank you for highlighting all those successes. Were there any challenges that you may have faced, as you were getting this initiative off the ground?
- Lashantynia Cla...: [23:50](#) I think one of the challenges that we initially faced was, we didn't know if we could use our young people, if they would actually be interested in participating. And that was just based off of assumptions. And obviously, we were wrong, because our young people came out, they participated and they were really excited to be filmed in front of a professional crew.
- [24:10](#) I would also say, another challenge that we faced was getting others to participate, so that's where the discussion guide came from. We wanted other PREP grantees or SRAE grantees to get the conversations going in their sites and their communities, and we didn't know how to do that without just giving them a three-minute PSA, and letting them lead a discussion when maybe they needed a little bit more assistance. So that's where the discussion guide came from.
- Dr. Kineka Hull: [24:36](#) Perfect. I think that's wonderful. I like taking young people's truth and translating that into something that can be a conversation, or help tool for parents, guardians and youth serving professionals. And so Zoa, I'm just fascinated and in awe about some of the things that the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative does for parents, guardians, and professionals. So not only do you have the Askable Adult workshops, you have a Birds and Bees workshop for adults, because sometimes adults didn't get some of the comprehensive sexual health education that we are providing for our young people, and so they just may not be knowledgeable about what it is that they need to cover. I know that you also do a lot to talk about marginalized populations. Can you tell us about any challenges or successes that you've had with your programming?
- Zoa Schescke: [25:33](#) I think in general, it's been a lot of trial and error, we've learned a lot from our community. And each community, I think as we go in, we let them define and sort of adapt things to make it work for them. So while we go in and train them initially on whether it be the Askable Adults curriculum, or some of the other things that we offer, we also have a supporting gender expansive youth training, which is really important for young people who are non-binary or gender expansive, because those young people don't necessarily get their needs met, especially if they are in foster care or in systems impacted in any way. Because we have a lot of foster parents who have come to us

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and said, "I'm not really sure what type of services, or what I should be providing. Would I find a binder, if they're trying to bind their chest? Or I'm not even really sure how to ask them what they need. Or, how do I figure out what pronouns they want? I want to be respectful, but I'm not sure how to navigate those conversations."

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So email us, and we'll help you figure out where the resources are, if there's a support group for young people in that community, so we can connect them with other resources. Or if there's a drop-in center for young people, we can connect them with some of those other resources. So each community is a little different, and for some communities, they aren't maybe as open to some of those, some of our more rural communities. But it's really about that education piece, and showing that this is what our young people are dealing with. And once the education is provided, and showing that it's not maybe some of the scary things that they may have thought it was, then I think people are a little more open to it and like, "Oh, okay, this is all it is." So that education piece, I think, is the crucial part of it.

[27:23](#)

And then, they can take the education, you usually find that one champion or two champions in the community that are like, "I want to learn more about this, and how can I do more of this?" And they usually take it and run with it, and they may adapt it a little bit or change things here or there. And that's great, because that's what they need for their community. And so whether that's the supporting gender expansive youth, or Askable Adults, because with a lot of the Askable Adults, it's a lot of... We talk about policy, we talk about rules, like what's allowed in Colorado, because that's where that permission comes in. Like, "Are we allowed to have these conversations? Can I give a young person a condom? Am I going to get in trouble?" Because case workers don't know, they're like, "I'm going to get fired." And we're like, "No, you're allowed. It's okay. And here's why. Because in this law, this rule, this is what it says. At age 13 minors can consent to contraceptive, in Colorado, and have access."

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And so once we give them that permission, then they're like, "Oh, okay." So we like to make sure that... But maybe a foster parent, they kind of want to know, but they don't want to have as much discussion. So we let them adapt it to what they actually need to know, or what they want to know, that's I think the important piece. And so it's been challenging to figure out which populations and which audiences want which parts of these things. And for some of our rural communities, it's been challenging to be told that they don't want any of it. So we have

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some areas that we've maybe not reached as much, but we'll keep trying, and we'll keep reaching out and showing up.

Dr. Kineka Hull:

[28:56](#)

Best foot forward, being as engaging as we possibly can, and doing that education. And so I just want to shift the conversation a little, now that we've talked about the wonderful things that you're doing, successes and challenges. We know that sometimes the biggest step towards preventing misinformation is getting the positive messaging out there. And so we've heard examples of young people speaking from their own experience of their wants and their needs, and the impact of APP programming on their lives. With the Georgia social media campaigns, we've heard about how they can reflect on some of those experiences, based on the advisory council in Tennessee, and provide input to help shape programming for up and coming APP participants. And then we've heard how we can meet parents and professionals where they are to reinforce and supplement and support some of the programming that we're doing and the schools, and community-based organizations.

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And so, that's the first step to addressing and preventing misinformation. Facts, education, training, positive messaging on positive results. Is there any way that you can share that your program or initiative has had to address misinformation in the community? So I know, maybe some pushback on some of the training, maybe some pushback on some of the messaging or youth engagement, and how you may have overcome that pushback?

Zoa Schescke:

[30:31](#)

I can share a little bit about one of our more successful and more challenging districts. One of our mountain areas, they had a lot of pushback on bringing any of the curriculum into the community, and they did a lot of community outreach and they did a lot of, went to PTO meetings, went to a lot of different community centers. And basically the main thing that worked was, they took all the curriculum and had sets of it, and different opportunities to have it in the libraries. So that people could go to the library, check it out from the resource or research center, and they couldn't take it from the library, but they could look at it there. And they could flip through it whenever they wanted, and see exactly what it said.

[31:14](#)

I was kind of surprised, because people did actually go and check it out quite a bit, and looked through it. And in the end, when they finally went to the final community meeting and the board had to discuss whether or not they were going to allow it, they didn't actually have that many people show up to dispute

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it, in the end. Lots of people had threatened, and it was very controversial at first, but once everyone had the chance to have those conversations and look through it, I think they realized it wasn't actually that scary. So that was a huge success.

Dr. Kineka Hull:

[31:46](#)

That's an interesting way to do the outreach. I know typically, we hear people say, "Oh, we left it at the school," or, "We left it at the community center." Well, most working adults can't get to the school or the community center in the hours that that curriculum may be available for them to preview, but the public library is open late in the evenings, it's open on weekends. It's a trusted and safe space for people to be able to go and review materials. I like that. I think that's a very good idea.

[NEW_PARAGRAPH]And so Lashantynia, I know when you talked about your social media campaign, my nieces and nephews tease me because I use Facebook, I use YouTube, and I know sometimes young people have moved on to the TikTok. Which I know that's not the terminology, but they've moved on to other things, but it was great that you guys put information out there for the community to see on adult-friendly websites. And so I know how you said that, "I'm a good skip the ads kind of person on YouTube," or hide the ad on Facebook. But the fact that you're saying that you did not have a lot of people who skipped, they actually listened to the young people and what they had to say. I'm sure that that helped when it came to expand your offerings, and do things in the community. Is there anything you can reflect on about that process for us?

Lashantynia Cla...:

[33:01](#)

I'll say this was one of our first campaigns in our Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention unit. And we learned a lot about reaching young people where they are, social media. Engaging with our participants. We didn't want them to feel as if they were just being talked to. We wanted their input, we wanted them to participate. We wanted them to feel involved in something a lot larger than just PREP curricula or SRAE curricula. And I think because we don't always see a lot of things like that done in Georgia, by Georgians, right? Georgia young people. I think that's why so many people were like, "Well, wait. What is this?"

[33:45](#)

And then they sit through it, right? Instead of skipping through, next thing you know, the ad is over because we've captured your attention within 30 seconds. When you hear these young people talk about healthy relationships and dating skills, and what that looks like for them, and of course they're young. They're in high school. So when you hear a young person talk about things, most times, most people should listen and they did.

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[34:09](#)

So I would just, if I could leave anybody with anything, it's to engage your youth, allow them to participate into things, and give their ideas. Because they have a lot of great ideas. This entire campaign started off with a conversation that was happening in a classroom at a local high school, here in Georgia, and we run this campaign every year. We get a lot of different responses each year because we're reaching new young people, we're reaching new parents and educators. So it's been a really great tool for us, not just to center the conversations around sex, but to center the conversations around dating and relationships and communication, and what things look like, what they've been able to learn. So that's what's really helped us.

Dr. Kineka Hull:

[34:56](#)

Thank you. And Ginger, I know with the Young Adult Council, just as Lashantynia said, feeling like what you're doing or saying is heard, and is changing something, right, for someone else and having some kind of impact. What type of information or guidance would you give for someone as they are thinking about maybe having their own young adult council, to make sure that they're able to address some misinformation? I feel like a young person is the best advocate for themselves. So for them saying, "Hey," like Zoa said, "this curriculum, or this class, or this content isn't scary. It's not exactly what you think. This is what I actually learned and experienced," like we're seeing in this social media campaign. "This is how I was impacted, and changed me, and this is why I think it should be available for other people." What thoughts or reflection which you give for people who are thinking about how to engage young people in this way?

Ginger Harris:

[35:56](#)

I would definitely tell someone to remember and focus on the mission of your group, or whatever it is that you're wanting to do. Focus on that, be confident about it, and don't give up. It's easy to say, especially when you're faced with just bringing young people together, which can be a difficult task. But I would say, as long as you focus on the mission, and you translate that and you make sure you communicate that to your audience, you have to get people to really want to get behind your mission. So you have to get that buy-in. And that can be hard, but you just have to keep trying.

[36:37](#)

You have to definitely get creative. That's something that I always believe in, it's creativity. Think outside the box. Again, if you try one thing and it doesn't work, try something else. That's the best advice that I can give.

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[36:53](#) And don't be discouraged, because I believe in quality over quantity. So even if I have two or three dedicated young people to start with, I'm happy with that, because I know that the two or three young leaders that I have, they will motivate me and I can motivate them, and then they will help pull in more members because of their commitment to the mission. So I just stick with that. It's quality over quantity. So I would rather have three that are engaged fully, than have a group of 10 who really aren't there to fulfill the mission and the purpose, and advocate for young people. But I know that over time it will grow.

[37:38](#) So also, have patience. Don't give up, because sometimes it can take up to a year to really build a strong foundation, to have a really good group. So just be patient, and it will work out, and things will come together. That's what I've learned, in my experience.

Dr. Kineka Hull: [37:55](#) I think the key word is engagement and buy-in, right? And so we've heard how three different agencies do that.

[38:02](#) So Lashantynia, and the PREP group in Georgia, are increasing buy-in from young people by allowing them to speak to their own experience and to have their voices heard. They're getting buy-in from the community, and addressing and preventing misinformation, by sharing those youth voices and other social media campaigns online, in adult-friendly frequented forums, so that they're able to hear the correct information and know when things don't match what they're hearing based on what they've received from that group.

[38:36](#) We've listened to gender, how the Tennessee PREP Group is using their Young Adult Advisory Council to provide, again, that lived experience, that input to help shape programming and to make sure that things are engaging and equitable for other young people who are coming through that group.

[38:56](#) And then we've heard from Zoa in Colorado, how the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative is taking not only their trainings with young people and providing them PREP education, but they're also translating that education and needs and services into building a strong group and a strong community of skilled and knowledgeable, trusted adults. So making sure that professionals and parents and guardians know how to supplement the education that the young people are receiving in their school and community-based settings, but that they're able to be their first line of defense, to make sure that they're able to answer questions and provide any guidance and support that they may need.

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[39:38](#) Are there any other information you would like to share with our listeners about increasing buy-in and preventing misinformation?

Ginger Harris:

[39:46](#) I would say, when it comes to buy-in, sometimes some of the benefits are not monetary. They can be basically building leadership skills with those young people, confidence. They are going to make so many professional connections because of the networking that they'll do, and that can definitely benefit them in their professional life. So as they transition into fulfilling their own goals, they can take the things that they've learned from your project, your group, and use that in their personal life. So I would say just letting them know that there's other benefits to this, in addition to advocating for other young people. So once you get them to look at it like that, it kind of changes their perception.

[40:33](#) But I would also say, as far as the misinformation, that's really hard because there's so much information that's there in the community. So it's really important to build a strong group. You want to make sure the right messages are being put out there, because there's so much going on with social media. You see stories on the news, and so there's people in the community that are being bombarded with certain messages. So I feel like that group that you have, that project, you're the change agent. So you can basically shut down all of the negative talk by shifting the view. And that's why it's really important to encourage young people to tell their story, but only what they feel comfortable with sharing, because a lot of these stories can bring up past traumas. And so it can be, those are some of the setbacks that you can have.

[41:27](#) But as long as they feel comfortable, I think that once you get out to the community and you start sharing stories and advocating, people, their perception, it will change. It will shift. I've seen it happen.

Lashantynia Cla...:

[41:42](#) I would say partnerships have been really helpful, here in Georgia. This campaign was great, but it was not something that we just did as a unit in house. We really had to seek our partnerships out in different agencies to assist, and it's worked, right? We can't do this work alone. We all know that this work, for many of us, is a labor of love. And we oftentimes need help, we need assistance. And I found not to be afraid to ask for that help, and to ask other agencies and organizations what they're doing, what's worked, what hasn't worked, and kind of continue to build your community. So I would say to use that as well,

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right? Seek out others in what they're doing, and you don't have to do it by yourself.

- Dr. Kineka Hull: [42:24](#) I love that. Strong partnerships and a village is what we need to surround our young people, which is why I was so excited to have the different perspectives here to say, everybody plays a role and a part to making sure that we meet the community. And so our community is the young people, the schools, the community-based agencies, the parents, the systems, right? All of this change, as Ginger said, it's needed. And we all play a role to shift that narrative, and just surround the young person in this support bubble, and help them in any way that we can. Is there anything you would add, Zoe?
- Zoa Schescke: [42:54](#) I was just going to echo, the community community engagement piece is really the most important piece. Because working at the state, I think people assume we're just going to come in and tell people what to do, and I don't know what those communities need. I want them to tell me what's going to work best for their community, and they need to define that, and help me help them to figure out what that looks like. But it's up to them to really define and help figure out what that looks like.
- Dr. Kineka Hull: [43:22](#) So I have really enjoyed this conversation on buy-in, engagement, preventing and addressing misinformation. By making sure that we are engaging, listening to communities, which are young people, parents, guardians, and systems, to tell us how we as health educators can help them in fulfilling their goals for healthy relationships and pregnancy prevention. And making sure that everyone feels supported to get the information in the way that they need, when they need it, and what they need to be successful.
- [43:56](#) And so as we wrap up, if there is one key takeaway that you would leave for listeners on youth engagement, buy-in, addressing misinformation, just any closing thoughts.
- Lashantynia Cla...: [44:09](#) Something that's been really helpful for youth engagement is to actually meet the youth where they are. Oftentimes, we want them to come to us, but we should go where they are. And a lot of times it's on social media.
- Zoa Schescke: [44:20](#) It's really important to, as you're engaging with your communities, to put yourself out there, and to do your best to be a part of the community, or to get out into the communities and really engage with them in their territories and in their areas. So right now, as we enter Pride Month, we're going out

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to as many pride events as we can, which means we try to do as many as we can. And not only is it fun, but we also get to meet our communities.

Ginger Harris: [44:49](#) I would say, it's important to be transparent. A lot of times when we're asking young people to share their story, we have to have that same willingness to... Not to share too much, but just to be transparent, and be genuine. And it goes back to what I said earlier about building rapport, and just building those strong relationships. And I think that will take you a long way.

Dr. Kineka Hull: [45:13](#) So this has been another episode of the Elevate Youth Programming Podcast, where we've spoken with three APP grantees on ways to use engagement, whether that be with your young people, whether that be with your community, whether that be with your partners, as a way to prevent and address misinformation.

[45:33](#) As we wrap this up, I want to say, remember to be transparent, be authentic, and meet your partners and all of your constituents where they are. Thank you for listening.

[45:44](#) If you enjoyed today's conversation, be sure to like and follow Elevate Youth Programming on your podcast platform of choice. For information on today's topic and resources in adolescent pregnancy prevention, visit the exchange at teenpregnancy.acf.hhs.gov.

[46:05](#) The Elevate Youth Programming Podcast is funded by the Family and Youth Services Bureau. The content in each episode is not the opinion of FYSB, nor is training and technical assistance contractors. I'm Kineka Hull, and this has been another episode of Elevate Youth Programming.