

Employing and Retaining the Best Facilitation Staff for Adolescent Sexual Health Programs

RECRUITMENT	Passion is the Foundation for Effective Teaching
	<p>Recruit facilitators who are passionate about adolescent health, wellness, and outcomes and have the ability to connect and communicate with youth. Individuals with health education, behavioral health backgrounds, or experience working with youth have a foundation for adolescent sexual health facilitation. Facilitators should be able to connect with the adolescents regardless of age or demographic.</p>
	<p>Design job descriptions to accurately reflect requirements and expectations and highlight organizational culture.</p>
	<p>In the job description and during the interview, detail position-specific challenges that are unique to facilitators in the field. Special considerations for adolescent sexual health facilitators include time and travel requirements, program facilitation to high-risk and special needs youth, classroom management, connection and ability to facilitate youth, and overall comfort in learning and discussing sexual-health-related topics. Organizations should be candid and open about these challenges.</p>
	<p>Use “word of mouth” to encourage peer recruitment. Current staff are often great advocates for the organization and can speak to the specifics of the facilitator position. Staff can encourage other skilled individuals to apply for open opportunities that fit their skillset, experience level, and interests.</p>
	<p>Use existing or new social media platforms to tap into networks for recruitment to find a diverse facilitation team that represents the community and youth served by the organization.</p>
	<p>Build an interview team that is knowledgeable regarding the roles, experiences, and responsibilities of the adolescent sexual health facilitator. Members should be fully engaged in all phases of the search and interview process.</p>

Field Notes: RECRUITMENT

Post the job description on partnering organizations’ websites and job boards.

Recruit staff who have passion for youth health outcomes, the ability to facilitate sensitive topics, and the willingness to meet the travel and time demands of the position.

Be open and honest when discussing the common challenges experienced by facilitators.



Organizational leaders and the interview team should come to a consensus on desirable and necessary qualities and qualifications of the right staff. Develop an understanding of who is the right fit for the position and organization.

- ▶ Not all programs can hire trained and highly experienced facilitators due to resources and availability; however, experienced facilitators may have training that supports evidence-based teaching methodologies and may be more comfortable teaching sex-related topics. These applicants should be considered high priority if their skills, qualifications, and “fit” meet the job description and organizational culture.
- ▶ Other important qualities include comfort discussing sensitive topics like sex, ability to connect and communicate with youth in the target age ranges, and understanding youth behaviors. It is also desirable to have staff who are positive representatives of the communities served, and those who have a passion for youth-related topics and boosting youth success.



Determine an interview process that is tailored to the organization and the specific facilitator position. Possible strategies include:

- ▶ Phone screening to discuss minimum qualification and job specifications per the job description, providing the opportunity to clarify any initial questions.
- ▶ Panel interview.
- ▶ Writing prompts to assess knowledge of sexual health education topics or topics related to facilitation.
- ▶ Personality test or other strength-based assessments.
- ▶ Mock lesson where the interviewee plans a lesson related to adolescent sexual health or prepares a lesson from the curriculum to facilitate to the interview team; the interview team portrays students during facilitation to gauge how the interviewee reacts to common student behavior.



Create a welcoming atmosphere for the candidate that reflects organizational culture.



Brainstorm ideal responses to open-ended interview questions that are specific to facilitator responsibilities and organizational standards and responses. For example:

- ▶ How would you manage a class or student that is being disrespectful to you during your presentation? Brainstorm: Does the organization have a classroom management protocol, or do they follow school policies on student discipline?
- ▶ If a student asked you a question about the sexual health topic you just facilitated, and you didn't know the answer, how would you respond? Brainstorm: Does the facilitator feel confident in not knowing the answers and confirm they will find the answer for the youth? Validate the questions and seek to either research or ask peer facilitators for the answer?

Field Notes: ONBOARDING

Develop an onboarding process for new employees that might include a probationary or transition process and timeline. The length of the onboarding should be tailored to fit the needs of the organization and the learning curve of new staff. Suggestions for onboarding activities include:

1. Formal Statement of Purpose to be reviewed and signed by new staff and manager
2. Formal curriculum and topic training
3. Review of program logic models and curriculum selection tools, such as the SMARTool 2.0 and the Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)
4. Discussion and understanding of a facilitator's role in achieving organizational goals for positive youth health outcomes; overview of the "big picture" of the program
5. Observations of lead facilitators
6. Co-facilitation with seasoned facilitators
7. "Teach backs" on curriculum lessons where new facilitators teach the lesson back to the instructor
8. Ongoing classroom observations with constructive feedback and additional training and guidance where needed



STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Keeping Skills Up to Date

	Staff training and professional development are vital for staff growth and job satisfaction.
	Coaching and peer learning provide adolescent sexual health facilitators the opportunity to learn and receive specific feedback from experienced facilitators to learn and increase skills.
	While “learning on the job” is a professional development approach taken in many professional and academic settings, facilitators who are not provided formal training are less prepared and more likely to leave the field early. Formal trainings include webinars, presentations by curriculum developers or guest speakers, and other methods. Trainings that boost facilitator confidence and knowledge in the teaching methodologies and topics related to adolescent sexual health help enhance effectiveness of the sexual health education program.
	Personalizing staff development and including day-to-day training provides opportunities to build and strengthen knowledge and facilitation skills.
	Providing an overview of program logic models gives new facilitators an understanding and foundation of the intent, purpose, and “why” behind the program. The “why” includes understanding program goals and objectives, but also broader views and long-term vision for youth and individuals served in the program (for example, increased health and well-being among youth, self-sufficiency, academic achievement, etc.).
	Training in cultural competence is vital; cultural appropriateness is a feature of effective sexual health programs.
	Programs should consider tailored training and materials for adolescent sexual health facilitators that match the population they are serving. In all settings, consider training on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth and gender non-conforming youth.
	Performance reviews for new and experienced staff provide constructive feedback and boost motivation for future facilitation. Leadership can establish a 90-day new hire evaluation, semi-annual performance evaluation, and annual performance evaluation to support staff and ensure standards of the curriculum and program are being met.
	Provide staff the opportunity to include career goals and one-on-one discussions regarding career progression and opportunities for staff feedback.

Field Notes: STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Timely training and professional development on topics related to the delivery of adolescent health education provide facilitators with the tools and knowledge needed to be successful in the classroom. Training topics that support adolescent sexual health facilitators include, but are not limited to: formal curriculum trainings, trauma-informed care, adolescent brain development, community engagement/outreach, classroom management, human trafficking awareness and prevention, and training on related and emerging adolescent health-related topics (e.g., vaping, opioids, etc.).

Suggested Resources:

- ▶ Cultural Competence (<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/resources-and-training/tpp-and-paf-resources/cultural-competence/index.html>)
- ▶ Trauma-Informed Care: Tips for Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (<https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/sites/default/files/trauma-informed-care-part2-508.pdf>)

RETENTION

Effective Retention Starts with Hiring the Right Staff



There is relatively little information on retaining adolescent sexual health facilitators that is specific to the unique needs they may have in the workforce. In general, effective retention starts with hiring the right staff and continues with supporting the staff through training, workplace culture, and support.



Cultivate a workplace culture that values individual staff and their success within the organization and team.



Staff meetings and staff retreats provide opportunities for team building, collaboration, and support, including team facilitation and community outreach.



Provide opportunities for facilitators to share information, interact with colleagues, mentor, and share lessons learned (e.g., peer facilitation and feedback, facilitator observations, etc.).



Creating a “career ladder” can give staff insight and motivation to advance through positions at the organization, if organizational resources permit. Use facilitator talents in other areas of the organization to grow and develop their skills. It’s possible that staff may need to go from full to part-time during their career and accommodating this can help retain talent.



Organizational leadership should discuss retention strategies that are feasible and desirable for the organization. Reducing staff turnover prevents constant hiring costs; creating a career ladder and other career advancement opportunities can have positive financial implications. Facilitator turnover can have potentially negative impacts on youth, especially those who rely on the relationship with school facilitators to fill adult-youth connections. A secure teacher-student relationship is an important protective factor for students.



Understand burnout—including mental, emotional, and physical burnout—and the effects of burnout on an individual’s personal and professional life.



Provide facilitators with opportunities to discuss emotional or sensitive experiences while facilitating or interacting with youth and the community.



Allow facilitators time to rest after intensive periods of program delivery (e.g., rotate assignments and responsibilities, where possible).



Suggest resources to prevent, recognize, and address potential secondary traumatic stress in facilitators and other staff:



Secondary Traumatic Stress (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/secondary-traumatic-stress>)



Organizational Culture and Secondary Traumatic Stress (<https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=178§ionid=2&articleid=4781>)

Field Notes: RETENTION

Retention practices are determined by the organization's need for staff retention. This is influenced by many factors, including grant funding cycles and changes in organizational focus and structure.

- ▶ Organizations that seek short-term retention can support facilitators by building skillsets through formal trainings and professional development activities that support their current role, providing networking opportunities with partnering agencies, and providing constructive evaluation feedback to improve professional capacities.
- ▶ Organizations that seek long-term retention can support facilitators by building skillsets that support the organization and its various departments, including formal and hands-on training in grant writing, non-profit sustainability, program management, and leadership.

No matter the retention plan, organizations should engage in efforts to make all staff feel valued and create an organizational culture of positive feedback and support.



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