

NWX-OS-OGC-RKVL

Moderator: Jaclyn Ruiz
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Jaclyn Ruiz: Today we'll be interviewing Dr. Janet St. Lawrence and Ms. Regina Firpo-Triplett as part of our Developer Interview Series.

They will be introducing the program Becoming a Responsible Teen also known as BART. The Office of Adolescent Health will be hosting a series of interviews with developers of those programs identified by the Department of Health and Human Services, teen pregnancy Prevention evidence review as found showing effectiveness in reducing teen pregnancy, sexually-transmitted infections or sexual risk behaviors.

The goal of these interviews is to ask developers some of the most frequently asked questions by OAH grantees.

The Webinar series was developed as a technical assistance product for use with OAH grant programs to provide additional guidance in selecting, planning and implementing an evidence-based program or teen pregnancy prevention.

This Webinar should not be used on its own but as a complement to various other resources available online. Additional resources are identified later in this PowerPoint presentation.

Please note that inclusion on the HHS PPP evidence review does not imply endorsement from OAH and that program selection is up to grantees.

As I mentioned we have Dr. Janet St. Lawrence with us today as well as Ms. Regina Firpo-Triplett. Dr. Janet St. Lawrence is the original developer of the BART intervention. She is currently Professor Emeritus of Arts and Sciences at Mississippi State University and a Research Professor at Portland State University.

She has been developing and evaluating interventions addressing HIV-AIDS for more than 30 years both domestically and internationally.

Ms. Regina Firpo-Triplett is an Experienced Health Educator specializing in youth sexual and reproductive health and evidence-based programming.

She has developed training to and evaluated science-based programs for youth and providers from a variety of settings including school, juvenile justice, community-based organizations, clinics and homeless shelters throughout the US.

Welcome to you both.

Regina Firpo-Triplett: Thank you.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Can you please briefly describe the program BART?

Janet St. Lawrence: Yes. BART was originally developed in the late 1980s when it became apparent that our initial assumption that HIV was limited to gay and bisexual men was absolutely incorrect. And it was appearing particularly among African American youth.

The original program had as its goals to delay if possible sexual debut of youth who were abstinent.

For those who were and would continue to be sexually active to reduce occurrences of unprotected sex and the number of sex partners and to increase their condom use if they were going to remain sexually active.

In addition we had the goal of training the youth to disseminate what they were learning, both the information and the skills to their peers and to their families in order to get maximum diffusion from the intervention into the surrounding community.

The original target population was 15 to 18-year-old African American rural and urban youth in Mississippi.

The sessions were led by facilitators selected on the basis of their ability to really communicate and be trusted by youths.

We had the Youth Advisory Panel throughout the development of the program. And they actually interviewed a large number of applicants for the facilitator positions and made their hiring recommendations. And we chose to hire those who got their highest endorsements.

The program involves very rapid changes of pace, changes in activity formats so that the users constantly engaged and active participants rather than passive learners.

There are two videos now fairly dated so that would for people that are delivering the program that would require that they have either a computer or a DVD player and screen so that they can show the videos and then lead the guided discussion as follows.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Components of the program?

Janet St. Lawrence: A good way to think about this is to think in terms of an IMB model, Information Motivation and Behavior.

There is some attention early on in the program to information provision, making sure that everyone has a common base of information to work from.

And then primarily we used what I call the 3-D models where the facilitator describes a skill, demonstrates the skill and then the participants do this skill so the three Ds, describe, demonstrate do.

With the skill practice whether it is for a component such as effective refusal, condom negotiation the time devoted to the rehearsal and the practice is three to four times as great as the time describing or instructing and demonstrating.

It also included problem-solving, how to deal with dilemmas that arise or when they practice the skill outside the session and it didn't go as well as they had hoped figuring out what they might do differently the next time to feel better about it when they walked away.

It was also a way of developing social supports from within the peers in the community as others were participating in the program as they try the skill out in their life and came back and described the success they were having for it with it.

Then they became a role model for other kids within the group who might have been a little more timid about starting to try to do something differently.

It also stressed self-efficacy, building confidence that they were able to take these newly learned skills and apply them effectively.

For that reason throughout the program at every session as new skills are taught, practiced then there are assignments to use those skills outside the session during the following week.

And then when they return there's time devoted at the beginning of the program to finding out how that went, what went well, what would they have liked to go better and then getting a description of the context and working together as a group to problem solve and figure out how that might beat the - done a little differently the next time to yield a better result.

Another goal of that activity is to help them understand that when you make a change it's not always completely successful the first timeout.

And that doesn't mean you throw it away and give up. It's you go to the problem-solving and say all right what could I try differently the next time? So they role model that for one another.

We also because at that time their information was not well known we worked with them on how to share what they were learning with their friends and with their families.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Thank you for that additional information. It was actually really helpful to know. Can you discuss your previous evaluation results?

Janet St. Lawrence: Yes. The program was originally developed and intended for sexually active youth. Our Community Advisory Board and our Youth Advisory Panel both felt that it was also appropriate for youth who were not sexually active.

I had major reservations about that but back then I'm thinking why do I have advisory panels if I'm not going to listen?

But, I was fairly concerned about how this kind of intervention would affect youth who had not reached their sexual debut.

As it turned out for those who had not reached their sexual debut it dramatically decrease the rate of sexual onset.

We had a comparison group that received a different kind of program that didn't address sexual behavior at all.

And one year after the program ended among the abstinent youth who participated in BART a little over 11% had initiated their sexual debut whereas those who did not participate in BART over 30% had become sexually active.

And that 30% figure was consistent with the rate of change among youth in evaluations that were conducted in the public high schools.

So it's not that they debuted at a faster rate but that the participating in BART definitely delayed the onset of sexual activity reducing it by 65% which came as a complete surprise to us.

For those who were sexually active the effects were somewhat different for girls than for boys because they differed at the outset.

Boys were far more sexually active, reported more partners, more occurrences of unprotected sex.

Over the following year they eliminated entirely unprotected anal intercourse which of course is a - the single highest risk practice, dramatically increased their condom use with either male or female partners and reduce the number of partners.

For girls in the BART intervention they reduced the number of partners in comparison with the girls in the comparison condition who actually increased their number of partners.

And for those who remained sexually active increased the proportion of condom protected intercourse occasions meaningfully.

They also increased other teens' knowledge which was measured through surveys in the school settings where there was no sex education.

And it was clear that in their information sharing, their presentations to their classes and what they were learning in this program that other kids were increasing in their knowledge and showing to evidencing changes in their attitudes towards condom use if they were going to have sex.

We know that they were communicating with their families because we wound up with mothers and fathers beating on our door wanting programs for themselves talking about they were learning - what they were learning around the dinner table from their kids and feeling like, you know, they needed some help as well.

Jaclyn Ruiz: So you mentioned that the study was done on African American youths in rural and urban Mississippi. Can you either expand upon the evaluated settings or also talk - and also talk about some other populations that these intervention may be applicable for?

Janet St. Lawrence: I'd be happy to. Yes at the time BART was developed I was a professor at a historically black university in Mississippi.

And a long message from my parents is that you try to produce benefit in the community from which you are supported.

So this was developed for African American youth working in collaboration with a health clinic that served low income minority families.

We provided it in and recruited from the clinic settings from community organizations that served the African American youth afterschool programs, sports programs, CBOs.

We delivered it in either in the setting where they were recruited or in our own offices which were located in the central city.

We also delivered it at a community-based organization in a rural area.

Since that time we and others have used the program with youth in corrections, youth in afterschool programs and community-based organizations, in health clinics, probably other settings that aren't rising to awareness at the moment. But it's been delivered by a lot of people with a lot of different variations.

We have also done major adaptations in terms of populations, problem constellations. These were community-based youth.

We have adapted it for more impaired groups of youth and for other countries.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Do you...

((Crosstalk))

Janet St. Lawrence: The program was originally delivered in single gender sessions. So it was provided to both boys and girls in separately constituted gender groups.

Others have tested the program. And the results that I've seen have been shared with me have shown effectiveness as well with other ethnically and racially mixed groups both single gender and mixed gender groups in urban, suburban rural, and diverse socioeconomic levels.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Thank you. Actually you beat me to the punch because I was going to ask about the single gender groups versus the mixed gender groups.

I also feel like you went ahead and addressed the settings that this has been evaluated in as well as the other settings.

Is there anything you want to add or should I - should we continue to move forward? I want to give you a chance just to make sure that you addressed everything you felt like you needed...

Janet St. Lawrence: One question that has been raised is about whether the program is appropriate with youth who are questioning whether heterosexuality fits for them.

And the active debate seems to be here does the program need to be specifically tailored for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth?

We did not - now we had all kinds of kids in our groups. However our point was that it's not who you are that poses risk, it's what you choose to do and how you choose to do it.

And that while we didn't tell them what to do we wanted to make sure that they know everything they needed to know to be able to make the decisions they could live with outside the group.

So, you know, regardless the sex in the role plays they would role play with obviously same gender role play partners. The facilitators would demonstrate mixed gender role play.

So we felt the program fit. And while we were aware of what some of the some of the youth sexual orientation was because they shared it with us none perceived this to be a problem or the content to be a source of any discomfort. So we felt like we were on track there.

Some of the issues that have arisen with people wanting to use it in the school setting has been the social sensitivity of talking about demonstrating and practicing with condoms in school settings which can be a source of controversy or among parents or teachers.

Jaclyn Ruiz: And you know what, you're providing an excellent segue into the adaptations that you've been mentioning. I just want to note that adaptations do require OAH prior approval.

And I know at times it can actually require approval by the developer. You mentioned some potential adaptations already and some that seem to vary.

I know you have the highlighted here as yellow light. Do you want to discuss any of the other adaptations that are applicable? I see some green lights and also an additional yellow light that you mentioned at least on Slide 10?

Janet St. Lawrence: They - I think one of the things to be aware of here is that the language for specifically of the role plays in particular these were written by the youth. So they reflect the language at that time for that group of youth.

I typically, when I've delivered the program with any other group in any other place - whether similar or different - similar SES or different SES - I engage youth prior to delivering the program to work with me at adapting that language in the role plays to the situations that they are commonly encountering and the way the language has morphed and changed over time to reflect their current language usage.

I think that is essential to anyone who is going to be delivering the program. They need to make it fit with where they are and who they are. And I always enlist young people to work with me to do that rather than assuming that I or

any other adult really understands the experiences that they're living day to day.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Thank you for the information. And I think it may be important to note -- I've heard this mentioned before - but for the most part this is the yellow light/green light, that's an - and I know there's a red light - that's an ETR categorization.

So for the most part seems like green light is something that should be okay. Yellow light's a little more questioning. So I just want to remind any grantee listening that definitely have the conversation with your product officer about what will definitely require OAH approval but at all times you should be having - you should be information OAH of any changes that you're going to be making and definitely talking to the developer or distributor about that as well. (Unintelligible)

Janet St. Lawrence: So ETR has developed an excellent document talking about adaptation and identifying the differences between those red light, yellow light, green light adaptations that can be very helpful in the issue of (couples' role) relevance.

We used and grounded the BART intervention in Kwanzaa. At that moment in time, Kwanzaa was very popular among the population that received it in its initial delivery. Now obviously with Hispanic kids that may not be the right format for kind of a philosophical grounding.

Recently I've been delivering it in Botswana where we use Botswana proverbs, African proverbs, that are very popular, that serve the same purpose of grounding people in a more communal orientation to thinking about how what they do affects others or this awful motivational impetus, building on their strengths and their positive qualities.

But it does not have to be Kwanzaa. Every culture has some similar cultural grounding that can be folded in.

Jaclyn Ruiz: And Regina did you want to add something?

Regina Firpo-Triplett: Well yes I was just getting ready to chime in. So I just wanted to mention yes that ETR does use the green, yellow, red light framework for adaptations. The most important thing when we look at adaptations that we're not - we're keeping the core components of the program intact.

So the green light adaptations refer to it's not a risk to the core components. It's just making those changes like Janet was mentioning that make it more relevant to the youth without changing the core component.

Yellow light is there is something that is stretching a core component a lot and so those need to be made really carefully -- of course with OAH's approval and usually with some outside assistance. And then red light we don't recommend at all.

So we do have great - we have all the core components for BART and adaptation guidelines that answer the most common adaptation questions about BART on ETR's Web site at the Evidence Based Program Center.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Thanks for that information. Can you talk a little bit about (unintelligible) recommendations for the program?

Janet St. Lawrence: Yes. My choice was not to go with experienced teachers or nurses but to find people that the youth would trust who are comfortable talking about sexuality and sensitive behaviors and whom the youth were comfortable

sharing information with and felt that they and their friends would feel comfortable with.

To the end when we initially advertised facilitators we had a substantial response of applicants. And in addition to my interviewing the applicants and having our community advisory board interview them, we had a separate panel of youth who interviewed them. And as the applicants came out of the youth panel clearly they were perspiring a little more. They said the toughest interviews were the youth.

And I had asked them specifically to think about is this somebody you feel like cares, like does this person care about you and your life? Would you feel comfortable sharing personal information with this person? Would you feel this person could be trusted not to pass that along to anyone else? How would your friends feel about, you know, dealing with sensitive information with this person?

So we were really trying to get their sense of the comfort zone. And in the end for that hiring decision my choices and my rank order was dramatically different than the rank order the kids gave me. And I scratched my head a lot because frankly I did go through the, "Well gosh, I'm the one with all the degrees." And then I thought, "Well then why do I have an advisory panel if I'm not going to listen?"

So I went with the recommendations of the youth. And oh were they right. And did they save me some serious mistakes. The people they chose were not well educated in terms of having degrees. What they had was heart. They cared, and they were willing to work with me to deliver the program as designed and to be getting constant feedback when they would veer off from the program as written.

So that turned out I think to be the more important quality for a facilitator -- their comfort, their ability to be trusted by the kids and comfortable with the kids and with sexuality information and to be willing to work with the developer or the person in charge of the program to make sure that they maintained their fidelity to the program.

I used two facilitators per group for groups that were primarily heterosexual or that include some gay and lesbian questioning, transgender/bisexual kids. They have opportunities in the single gender groups to role play with same gender role play partners. So the example, the facilitators, tend to be the role models for heterosexual negotiation and discussion. And that way they get both examples.

And then I did the training of the facilitators. I still do a lot of that but more importantly ETR has professional trainers who are available to provide training to those who want to deliver the program and would appreciate assistance in learning how to do so effectively. Regina would you want to add about the ETR training?

Regina Firpo-Triplett: Sure. Just that we have this distributive learning process that we really believe in that having educators show up and do a two-day training and then go back in the field to implement a program, that that's really not enough, that there's learning that needs to take place before coming to a face-to-face training.

And then there's a lot of learning after in the field as challenges come up, as skills are questioned. So we really believe it's an ongoing process. And because of that we do offer several training services. They can be purchased a la carte or as a package they're more cost effective.

So there's training of educators. We do booster sessions which can be in person or virtual, training of trainers which is important when you look at building program capacity and sustainability. When you have your own trainers on site they can lead your own training of educators so you don't need an outside provider as much.

Then we also do program enrichment training which isn't specific to an evidence based program but it's important. Some of the topics are the adolescent brain and how they learn a little differently and do behavior change a little differently than other populations and trauma informed education. So those are just different topics that are helpful.

Then we have tailored technical assistance, consultation and all this information can be found at this link on our Web site because we have a lot of information. There's a calculator if you're trying to calculate how much the packages would cost. So that's available for you.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Oh that's great. Thank you so much for that. Can you talk a little bit about implementation challenges that you had and maybe any possible strategies that you're aware of to overcome those challenges?

Janet St. Lawrence: One of the primary challenges I've seen with people delivering the program is that, you know, those of us who are leaders tend to think we have a lot of answers and though we have a lot of information to deliver the temptation for facilitators to be talking too much or to verge into lecturing rather than engaging the youth in discussion, trying to draw information out of them rather than having a teaching kind of format.

The other shortcoming I've noticed is very common is that I mentioned earlier that 3D model. You know, describe the skill, demonstrate the skill, and then do the skill where the youth engage in role play practice. There should probably be - let's say if describing and demonstrating takes ten minutes, there should probably be 30 to 40 minutes of role play practice with different kinds of vignettes and scenarios.

One of the temptations I've seen that I think poses a serious drawback is when the practice is truncated. Either the time allowed doesn't give them multiple opportunities to practice or instead of breaking apart into small groups where everyone has the chance to practice the skill multiple times and get positive feedback on what they're doing well, constructive feedback on what might make it a little more effective.

Instead they'll for example call someone up to model in front of the group and give generalized feedback, "Oh, that's good," as opposed to having everyone have opportunities to practice and get very specific feedback, given the skill components that were taught for how you do that skill effectively, letting them know, "You did eye contact really well. I felt like you were really focusing on me. But then when you began to speak you kind of looked down to the floor. Let's try it with you continuing to look at me as you give the answer."

My example here is getting rather concrete, but giving the feedback very specific rather than global, vague comments like, "Oh that was good." It doesn't let them know what it was about their response that was good.

And this way you can also - and I always encourage and model first providing a positive feedback about what they did well and then something that might have been problematic, asking them how comfortable they were with that piece, that it seemed to me that that didn't go as effectively and what did they

think, and then trying it again to see, you know, with the suggestion for how they might strengthen that part of the response to see how it goes and how they feel about it.

It's also a constant ongoing problem - when someone is delivering a program it's always a temptation to add to it, to change it from time to time. And when that happens you wind up not knowing what's really being delivered.

In its worst case I have sometimes been invited to go out and see programs where the people delivering it were absolutely wonderful. They obviously cared about the kids. They were doing, you know, just working from their hearts to try and make a difference.

But the program they were delivering had evolved over time to where it was absolutely unrecognizable. And many of the core components had slipped away. So that's a constant caution that you have to be aware of.

The other thing is to include all of the sessions and not try and take - in the case of BART it was an eight-program session - or an eight-session program, sorry. And not trying to cut it down to a two-session or a one-session program, in which case you have to leave out so much. And they don't have the opportunities to practice and apply the skills between sessions and come back and talk about how that went and problem solve.

I think I endorse Regina's stress on the need for training of the facilitators. I think the training is essential and monitoring what is happening, retraining as needed. I think it's important to stay in close touch with the participants.

My staff always called them the day before the session to remind them about the session, give them a teaser about something nifty that was going to be in

that session that they, you know, really look forward to having them participate in.

And that the facilitators be totally prepared with everything in place before the first participant walks through the door. I think there is nothing more off-putting than to have kids there migrating around with no leader in sight or the leader rushing in with the supplies and making everyone wait while they get organized.

I think it sends a message, “I care about you. I care enough to be ready and eager for you the moment you walk in the door,” when everything is well prepared ahead of time. So those are some of the main things I’ve noticed.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Thank you for that information. I think that last point’s a good one just when dealing with any training that you do. So I just want to direct grantees who may be listening that on Slide 14 any (unintelligible) curriculum visions is mentioned on that slide.

And then on Slide 15 and 16 you’ll find some additional resources on BART. And we hope that these resources in conjunction with today’s Webinar will provide a comprehensive understanding of this evidence based teen pregnancy prevention program.

It will assist you in making not only an informed decision on which evidence based program to select for your community, how to best prepare for and implement this program. Do you have any final words you’d like to add?

Janet St. Lawrence: I just thank you for the effort you’re going through to try and get programs into the hands of people who can use them and try to make a difference in the life of our children.

Regina Firpo-Triplett: And I really thoroughly enjoyed Janet hearing you speak about BART.

I've heard you speak about it before but it's just so wonderful to hear you speak about it. And I do encourage people to go to ETR's Web site - evidence based program center.

We've got lots of information on BART, how it should be implemented, logic models, fidelity logs, just tons of information and information that it would be helpful to use in grants if you're writing BART into a grant. So do check that out.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Well thank you both so much. I 100% agree with Regina. It's been a pleasure listening to Janet talk about your program.

Janet St. Lawrence: Thank you.

Jaclyn Ruiz: I could just hear the passion come out. So thank you so much. And I know that our grantees will find this information incredibly helpful as well as they work to implement the program. So thank you again.

Janet St. Lawrence: Okay I'd also like to encourage your and the grantees that, you know, we're very available and accessible. So if there are questions, we're here. Feel free to contact me, to call me, to e-mail. You know, I'll be glad to help in any way that I can.

Regina Firpo-Triplett: Likewise.

Jaclyn Ruiz: Fantastic. Fantastic, thank you guys so much. And can we go ahead and end the recording?

Regina Firpo-Triplett: That was great.

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