

Professional Development Plans for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs

What is an Organizational Professional Development Plan?

Professional development is a process of improving and increasing the capabilities of your staff by aligning employee training and growth efforts with your organization's mission, goals, and objectives (Office of Personnel Management, n.d.). An Organizational Professional Development Plan is a way to set priorities across an organization to ensure that the investments made in professional development align with the overall goals of the program and are adequately supported by organizational policies and practices.

As you develop your plan, recall that the goals and objectives of your Organizational Professional Development Plan should address skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are relevant to the effectiveness of your organization as a whole as well as effective implementation of your teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) program.

Why create an Organizational Professional Development Plan?

OAH expects all grantees to develop a plan to hire and retain qualified, well-trained staff. In order to do this, grantees should assess the professional development needs of staff on a regular basis and use the results to develop a plan for providing staff with ongoing support. In addition to helping you meet your funding requirements, professional development is a critical investment in your staff and their ability to support high-quality implementation of your TPP program. Research suggests that developing and implementing an Organizational Professional Development Plan can result in increased employee job satisfaction, improved staff morale, reduced staff turnover, and more effective uptake of innovations (Kroll, 2015; SHRM, 2015).

Developing a framework for professional development

Providing relevant, timely, and effective professional development requires a structured planning process. One planning process that should be familiar to all TPP grantees is the Getting to Outcomes® (GTO) program planning framework. While there are various frameworks and planning processes one can use to create a professional development plan, this tip sheet will outline a professional development planning process based on the 10 steps of GTO.¹

1. Conduct a needs/resources assessment. A needs/resources assessment should be conducted annually and cover individual staff needs as well as the broader needs of your organization (Brown, 2002). OAH has developed a number of resources to help grantees assess skills, knowledge, attitudes, and policies as they relate to [general organizational capacity](#), [positive youth development](#), [trauma-informed approaches](#), and [LGBTQ inclusivity](#) (see the Resources section for more information).

10 Steps to Developing an Organizational Professional Development Plan:

1. Conduct a needs/resources assessment
2. Establish goals and desired outcomes
3. Identify best/promising practices
4. Address issues of fit
5. Consider capacity
6. Develop a plan
7. Conduct implementation and process evaluations
8. Conduct an outcome evaluation
9. Engage in continuous quality improvement
10. Address sustainability issues

¹ These steps have been adapted from Wandersman and colleagues' (2012) evidence-based approach to training using GTO.

2. **Establish goals and desired outcomes.** Consider how the needs you identified in Step 1 align with the mission of your organization and the goals and objectives of your TPP program. Linking professional development opportunities to program goals and staff job descriptions that are competency based and clearly outline related skills, knowledge, and behavior will increase the effectiveness of your professional development opportunities (Locke, 2002).
3. **Identify best/promising practices.** It is important to tailor your professional development plan by selecting the best strategies for improving identified skills, knowledge, and attitudes (Fixsen, 2005). Make sure your plan incorporates adult learning principals and addresses diverse learning styles (Bryan, 2008). [See Table 1 for a list of professional development strategies.] In order to improve performance, staff should have frequent opportunities to try new skills and receive constructive feedback (Arthur, 2003). Administrative and supervisory staff should be skilled at assessing staff strengths and challenges as part of an ongoing process of feedback (Kinicki, 2013).

Table 1: Professional Development Strategies

Strategy	Examples	Note
On-the-job Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation/demonstration and practice • Coaching • Mentoring 	Most effective and efficient strategy for increasing capacity.
Self-managed Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • E-learning • Further education 	Most effective when paired with on-the-job learning.
Group Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities of practice • Networking 	Requires some management of the group to be effective.
Instructor-led Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings • Workshops 	Must be relevant to current position. Most effective when paired with on-the-job learning.

4. **Address issues of fit.** Consider both the goal and the target population in order to ensure that professional development opportunities are relevant (Fixsen, 2005). For example, while both supervisors and program facilitators may benefit from opportunities to increase their skills in working effectively with youth who have experienced trauma, supervisors may also need to acquire particular skills in supporting program facilitators that are different than the skills facilitators might use when delivering the program.
5. **Consider capacity issues.** Assess your internal capacity for providing professional development opportunities prior to contracting with an outside provider. For example, you may have a program facilitator with recognized expertise in leading role-play activities who could be paired with a new facilitator. Remember that professional development opportunities are generally more effective when they include on-the-job experiences – and peer learning provides leadership opportunities for your more experienced staff (Fixsen, 2005).
6. **Develop a plan.** A professional development plan should describe the tasks, schedules, and methods to be implemented in order to achieve the goals and objectives identified in Step 2. Make sure to include ongoing opportunities that are tailored for specific audiences (project directors, program coordinators, facilitators, trainers, peer educators, and support staff) so that staff are able to receive constructive feedback on their performance. You will find a template for developing an organizational professional development plan at the end of this tip sheet.
7. **Implementation and process evaluation.** In the case of a professional development plan, a process evaluation provides an opportunity to obtain feedback from staff and will help you assess the quality of the professional development provided. Research on the evaluation of training programs has identified the following targets of evaluation (Alvarez, 2004):

- **Reactions:** Participant reactions as to the usefulness of the training opportunity – *generally collected through satisfaction surveys.*
- **Post-training attitudes:** Participant attitudes related to self-efficacy or motivation – *generally collected through surveys.*
- **Cognitive learning:** Knowledge gained through the training opportunity – *generally collected through a test of knowledge.*
- **Training performance:** Ability to perform a newly acquired skill at the completion of a training opportunity – *generally measured through observation.*

Spotlight On: Making Performance Evaluations Work for Your Staff

More organizations are eliminating performance evaluations each year (12% dropped this process in 2014, up from 4% in 2012). About 66% of employees say the performance review process interferes with their productivity, 65% say it isn't even relevant to their jobs, and 90% of human resources professionals don't believe their companies' performance reviews provide accurate information. Many companies are replacing their annual performance reviews with ongoing feedback for staff that focuses on performance on specific tasks and avoids ranking staff or comparing them to one another (SHRM, 2015).

8. Conduct an outcome evaluation. The purpose of professional development is to increase performance, both at the individual level and also at the organizational level. Therefore, it is important to review performance data related to the goals and objectives that were identified in Step 2. Research on the evaluation of training programs has identified the following targets of evaluation (Alvarez, 2004):

- **On-the-job performance:** Behavior changes on the job as a result of the training opportunity – *generally measured through supervisor evaluations.*
- **Results:** Changes in related outcomes as a result of a change in employee behavior– *generally measured through program output and outcomes data.*

9. Engage in continuous quality improvement. Engaging in a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process involves a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of the various professional development opportunities across your TPP program. For example, it may be that staff who participated in particular activities did not see any improvement in skills, knowledge, or attitudes. Through a structured CQI process, a decision can be made to discontinue an ineffective activity or adapt it in some way to see if it can be made more effective.

10. Address sustainability issues. Consider how to institutionalize successful professional development opportunities. This includes making sure that sufficient time and resources can be dedicated to ensure that professional development opportunities are always of high quality. For example, an effective mentoring program may become less effective if mentors are not afforded adequate time to meet with their mentees because their workload is too high. Other considerations include whether to invest in a train-the-trainer workshop to increase internal capacity to train new staff and reduce training costs.

OAH expects that each grantee will create a professional development plan that:

- Can be updated annually
- Incorporates adult learning principles
- Provides multiple opportunities for skill-building
- Includes opportunities for follow-up support

Best practices for developing an Organizational Professional Development Plan

Select your team. The team could include the program director, at least one individual in a supervisory position, and at least one program facilitator.

Initial planning. During the initial planning period, team members can work through steps one through eight, documenting their decisions in the Organizational Professional Development Plan Template included at the end of this tip sheet.

Ensure accountability. Consider assigning accountability for monitoring the progress of your plan to a specific individual. If there are a large number of activities planned, it may be preferable to assign each team member a subset of activities to monitor.

Monitor progress. It is a good practice for a professional development team to meet on a regular basis to discuss progress and review any implementation or outcome data. Members of your professional development team may choose to revise the Organizational Professional Development Plan based on the data.

Resources

The Office of Adolescent Health Teen Pregnancy Prevention Resource Center contains several relevant training resources which can be found here: http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/.

A number of particularly relevant resources have been highlighted below.

- *Five Things to Know About Staffing Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs* (Office of Adolescent Health tip sheet): http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/Assests/staffretention-tipsheet.pdf
- *Fostering Professional Development Practices* (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tip sheet): <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/fundedpartners/1308/pdf/practicessmartcardf3.pdf>
- A Guide for Assessing LGBTQ Inclusivity of Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (Office of Adolescent Health): <http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/assets/tpp-grantee-orientation/guide-for-lgbtq-inclusivity.pdf>
- A Checklist for Putting Positive Youth Development Characteristics into Action in Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (Office of Adolescent Health): http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/Assests/pyd-tpp-checklist.pdf
- A Checklist for Integrating a Trauma-Informed Approach into Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (Office of Adolescent Health): http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/Assests/traumainformed-checklist.pdf
- Organizational Capacity Assessment for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (Office of Adolescent Health): http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/Assests/organizationalcapacity-assessment.pdf
- Conducting Needs Assessments (Society for Human Resources Management): <https://www.shrm.org/education/hreducation/pages/conductingneedsassessments.aspx>

Organizational Professional Development Plan Template

This template can help you to document your decisions as you go through the process that is outlined in this tip sheet. You can enter your own information by typing into the boxes in each section. The first two pages will help you to assess your needs and the final page will help you to document your plan.

Assess

On the first two pages of the template you will find a list of skills and knowledge that the Office of Adolescent Health recommends grantees to consider when assessing professional development needs – see the TPP Resource Center for additional topics and resources (http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/oah-initiatives/teen_pregnancy/training/). You may also want to include additional topics that are relevant for your particular program in the blank rows provided at the bottom of each table.

For each topic, identify which categories of staff might benefit from professional development related to that topic. You might choose to indicate which staff should be targeted by marking that box with a “✓” or you might want to indicate specific skills or knowledge that would be relevant for staff in that category. Keep in mind that it is important to tailor professional development opportunities to the expectations for a particular role.

While you might have a sense of which areas are most challenging for staff at your organization, it is also a good idea to consult performance management data and staff performance reviews. Not only can reviewing those data help identify needs, but they can also be great sources of information for monitoring progress once you have begun to implement your professional development plan.



Plan & Monitor

Once you have completed your assessment, it is time to make a plan. Use the last page of this template to document your plan and to monitor progress. You will want to identify the specific objectives that you are looking to accomplish based on the assessment you conducted and consider what activities will best support that objective (refer back to Table 1 in this document for examples of possible strategies), who should attend, and how you will follow up to evaluate the professional development experience and to monitor progress.

Organizational Professional Development Plan Template: Assess

Skills and knowledge to improve organizational capacity

For each topic, identify which categories of staff might benefit from professional development related to that topic. You might choose to indicate which staff should be targeted by marking that box with a “✓” or you might want to indicate specific skills or knowledge that would be relevant for staff in that category. Keep in mind that it is important to tailor professional development opportunities to the expectations for a particular role.

	Leadership	Supervisors and managers	Direct service and facilitators	Program partners
Communication				
Community mobilization				
Health referrals				
Partnerships				
Program evaluation				
Program planning				
Sustainability				
Other:				
Other:				



Organizational Professional Development Plan Template: Assess

Skills and knowledge to improve program delivery

For each topic, identify which categories of staff might benefit from professional development related to that topic. You might choose to indicate which staff should be targeted by marking that box with a “✓” or you might want to indicate specific skills or knowledge that would be relevant for staff in that category. Keep in mind that it is important to tailor professional development opportunities to the expectations for a particular role.

	Leadership	Supervisors and managers	Direct service and facilitators	Program partners
TPP program specific				
LGBTQ inclusivity				
Positive youth development				
Recruitment				
Retention				
Trauma-informed approaches				
Youth engagement				
Other:				
Other:				

Planned professional development opportunities

Objective	Activity	Target staff group(s)	Date(s)	Evaluation plan	Follow-up plan
What skills and knowledge listed above do you want staff to acquire/enhance?	What will you do to increase staff skills and knowledge?	Who should participate?	When will it happen?	How will you know it worked?	When and how will you check in after training?
<i>Effectively engaging youth</i>	<i>Staff skilled at role-plays will partner with less-skilled staff for two sessions to facilitate role-plays</i>	<i>Facilitators who self-identify as comfortable/ uncomfortable or are identified by supervisor</i>	<i>Partner sessions will take place in the first two weeks in March</i>	<i>Review attendance data in June to see if participant attendance improves</i>	<i>Supervisors will discuss the use of role-play twice in April with identified facilitators</i>

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