



## Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Evaluation

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The Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP), funded under the Affordable Care Act of 2010, is a key element of a multi-pronged federal strategy to reduce teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). PREP provides grants to states to replicate, or substantially incorporate elements of, programs that have been shown to be effective at delaying sexual initiation, reducing pregnancy, and increasing contraceptive use among sexually active youth. The selected programs must educate youth on both abstinence and contraception. Another aspect of the PREP program is that states must incorporate lessons on at least three of the following adulthood preparation subjects: adolescent development, healthy relationships, healthy life skills, parent-child communications, educational and career success, and financial literacy. Forty-five states, Micronesia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia have been awarded PREP state grants. Programs will be available for up to five years to youth ages 10 to 19, beginning in 2011.

Upon authorizing the PREP program, Congress required that it be evaluated. The evaluation will help the federal government, states, and local service providers learn more about program design, implementation, and outcomes. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to document and assess this large-scale replication effort. The evaluation will study PREP programs nationwide, collecting data on programs operating in all states, and will also conduct an in-depth examination of a few selected PREP sites.

### Across all states, the PREP evaluation will:

- **Document how state PREP programs are designed and implemented.** States must decide how to distribute grant funds to local sub-awardees, what program models to authorize, and how to support implementation. Understanding the range of programming decisions made and how implementation unfolds can contribute to stronger future distribution of federal grant funds for pregnancy prevention and other programs.
- **Measure and report on program performance.** All state PREP grantees will be required to submit standard information on program delivery, participant characteristics, and fidelity to program models. These measures will be used to monitor program performance and identify areas for program improvement.

### Within a small number of selected sites, the PREP evaluation will:

- **Examine the impacts and implementation of PREP.** In four or five sites, the evaluation will provide rigorous estimates of program effectiveness on key outcomes, such as rates of sexual initiation and abstinence, contraceptive use, and teen pregnancy. The evaluation will also include a detailed look at program delivery.



## PREP Nationwide

**Design and Implementation Study.** Documentation of states' PREP design decisions and implementation experiences will be based on two rounds of data collection. In early 2012, the evaluation team will begin a Design Survey. The team will review documents that outline state PREP program plans and then conduct telephone interviews with state PREP officials to learn more about what programming decisions have been made, and why. In mid-2013, the team will begin an Implementation Survey, which will focus on program implementation, including training and technical assistance provided, monitoring activities to ensure that programs are being replicated with fidelity, adaptations made to fit local contexts, and youth enrollment and retention.

**Performance Analysis Study.** Performance measures, collected consistently from all state PREP grantees beginning in fall 2012, will help ACF understand whether the PREP objectives are being met and whether technical assistance may be needed to support program improvement. The PREP evaluation team will:

- Develop performance measures that are aligned with items used to assess other federally funded teenage pregnancy prevention programs. The team will also modify the existing measures to reflect the unique features of PREP.
- Disseminate the processes for collecting data from participants and programs, and explain how states will submit data through an online data collection system.
- Provide training and technical assistance to states and their sub-awardees on how to fulfill performance reporting requirements, beginning in spring 2012.

## PREP In-Depth

**Impact and Implementation Study.** In four or five sites (a site could be an entire state or local sub-awardees within a state), the evaluation will take a detailed look at how PREP programs are implemented and whether they are effective.

The impact study will primarily aim to determine whether the selected programs are effective at reducing teen pregnancy, STIs, and sexual risk behaviors. It will also seek answers to the following questions: Were the programs more effective for particular subgroups of participants? What intermediate changes in youth attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors may be related to impacts on pregnancy, STIs, and sexual risk behaviors? Do impacts vary by particular features of program implementation or attendance?

The impact study will be based on a random assignment design (an experimental evaluation). For sites that can support random assignment and are selected for the impact and implementation

study, the evaluation team will work collaboratively with grantees to develop a plan for either randomly assigning individuals to a group that will receive the program or to a control group, or randomly assigning program sites (such as schools, clinics, or group homes) to deliver the program or to be control sites. Under both scenarios, youth in the control group will be able to participate in the program after data collection for the evaluation is complete. The evaluation team will administer surveys to study youth shortly before the programs begin, and about 6 and 18 months after the programs end. Using data from these two follow-up surveys, the evaluation team will compare outcomes for youth randomly assigned to the programs and those who were not; differences detected between these two groups can be attributed to the PREP programs. The evaluation design and planned analyses will provide sound, scientific evidence about program effectiveness within the context of this large-scale replication effort.

The implementation study will focus a scientific lens on program operations to identify factors that affect large-scale replication of program models. The evaluation team will make multiple visits to the selected sites, conduct interviews with stakeholders and program staff, hold focus groups with program participants, and review program documents. Team members will also observe program sessions to document the quality of delivery and fidelity to the program models.

### For More Information

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