ATTACHMENT M

OVERVIEW FOR GRANTEES

Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Feasibility and Design Study

The Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF) Competitive Grants Program, established as part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, is a key element of the federal strategy to support teens and young adults who are having or raising a child. Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Adolescent Health (OAH), the PAF program funded a second cohort of 17 grantees—states, tribes, and tribal entities—in the summer of 2013 to develop and implement programs focused on an array of outcomes, including access to and completion of secondary and postsecondary education, child and maternal health, likelihood of repeat teen pregnancies, parenting and co-parenting skills, and intimate partner violence. To promote positive outcomes, grantees may implement a wide variety of services for expectant and parenting teens, women, fathers, and their families.

The PAF evaluation will help the federal government, grantees, and local service providers learn more about program design, implementation, and outcomes. All PAF grantees will be part of an implementation study by sharing their program design decisions and implementation experiences. OAH also expects to engage two or three grantees in a rigorous impact and in-depth implementation evaluation. OAH has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to lead preliminary study efforts through the Feasibility and Design Study (FADS).

As a first step, the FADS team will hold discussions with grantees about their programs to determine whether conditions are conducive for the impact evaluation. In particular, the project team will explore whether the most rigorous design possible—involving random assignment of youth, groups of youth, or sites—might align with or only minimally alter existing program implementation plans. This is most often possible when more individuals or groups are interested in or eligible for the program than can be served at any one time. Random assignment does not mean denial of key program services to individuals in need. The experienced FADS team will be able to

The PAF Impact Evaluation: A Unique Opportunity for Selected Sites

Participating in the impact evaluation will offer three key benefits to grantees:

1. **A clear answer to the question "How much of a difference is my program making?"** The impact study will use the most rigorous research methods possible in a given program and will offer evidence of the effects the program is having on the lives of participating youth and their families. It will answer the following questions: How successful was the program overall in changing key outcomes? Is the program more successful with certain groups of youth than with others? Is it more likely to change certain kinds of outcomes than others?

2. **A fair and constructive way to allocate PAF program services.** For many program providers, available resources will limit services to a smaller group of expectant and parenting teens and young adults than the total number who may be eligible for or interested in the program. The study will use a carefully implemented random program allocation process to give all eligible or interested youth an equal chance to participate in the program, instead of a more traditional first-come, first-served approach. In some cases, those not randomly selected for the program initially could be scheduled to receive services later, after evaluation data collection ends, as individual program spaces open up or in line with a grantee's plans to expand the program and roll it out to new sites in the later years of the grant.

3. **An opportunity to understand implementation from the perspective of a supportive and friendly outside observer.** Grantees selected for the impact evaluation will have their implementation studied more closely than will the other grantees. This in-depth study of program activities can help grantees by providing an objective and constructive examination of processes, challenges, and solutions. This evaluation component will not grade success, but it will offer lessons learned to both participating grantees and the broader service community regarding pregnancy assistance and parenting programs.

recognize conditions and opportunities that will support this kind of rigorous evaluation, without significantly disrupting program implementation plans.

Based on these discussions with grantees, OAH will select sites for the impact evaluation. The FADS team will then work with leadership at the selected sites to develop a plan for the impact evaluation.

Key Elements of the PAF Evaluation: How They Work

The PAF evaluation will have two core components: a rigorous assessment of program impacts and a descriptive examination of program implementation.

Measuring Program Impacts

During the FADS, Mathematica's team will identify and work with two or three grantees to decide which services components will be evaluated, which participants will be included, and which outcomes will be measured. No single research question will necessarily guide the impact study for all the participating grantees. For example, for one grantee the study may focus on services for young mothers and measure their college and career readiness, while for another it may focus on services for young fathers and measure their parenting skills and attachment to their children.

In addition, the FADS team will work with grantees to develop a plan for random assignment. If far more individuals are eligible for services than the program can accommodate at one time, individuals randomly selected for the treatment group may be able to receive certain services now, while individuals randomly selected for the comparison group may be able to receive those services later, or receive different services. If the grantee plans to increase services over time at additional locations, such as districts or individual schools, eligible districts or schools could be randomly selected to implement services sooner versus later. These are just two examples of how the study team can design random assignment to work in concert with grantees' plans and preferences. The study team will also help grantees to explain the evaluation to local stakeholders.

Finally, the FADS team will work with the selected sites to design a process for collecting study data, including evaluation consent, intake surveys, and long-term follow-up surveys. The FADS team will work collaboratively with grantee officials to ensure that the surveys capture the program's desired outcomes and the consent processes align with program intake procedures. The evaluation team, not the grantees, will assume most of the burden for data collection activities.

Documenting Program Implementation

All PAF grantees will participate in one component of the implementation study—telephone interviews about program design and implementation experiences. These interviews will be conducted toward the end of the first grant year. The two or three grantees selected for the impact evaluation will participate in a more in-depth implementation study. This component will take a detailed look at program operations. The study team will focus on four key aspects of implementation: (1) inputs required for implementation to succeed and be sustained, (2) contextual factors that influence implementation, (3) quality of program implementation, and (4) participants' responsiveness to service. Data collection methods will include phone interviews with program officials; site visits that may involve interviews with staff, focus groups with participants, and direct observation of service delivery; and monitoring of administrative information such as program enrollment, attendance, cost, and service intensity.

For More Information

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