



Alignment with the *Tool to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs*

Purpose: This document illustrates how TOP aligns with each of the 17 characteristics of effective programs outlined in the *Tool to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs* (Kirby, Roller, & Wilson, 2007). This alignment document is intended to be used as a resource to help assess whether TOP is a fit for the needs of your community and the requirements of your funding sources.

For Additional Information, Contact: Tori Gale, Manager of Partnerships and Administration ▪ tori.gale@wymancer.org ▪ 314 712 2368

Overview: Wyman's Teen Outreach Program (TOP) is an evidence-based, positive youth development program with over 30 years of implementation nationwide. TOP promotes the healthy development of adolescents in grades 6-12 through a unique combination of weekly peer group meetings, engaging curriculum and community service learning, facilitated by caring, responsive and knowledgeable adults. TOP fosters protective factors and prevents risk among participating youth with opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills and to practice them in an emotionally safe and supportive environment. TOP has been implemented in a variety of settings, including rural, urban, in-school, after-school, through community organizations and in systems and institutional settings.

Wyman's National Network provides supports for over 50 Partners, nationwide, implementing TOP. National Network staff work with organizations considering TOP to help determine TOP's fit with the organization and community. When an organization joins the National Network, they receive training, as well as ongoing technical assistance, and support to implement TOP with fidelity and quality.

The TOP Curriculum, a core component of the TOP program, was revised in 2017. The revision was informed by research in adolescent development and best practices in positive youth development and incorporated learning from 20 years of Wyman's direct program delivery, over eight years of national replication, and an extensive feedback process specific to the curriculum revision. Given what we know about how to develop teens' competencies and pave the way for a successful transition into adulthood, the curriculum focuses on three core content areas that work together to build protective factors, reduce the impact of risk and promote healthy development: ***skill building, developing a positive sense of self and strengthening connections to others***. The TOP Curriculum includes 140 lessons on Decision-Making, Problem Solving, Emotion Management, Goal-Setting, Communication, Empathy, Relationships, Community, Self-Understanding, Social Identity, and Health & Wellness. The TOP Curriculum uses a holistic, positive youth development approach to sexual health education, including comprehensive, up-to-date and medically accurate sexual health information. TOP facilitators have the flexibility to select lessons that meet the needs and interests of the teens they serve.

Alignment:

Characteristic	How TOP Aligns
1. Involved multiple people with different backgrounds in theory, research, and sex and STD/HIV education to develop the curriculum.	Wyman’s curriculum development team working on the 2017 revision was comprised of staff with a range of educational backgrounds and expertise, including six masters-level social workers and two doctoral-level developmental psychologists. Medical information was reviewed by a physician. Across the full curriculum development team, expertise in adolescent sexual behavior, risk and protective factors, instructional design, cultural norms and evaluation was fully represented.
2. Assessed relevant needs and assets of target group.	The curriculum development team working on the 2017 revision utilized a variety of data sources to understand the needs and assets of youth. Prevalence data were reviewed as well as Wyman’s data from pre-post surveys completed by thousands of teens who participated in TOP nationwide. Pre-post data were used to understand teens’ characteristics (E.g., gender, race, living situation, parental education), risk behaviors (E.g., pregnancy, birth, school suspensions, etc.) and protective factors (E.g., problem-solving skills, relationships with others). Additional quantitative data used to inform youth needs and assets included results from rigorous research conducted on TOP’s effectiveness and results from a feedback survey completed by Wyman’s national partners who implement TOP. Qualitative data were also collected and used to inform the development of the revised curriculum. Focus groups were conducted with TOP teens across multiple states to gather input on specific curriculum lesson topics, activities, etc.
3. Used a logic model approach to develop the curriculum that specified the health goals, the behaviors affecting those health goals, the risk and protective factors affecting those behaviors, and the activities addressing those risk and protective factors.	The TOP logic model was revised in 2017 to inform the curriculum development work. The revision was guided by a variety of data sources (named above) as well as a literature review on promoting protective factors and preventing risk behavior among adolescents. The TOP logic model shows clear links between the core components of the TOP program--weekly peer group meetings, curriculum content, and community service learning, facilitated by caring, responsive, knowledgeable adults—and short term, intermediate term, and long term outcomes. TOP aims to reduce risky behavior, which includes fewer pregnancies as a health outcome. Short term protective factors that promote fewer pregnancies and are identified on the logic model include: improved social and emotional skills, a positive sense of self, and stronger connections to others.
4. Designed activities consistent with community values and available resources (E.g., staff time, staff skills, facility space and supplies).	Community values were considered by Wyman’s curriculum development team, informed by the data collected from partners who implement TOP in a variety of settings nationwide. TOP curriculum content integrates medically accurate information into lessons about adolescent puberty, sexual behavior, sexual health and potential risks of engaging in sexual activity. TOP replication partners have the flexibility to address sexual health information with the teens they serve according to their own community values and beliefs about adolescent sexuality. Wyman’s National Network staff work with organizations considering TOP to help determine TOP’s fit with the organization and community.

Characteristic	How TOP Aligns
	Wyman’s National Network staff supports implementation of TOP to ensure that implementing agencies are well-prepared with well-trained staff, adequate staff time to plan and deliver the program, safe and comfortable facilities for delivering program, and adequate supplies.
5. Pilot-tested the program.	TOP is a well-established, evidence-based program with a 30+ year history of implementation nationwide. When the curriculum was revised in 2017, the curriculum development team incorporated learning from 20 years of Wyman’s direct program delivery, over eight years of national replication, and an extensive feedback process specific to the curriculum revision. To inform the revision, feedback was gathered via survey and focus groups of TOP facilitators and coordinators across the Network and over 20 focus groups with teen participants from TOP sites across several states. During the revision process, partners piloted selected lessons and provided feedback to Wyman’s curriculum development team via surveys. As part of a continuous learning cycle, Wyman is using online surveys to continue to gather feedback from partners about their experiences with the revised lessons, and will use the feedback to provide guidance to partners about how best to deliver the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs and interests of the teens they serve.
6. Focused on clear health goals—prevention of STD, HIV, and/or pregnancy	The TOP Curriculum addresses clear health goals, including the prevention of STDs, HIV and pregnancy. Lesson objectives include increasing knowledge and understanding of key concepts related to these health outcomes.
7. Focused narrowly on specific behaviors leading to these health goals (E.g., abstaining from sex or using condoms or other contraceptives), gave clear messages about these behaviors, and addressed situations that might lead to them and how to avoid them.	<p>The TOP Curriculum focuses on specific behaviors leading to sexual health goals. Lessons include clear messaging that abstinence is the most effective way to prevent pregnancy and/or STDs and that if someone is sexually active, correctly and consistently used contraception and/or protection can reduce the risk of pregnancy and/or STDs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons on abstinence include discussion of reasons a person may choose to practice abstinence, guidelines for practicing abstinence and non-sexual ways to express feelings. • Lessons on STDs include discussion of STD contraction, treatment and prevention. A participant handout describes each STD, how it is contracted, symptoms, whether it is curable, treatment, possible complications, and prevention. • Lessons on contraception include discussion of how each contraceptive method works, guidelines for correct use, effectiveness rates, and whether the method also reduces risk of STDs. A participant handout summarizes this information.
8. Addressed multiple sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors affecting sexual behaviors (E.g., knowledge,	<p>The TOP Curriculum addresses multiple sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors affecting sexual behaviors. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons include engaging activities and games designed to increase knowledge of sexual risk. Participants have opportunities to compare their perception of risk to the facts presented in the activities.

Characteristic	How TOP Aligns
perceived risks, values, attitudes, perceived norms and self-efficacy).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In “Using Condoms Correctly,” participants have an opportunity to discuss how to respond to reasons a partner may give for not wanting to use a condom. • In “Substance Use and Sexual Activity” participants explore the potential influence of substance use on sexual activity. • In “Dealing With Pressure Situations” and “When Relationships Lead To Pressure,” participants learn and discuss strategies for responding to pressure and apply these to real-life situations, including pressure to engage in sexual activity. <p>In addition to 18 lessons in the Health & Wellness section of the curriculum, which include lessons on sexual health, lessons on goal-setting, relationships, communication, and values, as well as the Community Service Learning aspect of TOP, support the development of self-efficacy and additional protective factors which impact a teen’s sexual decision making.</p>
9. Created a safe social environment for youth to participate.	<p>The TOP Curriculum, accompanying Facilitation Guide, and required Training of Facilitators emphasize the need for a safe social environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the Training of Facilitators, facilitators are trained in “High Quality Facilitation,” in which facilitators build strong, supportive relationships with teens and create engaging and empowering TOP Club experiences. • During the Training of Facilitators, facilitators are trained in creating safe space, including creating an inclusive program environment. • Facilitators receive information on facilitating with trauma awareness, and the curriculum includes prompts for facilitators to consider how lessons may affect youth who have experienced, or are experiencing, trauma. • The Facilitation Guide includes content that reinforces the above concepts. • The curriculum includes lessons with introductions and the creation of group guidelines. Icebreaker and teambuilding activities are encouraged. • To encourage youth participation, lessons are written with varied opportunities for youth engagement (E.g., movement based activities, activities incorporating music, etc.), and activities and reflections include varied structures, such as large group work, small group work, pair sharing and individual journaling. • In many lessons, two options are presented (E.g., a Think-Pair-Share and a Journal Reflection) and facilitators are able to choose which best suits the needs of their youth.
10. Included multiple activities to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors.	<p>The TOP Curriculum includes multiple opportunities to change targeted risk and protective factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum includes basic information about the risks of having sex and methods to avoid sex or use protection. • The curriculum includes information about STDs, including: transmission, symptoms, consequences, prevention, testing and treatment. It additionally addresses common myths about STDs.

Characteristic	How TOP Aligns
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum includes information about pregnancy, including pregnancy risk and contraceptive methods, their effectiveness, and how they work. • In “Examining Teen Parenthood,” participants explore the realities of teen parenthood and how becoming a teen parent would affect their daily life. • The curriculum includes simulations of how easily STDs spread and the risk of pregnancy if people have unprotected sex over time. • The curriculum addresses pressure to have sex and how one could respond. • All information in the TOP Curriculum is medically accurate, including the risk of STDs and/or pregnancy and the effectiveness of condoms and other methods of contraception. • The curriculum includes lessons that support healthy decision making and learning and practicing assertive communication skills. • Curriculum activities help participants apply information to their own lives.
<p>11. Employed instructionally sound teaching methods that actively involved the participants, that helped participants personalize the information, and that were designed to change each group of risk and protective factors.</p>	<p>The TOP Curriculum uses instructionally sound teaching methods, with an emphasis on lessons being active, engaging and empowering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum lessons incorporate the Experiential Learning Cycle and Multiple Intelligences Theory. • Teaching methods include the following: short lectures, brainstorming sessions, stories, class discussions, role plays, live skits, small group work, risk simulations, competitive games, worksheets, condom demonstrations (the demonstration is an optional part of the “Using Condoms Correctly” lesson) forced-choice activities and problem-solving activities. • In many lessons, facilitators have a choice between two teaching methods (E.g., Small group discussion or journaling). National Network staff can provide guidance around adding additional teaching methods. • Each lesson ends with reflection, which prompts youth to personalize the information they are learning.
<p>12. Employed activities, instructional methods and behavioral messages that were appropriate to the youths’ culture, developmental age and sexual experience.</p>	<p>The TOP Curriculum includes 140 lessons on Decision-Making, Problem Solving, Emotion Management, Goal-Setting, Communication, Empathy, Relationships, Community, Self-Understanding, Social Identity and Health & Wellness. Facilitators use their knowledge of participants’ culture, needs, interests, and experience to select which lessons to use and how to sequence them, with National Network staff available to provide guidance.</p> <p>To meet the varying developmental needs of participants, the TOP Curriculum includes three levels- Foundational, Intermediate and Advanced- that progress in content and instructional design. Facilitators select lessons that are most appropriate for participants and can incorporate lessons from across developmental levels.</p> <p>Facilitators are encouraged to make lesson content as relevant to youth in their community as possible, such as by incorporating current events, adapting role play scenarios, etc.</p>

Characteristic	How TOP Aligns
13. Covered topics in a logical sequence.	See above, #12. Additionally, facilitators are trained to establish safety and trust in the group before using lessons that may be sensitive, including sexual health lessons.
14. Secured at least minimal support from appropriate authorities such as ministries of health, school districts or community organizations.	<p>Staff in Wyman’s National Network have supported TOP implementation across a variety of settings, and they use this experience to advise new implementations. New partners go through an onboarding process that includes consultation on key stakeholders, capacity analysis, and tools such as sample MOU’s.</p> <p>In addition to national replication, Wyman engages in direct delivery of TOP in the St. Louis community, and learnings from this direct delivery are incorporated into the National Network.</p>
15. Selected educators with desired characteristics (whenever possible), trained them, and provided monitoring, supervision and support.	New partners send their coordinator to Wyman’s Training of Trainers, a five day training that prepares them to return to their community and set up TOP implementation, including training their facilitators in Wyman’s Training of Facilitators training program. Wyman offers sample job descriptions, as well as consultation, to help partners select individuals who will be successful as TOP facilitators. Wyman has a fidelity model for TOP, and attendees at the Training of Trainers learn about fidelity criteria and data processes used to monitor them.
16. If needed, implemented activities to recruit and retain youth and overcome barriers to their involvement (E.g.,, publicized the program, offered food, obtained consent).	Wyman offers support and guidance on recruitment and retention.
17. Implemented all activities with reasonable fidelity.	The TOP logic model clearly specifies the fidelity criteria for implementation of TOP, and there are multiple touchpoints between National Network staff and prospective and current Partners to review expectations for implementing TOP with fidelity and quality (E.g., Wyman’s Training of Trainers and Training of Facilitators). Partners develop Quality Assurance Plans at the beginning of each program year to indicate how they will regularly monitor fidelity and quality of TOP implementation. Partners use Wyman Connect, Wyman’s proprietary online data management system, to enter, view and use real-time implementation data in support of their continuous quality improvement efforts. Annually, Wyman’s National Network team engages Partners in a certification review which includes using data to assess fidelity and to highlight areas in need of improvement.