The Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy provides statewide leadership to prevent adolescent pregnancy and to promote quality services for pregnant and parenting teens and their children through policy analysis, education, research, and advocacy.

In 2003 and 2004, the Alliance provided intensive technical assistance to a community in Western Massachusetts, working with a task force of local stakeholders to design a community-wide science-based strategy for preventing teen pregnancy. This report is intended primarily for statewide organizations similar to the Alliance that are supporting communities to select, implement and evaluate science-based practices. Regional Training Centers and local coalitions may also find the approaches used by the Alliance to be applicable to their own initiatives related to science-based approaches.

Through an eight-month partnership with the Task Force, the Alliance was successful in guiding a community process that led to the selection of a research-based teen pregnancy prevention program that met community needs and gained community-wide support. What follows is a brief outline of the steps involved in that process.
Laying the Groundwork

Build relationships in local communities

*What the Alliance does.* . .

- Seeks local community input and coordinates statewide advocacy efforts on issues related to teen pregnancy and teen parents;
- Creates and supports multiple opportunities for community programs and the youth they serve to connect with policymakers; and
- Recruits individuals from local organizations to serve on its Board of Directors.

Position your agency as a resource for coalition-building and science-based approaches (SBAs)* to teen pregnancy prevention

*What the Alliance does.* . .

- Annually convenes the only statewide conference on teen pregnancy issues;
- Publishes quarterly newsletter on science-based approaches to teen pregnancy prevention;
- Hosts quarterly roundtables providing opportunities to connect science-based teen pregnancy prevention providers throughout the state; and
- Regularly disseminates information on teen pregnancy prevention topics to program providers.

Be available and flexible while learning about the community

*What the Alliance did.* . .

- Responded to the request for assistance from the local coordinator;
- Hosted several in-person and phone meetings with the local coordinator;
- Took the lead in creating the agenda for the first task force meeting; and
- Agreed to dedicate .3 FTE staff time to facilitating the community engagement process.

*What else could be done.* . .

- Enlist other youth development providers in target community to become Alliance members.
- Provide links on Alliance website to targeted community data.
- Invite community program staff to contribute to publications.

Responding to Request for Technical Assistance on Science-Based Approaches

Ensure there is a key community partner who will steer the process locally

*What the Alliance did.* . .

- Conducted an initial interview with the local coordinator to determine interest and capacity in undertaking a community process to select and implement a science-based approach to teen pregnancy prevention;
- Met with local coordinator to further discuss technical assistance the Alliance could offer through its CDC-funded project and to outline next steps, both short and long term that coincided with the Task Force’s quarterly meeting schedule; and
- Finalized a work plan and timeline that outlined the areas for which the Alliance would be responsible and the areas for which the local coordinator would be responsible.

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Train task force members in science-based approaches to teen pregnancy prevention

**What the Alliance did. . .**
- Compiled and distributed an orientation binder on science-based approaches;
- Presented at task force meeting on the basics of science-based approaches to teen pregnancy prevention; and
- Administered an evaluation of the presentation and used results to shape further work with the task force.

**Identify a common goal**

**What the Alliance did. . .**
- Facilitated a goal development process during a task force meeting;
- Outlined tasks and timelines to be completed to meet common goal; and
- Enlisted task force members to complete specific tasks and report back to the group.

**Keep task force members on track by following up and maintaining communication**

**What the Alliance did. . .**
- Prepared meeting agendas and facilitated bi-monthly task force meetings;
- Oriented and communicated with new task force members as they came on board; and
- Regularly contacted task force members to ensure “homework” was being completed between meetings.

**What else could be done. . .**
- Informally interview or survey task force members to determine their experience level with logic models and other components of science-based approaches.
- Tailor task force trainings based on initial surveys.

**Facilitating Selection of Specific Risk and Protective Factors to Address**

Provide the Task Force with data on the community

**What the Alliance did. . .**
- Compiled data from disparate sources into a “snapshot” document that suggested prevalent risk and protective factors relating to teen pregnancy prevention in the community;
- Presented the data at a task force meeting; and
- Led a brainstorming session for task force members to add risk and protective factors to the research data based on their knowledge of the community.

Select specific risk and protective factors

**What the Alliance did. . .**
- Asked each member to prioritize five risk and protective factors to address;
- Narrowed down and categorized the list of factors based on members’ input;
- Encouraged members to share their concerns about which factors to address; and
- Helped the task force assess the community capacity to impact specific risk factors.

**What else could be done. . .**
- Use focus groups, a community needs assessment, or surveys to provide up-to-date information on local risk and protective factors.
Facilitating Selection of a Science-Based Approach

Identify the Science-based Strategy that will be utilized

*What the Alliance did.*

- Facilitated a two-part training on the three strategies for implementing a science-based approach (replicating a proven program, incorporating characteristics of effective teen pregnancy prevention programs, and developing a program using a BDI Logic Model);
- Provided guidance to the task force on developing a list of advantages and disadvantages for each strategy specific to their community; and
- Led a discussion to examine the pros and cons and arrive at consensus.

Select an intervention

*What the Alliance did.*

- Helped the task force articulate the criteria they wanted the program to meet: it had to be a good fit for the values and capacity of the community, address the specific risk and protective factors identified by the task force; have funding to support its implementation; and be likely to garner community support;
- Provided additional research and support to a key task force member who had strongly bought into the value of science-based approaches and could influence the group;
- Supported the key task force member on developing a presentation to the group on the Teen Outreach Program, which she thought would satisfy the criteria that had been identified; and
- Led the task force in a BDI Logic Model development process to apply the TOP program to the community.

Introduce the intervention to the larger community

*What the Alliance did.*

- Helped the task force create a presentation strategy for a community-wide meeting, including anticipated audience questions and how to respond; and
- Provided a packet of information for meeting attendees, including data on local birth rates, the logic model developed, a press release, a letter to the editor by a local teen, an overview of the selected program, and information on science-based approaches.

**Conclusion**

As the trend toward science-based practices extends its reach further into teen pregnancy prevention, communities are increasingly searching for ways to incorporate research into practice. Statewide coalitions and organizations are in a unique position to translate research for the field by partnering with local communities. We hope this document can serve as a resource for organizations seeking to collaborate on science-based pregnancy prevention efforts to support all teens to make healthy decisions and build positive futures.