South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Lessons Learned

March 2012

SUPPORTING TEEN PREGNANCY PROGRAMS TO IMPLEMENT WITH FIDELITY

The South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (SC Campaign) has 17 years of experience supporting teen pregnancy prevention programs to implement programs with fidelity. This document describes what fidelity is, why it is important and how to maintain it.

What is fidelity?

Fidelity: faithfully implementing an evidence-based program without compromising its core content, pedagogical, and implementation components which are essential for the program's effectiveness.[1]

Why is fidelity important?

Teen pregnancy prevention programs are developed to have an impact on specific behavioral outcomes. Programs that are grounded in scientific research are more likely to be successful than programs that are not. Consider the curriculum the "recipe" for your program; if you do not follow the recipe as outlined then you will likely produce significantly different results than what was intended. Similarly, when teen pregnancy prevention programs are implemented, it is important that the programs be delivered to youth in the same way the developers intended. Leaving out important concepts or altering the length or activities of a program may result in decreased effectiveness or may even have unexpected negative consequences. Tracking the fidelity of program implementation can help to explain why a program may result in positive or negative outcomes.

How is fidelity tracked?

Depending on the situation, different types of fidelity tracking tools are often needed by those facilitating the program as well as those overseeing or evaluating the program. Some of the more common ways to track fidelity include: observations, interviews, surveys, existing scales/instruments, facilitator logs, and administrative records. Some tools may be completed by trained evaluators, but other record-keeping may be completed by the program facilitator.

The SC Campaign encourages teen pregnancy prevention program facilitators to complete facilitator logs after each session (please contact the SC Campaign for examples of these forms). These forms are specific to the program being implemented and allow the facilitators to keep track of the number of participants, the amount of time spent on the session, the topics covered, and any problems or issues that arise during the session. Essentially, these forms let the program evaluators know who received the program, what information they received, and how they received it.

How is fidelity tracking information shared and used?

The SC Campaign uses fidelity tracking information to identify areas where the facilitator may need support or where the facilitator has learned something that could help someone else. In one project, the SC Campaign uses fidelity tracking information in "real time" to identify issues as they come up and offer help to the facilitator quickly. After a program facilitator

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PAGE 1

completes a log entry, SC Campaign staff review the log to check for inconsistencies, red flags, or helpful hints learned during implementation. If the fidelity tracking data reveal that something could influence the integrity of the program, the SC Campaign technical assistance (TA) provider will follow up with the program facilitator through email or phone. Possible issues for follow up include: equipment/technological difficulties, insufficient materials, classroom management problems, running out of time, and/or skipping activities. Fidelity monitoring logs can also provide helpful strategies and tips for implementation, which can be shared with other facilitators. At the SC Campaign, technical assistance provided to the facilitators is recorded in a shared FileMaker Pro database that allows all team members to learn from each other and develop a case record of technical assistance provided to each facilitator. Please contact the SC Campaign for more detailed information about the FileMaker Pro tool and the feedback process.
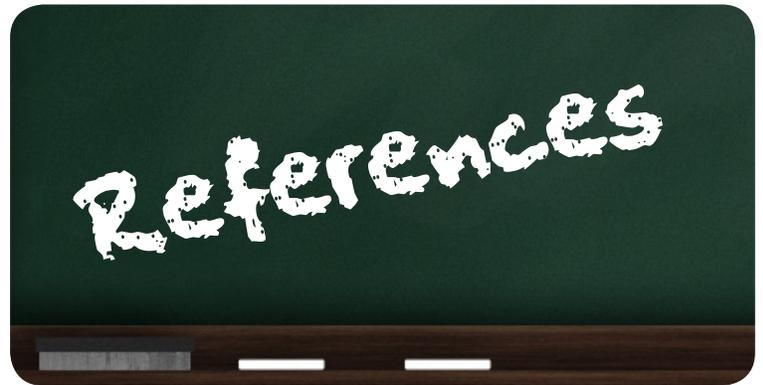
How can fidelity be promoted?

When facilitating a teen pregnancy prevention program, it is vital to underscore the importance of fidelity to participating sites. Ways to do this include:

- **Early Emphasis:** The SC Campaign has worked with schools to provide initial trainings on the importance of implementing a program with fidelity and the necessity of timely and accurate completion of fidelity monitoring tools. One way to support the completion of fidelity monitoring tools is to provide incentives to program facilitators, such as a two-hour lunch break or gift cards.
- **Ongoing Focus:** The SC Campaign works to ensure that fidelity stays a top concern for the program facilitators within the schools through continuing education opportunities such as online trainings and scholarships to the annual conference, Summer Institute.
- **Information Sharing:** The SC Campaign developed an email series called "Tips and Tricks" that is sent out regularly to program facilitators. The series provides information on what is going well for program facilitators as well as ways to improve a troubling situation. Information is shared in a general format and includes lessons learned from a specific program facilitator's experience and/or general information that may be useful to all program facilitators in the group.
- **Stay Connected:** The SC Campaign provides regular check-ins with schools and program

facilitators to get a personal feel for how the program is going. Therefore, any needs and concerns can be addressed in a personal manner.
- **Provide Support:** It is also important that the schools are invested in the program, feel supported, and encouraged to implement the program. Therefore, the SC Campaign strives to be visible and proactive. The SC Campaign works to ensure the ease of implementation by anticipating program facilitators' needs and being responsive if/when issues do occur.

[1]www.cdc.gov/TeenPregnancy/Docs/AdaptationGuidelines.doc

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PAGE 2