

Promoting Positive Adolescent Health Behaviors and Outcomes: Thriving in the 21st Century

Forum for Children's Well-Being
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Sponsor

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH)
of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



Committee on Applying Lessons of Optimal Adolescent Health to Improve Behavioral Outcomes for Youth

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Summary of the Statement of Task

Review key questions related to the effective implementation of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) program.

Explore the scientific literature surrounding key elements or core components of adolescent health programs using an optimal health lens.



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The committee was charged with recommending:

- A research agenda that incorporates a focus on optimal health for youth
- Ways OASH can use its role to foster the adoption of promising elements of youth-focused programs
- Ways OASH youth-focused programs could be improved



Study Methodology

- In-person closed session meetings (n=5)
- Public information-gathering session (n=1)
- Extensive review of the literature
 - Systematic review of core components of adolescent health programs
- Memos received from TPP Tier 1B grantees (n=6)
- Papers commissioned (n=5) on adolescent health and media, consent, LGBTQ youth, youth with disabilities, and youth perspectives



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2. More research is needed to identify, measure, and evaluate the effective components of adolescent health behavior programs.
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4. Programs can benefit from implementing and evaluating policies and practices that promote inclusiveness and equity.



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1. Healthy risk taking during adolescence is normal and necessary.
2. More research is needed to identify, measure, and evaluate the effective components of adolescent health behavior programs.
3. Social emotional- and positive youth development programs provide a foundation upon which other skills and services can be built.
4. Programs can benefit from implementing and evaluating policies and practices that promote inclusiveness and equity.
5. Youth are experts in their own lives and should be involved in the decisions that affect them.



www.nationalacademies.org/adolescent-health

[illegible]

And for me, what I think a thriving person in 2019 is when you're physically, mentally, and emotionally stable. I feel like you accept yourself for who you are and you're around people that support you emotionally and you can in return give that support back.

Natnael Abate, age 18
Peer Educator with Promising Futures DC
Public Information-Gathering Session, April 17, 2019



APPENDIX



Statement of Task

Optimal health: defined

Examples of healthy and unhealthy risks

Core components: defined

Promising components across optimal health domains

Incorporating cultural inclusiveness in programs

Report recommendations and promising approaches



Statement of Task

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine will convene an ad hoc committee to review key questions related to the effective implementation of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) program. The committee, using an optimal health lens, will explore the scientific and public health literature surrounding key elements or core components effective in improving behavioral outcomes for youth. Specifically, the committee will analyze components of a variety of youth programs which may be successful in preventing adolescent-risk behaviors with the parallel goal of accelerating progress toward the discontinuation (and not merely the reduction) of those risks among currently engaged adolescents. The committee will identify the programs and outcomes to review and examine which factors contribute to optimal health. In addition, the committee will consider broader issues of methodology as they relate to examining specific components of programs in comparison to research that uses the program as the unit of analysis.

The report will recommend a research agenda that incorporates a focus on optimal health for youth. The report will also offer recommendations on ways that the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) can use its role to foster the adoption of promising elements of youth-focused programs in the initiatives it oversees such as mental and physical health, adolescent development, and reproductive health and teen pregnancy. Drawing on lessons learned, the report will present recommendations on ways OASH youth-focused programs could be improved.



Optimal Health: Defined

A dynamic balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health.

O'Donnell (2009, p. vi)



Optimal Health: Defined

It is not realistic to expect to reach that magic point of perfect balance and stay there. It is more realistic to seek opportunities for growth and think in terms of a process of striving for balance under changing circumstances.

O'Donnell (2017, p. 76)



Examples of Healthy and Unhealthy Risks

Healthy

- Participating in a team sport
- Trying a new food
- Reaching out for help
- Apologizing for a mistake
- Public speaking
- Asking someone out on a date
- Enrolling in a challenging course
- Applying knowledge to a new situation
- Volunteering for a good cause

Unhealthy

- Driving under the influence of alcohol
- Engaging in sexual intercourse without protection
- Using coercion
- Lying
- Provoking a physical fight
- Bullying or cyberbullying
- Cheating on a test
- Skipping school
- Doing something because of peer pressure rather than personal beliefs



What are core components?

“discrete, reliably identifiable techniques, strategies, or practices that are intended to influence the behavior, outcomes, or well-being of a service recipient”

“Active ingredients” of programs or interventions:

- content
- locations and formats
- processes
- implementation strategies



Promising components across health domains:

- Universal programs
- Promoting social-emotional learning and positive youth development competencies
- Beginning in childhood
- Including diverse youth and communities in program development
- Creating a supportive and inclusive culture in program settings
- Theory-based approaches



Five “building block” skills

- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making



Incorporating cultural inclusiveness in programs

- Materials free of culturally biased information
- Information, activities, and examples inclusive of diverse cultures and lifestyles
- Values, attitudes, and behaviors acknowledge cultural diversity
- Relevant to youth from multiple cultures
- Skills to engage in intercultural interactions
- Build on cultural resources of families and communities

(CDC, 2019)



REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROMISING APPROACHES

RECOMMENDATION 1: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services should fund additional research aimed at identifying, measuring, and evaluating the effectiveness of specific core components of programs and interventions focused on promoting positive health behaviors and outcomes among adolescents.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) should

- update and expand the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) to include
 - out-of-school youth (e.g., homeless, incarcerated, dropped out), and
 - survey items that reflect a more comprehensive set of sexual risk behaviors with specific definitions; and
- conduct further research on the ideal setting and mode for administering the YRBS with today's adolescents.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health within the Department of Health and Human Services should fund universal, holistic, multi-component programs that meet all of the following criteria:

- promote and improve the health and well-being of the whole person, laying the foundation for specific, developmentally appropriate behavioral skills development;
- begin in early childhood and are offered during critical developmental windows, from childhood throughout adolescence;
- consider adolescent decision making, exploration, and risk taking as normative;
- engage diverse communities, public policy makers, and societal leaders to improve modifiable social and environmental determinants of health and well-being that disadvantage and stress young people and their families; and
- are theory-driven and evidence-based.

PROMISING APPROACH 1: Programs can benefit from implementing and evaluating policies and practices that promote inclusiveness and equity so that all youth are able to thrive.

PROMISING APPROACH 2: Programs can benefit from including youth of diverse ages, racial/ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, rurality/urbanity, sexual orientations, sexes/genders, and disability/ability status in their decision-making processes.