

PROMOTING SCIENCE-BASED APPROACHES DEFINITIONS

Science-Based Approach, Science-based Program, and Promising Program

SCIENCE-BASED APPROACH

The use of a science-based approach to teen pregnancy prevention will help ensure that the programs you implement have a greater chance of succeeding. A science-based approach includes the following:

- Using demographic, epidemiological and social science research to identify populations at risk of early pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections, and to identify the risk and protective factors for those populations.
- Using health behavior or health education theory to guide the selection of risk and protective factors that will be addressed by the program, and to guide the selection of intervention activities.
- Using a logic model to link risk and protective factors with program strategies and outcomes.
- Selecting, adapting, if necessary, and implementing programs that are either science-based or are promising (see definitions below).
- Conducting process and outcome evaluation of the implemented program, and modifying approach based on results.

SCIENCE-BASED PROGRAM

A *science-based program* is one that research has shown to be effective in changing at least one of the following behaviors that contribute to early pregnancy, STI and HIV infection: delaying sexual initiation, reducing the frequency of sexual intercourse, reducing the number of sexual partners, or increasing the use of condoms and other contraceptives. The program was evaluated using a rigorous research design, which includes:

- Using an experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation design
- Measuring knowledge, attitude *and* behavior
- Having an adequate sample size
- Collecting data from both groups at three months or later after intervention
- Using sound research methods and processes
- Replicating in different locations and finding similar evaluation results
- Publishing results in a peer-reviewed journal

If a science-based program cannot be implemented with fidelity, or cannot be adapted to fit your population, then implementing a promising program would be the next best option.

PROMISING PROGRAM

A *promising program* is one that has not been formally evaluated but has most of the characteristics of programs shown to be effective by Dr. Douglas Kirby and his colleagues. They conducted a systematic review of 83 domestic and international curriculum-based sexuality education and HIV prevention program evaluations. In their review, Kirby, et al found that the majority of the effective programs incorporated most of the 17 common characteristics of successful curriculum-based programs identified in the analysis. The characteristics are divided into three categories: program development, program design/content and program implementation. The list of characteristics can be accessed at www.etr.org/recapp or www.healthyteennetwork.org. It is important to note that this list of characteristics applies only to curriculum-based sexuality/HIV education programs. To date there is not yet a comparable list of characteristics for other types of programs, such as clinic-based, youth development, or parent education programs.