

Executive Summary

Purpose of Program

Start Strong aims to prevent sexual violence victimization and perpetration. Start Strong is an age-appropriate educational program for seventh and ninth grade students in Orange County's two school districts. This evaluation focused on the seventh grade curriculum, which increases students' knowledge of how to recognize sexual violence and addresses gender stereotypes, the differences between sexual harassment and flirting, and skills related to bystander intervention.

Program Activities, Setting & Population Served

The seventh grade program consists of four 45-minute sessions over four days. Sessions include interactive media presentations, group discussions, media literacy activities, and role-play. Start Strong is implemented in both Orange County Schools (OCS) and Chapel Hill Carrboro City Schools (CHCCS) middle schools. In the 2013-2014 school year, the seventh grade Start Strong program occurred at all four CHCCS middle schools, and one of the four OCS middle schools.

Purpose of the evaluation

In the fall of 2013, Start Strong transitioned from being a program implemented solely by the Rape Prevention Education Coordinator (RPEC) to a program implemented by trained volunteer facilitators. At this point in the program development, it was necessary to evaluate the implementation of the facilitator training and the implementation of the Start Strong program by volunteer facilitators, as well as how the school context may affect the program implementation. In light of these changes in the program structure, the OCRCC staff asked a team of Capstone students from the Health Behavior Department in the UNC Gillings School of Global Health to conduct an evaluation of the implementation processes of the seventh grade program.

Overview of findings or outcomes

The evaluation was carried out in 23 classrooms in all five of the middle schools in which Start Strong occurred. In regards to the facilitator training, five of eight trainees met the objective for knowledge of program content, and trainees met the objective for their confidence in 10 of the 17 program-related abilities. Facilitator trainees were satisfied with the training overall and with the instructor, but would have preferred more time to practice the skills they learned.

We were not able to fully assess facilitators' implementation of the program, due to school and Capstone project scheduling. However, facilitators were able to complete all program components in 92% of classrooms, although not always during the intended session. Moreover, students reported high levels of satisfaction with the course and the facilitators.

Overview of recommendations

Recommendations for improving Start Strong facilitator training and implementation in the future include:

- Examine sections of the training in which trainees reported low knowledge and/or confidence to see if they can be improved.
- Build more opportunities to practice skills and curriculum implementation during the training before trainees have to do it in the classroom.
- Consider re-arranging the agenda for each of the four Start Strong curriculum sessions.
- Split the Facilitator Satisfaction Survey into smaller questionnaires that are tailored to each session of the training in order to get feedback in real time and to include feedback from trainees who drop out.
- Monitor data from process tools on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.
- Adapt the process evaluation tools developed for the seventh grade Start Strong program for use with the ninth grade Start Strong curriculum and/or the kindergarten through fifth grade Safe Touch program, if feasible given time and resource constraints.