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Original article

Stakeholder Education and Community Mobilization Garner Support for Sex Education


 Kristen Plastino, M.D.^{a,*}, Jennie Quinlan, M.P.H.^a, Jennifer Todd, J.D.^a, and Heather D. Tevendale, Ph.D.^b
^a Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, UT Teen Health, The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas

^b Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio UT Teen Health (UTTH) implemented a community-wide teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) initiative in south San Antonio. This article describes how UTTH staff educated community stakeholders and mobilized community members to support implementation of evidence-based TPP interventions.

Methods: UTTH educated key stakeholders about the need for TPP efforts, strong local support for such efforts, and the value of evidence-based interventions (EBIs). The process of stakeholder education and partnership development leading to implementation of EBIs was lengthy with, for example, an average of 11 meetings and 13.5 months between the initial meeting and formal approval of EBI implementation among school partners. UTTH also mobilized the community by engaging community members on leadership teams that actively supported the initiative efforts.

Results: Partnerships to implement EBIs were developed with 16 middle and high schools across five local school districts, two divisions of the juvenile justice system, and five youth-serving organizations. From 2011 to 2015, more than 12,500 youth (51% female) aged 11 to 19 years received EBIs. Of the total served, 95% were served through partnerships with local schools, 4% by juvenile justice, and 1% by youth-serving organizations.

Conclusions: Engaging and educating members of the community require notable time and resource investments up front; however, once strong partnerships are built, there is an ongoing opportunity to reach youth. In south San Antonio, schools provided the opportunity to reach the largest numbers of youth.

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IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

From 2010 to 2015, efforts to mobilize community members and educate stakeholders in support of evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention curricula implementation in schools and organizations in one predominantly Latino community in San Antonio, Texas, resulted in more than 12,500 youth served. Key lessons learned are presented.

San Antonio, with a population of 1.4 million, is the fourth fastest growing city in the U.S.; the population is predominantly Hispanic/Latino (63.2%) [1]. Although teen birth rates have been

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* Address correspondence to: Kristen Plastino, M.D., UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, 7703 Floyd Curl Drive, MC 7836, San Antonio, Texas 78229.

E-mail address: Plastino@uthscsa.edu (K. Plastino).

declining nationally, rates remain high in south San Antonio. The teen birth rate of 77.3 births per 1,000 females aged 15–19 years old in 2010 was almost double the national rate of 39.1 [2,3]. In 2010, UT Teen Health (UTTH) started to address teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) through a community-wide initiative (CWI) intended to reduce teen birth rates in south San Antonio, Texas.

The UTTH CWI, one of nine projects supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Office of Adolescent Health entitled “Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Integrating Services, Programs, and Strategies through CWIs,” consisted of five components: (1) implementing evidence-based

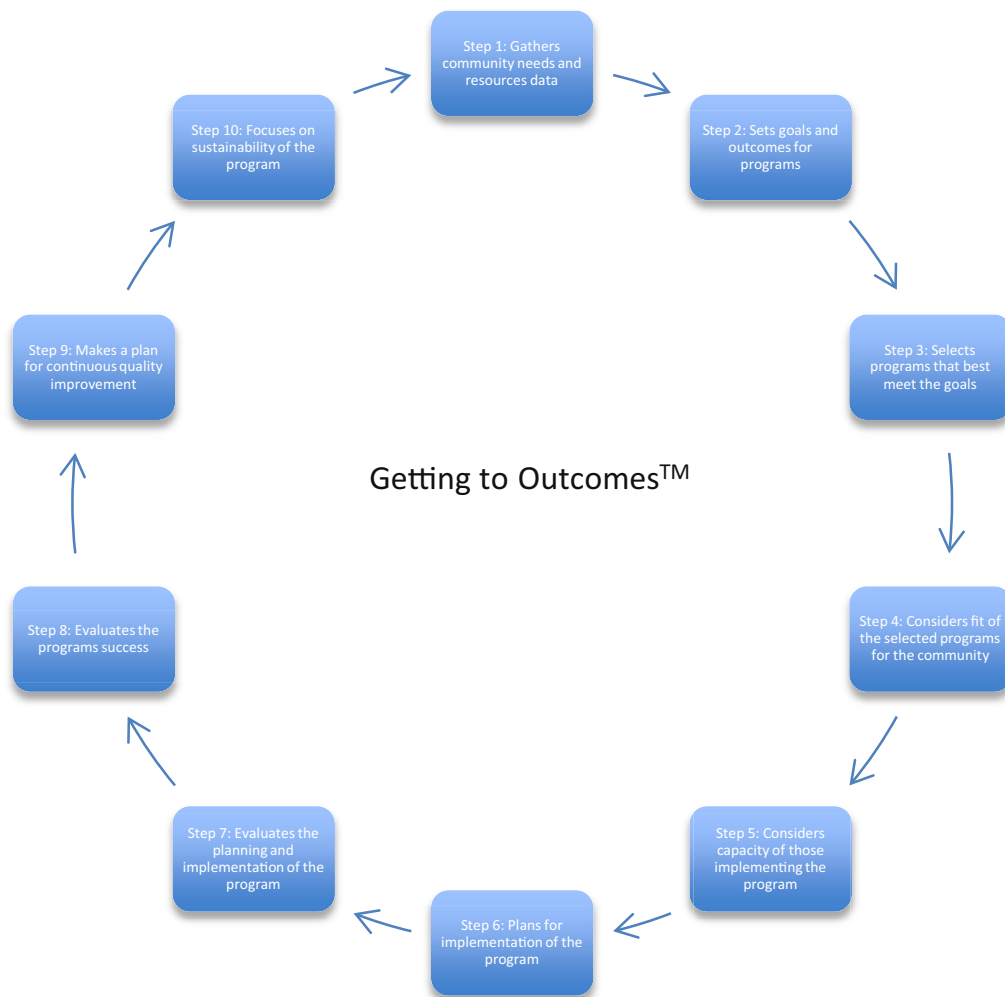


Figure 1. Getting to Outcomes framework. Ten steps for partners to complete to benefit fully from this process.

TPP interventions, (2) linking teens to adolescent reproductive health services, (3) mobilizing the community in support of TPP, (4) educating key community stakeholders about TPP, and (5) working to meet the needs of a diverse community [4].

A key objective of the CWI was widespread implementation of evidence-based TPP programs in the five school districts and in organizations serving high-risk youth in south San Antonio. These evidence-based interventions (EBIs) have been shown through rigorous evaluation to reduce behaviors associated with teen pregnancy [5]. UTTH engaged each local school district and organization to select the EBI that best fit the needs of youth served in their respective settings. UTTH provided training and technical assistance (T&TA) to ensure that each EBI was implemented with fidelity. UTTH partner schools and agencies selected EBIs for implementation from those indicated to be effective by the Department of Health and Human Service review of TPP programs [6]. The five school districts UTTH targeted offered non-evidence-based sex education interventions prior to the introduction of the UTTH initiative.

We describe the process of educating key stakeholders about the need for TPP efforts, efforts to mobilize the community so

that community members could actively support TPP efforts in south San Antonio, the use of EBIs as a prevention strategy, and present results about the extent of partnerships developed and eventual program implementation in south San Antonio. Finally, we discuss lessons learned and strategies we found useful to build community support for implementation of EBIs.

Methods

Descriptions of the process of educating local stakeholders and seeking to engage community members in TPP are based on records of events undertaken as part of the project. Partner organizations recruited participants for the focus groups via email, flyers, and word of mouth and were conducted as part of stakeholder education efforts. The UTTH evaluator led the focus groups, the groups were recorded, and notes analyzed for common themes.

Educating key stakeholders

In 2007, CDC adapted Getting To Outcomes (GTO), a 10-step framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating

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