

Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes

# Youth Empowerment Information, Data Collection, and Exploration on Avoidance of Sex (IDEAS) – Case Study of Parent Reflections

Formative Data Collections for Program Support

0970 - 0531

## Supporting Statement

### Part A

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Submitted By:  
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation  
Administration for Children and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

**Part A**

**Executive Summary**

- **Type of Request:** This Information Collection Request is for a generic information collection under the umbrella generic, Formative Data Collections for Program Support (0970-0531). We are requesting one year of approval.
  
- **Description of Request:**  
The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has funded the Youth Empowerment Information, Data Collection, and Exploration on Avoidance of Sex (IDEAS) project to identify effective messages and approaches to empower youth to make healthy and informed decisions related to sexual risk avoidance, teen pregnancy prevention, and their well-being.

This generic ICR seeks approval to collect data on parent reflections on youth sexual behavior; sexual risk avoidance education (SRAE); and SRAE programming, including parent engagement, as part of the IDEAS project. This information will be collected through virtual focus groups with parents whose youth received or may still be receiving, SRAE programming. The SRAE programs that will be involved in the focus groups include parent engagement as a part of their program model. Focus group data will be summarized to provide more detailed information about parents' views on youth sexual behavior and sexual risk avoidance education, and also parent engagement strategies employed by grantees, providing insights that may be useful to informing future SRAE programming and parent engagement strategies.

We do not intend for this information to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions.

## Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes

### A1. Necessity for Collection

The consequences of adolescent sexual activity remain a critical social and economic issue in the United States, shaping the lives of thousands of teens and their families every year. Despite its decline over the past 25 years, the teen birthrate in the United States remains higher than in other industrialized countries, and varies widely across geographic regions and racial and ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>. Further, adolescents and young adults account for half of all new cases of sexually transmitted infections each year<sup>2</sup>. Sexual activity in youth is also associated with other risk behaviors, such as alcohol and substance use.

As part of the federal government's ongoing efforts to support youth in making healthy decisions about their relationships and behaviors, in February 2018, Congress updated Title V, Section 510 of the Social Security Act to authorize the Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) grant program. Administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), SRAE funds programs that teach adolescents to *refrain* from sexual activity. The programs also provide education on personal responsibility, self-regulation, goal setting, healthy relationships, a focus on the future, and prevention of drug and alcohol use. The programs also may contain a component that seeks to increase and improve parental communication and engagement with their teens on these topics. Research shows the importance of parent-child communication on sexual decision making (Commendador 2010)<sup>3</sup> and that intensive parental components within sex education programs can improve communication and may modify adolescent sexual behaviors (Wight and Fullerton 2013)<sup>4</sup>. However, engaging parents in programming is often difficult. Parents' interest and attitudes toward sex education can affect their willingness to participate, and to allow their child to participate. The Youth Empowerment IDEAS project is intended to identify messages and strategies that resonate with parents and youth and reinforce a sexual risk avoidance (SRA) message.

This information collection request seeks approval to conduct a set of virtual focus groups with parents whose youth receive SRAE programming. These focus groups will allow us to perform an in-depth, qualitative exploration of these topics and summarize parent perspectives and experiences. The qualitative information collected from the parent focus groups will inform FYSB, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), and SRAE grantees with additional insights into program content and strategies for parental engagement that may best resonate with parents and youth to reinforce messages related to sexual risk avoidance.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Osterman, M. J. K., Driscoll, A. K., and Matthews, T. J. (2017). Births: Final data for 2015. *National Vital Statistics Report*, 66(1).

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). *Sexually transmitted disease surveillance 2016*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>3</sup> Commendador, K. A. "Parental Influences on Adolescent Decision Making and Contraceptive Use." *Pediatric Nursing*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2010, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Wight, D., and D. Fullerton. "A Review of Interventions with Parents to Promote the Sexual Health of Their Children." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2013, pp. 4-27.

## **Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

### *Legal or Administrative Requirements that Necessitate the Collection*

There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. ACF is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency.

## **A2. Purpose**

### *Purpose and Use*

This proposed information collection of data that will be used to inform current and future SRAE programming and parent engagement strategies, meets the following goals of ACF's generic clearance for formative data collections for program support (0970-0531):

- Delivery of targeted assistance and workflows related to program implementation or the development or refinement of program and grantee processes, and the development and refinement of recordkeeping and communication systems.

Ultimately, these data will provide important insight into SRAE program content and strategies that resonate with youth and parents, leading to improvement of these programs to better meet their intended goals.

The information collected is not intended to be used as the principal basis for a decision by a federal decision-maker and is not expected to meet the threshold of influential or highly influential scientific information.

### *Research Questions or Tests*

This study aims to:

- Describe parents' beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and preferences related to youth sexual and other risk behavior, related sexual health education, and delaying sex as a teen (or until marriage).
- Examine the nature of parents' communication with youth about topics related to relationships, risk behaviors, sexual health education, delaying sex as a teen (or until marriage), and future planning.
- Generate insights on SRAE program content, messages, and strategies that may best resonate with youth and engage parents in SRAE programming to reinforce messages related to sexual risk avoidance and cessation.

### *Study Design*

Data for this study will be collected through virtual parent focus groups.

We will conduct up to three virtual focus groups, recruiting parents of youth served by up to three SRAE programs in three different states who employ robust parental engagement strategies. For each program, we will aim to conduct a 90-minute asynchronous virtual focus group, broken up over three 30-minute sessions. Asynchronous focus groups, or online chat focus groups, allow users to log into an

**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

online platform and respond to discussion guide questions via chat rooms moderated by study staff. The parent focus group sample will be built from a list of program participants at each site. Each of the participating SRAE programs has agreed to assist with the recruitment of the parent focus group participants, as they have their contact information and an established relationship with the participants’ families. Depending on the preference of each program, recruitment will be conducted by email and/or telephone. Appendix A provides the parent recruitment email and Instrument 1 the parent screener script. We will recruit enough parents so that each virtual focus group will include up to 30 participants. Asynchronous online focus groups allow for larger sample sizes, with larger groups tending to yield richer and more detailed discussions as participants can discuss multiple topics at the same time through use of threads<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, they offer a more anonymous environment for answering sensitive questions (Section A11), allowing respondents to be more open and honest in their responses, which may increase data quality<sup>6</sup>.

Noted limitations of this design are the lack of verbal clues from respondents and less control of the group by the moderator (Reisner et al., 2018). To address these limitations, the study team will pay special attention to creative uses of text by respondents, such as punctuation and emojis, in the analysis. While the group will be moderated on a regular basis by the study team, we will attempt to minimize moderator comments to allow the group to interact with each other. To increase interpersonal connections, we will invite small groups of respondents to join a short video call the day prior to the focus group to introduce the process, allowing them to ask technical questions. We will also include an introductory statement on the focus group chat board encouraging participants to interact with each other.

Instrument 2 provides the Parent Discussion Guide. We will conduct one focus group for each of the three sites, seeking variation, to the extent possible, of parents with middle school and high school age youth. We will also seek a representative set of parents who reflect the characteristics of the youth served through the grantee’s programming.

**Table A2. Justification for Sensitive Questions in the Focus Group Discussion Guide**

<i>Data Collection Activity</i>	<i>Instrument(s)</i>	<i>Respondent, Content, Purpose of Collection</i>	<i>Mode and Duration</i>
Parent Focus Groups	IDEAS Parent Discussion Guide (Instrument 2)	<p><b>Respondents:</b> Parents of youth who received programming and have participated in some aspect of the programming from select SRAE grantees that engage parents as part of their program model.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Parents’ beliefs, expectations, and communication with youth regarding youth</p>	<p><b>Mode:</b> Virtual focus groups</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes total</p>

<sup>5</sup> Stewart, K., and M. Williams. (2005). “Researching online populations: the use of online focus groups for social research.” *Qualitative Research*. Vol. 5(4) pp. 395-416.

<sup>6</sup> Reisner, S. L., Randazzo, R. K., White Hughto, J. M., Peitzmeier, S., DuBois, L. Z., Pardee, D. J., Marrow, E., McLean, S., & Potter, J. (2018). Sensitive Health Topics With Underserved Patient Populations: Methodological Considerations for Online Focus Group Discussions. *Qualitative health research*, 28(10), 1658–1673.

**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

		<p>sexual behavior and sexual risk avoidance education and programming.</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Delivery of targeted assistance and workflows related to program implementation or the development of program and grantee processes, and the development and refinement of recordkeeping and communication systems.</p>	
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**A3. Use of Information Technology to Reduce Burden**

Qualitative information collected from parent focus groups will be collected via Qualboard, an online focus group board, which require less burden than other focus group methods.<sup>7</sup> Participants in the focus groups type their responses into the board as messages, which are stored and used as the focus group transcript. This transcript can be exported and used for coding and analysis. Boards will be open for responses 24 hours a day and monitored by research staff during both the day and evening hours, allowing respondents flexibility to respond when it is most convenient for them.

**A4. Use of Existing Data: Efforts to reduce duplication, minimize burden, and increase utility and government efficiency**

ACF has carefully reviewed the information collection requirements to avoid duplication with existing studies or other ongoing federal teen pregnancy prevention evaluations. The qualitative information collected by the parent focus groups is uniquely poised to provide ACF with detailed parent reflections on youth sexual risk behavior and risk avoidance within the context of the specific SRAE programs, generating insights for current and future SRAE programming.

**A5. Impact on Small Businesses**

This data collection has no impact on Small Businesses.

**A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Collection**

A smaller parent focus group data collection containing just one focus group and/or fewer than 10 participants would not provide sufficient information about parent perspectives on youth sexual behavior and avoidance. Our intent is to discuss topics with parents of youth served by different SRAE programs that offer a relatively robust set of parent engagement strategies. This approach will provide more information about different types of parent engagement strategies and will allow us to pull from a

<sup>7</sup> Rupert, D. J., Poehlman, J. A., Hayes, J. J., Ray, S. E., & Moultrie, R. R. (2017). Virtual versus in-person focus groups: Comparison of costs, recruitment, and participant logistics. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 19(3), e80.

## **Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

more representative set of parents who reflect the characteristics of the youth served through three different SRAE programs. A broad range of perspectives will generate richer data by including participants who have been engaged in different ways by each of the programs. This is a one-time data collection effort.

### **A7. Now subsumed under 2(b) above and 10 (below)**

### **A8. Consultation**

#### *Federal Register Notice and Comments*

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), ACF published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of the overarching generic clearance for formative information collection. This notice was published on October 11, 2017, Volume 82, Number 195, page 47212, and provided a sixty-day period for public comment. A subsequent notice, updated with more specific information, was published on June 18, 2019, Volume 84, Number 117, page 28307, and provided a thirty-day period for public comment. During the notice and comment periods, no substantive comments were received.

#### *Consultation with Experts Outside of the Study*

At the 2019 Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention conference, grantees shared information and lessons learned about the programming they are offering to parents during a breakout session. As part of these conversations, grantees discussed that it would be helpful to have more information on parental engagement strategies and parent reaction to programming.

### **A9. Tokens of Appreciation**

To recruit and conduct parent focus groups, our contractor, Mathematica, will collaborate with up to three SRAE programs to identify willing parent participants. The focus group will be administered over 3 sessions in the online platform and the process will start with an introductory video call. To keep participants engaged and motivated and to obtain maximum retention across sessions, we propose offering participants a \$10 gift card for each of the three subsequent sessions they attend. Participants who complete all study activities will receive a \$5 bonus gift card, for a maximum total of \$35 if they participate in all activities. Similar to online panel surveys, this respondent payment structure is positively associated with high response rates<sup>8</sup>. The amount proposed is less than those typically provided (up to \$75) for in-person focus groups that last 90 minutes or more where tokens offset the

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<sup>8</sup> Dillman D.A., Smyth J.D., and Christian, L.M. *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* (Fourth Edition). John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014.

**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

cost of attending the focus group, including transportation and childcare costs, but still encourages respondents to engage in the discussion.



**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

**A10. Privacy: Procedures to protect privacy of information, while maximizing data sharing**

*Personally Identifiable Information*

The respondent's name, email and phone numbers will be recorded as part of recruitment but will be stored separately from the focus group data. An email address is needed for outreach, reminder emails to focus group participants, and delivery of the tokens of appreciation after the conclusion of the focus groups. We will also ask for phone numbers in case we have trouble reaching focus group participants by email. When participants log into the virtual focus group board, they will be instructed to not share their full name, but rather their first name, initial, or an alias. Demographic information, such as age, race, and ethnicity will be collected from participants to provide context for the focus group findings and themes. This data collection is not subject to the Privacy Act, as information will not be maintained in a paper or electronic system from which data are actually or directly retrieved by an individuals' personal identifier.

*Assurances of Privacy*

Information collected will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Respondents will be informed of all planned uses of data, that their participation is voluntary, and that their information will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. As specified in their contract, the contractor will comply with all Federal and Departmental regulations for private information. Appendix D provides the consent form, containing assurances of privacy, that all participants will read and acknowledge before participating in the data collection.

*Data Security and Monitoring*

As specified in the contract, the contractor will protect respondents' privacy to the extent permitted by law and comply with all federal and departmental regulations for private information. The contractor has developed a Data Safety and Monitoring Plan that assesses all protections of respondents' personally identifiable information. The contractor will ensure that all of its employees, subcontractors (at all tiers), and employees of each subcontractor who perform work under this contract or subcontract are trained on data privacy issues and comply with the above requirements. All study team staff involved in the project will receive training on (1) limitations of disclosure; (2) safeguarding the physical work environment; and (3) storing, transmitting, and destroying data securely. All Mathematica staff sign the Mathematica Confidentiality Agreement, complete online security awareness training when they are hired, and receive annual refresher training thereafter.

As specified in their contract, the contractor will use Federal Information Processing Standard compliant encryption (Security Requirements for Cryptographic Module, as amended) to protect all instances of sensitive information during storage and transmission. The contractor will securely generate and manage encryption keys to prevent unauthorized decryption of information in accordance with the Federal Processing Standard. Any data stored electronically will be secured in accordance with the most current National Institute of Standards and Technology requirements and other applicable federal and

**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

departmental regulations. In addition, the contractor has a plan for minimizing the extent possible the inclusion of sensitive information on paper records and for the protection of any paper records, field notes, or other documents that contain sensitive or personally identifiable information that ensures secure storage and limits on access.

**A11. Sensitive Information <sup>9</sup>**

Questions pertaining to sexual attitudes and the behaviors of youth and sexual attitudes of their parents can be very sensitive in nature; however, the questions are necessary for ACF to make improvements to SRAE program content in relation to parent engagement and parent-child communication strategies (section A2). Table A11 indicates the topics and questions in the focus group discussion guide that may be considered sensitive. Prior to the start of the focus groups, participants will read the consent form (Appendix D), which describes the purpose of the study and indicates their rights as a research participant, and acknowledges their consent prior to entering the virtual focus group. All participants will be informed that they do not have to respond to any questions they feel uncomfortable answering, that their participation in the group is voluntary, and that they can end their participation at any time. The focus group discussion guide and all related materials, such as the consent form and recruitment materials, are currently undergoing review by an Institutional Review Board.

**Table A11. Justification for Sensitive Questions in the Focus Group Discussion Guide**

Question Topic	Justification
Attitudes and beliefs related to youth sexual activity (Discussion Guide Section IV)	To understand what sexual risk avoidance and teen pregnancy prevention messages connect with youth and their parents, it is necessary to understand their attitudes and beliefs related to sexual activity. Responses to questions in these sections can guide the direction of future programming, ensuring it addresses common attitudes and beliefs among youth and parents.
Parent-youth communication about youth sexual activity and risk avoidance (Discussion Guide Section V)	A primary goal of the focus group data collection is to examine the nature of parents' communication with youth about topics related to relationships, risk behaviors, sexual health education, abstaining from sex as a teen (or until marriage) and future planning. Responses to questions in these sections can help ACF and SRAE grantees better understand messages and strategies that resonate with parents and youth to reinforce an SRA message.

<sup>9</sup> Examples of sensitive topics include (but are not limited to): social security number; sex behavior and attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior; critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close relationships, e.g., family, pupil-teacher, employee-supervisor; mental and psychological problems potentially embarrassing to respondents; religion and indicators of religion; community activities which indicate political affiliation and attitudes; legally recognized privileged and analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians and ministers; records describing how an individual exercises rights guaranteed by the First Amendment; receipt of economic assistance from the government (e.g., unemployment or WIC or SNAP); immigration/citizenship status.

**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

Question Topic	Justification
Parental perceptions about youth decision making regarding sexual activity and risk behaviors (Discussion Guide Section VI)	The focus group will attempt to collect information about parents' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, communication, education, and expectations related to teen sexual behaviors. These questions address the behavioral component and are necessary to provide context to other topical areas, such as attitudes and expectations.

**A12. Burden**

*Explanation of Burden Estimates*

Table A12 summarizes the estimated reporting burden and costs for each data collection activity. We will conduct up to 3 focus groups, each containing up to 30 participants. We anticipate conducting a 5-minute screening call with approximately 50 parents per site to get the final 30 eligible participants for each group. Each focus group will be designed to last 90 minutes.

*Estimated Annualized Cost to Respondents*

We estimate the average hourly wage for parents is the average hourly wage of “all occupations” taken from the May 2019 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (\$25.72).

**Table A12. Total Burden Requested Under this Information Collection**

Instrument	No. of Respondents (total over request period)	No. of Responses per Respondent (total over request period)	Avg. Burden per Response (in hours)	Total/Annual Burden (in hours)	Average Hourly Wage Rate	Total Annual Respondent Cost
1. Parent Screener Script	150	1	.08	12	\$25.72 <sup>10</sup>	\$308.64
2. Parent Discussion Guide	90	1	1.5	135	\$25.72	\$3,472.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>			<b>147</b>	<b>\$25.72</b>	<b>\$3,780.84</b>

**A13. Costs**

There are no additional costs to respondents.

**A14. Estimated Annualized Costs to the Federal Government**

<sup>10</sup> The average hourly wage for parents and young adults is the “All Occupations” wage from the May 2019 Bureau of Labor Statistics [https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm#00-0000](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm#00-0000).

**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for  
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

Table A14 provides the estimates of the annualized costs to the Federal government for the work associated with this Information Collection Request.

**Table A14. Estimates of Annualized Costs to the Federal Government**

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Estimated Costs</b>
Instrument Development and OMB Clearance	\$15,000
Field Work	\$40,000
Summary Brief	\$45,000
<b>Total/Annual</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>

**A15. Reasons for changes in burden**

This is for an individual information collection under the umbrella formative generic clearance for program support (0970-0531).

**A16. Timeline**

Focus groups are expected to begin during early fall 2020 after obtaining OMB approval. We expect the conduct of the focus groups to occur over a 4-week period. A brief summarizing key themes and lessons will be developed during fall 2020 and disseminated to the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) for purposes of communicating to grantees about parental engagement strategies and parental reactions to programming.

**A17. Exceptions**

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

**Appendices**

Appendix A: Parent Recruitment Email

Appendix B: Reminder Email

Appendix C: Invitation Email

Appendix D: Consent Form

Instrument 1: Parent Screener Script

Instrument 2: Parent Discussion Guide