SRAENE
Sexual Risk Avoidance Education
National Evaluation

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Brief

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Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Programs: Preparing for and Supporting Program Implementation

For nearly a decade, federal policymaking related to adolescent pregnancy prevention has focused on optimal health outcomes and sexual risk avoidance.[1] Grant programs have increasingly emphasized the social, psychological, and biological factors that can eliminate risk and encourage healthy behaviors. In support of this emerging approach, Congress authorized a discretionary grant program in 2016—the General Departmental Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) program. Then, in 2018, Congress authorized and funded the Title V State and Competitive Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) programs. If a state or territory does not apply for the Title V State SRAE program, the funding allocated to that state or territory is made available to direct service providers or organizations in the state or territory through an open competitive application process.

These three SRAE-funded programs expand the federal emphasis on optimal health, risk avoidance, and positive youth development by focusing on personal responsibility and healthy decision making to encourage youth to voluntarily refrain from nonmarital sexual activity and other risky behaviors. Altogether, 109 SRAE grantees are working with 363 sub-recipient providers to provide 710 programs with a goal of serving more than 675,000 youth during their project periods.

109 grants

363 subrecipient providers

710 programs

675,000 youth
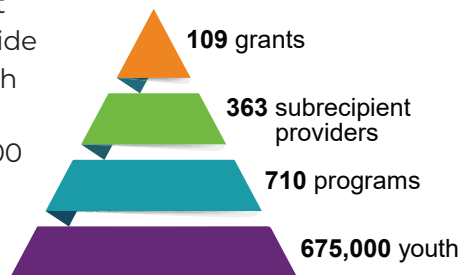
This brief describes how the Title V State, Title V Competitive, and General Departmental SRAE grantees planned and prepared for their SRAE programs using data Mathematica collected through an online survey in summer 2020 of grantees funded at that time.[2]

Grantees invested time in planning for and developing their SRAE programs, relying on stakeholders, other partners, and data to inform decisions

When designing their SRAE programs, grantees took a comprehensive approach that considered capacity, stakeholders, and communities, and relied on data to inform decisions. More specifically, grantees assessed their organization's capacity (84 percent), secured buy-in from stakeholders (84 percent), and considered the sustainability of their SRAE program (91 percent).

To make more detailed programmatic decisions, including about populations to serve and implementation settings, most grantees also conducted a needs assessment (88 percent).

- One-third of these grantees (33 grantees, 34 percent) received assistance from another organization when conducting their needs assessments, most often relying on local service providers or another state agency (23 grantees, 70 percent and 16 grantees, 48 percent, respectively). Grantees also partnered with university-based researchers, private program developers, and local advocacy groups to conduct the needs assessment (9 grantees, 27 percent, each).[3]

To help them plan for their SRAE programs, grantees also relied on the SMARTool,* a resource specifically for organizations providing risk-avoidance education to youth. Eighty-five percent of all grantees reported that they used the SMARTool to inform their program plans.

*FYSB does not endorse the use of the SMARTool.

- Two-thirds of all grantees planned to reassess needs at least once more during the grant period (66 percent).

- Only a small number of grantees did not conduct a needs assessment or plan to do so during the grant period (4 percent).

To inform their needs assessments, grantees relied on data from youth, providers, and other stakeholders. Most grantees relied on data on the prevalence of risk behaviors among youth (93 percent), and more than three-quarters of grantees collected data directly from the youth they would serve through surveys or focus groups (76 percent). In smaller numbers, grant-ees also gathered information through interviews or focus groups with stakeholders (41 percent), surveys of school administrators or teachers (39 percent), surveys of providers (33 percent), and interviews or focus groups with providers (32 percent).

SRAE grantees designed programs to meet the needs of high-risk populations. Grantees are serv-ing youth from high-poverty areas, youth from racial or ethnic minority groups, adjudicated youth, youth in foster care, and youth with emotional or behavioral health needs. To serve these youth, they are delivering more than 60 different curricula, primarily in schools, community-based organiza-tions, and faith-based institutions.

Data Sources Used for Needs Assessment
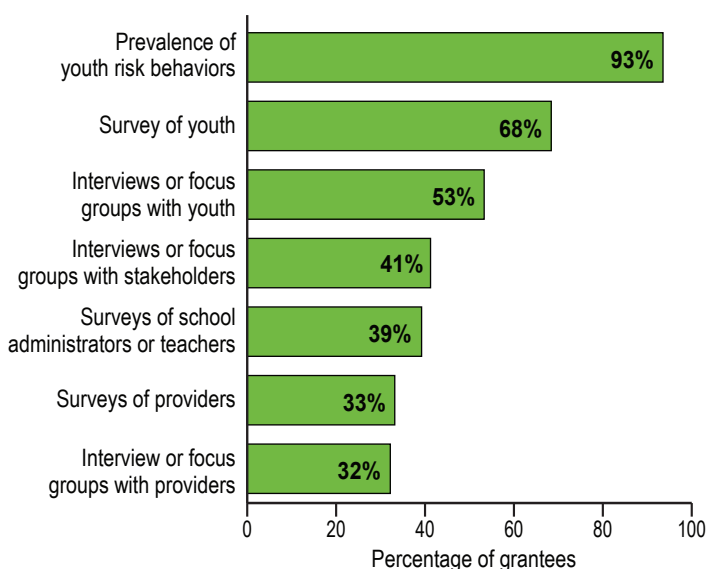
Grantees invest in training and ongoing support to ensure facilitators are prepared for and supported during implementation

During their first grant year, grantees allocated an average of 50 percent of their funds to the provision of programming to youth. In addition, they allocated eight percent to training facilitators and seven percent to program monitoring and observations.

Year 1 SRAE Funding Allocations
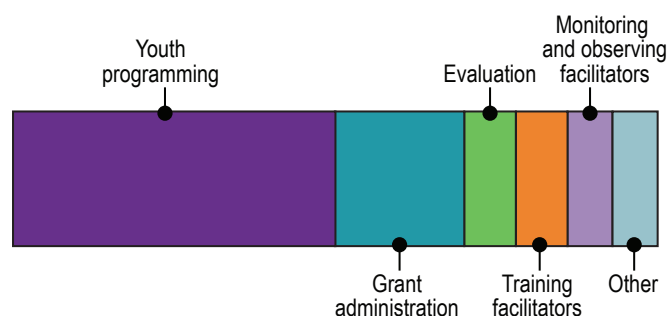
Almost all grantees require that facilitators receive training before delivering programming to youth (98 percent), and most require that facilitators receive refresher training or technical assistance during the grant period (91 percent).[4] Most com-monly, facilitators are required to receive training on the primary curriculum (99 percent). Trainings also reflect SRAE program content, including positive youth development (78 percent), trauma-compe-tent caregiving (69 percent), dating violence and consent (66 percent), child protection (60 percent), mental health (49 percent), and suicide prevention (44 percent). Almost three-quarters of grantees require that facilitators are trained on classroom management (72 percent). The required training topics vary depending on the population(s) the grantee is serving. For example, grantees serving homeless or runaway youth more frequently required facilitators to be trained on mental health and suicide prevention than grantees planning to serve general populations in middle school and high school.

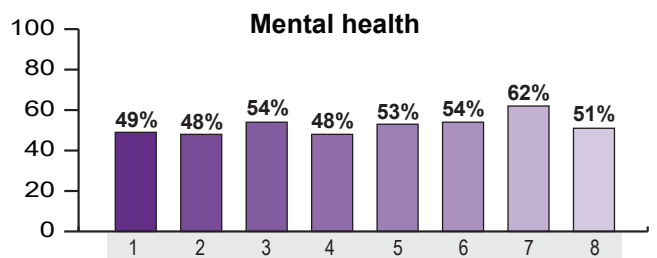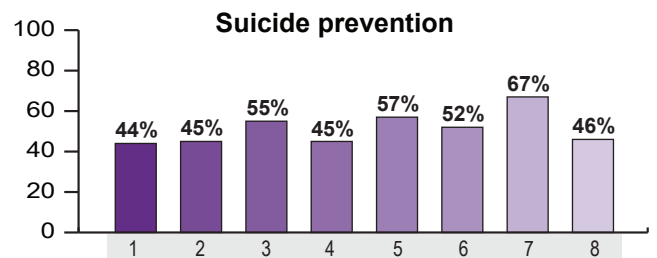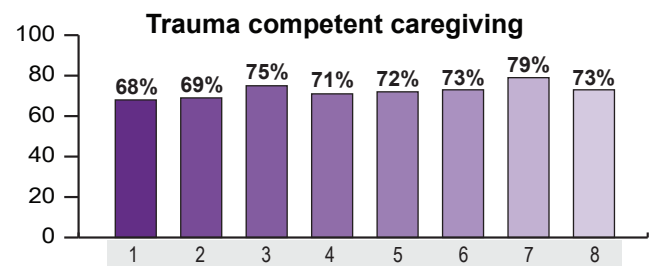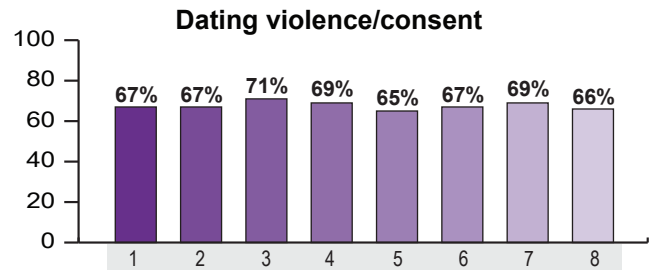Grantees provide training directly to facilitators but also leverage existing partnerships with training organizations and program developers. Many grantees directly provide initial training (75 percent) and refresher trainings and technical assistance (85 percent) to facilitators. About two-thirds of grantees are also working with a training organization (70 grantees, 66 percent) or a program developer (69 grantees, 64 percent) to train facilitators before implementation . Sixty-seven of these 70 grantees are working with a training organization they have worked with in the past (96 percent). Eighty-four percent of the 69 grantees that are working with a program developer have worked with them in the past. Grantees also partner with training organizations (60 percent) and program developers (53 percent) to provide refresher training and ongoing technical assistance for facilitators.

Grantees assessed program fidelity and quality through monitoring and observations, tailoring these activities to their specific programs

To ensure facilitators are implementing quality SRAE programming with fidelity to the model, grantees monitor their programs and observe facilitators. Almost all grantees reported that they monitor for adherence or quality (98 percent), and most require facilitator observations (96 percent).

More than 90 percent of all grantees collect data on program adherence or quality (94 percent and 93 percent, respectively). The frequency with which grantees conduct monitoring activities and collect data varies, likely because of the broad range of SRAE programs and differences in the frequency

Training Topic by Population

Dating violence/consent

Bar chart showing percentages: 1: 67%, 2: 67%, 3: 71%, 4: 69%, 5: 65%, 6: 67%, 7: 69%, 8: 66%

Trauma competent caregiving

Bar chart showing percentages: 1: 68%, 2: 69%, 3: 75%, 4: 71%, 5: 72%, 6: 73%, 7: 79%, 8: 73%

Suicide prevention

Bar chart showing percentages: 1: 44%, 2: 45%, 3: 55%, 4: 45%, 5: 57%, 6: 52%, 7: 67%, 8: 46%

Mental health

Bar chart showing percentages: 1: 49%, 2: 48%, 3: 54%, 4: 48%, 5: 53%, 6: 54%, 7: 62%, 8: 51%

Child protection

Bar chart showing percentages: 1: 62%, 2: 60%, 3: 66%, 4: 61%, 5: 62%, 6: 62%, 7: 67%, 8: 62%

1. Middle school-age youth
2. High school-age youth
3. Adjudicated youth
4. Youth from racial or ethnic minority groups
5. Youth in foster care
6. Youth with emotional or behavioral health needs
7. Homeless or runaway youth
8. Youth in high areas of poverty

of implementation cycles and implementation schedules. More than half of the grantees collect data on program adherence or quality after every administration of the curriculum (58 percent and 59 percent, respectively); the remaining grantees collect data on these topics at varying frequencies ranging from weekly to semiannually. Similarly, 96 percent of grantees observe program facilitators, and most often, grantees require observations once per program cycle (30 percent). The remaining grantees observe facilitators anywhere from twice per program cycle to once per grant period, depending on their program structure and format.

> SRAE program cycles and schedules vary widely, even when providers implement the same curricula.
>
> Nineteen percent of the providers that offer the same curriculum provide programming over the same number of weeks.
>
> Thirty percent of providers offering the same curriculum provide the same number of hours of programming.

Most often, grantees carry out monitoring activities (91 percent) and conduct observations (95 percent) themselves. However, among these grantees, 46 percent also work with an independent evaluator to monitor programs for adherence and quality, and 27 percent work with an independent evaluator

to conduct observations. When working with an independent evaluator, almost 90 percent of grantees are working with an independent evaluator they have worked with in the past. Only a small number of grantees rely exclusively on an independent evaluator to monitor for adherence and quality (8 percent) and conduct observations (2 percent).

> Because Title V State SRAE grantees are most often working with sub-recipient providers to deliver programming, providers are more likely to monitor for program adherence and quality and observe facilitators than Title V SRAE Competitive and General Departmental SRAE grantees are.

Less frequently, grantees work with other partners to conduct monitoring activities. Fifteen percent of grantees work with a program developer and one percent of grantees work with a professional consultant to monitor for program adherence and quality. About one quarter of the grantees work with sub-recipient providers to conduct facilitator observations (24 percent). Less often, they work with a program developer (12 percent), training organization (10 percent), school staff (3 percent), or a professional consultant (1 percent) to conduct observations.

This brief is a product of the SRAE National Evaluation (SRAENE). SRAENE has three distinct activities. One is the **National Descriptive Study**, which describes the implementation of programs funded by SRAE grants. This brief draws upon data collected in summer 2020 as part of this effort. The second activity is the **Program Components Impact Study**. We will use a systematic and rigorous approach to test and improve the components of programs. The third is **Data and Evaluation Support**. We help grantees build their capacity to use data and research to improve their programs and support grantees conducting their own evaluations.

Endnotes

[1] "A Better Approach to Teenage Pregnancy Prevention: Sexual Risk Avoidance." The Policy Paper Series, vol. 1, issue 2. Washington, DC: U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Energy and Commerce, July 2012
[2] Since the 2020 data collection effort, FYSB has awarded SRAE grants to additional organizations. The results presented in this brief may not reflect SRAE programming offered by these additional grantees.
[3] In response to questions about the types of organizations grantees partnered with to conduct their needs assessments, respondents could select more than one type, so these percentages do not sum to 100 percent.
[4] FYSB requires that grantees train all facilitators.