

Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION



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Note: The Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Empowering Teens to Build Safe and Supportive Relationships was previously referred to as Dating Matters: Strategies to Promote Healthy Teen Relationships.

Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships

How to Use This Guide

The Healthy Relationships Toolkit Guide to Implementation serves as an overarching roadmap for local health departments (LHDs) or community-based organizations (CBOs) interested in implementing the Healthy Relationships Toolkit (HeaRT) comprehensive model to prevent violence in adolescence. This Guide to Implementation provides information, strategies, and guidance, as well as some of the “nuts and bolts” necessary to successfully implement and sustain this multi-component prevention model. This guide will also help you decide if HeaRT is right for your community and, if so, how to get started.

In an effort to prepare your organization for implementing HeaRT, this guide is broken into four phases containing multiple activities. As shown in Figure 1, these phases will walk you through several key goals including:

- **Phase 1:** Understanding the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Model
- **Phase 2:** Assessing Capacity to Implement the Healthy Relationships Toolkit and Engaging Partners
- **Phase 3:** Preparing for Implementation
- **Phase 4:** Planning for Evaluation and Sustainability

Tips for Using This Guide:

- Print the Guide to Implementation out for reference
- Use it as a companion piece for the electronic document online
- Don't forget to click on hyperlinks in the electronic document for additional materials and tools



Phase 1: Understanding the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Model

- Learn about the development and goals of the Healthy Relationships Toolkit
- Get familiar with all seven components of this comprehensive prevention model
- Explore the HeaRT website



Phase 2: Assessing Capacity to Implement the Healthy Relationships Toolkit and Engaging Partners

- Identify and engage partners
- Complete the General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention Tool (G-CAT)
- Develop a Community Advisory Board



Phase 3: Preparing for Implementation

- Create a logic model
- Create an implementation action plan
- Plan for your budget and staffing
- Develop a plan for recruiting schools and parent participants
- Adapt program materials, if needed



Phase 4: Planning for Evaluation and Sustainability

- Plan for program monitoring and evaluation
- Implement policy and indicators components of the Healthy Relationships Toolkit
- Plan for sustainability
- Get started!

Figure 1

In addition to these key steps in getting HeaRT up and running, you will engage in these **ongoing activities** throughout the planning phases and as implementation continues:

- Engaging partners
- Convening a Community Advisory Board
- Providing supervision and support for program facilitators through coaching
- Engaging in program evaluation and quality improvement activities
- Engaging in sustainability planning and activities
- Performing annual capacity assessments

This Guide provides a blueprint for communities preparing to implement HeaRT—but it is not one-size-fits-all. Communities vary considerably in terms of their resources, interests, goals, and infrastructure. LHDs or CBOs implementing HeaRT will need to adapt, modify, and fill in gaps during planning to ensure that they can meet the specific needs of their partners, and that the efforts are feasible, acceptable, and sustainable. This guide outlines key activities to get you started.



Phase 1: Understanding the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Model

Ready to get started? Your first step is to familiarize yourself with the HeaRT model.

What you will do in Phase 1:

- Learn about the development and goals of HeaRT
- Get familiar with all seven components of this comprehensive prevention model
- Explore the HeaRT website

WHAT IS THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT?

Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Empowering Teens to Build Safe & Supportive Relationships is a comprehensive model to prevent violence in adolescence developed and evaluated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Healthy Relationships Toolkit aims to promote healthy relationship behaviors and prevent violence before it starts. The model focuses on 11- to 14-year-olds to prevent dating violence, sexual violence, bullying, and other risk behaviors in middle school and across the lifespan. It includes multiple prevention components that focus on individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. These components work together to reinforce and promote respectful, nonviolent dating relationships. CDC encourages communities to adopt all of these prevention components, as the model was developed and evaluated, for maximum impact at the community level.

HeaRT was developed based on two principles:

1. In order to stop violence before it begins, we must work with youth *before* they start dating – which is commonly during early high school.
2. To maximize public health impact, we must provide a comprehensive approach with prevention strategies that address all of the different influences across a young person's environment.

Risk factors are characteristics that increase the likelihood of someone becoming a person who experiences or perpetrates violence.

Protective factors are characteristics that decrease the likelihood someone becoming a person who experiences or perpetrates violence by providing a buffer against risk.

Why was HeaRT created?

- Teen dating violence is a significant and preventable public health issue.
- It requires a coordinated and comprehensive prevention approach.
- The 2021 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that nearly 9.7% of high school students reported sexual violence and 8.5% reported physical violence from a dating partner in the past year.

Why Is the Comprehensive Approach to Prevention So Important?

Comprehensive prevention approaches are those that address risk and protective factors at multiple levels of the social ecology—individual, peer and family, community, and societal—with a set of multisector interventions intended to create a social and physical environment in which harmful behaviors are less likely and healthy behaviors are encouraged and supported across contexts.

Comprehensive approaches are critical to strengthening the effectiveness of violence prevention efforts. While research has identified several school- or family-based programs that reduce teen dating violence, the size of the effects tends to be small. HeaRT is a comprehensive, multi-component prevention model, with the goal of maximizing impact by engaging youth, their peers, parents, educators, and the community in dating violence prevention using school- and family-based training and education, policy, and a social media and youth communications campaign. HeaRT is also unique in the teen dating violence field, as it was designed for use by local health departments. As leaders in the community, local health departments have access to the resources, skills, and partners needed to implement interventions across sectors with the goal of achieving population-level impacts.

Why Does It Focus on Healthy Relationships?

HeaRT's focus on healthy relationships reflects a shift in public health from an emphasis on disease prevention to one on health promotion. CDC's Resource for Action for intimate partner violence prevention, the adult form

of dating violence, highlights the importance of teaching safe and healthy relationship skills as a key strategy for preventing relationship violence in adolescence and adulthood. A healthy-relationships approach to violence prevention also allows for the inclusion of content to address the various risk factors that are associated with dating violence. For example, a healthy relationship is free from violence and other risks, such as substance abuse and sexual risk-taking as well. HeaRT addresses these co-occurring risk behaviors under the umbrella of promoting healthy relationships.

WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT?

The HeaRT comprehensive violence in adolescence prevention model is comprised of seven prevention components. These components (Figure 2) address key risk and protective factors for teen dating violence across the social environments that influence young people, including peers, their families, the school, and the neighborhood. The seven HeaRT components work to reinforce consistent messages about healthy relationships across these contexts; promote complementary skills for youth, parents, and educators; and support these skills and messages with policy efforts.

CDC's Prevention Resources for Action

A Prevention Resource for Action is a select group of strategies based on the best available evidence to prevent or reduce public health problems like violence. They can help improve the health and well-being of communities. A Prevention Resource for Action has three parts.

- **Strategy:** The strategy lays out the direction or actions to achieve the goal of preventing violence.
- **Approach:** The approach includes the specific ways to advance the strategy. This can be accomplished through programs, policies, and practices.
- **Evidence:** The evidence for each of the approaches in preventing violence or its associated risk factors is included as the third component.

Find these Resources for Action and learn more about how to prevent different forms of violence in adolescence here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/violence-prevention/php/resources-for-action>.



Figure 2. Healthy Relationships Toolkit Comprehensive Model to Prevent Violence in Adolescence

The Seven Components of the Healthy Relationships Toolkit

Youth Programs

HeaRT youth programs provide middle school students with the knowledge and social-emotional skills (i.e., emotional expression and management, social skills) they need to expect and engage in healthy, safe relationships when they start dating. CDC developed the 6th- and 7th-grade programs and adopted an existing evidence-based program for 8th grade. Teachers, school staff, or an outside educator can deliver the programs during the school day.

- **Healthy Relationships Toolkit for 6th Graders** provides youth with opportunities to learn and enhance relationship skills in an engaging and non-threatening manner by first exploring what it means to have healthy friendships across seven sessions.
 - **Healthy Relationships Toolkit for 7th Graders** reinforces the information and skills developed in the 6th grade program with seven sessions that provide further information on sexual violence, dating safety, and relationship rights, as well as access to supportive resources.
 - **Safe Dates (8th Grade)** builds upon the skills and knowledge students learn in the 6th- and 7th-grade HeaRT programs with ten sessions focused more heavily on specific attitudes and behaviors related to teen dating violence, including sexual violence.
-

Parent Programs

HeaRT parent programs provide parents and caregivers of 11- to 14-year-olds with positive parenting and effective parent-child communication skills while also helping them engage in a dialogue with their kids about healthy, safe relationships. CDC developed the 6th- and 7th-grade programs and adopted an existing evidence-based program for 8th grade. The programs are delivered by health educators in community-based settings and/or through self-guided activities for parents and teens to complete at home.

- **Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents (6th Grade)** educates parents and caregivers through six group sessions on the issues their children face; improves their ability to communicate with their children about healthy relationships and sexuality; and helps them develop parenting practices that will decrease the likelihood of their children being exposed to unhealthy relationships.
- **Healthy Relationships Toolkit for Parents (7th Grade)** focuses on positive parenting and provides parents and caregivers with strategies and skills needed to communicate with their children about healthy relationships and sexual behaviors through three group sessions and three self-guided, in-home sessions.
- **Families for Safe Dates (8th Grade)** enables parents and their teens to jointly explore different topics regarding teen dating violence through five self-guided, in-home discussions.

The **HeaRT Training for Parents** is a free, self-administered online training for parents and caregivers developed by CDC to ensure that all families have access to core content from the HeaRT parent programs at no cost. Schools and community organizations can promote the training for parents in addition to offering the in-person, facilitated programs or instead of those programs to reach as many families as possible. The online parent training is an additional resource available to communities and families but is not a original component of the HeaRT model, as evaluated by CDC.

i2i Youth Communications Program reinforces messaging from the HeaRT program for all grades and promotes healthy dating behaviors by using teen-led communications strategies and messages to reach youth in their communities.

General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention Tool guides organizations in enhancing local public health capacity needed to implement comprehensive evidence-based and evidence-informed violence prevention strategies across their communities. It uses a collaborative four-step planning and action process developed by CDC.

Healthy Relationships Toolkit: Understanding Teen Dating Violence Prevention Training for Educators provides teachers and other school personnel with critical knowledge about teen dating violence as well as the specific skills, strategies, and resources needed to prevent violence from occurring and to implement prevention activities in their schools.

Interactive Guide to Informing Policy provides an overview of policy approaches to teen dating violence prevention, important considerations for informing policy, guidance for developing a policy plan, and tools and resources related to policy development, implementation, and evaluation.

Using Indicator Data to Inform Teen Dating Violence Prevention: A Guide for Local Health Departments aids LHDs in collecting and using the best available health indicator data to inform community-level teen dating violence prevention activities.

Additional overview information about each component of the HeaRT model is available in **At-A-Glance** documents, linked above and available at <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/heart/content/materials-and-resources>.

THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT

CDC developed the HeaRT website to give you everything you need to kick off and sustain the HeaRT comprehensive model to prevent violence in adolescence in your community. In addition to all of the materials you need to implement each of HeaRT's seven prevention components, the Toolkit website also includes:

Guide to Implementation

Guides LHDs, or other lead CBOs, in planning and successfully implementing the HeaRT model and includes information on capacity-building, staffing needs, building community partnerships, planning a budget, recruiting and engaging participants, tracking outcomes, and sustainability planning.

Coaches' Playbook

Provides guidance for HeaRT Coaches in their role overseeing and supporting youth and parent program facilitators. The guidance includes information on characteristics of good facilitators, training, supervision, and monitoring fidelity.

Online Facilitator Trainings for Youth and Parent Programs

Training for youth and parent program facilitators including interactive exercises, quizzes, video demonstrations featuring experienced youth and parent program facilitators, and homework assignments to reinforce skills and knowledge. The online site also includes an accompanying training manual.

The HeaRT Website—with all of the materials, guidance, and tools you need to implement HeaRT—is available on CDC's VetoViolence website at vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/heart. The website is your one-stop shop for everything HeaRT and will walk you through accessing all of the information and materials you will need to implement the prevention model in your community.

Phase 2: Assessing Capacity to Implement the Healthy Relationships Toolkit and Engaging Partners

Is HeaRT right for your community? Once you are familiar with the model, your next step is to assess whether your community has the interest, readiness, and capacity to carry out a comprehensive violence prevention strategy. In Phase 2, you will complete an exercise to help you assess your community's capacity and develop a plan for addressing any gaps in that capacity. The Healthy Relationships Toolkit provides all of the tools you need to complete the assessment—but you will need to begin engaging some potential partners to help you work through this step. The final step in Phase 2 involves ramping up your engagement efforts with community partners to ensure you will have the support you need throughout the rest of your planning and the start of implementation.

What you will do in Phase 2:

- Identify and engage partners
- Complete the General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention Tool (G-CAT)
- Develop a Community Advisory Board

IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING PARTNERS

HeaRT requires the involvement of many members of the community to be successful. CDC originally designed this model for implementation by LHDs because they often have access to multiple agencies and organizations that are important to, and interested in, preventing dating violence—like schools, law enforcement, health care, social services, community leaders, CBOs, and philanthropic foundations. Many CBOs may also be well-equipped to implement HeaRT. However, LHDs and CBOs cannot implement HeaRT alone. Involving various partners is critical to the success of this model.

How to Identify and Engage Partners

HeaRT uses a participatory process in which LHDs or CBOs identify and engage partners as key resources to better understand the comprehensive needs of the community and align the project goals and processes with those of partner organizations. By applying partners' expertise and knowledge of their own community's strengths and needs, LHDs can build a prevention initiative that addresses the core interests of the community, identifies and engages important populations, secures the community's trust and engagement, complements existing resources, and ensures greater sustainability.

Creating and Maintaining Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships bring together networks of individuals and organizations in a community to improve program outcomes. The partnerships should include all sectors of the community, for example:

- Education
- Businesses
- Local, county, or state government

Building community partnerships is an important step in marketing the HeaRT comprehensive prevention model and creating the base needed to maintain it. Consider how partnerships could benefit HeaRT in reaching parents and youth, what resources and contributions you are seeking from potential partners, and which partners could be most helpful for successful recruitment and implementation. Before starting a partnership, take time to learn about potential partner organizations and their goals to ensure they align with your organization and HeaRT. Take time to build partner relationships, including developing effective messages to solicit the help of partners. Make formal agreements with partners about what they will do, and engage in ongoing communication to check in about how the partnership is working.

When approaching potential partners, use the HearT brochure and At-A-Glance briefs to help convey the purpose and scope of HearT, and identify ways they can contribute!

Steps in developing partnerships:

- Identify needs
- Research potential partners
- Establish criteria
- Initiate a kickoff call
- Be clear of your “ask”
- Formalize the partnership
- Maintain constant communication
- Monitor, track, and evaluate

For more information on Creating Sustainable Partnerships please visit The University of Kansas' Community Tool Box:
<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/creating-and-maintaining-partnerships>

Recruitment Messaging for Partners

Your ongoing efforts to establish partnerships are crucial for successfully implementing HearT. Consider not just who to approach when reaching out to potential collaborators but how best to craft your message. The following tips¹ may help:

- Communicate the value of the program in ways that will resonate with potential partners, convey a clear image of the program, highlight costs and benefits and reasons to participate, identify requirements and expectations, and address typical concerns raised by participants.
- Support consistent messaging in a variety of useful formats, including handouts, presentations, demonstrations, a website, and video. Some promotional resources are available on the HearT website.
- Consider using a memorandum of understanding, an application process for participation, or another means of formalizing expectations of the partnership to create an appropriate level of commitment
- Consider developing a standardized script and flyer for partner recruitment efforts to ensure consistency of messaging across staff and meetings.

The flyer should provide information on HearT's purpose and content, eligibility for participation, benefits of participation, and who to contact for more information.

- You may also want to develop PowerPoint slides describing the program to use during presentations with community members and partners.

The HearT website includes [resources that may be helpful](#) in developing your partner recruitment package, including the At-A-Glance Briefs and Promotional Brochure.

THE GENERAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION TOOL

Once you have identified and begun engaging some potential partners, you can take the next step towards implementation by completing the [General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention Tool \(G-CAT\)](#). The G-CAT is a free online tool that helps health departments, local schools, and partners assess and monitor their capacity for implementing a comprehensive teen dating violence prevention initiative. This tool allows agencies to gather information on organizational- and program-specific capacity, generate personalized capacity assessment reports, and work with partners to determine capacity priorities and develop a web-based action plan for monitoring capacity-building efforts. The G-CAT takes approximately 30 minutes for each partner to complete online.

For more information on the G-CAT, check out the G-CAT At-A-Glance brief on the HearT website or go to the [G-CAT tool](#) online.

Once you complete your assessment, be sure to share your results with your partners. This helps engage them in planning and secures their commitments to HearT moving forward. Do you need additional partners to fill in the gaps in your resources or capacity? Ask your current partners. They may have ideas on additional organizations or individuals who can help you build a strong coalition of champions for HearT.

The G-CAT was designed to be repeated annually, or as needed, to assess changes in capacity over time or provide an opportunity to revisit your capacity building plan.

¹ Tips adapted from: Rochelle, J., Feng, M., Gallagher, H., Murphy, R., Harris, C., Kamdar, D., & Trinidad, G. (2014). *Recruiting Participants for Large-Scale Random Assignments Experiments in School Settings*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International <https://www.sri.com/publication/education-learning-pubs/recruiting-participants-for-large-scale-random-assignment-experiments-in-school-settings>

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

An important part of implementation at the community level involves establishing a Community Advisory Board early on in the process to oversee the development and initial operation of the initiative. A Community Advisory Board (CAB) is comprised of key partners—schools, parents, local youth, community leaders, and organizations—with the resources and knowledge to increase access to, and credibility with, populations of interest and ensure ongoing support for the effort. CABs can help you improve focus on your prevention efforts by leveraging the community's perspective and fostering community buy-in.

CABs are also important because they²:

- Lend credibility and community support;
- Generate ideas to support program and recruitment;
- Create an opportunity to educate the community;
- Provide opportunities for organizations to learn from each other;
- Form a base for membership, fundraising, and other support; and
- Offer personal support to members of the board.

The CAB allows your LHD or CBO to create new linkages or strengthen existing ones between relevant partners and the local, city, or county public health department. During this planning phase, you should identify and mobilize relevant partners to inform activities such as reviewing the youth and parent programs, ensuring buy-in of partnering schools, recruiting facilitators, and managing other challenges you may face when implementing or planning activities. The CAB partnership allows for ongoing feedback and continuous quality improvement during the initiative.

Your organization and the CAB should work closely together to accomplish goals of the initiative, such as:

- Building capacity and readiness;
- Identifying unique characteristics of the population that may impact implementation;
- Recruiting participants; and
- Digesting community response and feedback.

Although it is rare for participants in the youth and parent programs to experience distress, the CAB can assist in the development of programmatic policies and protocols for responding to distressed participants if it occurs, as well as mandated reporting of child maltreatment or other indicators of violence risk as required by state and local law. CABs can help formulate sustainability plans for the model by identifying funding sources. All of these topics are discussed more later in this Guide. Plan on engaging the CAB through regular meetings—on a monthly, quarterly, or bi-annual basis—depending on the needs and activities of your prevention efforts.

The University of Kansas' Community Tool Box provides further guidance, as well as a checklist, for creating and gathering a group to run an initiative: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/organizational-structure/group-to-run-initiative/main>

² Community Tool Box: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/organizational-structure/group-to-run-initiative/main>

Phase 3: Preparing for Implementation

After determining that HeaRT is a good fit for your community, identifying partners and establishing local partnerships, we suggest that you follow the steps outlined below. Engaging in this process will help ensure a successful start to your teen dating violence prevention efforts and leave you well-positioned for the implementation phase.

What you will do in Phase 3:

- Create a logic model
- Create an implementation action plan
- Plan for your budget and staffing
- Develop a plan for recruiting schools and parent participants
- Adapt program materials, if needed

CREATING A LOGIC MODEL

A logic model is a key part of both implementation and evaluation efforts. It ensures that resources and activities are directed in ways that facilitate achieving primary objectives.

A logic model is a pictorial presentation of a “theory of change” or the specific ways in which an effort or initiative is intended to work. It should state the activities that your organization will be implementing and the ways in which those activities are expected to bring about desired change or outcome in the community. A benefit of logic models is that they keep all of the initiative’s participants moving in the same direction by providing a common language and point of reference.

CDC developed an interactive online tool called EvaluACTION that guides organizations through the steps of building a custom logic model based on their specific needs and plans. You can access it for free at: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/evaluation>. We suggest using this tool to assist in the creation of your HeaRT logic model.

Components of a Logic Model³

Logic models include the following components:

- Purpose or mission
- Context, conditions, or assets
- Inputs, resources, or infrastructure
- Activities or prevention approaches
- Outputs
- Effects, results, consequences, outcomes, or impact

Let's illustrate the typical components of a logic model, using examples from a logic model created for the HeaRT demonstration project. HeaRT was developed based on research suggesting that promoting healthy, respectful relationships may prevent teen dating violence. Each component below is followed by examples from the HeaRT logic model. Keep in mind that the examples are not meant to cover every case but are included to give you an idea of the type of information included in each component of a logic model.

³ Adapted from The Community Tool Box

<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main>

Example HearT Logic Model.

Purpose. What motivates the need for change? What issue is HearT trying to address?

- Examples from the HearT logic model:
 - 1 in 10 teens report experiencing physical dating violence
 - Involvement in dating violence is a risk factor for intimate partner violence/sexual violence

Assets. What resources, supports, or benefits already exist for HearT? What resources, supports, or benefits are needed?

- Examples from the HearT logic model:
 - Parents and other caregivers, teachers, “near-peers”
 - Growing national movement to prevent teen dating violence
 - Youth- and family-serving organizations in the community
 - Schools

Inputs. What raw materials will be used to implement HearT? Inputs include human, financial, organization, and community resources available to the work. Inputs can also include restrictions on the program, such as regulations or funding gaps, which are barriers to your objectives.

- Examples from the HearT logic model:
 - Funding
 - Staff—Prevention Lead, Coach, Facilitators, and other team members
 - State, local, community partners—school administrations, state and local health departments, CBOs working with parents

Activities. What will HearT do with its resources to direct the course of change? Any intervention, and logic model, should be guided by a clear assessment of risk and protective factors.

- Examples from the HearT logic model:
 - Develop a General Capacity Assessment for Violence Prevention Tool (G-CAT) for local health departments and their community partners
 - Work with schools to disseminate Training for Educators
 - Develop or adapt the youth and parent programs
 - Develop the i2i youth communications program

Outputs. What products or services were produced or developed as a result of the HearT activities?

- Examples from the HearT logic model:
 - G-CAT distributed to HearT sites for implementation
 - Guidance document created and distributed to sites with steps for creating a planning team and identifying partners to involve
 - i2i youth communications program launched
 - Teachers completed Training for Educators
 - Middle school students received youth programs in 6th-8th grade
 - HearT parent programs implemented with parents

Outcomes. What are the specific changes expected in HearT participants' behavior, knowledge, or skills?

- Examples from the HearT logic model:
 - **Short-term outcomes**
 - Youth have greater knowledge and more positive attitudes and behaviors related to teen dating violence and healthy relationships
 - **Intermediate outcomes**
 - More youth experience healthy, respectful relationships when they start dating
 - **Long-term outcomes**
 - Community norms and beliefs about teen dating violence value healthy, respectful relationships

Impacts. What are the intended or unintended changes occurring in a community (or organization) as a result of HearT?

- Example from the HearT logic model:
 - Decreased incidence of teen dating violence

CREATING AN IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

An implementation action plan details how you intend to start implementing the set of prevention approaches included in the comprehensive HeaRT model. The plan should include a timeline, questions or prompts to help you think through all of the elements needed for successful implementation of HeaRT, and specific goals that you can link to your organization's mission. Creating an action plan not only assists you in addressing the needs of your population, but it also strengthens your organization by supporting your mission. When writing your action plan, try to do the following:

- Clearly state the goals of implementing HeaRT in your community.
- Link these goals to your mission and the missions of partnering organizations.
- Create a realistic timeline.
- Identify responsible parties and dates of completion for each task.

While developing your implementation action plan, you should be prepared to assess and address resource needs and make any needed organizational changes. Check out the [Community Toolbox](#) for some additional help in developing your implementation action plan.

BUDGET AND STAFFING PLANS

You will need to consider the costs of implementing HeaRT before you prepare to roll it out. You may be very familiar with the process of creating a project budget. If not, consider that actual costs may likely vary from anticipated costs. However, you should still itemize required equipment and personnel expenses and draft a budget based on your best estimates.

Table 1 lists necessary materials and items to consider when you are planning the budget for your community. Quantities and estimated costs are provided, when applicable. Materials can be self-printed with printable files provided by CDC. These files can also be taken to a local printer and printed professionally if your budget allows. To estimate supply and equipment expenses, you can use a cost estimator or a similar tool. You may find that you or your partners have some of the costlier items in-house (e.g., laptops, LCD projectors), and it may be more cost-effective to use them instead of purchasing new equipment.

You will also need to consider the cost of staffing. Information to help you create a staffing plan is provided below.

Supplies & Materials

Table 1.

General Office Supplies	Quantity	Estimated Cost
Printer/copier, paper, and ink		
Pens, pencils, tape, easel paper pad, markers for sessions with parents and youth		
Materials for Parent Program Implementation	Quantity	Estimated Cost
Computer (to project slides and play videos for parent program)	1 per site or facilitator	
Projector (to connect to the computer or laptop to display slides and videos)	1 per site or facilitator	
Healthy Relationships Toolkit Parent Program Posters (17 total)	1 set per site or facilitator	Self-print (cost varies)
Parent Facilitator Guides (6th & 7th)	1 per facilitator	Self-print (cost varies)
Parent Handbooks (6th & 7th)	1 per parent	Self-print (cost varies)

Families for Safe Dates (8th) booklets	1 set per family	\$3 per family, print copies available for order
Postage for mailing Families for Safe Dates (8th grade) booklets to families	6 booklets mailed individually to each household	\$3 per family
Incentives, like cash or promotional goods for parent participation		
Child care, if needed, to facilitate parent participation		
Food or refreshments to serve at sessions		
Space rental, if applicable		
Materials for Youth Program Implementation	Quantity	Estimated Cost
Youth Facilitator Guides (6th & 7th)	1 per facilitator	Self-print (cost varies)
Youth Handbooks (6th & 7th)	1 per parent	Self-print (cost varies)
Safe Dates program (8th) CD-ROM	1 per facilitator	\$395 from Hazelden Publishing
Safe Dates Facilitator Guide (8th)	1 per facilitator	Self-print (cost varies)
Safe Dates Student Handouts (8th)	1 per youth	Self-print (cost varies)
Incentives, like prizes or healthy snacks to encourage youth participation		
Producing promotional materials		
Materials for Youth Communications Program Implementation	Quantity	Estimated Cost
Program Facilitator Guide	1 per facilitator	Self-print (cost varies)
Brand Ambassador Handbook	1 per brand ambassador	Self-print (cost varies)
iGuide	1 per youth attending each event	Self-print (cost varies)
Comic book (optional)	1 per youth attending each event	Self-print (cost varies)
Incentives for Brand Ambassadors	3-5 trained youth per year	\$500/brand ambassador (suggested)
Space rentals, for trainings and events		
Food or snacks for events		
Computer/TV and projector for movie events		
Promotional gear and swag		

Staffing

HeaRT was designed to be implemented by a team of skilled individuals employed by the LHD (or lead CBO) or through partner organizations. It is important that staff have experience working with youth and families in the communities you serve. Familiarity with community members is particularly important, as you may need to adjust program delivery to be culturally appropriate and specific to your population.

Table 2 provides an overview of the various roles and an estimated proportion of a full-time employee's time (% FTE) needed to perform the duties. For example, a role that requires .10 FTE is expected to take about 4 hours a week, on average. However, the staffing needs, resources, and options available may vary considerably by community and throughout the year as activities change. Individual staff members may fulfill multiple roles, and there is substantial flexibility in the way these positions can be filled. For example, a Prevention Lead—typically a full-time LHD staff member—might also serve as the Policy and Indicators Lead on the project, with less time devoted to each activity. A HeaRT Coach might also serve as a Program Facilitator. Middle school teachers or existing staff of partner CBOs can also be trained to be Youth or Parent Program Facilitators. Each role and its key responsibilities are summarized below in Table 3.

Table 2. HeaRT Roles and Estimated % Effort Required

Staff Role	Estimated % FTE Quantity Per Week
Prevention Lead	1 FTE
Coach	0.50 FTE
Youth Program Facilitator	1 FTE
Parent Program Facilitator	0.50 FTE
i2i Program Facilitator	0.25 FTE
i2i Brand Ambassador (youth volunteers)	6-8 hrs/month
Policy Lead	0.10 FTE
Community & School Indicators Data Collection & Tracking Lead	0.10 FTE

FTE=full-time employee

Estimating the Total Cost of HeaRT Implementation

Using data from the 4-year, multi-site HeaRT (formerly, Dating Matters) demonstration project, CDC estimated the total cost to communities of implementing the comprehensive prevention model as designed in 10 middle schools within one community. Total costs of implementing HeaRT were relatively stable within sites over time but varied greatly between sites, averaging \$175,452 per year (range = \$130,149 to \$227,604). The average per-student cost of Dating Matters was \$145.40 but also ranged widely (\$20.66 to \$324.65) across sites and years. Variation was largely driven by staffing costs and number of students served.

Implementation costs were lowest when the youth programs were implemented by school staff at no additional cost to the community. This estimate did not account for the more recent availability of the free, online HeaRT Training for Parents (since 2024), which can serve as a no-cost alternative to implementation of the in-person and facilitated HeaRT parent programs.

These estimates can help inform implementation decisions and planning by potential funders, communities, and organizations as they seek to support and implement effective prevention strategies for violence in adolescence.

Luo, F., DeGue, S., & Le, V. D. (2022). Estimating From the Payer Perspective the Implementation Cost of Dating Matters®: A Comprehensive Teen Dating Violence Prevention Model. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(11-12), NP9144–NP9167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520980389>

Table 3. Recommended Staff Roles

Prevention Lead (Estimated 1.0 FTE)		
Prevention leads should have the skills and experience to oversee a comprehensive prevention initiative and engage community partners in teen dating violence prevention.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completes the G-CAT capacity assessment process • Oversees HeaRT at the health department or community-based organization • Recruits and maintains engagement from schools by working with administrators and staff to prepare for implementation • Engages partners • Leads efforts to build capacity (i.e., organizational, program) for implementation • Supervises activities of HeaRT coaches, including hiring facilitators, training, and implementation for youth, parent, and i2i programs • Supervises i2i program facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners with community-based organizations to assist with parent recruitment and delivery of the parent program • Designs and monitors program evaluation; conducts or oversees analyses and quality improvement activities • Secures access to required training and materials • Monitors budget • Coordinates Community Advisory Board • Identifies and secures venue(s) • Plans for sustainability • Implements and oversees work on the Policy and Indicators components of HeaRT 	<p>Required Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HeaRT Training for Educators <p>Recommended Additional Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HeaRT Youth Program Facilitator Training • HeaRT Parent Program Facilitator Training • Guide to Informing Policy
Coach(es) (Estimated 0.50 FTE)		
Coaches should have experience providing health education to youth as well as supervision and support to youth and parent program facilitators.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors completion of online trainings for youth and parent program facilitators • Engages in supplemental in-person training activities with facilitators • Provides supervision and support for youth program facilitators • Provides supervision and support for parent program facilitators • Collects and uses program implementation data, like session logs, for ongoing program improvement • Conducts session observations and fidelity checks to provide ongoing feedback and assistance to facilitators • Coordinates scheduling with schools and community-based organizations for student and parent programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates school or implementation venue access, as needed, for program facilitators • Monitors data collection for program evaluation • Ensures facilitators complete session logs and evaluation measures • Maintains key relationships with partners in schools and community-based organizations implementing the student and parent programs • Participates in the Community Advisory Board 	<p>Required Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HeaRT Training for Educators • HeaRT Youth Program Facilitator Training • HeaRT Parent Program Facilitator Training
Youth Program Facilitator (1.0 FTE)		
Youth program facilitators should have experience and skills working with youth, especially teens, to provide health education and facilitate an engaging open dialogue about difficult topics. Teachers, school staff, or community-based health educators can deliver youth programs in the classroom. FTE estimate assumes that one facilitator working full-time (or part-time equivalents) is needed to implement the 6th- to 8th-grade youth programs per 10 middle schools; however, the actual percent effort needed will vary by the number of classrooms, scheduling logistics, and time of year (e.g., school year vs. summer).		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtains youth facilitator certification (completion of online training plus approval by HeaRT Coach) • Maintains positive relationships with school staff and assists HeaRT Coach with scheduling • Delivers youth programs in the classroom • Clearly and thoroughly explains all concepts covered in each session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a safe and accepting learning environment • Manages group dynamics • Facilitates discussions of session content with youth • Completes session logs within 48 hours of completing a session and gives forms to Coach • Seeks feedback, support, and assistance from Coach to maintain or improve fidelity • Collects program evaluation data 	<p>Required Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HeaRT Training for Educators • HeaRT Youth Program Facilitator Training • Additional training activities and supervision with coach

Parent Program Facilitator (0.5 FTE)

Parent program facilitators should have experience and skills working with parents, especially parents of teens. They should feel comfortable delivering health education and facilitating engaging, open dialogue about difficult topics. Parent programs can be carried out by health department staff or other community-based health educators. FTE estimate assumes five parent-training groups (6th and 7th grade) run per year, with one part-time facilitator responsible for recruitment, retention, and implementation. The actual percent effort required depends on success in parent recruitment and retention efforts and the number of groups conducted.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtains parent facilitator certification (completion of online training plus approval by HeaRT Coach) Works with another facilitator to deliver parent programs in group sessions Clearly and thoroughly explains all concepts covered in each session Creates a safe and accepting learning environment Manages group dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitates discussions of session content with parents Completes session logs within 48 hours of completing a session and gives forms to Coach Seeks feedback, support, and technical assistance (TA) from coach to maintain or improve fidelity Collects program evaluation data 	Required Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HeaRT Training for Educators HeaRT Parent Program Facilitator Training Additional training activities and supervision with coach
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i2i Program Facilitator (Estimated 0.25 FTE)

i2i program facilitators are typically a staff member at the local health department, school, or other community organization who has experience working collaboratively with youth.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trains i2i brand ambassadors Responsible for overseeing the activities of i2i brand ambassadors Works with i2i brand ambassadors to plan and host one kickoff event and at least two additional events per year Ensures that event promotion is incorporated into social media strategy and is developed with the help of i2i ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiates and coordinates all event logistics Seeks new partnerships and manages existing partnerships to support program needs Monitors events and activities for safety and ensures that they run smoothly Collects program evaluation data 	Required Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HeaRT Training for Educators HeaRT Program Facilitator Training: Module 1
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i2i Brand Ambassadors (6-8 hrs/month)

i2i brand ambassadors are high school students selected and trained to implement i2i as volunteers (not employees). Brand ambassadors commit to spending around 6-8 hours per month on i2i activities in exchange for volunteer experience and an incentive or small stipend. For example, in the demonstration project, i2i ambassadors received a \$500 stipend per year. Each community should plan to train and supervise about 3-5 brand ambassadors per year.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with i2i program facilitator to plan, coordinate, and host one kickoff event and at least two additional events Promote events via social media Discuss i2i with youth and generate excitement about program and messages Engage youth in activities that incorporate i2i messaging and branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand out the i2i iGuide during events Help youth sign up for the i2i text message program (if applicable) Show youth the social media pages during events Model healthy relationship skills in peer groups and schools 	Required Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambassador training developed and coordinated by i2i program facilitator
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Policy Lead (Estimated 0.10 FTE)

The policy lead role can be filled by the prevention lead or other staff with relevant expertise.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts inventory of local teen dating violence policies Develops plan to educate about policies in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiates and supports activities through community advisory board and other partnerships to inform policy changes, as allowable for your organization or agency 	Relevant Implementation Guides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guide to Implementation Guide to Informing Policy tool (online at VetoViolence); included Policy Inventory Worksheets
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Community and School Indicators Data Collection and Tracking Lead (Estimated 0.10 FTE)

The indicators data collection and tracking lead role can be filled by the prevention lead or other health department staff with relevant expertise, such as an epidemiologist.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies available data sources for appropriate indicators of teen dating violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accesses and collects data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves capacity to track over time
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Using your budget to secure funding and prepare for hiring staff

Use this guidance on the costs of supplies, materials, and staff to develop an estimated budget for the first year of HeaRT and subsequent years. You may find that costs are lower in later years than in the first year as you re-use materials and supplies, need less initial training time for experienced facilitators, sustain recruitment efforts instead of initiating new ones, receive more in-kind donations from community supporters, and become more efficient at delivery overall. Once you have a budget in place, you can undertake the task of securing funding from your agency, donors, nonprofits, grants, community partners, or elsewhere. Your CAB may be able to help with fundraising efforts.

This is also the time to develop a staffing plan. Determine the number and type of staff you will need. Develop job descriptions. Create a supervisory infrastructure. Assemble any materials or resources needed for training. In addition to the Prevention Lead, one of the key players in your preparations for implementation will be the HeaRT Coach. As described above, the Coach is responsible for supervising and training program facilitators. The Coach may also be responsible for hiring facilitators, which means having a Coach on board early is important. Guidance on hiring facilitators with the right skill sets is included in the Coaches' Playbook.

RECRUITING SCHOOLS AND PARENT PARTICIPANTS

Recruiting and retaining participants in prevention programs can be one of the most challenging and time-consuming aspects of a prevention initiative. In order to implement the primary programmatic components of HeaRT, LHDs or CBOs will need to have access to youth aged 11 to 14 years old in 6th-8th grade and their parents. To increase your access to these populations, consider contacting schools, community leaders, and members of community organizations. Engaging the CAB during this process may provide additional channels for recruitment. Pursuing one or a combination of these avenues will usually result in recommendations of families who might be interested in the program. Table 4 provides some general ideas for marketing HeaRT in your community.

Recruiting Schools

The HeaRT youth programs were designed for delivery to all students in 6th-8th grade during the school day. Schools are directly recruited for participation rather than youth. Begin building relationships with the local school districts early in the process. Keep in mind that school systems begin planning for the next school year before it starts. Reach out to principals and school district officials with information about HeaRT and its advantages as well as the resources needed. At-A-Glance briefs for the youth and parent programs will be helpful when educating schools about HeaRT, as well as information on the Training for Educators. Schools may appreciate having free, online violence prevention training for their teachers.

If you establish a connection with principals first, secure their assistance in solidifying support for HeaRT at the school district level. If your initial relationship is with school district representatives, leverage their enthusiasm for HeaRT to increase buy-in from principals. In some cases, school districts may be in a position to require HeaRT implementation district-wide to comply with state or local policies requiring teen dating violence prevention in schools or as part of a district-wide initiative. Sharing information about the benefits of the HeaRT comprehensive model and the science behind it may help increase enthusiasm of school officials. Once you have secured sufficient support for HeaRT,

contact decision-makers and formalize the partnership with a memorandum of understanding or agreement. Personal relationships are important to schools. Decide who will be the face of HeaRT for each school—the Prevention Lead, the Coach, or a Facilitator—and make sure they visit the school regularly, check in with the staff, provide support and problem-solve when needed, and arrange implementation schedules. Having this relationship with principals and teachers will increase access and sustainability.

In some cases, organizations may wish to implement the HeaRT youth programs outside of schools—in community recreation centers, as part of scouting activities, in faith-based groups, etc. Ideas from the University of Kansas's Community Tool Box might provide some useful suggestions for engaging high-risk youth in community-based prevention activities: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/implement/youth-mentoring/recruit-youth/main>.

The i2i Youth Communications Program will require direct recruitment of high school students as brand ambassadors. Tips for engaging youth in i2i are provided in the i2i Implementation Guide for use by i2i Program Facilitators.

Recruiting Parents

Parents are busy and have many obligations and responsibilities. So recruiting parents to participate in prevention programs can be a challenge! You will have the best success in reaching participants by finding community leaders or organizations that are already in contact with and trusted by parents to help with outreach and recruitment. Parents can also be recruited through schools by sending home invitations with students, advertising at school events, etc. When you reach out to principals and school district officials with information about HeaRT, you can also introduce the parent program to get buy-in and help with recruitment when it comes time for parent recruitment.

You may also need to consider ways to incentivize and facilitate attendance for parents. For instance, parents may have logistical hurdles to overcome before they participate, such as securing child care or transportation. Talk to your Community Advisory Board for ideas on what might help parents in your communities get to group sessions once they are interested. Some ideas include providing monetary incentives, prizes, food, transportation reimbursement, child care, or something else. Partnering with organizations like community recreation centers, where child care or public transportation may already be available, can help.

For more specific information on parent recruitment and retention, you will want to check out [the Coaches' Playbook](#), for supervisors of the youth and parent programs.

IDENTIFYING LOCAL DATA AND RESOURCES

Facilitators of the youth and parent programs should provide participants with information on local resources for support and help. This information will supplement the national resources highlighted in the youth and parent program handbooks. The Prevention Lead and HeaRT Coach should work together to identify and develop handouts with information that can be shared with participants in the first session of each program. These sheets are also helpful should the facilitators encounter youth or parents who are experiencing distress or requesting referrals for help or support. Resource sheets for youth and parents should be tailored to the unique needs of these groups. Local organizations that support or assist victims of violence or that advocate for violence prevention are helpful. In addition, you may include other local resources that address the physical and mental health, housing, safety, financial, educational, and other needs of youth and parents.

Table 4. Ideas for Marketing the Healthy Relationships Toolkit in your Community

Ideas for Marketing the Healthy Relationships Toolkit in Your Community
Presentations at specific events , such as school open houses, health fairs, faith-based services and dinners, Boys & Girls Clubs and scouting events, and town meetings
Advertisements , including public service announcements, on local radio and TV stations as well as print and social media
Word of mouth through community leaders or former participants
Door-to-door strategies (if your organization and staff are well integrated into the community and staff safety has been addressed)
Flyers on mailboxes, in door seals, and on car windows, or (in batches) in neighborhood stores, faith-based organizations, or community centers
School system email or web announcements
Endorsements from key community members, including engaging local leaders with substantial reach via social media

In addition, the 6th Grade parent program incorporates the use of local data on violence and sexual health, when available, to bring the issue home for participants. The Prevention Lead and Coach should identify and provide facilitators with appropriate data for this purpose. [The HeaRT Guide to Using Indicator Data](#) may provide some helpful suggestions of sources for identifying local or state level data that parent program facilitators can refer to when carrying out this program.

GUIDANCE FOR ADAPTING THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT

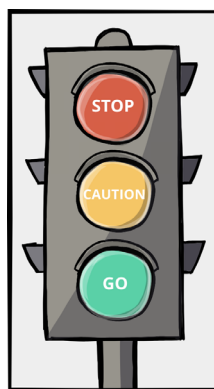
Implementation fidelity refers to the delivery of an intervention as it was designed by the program developers. Fidelity to the implementation model is of critical importance because most evidence-based programs are designed around essential elements—that is, the active ingredients of a prevention approach assumed to be responsible for achieving the intended outcomes.⁴ Essential elements include what content you should deliver, how you should deliver it, and who should deliver it in order to be consistent with the logic and theory of change underlying the intervention design. Changing or eliminating the essential elements of an evidence-based intervention, either intentionally or accidentally, could reduce or eliminate its effectiveness. For that reason, LHDs or CBOs should plan to implement HearT with fidelity to the implementation model—adhering to the core content and applying implementation guidance as recommended—in order to ensure that the various programs and intervention components have their intended effects, whenever possible.

However, evidence-based programs do not always fit the needs of every setting or population. Sometimes adaptations are necessary to better engage and have an impact on unique populations, or to apply the prevention approach in new or different contexts. Your community may need to make adaptations to increase the fit of HearT to your setting and respond to the local needs or constraints of your community. Adaptations to the HearT programs might include content additions, deletions, modifications, or changes to the implementation model or guidance. Such changes may be helpful for a number of reasons, including:

- To increase the relevancy of HearT materials
- To increase participant understanding of the content
- To increase recruitment and retention
- To respond to limited time and resources
- To respond to state and local policies/mandates

Decisions to adapt the HearT component programs should be made carefully, balancing the importance of implementation fidelity, essential elements, and the needs of your community. Engage your CAB in these decisions—they know your community and may have input on whether adaptations are necessary.

To help you during the adaptation process, CDC has created general guidance on adapting evidence-based approaches, *Using Essential Elements to Select, Adapt, and Evaluate Violence Prevention Approaches* (<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/adaptation-guidance>). The guide was developed, with LHDs and CBOs in mind, to support the adaptation decision-making process. Every organization operates differently and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to delivering preventative interventions. This important guide will help you consider the fit of the HearT component programs to your community's needs, think through potential adaptations, and track and evaluate those modifications you implement—and it includes a number of worksheets to walk you through the process. The guide also applies a traffic-light framework to help you determine whether an adaptation supports the essential elements of a program or whether it is an adaptation that compromises program effectiveness. Using the traffic-light framework, you can think of potential adaptations in three categories:



Green Light: These adaptations likely support essential elements and can be utilized without concern to compromising program fidelity.

Yellow Light: These adaptations have an unclear effect on the essential elements and should be utilized cautiously.

Red Light: These adaptations do not support essential elements and should be avoided to maintain the integrity of the program.

In order to support adaptations that maintain program effectiveness, CDC has developed HearT-specific guidance to aid in adapting the CDC-developed and -adapted programs without compromising fidelity (Table 5). This guidance is not exhaustive but provides example Green Light, Yellow Light, and Red Light adaptations for the 6th- and 7th-grade youth and parent programs, and the i2i youth communications program. Use Table 5 as a guide for discussing and considering potential adaptations to HearT programs in your community. Adaptation guidance for Safe Dates, approved by the program developer, is also provided in Table 6.

⁴ See CDC's *Using Essential Elements to Select, Adapt, and Evaluate Violence Prevention Approaches*: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/adaptation-guidance>.

Table 5.

Adaptation Guidance for the Healthy Relationships Toolkit Youth and Parent Programs (6th and 7th Grade) and i2i Youth Communications Program

	Green Light Adaptations
Youth Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include components and activities that incorporate cultural relevance to the local population. • Add/substitute local statistics and information. • Adapt activities to class size (e.g., if the class is too big, split up class activities into groups). • Add role-play scenarios or additional topics to sessions so that youth can practice and have more experience. • Add additional content that is in line with the existing programs, as long as the content does not deviate from the goals or messaging of the programs/sessions. • Include different technology to help teach or enhance the lessons (e.g., SMARTBoards, iPads). • Deliver the programs in a community-based setting or after school instead of during the school day. • Deliver the program(s) to younger or older youth than intended (e.g., deliver 6th-grade program to a group that includes 5th and 7th graders).
Parent Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include components and activities that incorporate cultural relevance to the local population. • Add local statistics and information. • Adapt activities to class size (e.g. if the class is too small, do group activities as a class). • Provide additional incentives for participation, or eliminate incentives. • Engage in alternative methods of following up with parents (e.g., have a group text to remind parents of next session; start a private Facebook group). • Add additional proverbs or posters. • Add additional role-plays. • Deliver the programs to parents with older or younger children (e.g., 5th or 9th grade).
i2i Youth Communications Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customize the i2i brand by adding your community name to the i2i logo. • Tailor an i2i event plan to fit the interests of your community's youth and the resources of community organizations. • Provide content tailored to your community on social media pages. • Provide additional incentives for i2i Brand Ambassadors. • Reduce costs by obtain prizes and incentives for youth from community donors.
	Yellow Light Adaptations
Youth Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the order of sessions or the order of activities within sessions. • Invite guest speakers who provide a presentation on the session content. • Provide alternative activities that maintain the purpose and goals of the original activity (e.g., allowing other performances or products for the play and poster contest). • Modify role-plays or session content to be sensitive to community and cultural teachings.
Parent Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the order of sessions or the order of activities within sessions. • Invite guest speakers who provide a presentation on the session content. • Provide alternative activities that still maintain the purpose and goals of the original activity. • Modify role-plays or session content to be sensitive to community and cultural teachings. • If it is difficult for children to attend session 6 of the 6th grade program, ask parents to complete the parent-child discussion and view the peer pressure video with their children at home after session 5 for discussion in session 6.
i2i Youth Communications Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce or modify the role of community partners in implementation. • Host a virtual i2i event instead of an in-person event. • Host fewer i2i events than recommended. • Eliminate incentives for i2i Brand Ambassadors. • Reduce costs by providing fewer printed materials or “swag” for youth participating in events (e.g., comic books, iGuides, branded prizes). • Eliminate refresher trainings for i2i Ambassadors.

	Red Light Adaptations
Youth Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the length of time of the sessions and program significantly. • Reduce the number of activities and content in a particular session. • Deliver the sessions or session content in a different order. Each session builds upon content from the previous session, and the same is true of session activities. • Eliminate or replace the session activities. • Add content that is not consistent with the goals or messages of HearT (e.g., information on other unrelated health or behavioral topics).
Parent Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the length of time of the sessions and program significantly. • Reduce the number of activities and content in a particular session. • Deliver the sessions or session content in a different order. Each session builds upon content from the previous session, and the same is true of session activities. • Eliminate or replace the session activities. • Add content that is not consistent with the goals or messages of HearT.
i2i Youth Communications Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate i2i Ambassadors from the program model. • Engage i2i Ambassadors who are younger than the recommended age. • Eliminate or reduce training for i2i Ambassadors. • Host i2i social media pages and events without adult supervision.

Table 6.
Adaptation Guidance for Safe Dates (8th Grade)*

SESSION	Green Light Adaptations
Session 1: Defining Caring Relationships	<u>Part 1: Introducing Safe Dates Program to Students</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of passing out Safe Dates handbooks/journals, pass out folders with all of the handouts and blank paper for notes. • Alternatively, provide handouts as you go to ensure students will have them when they are needed.
Session 2: Defining Dating Abuse	<u>Part 1: Ground Rules and Homework</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Session 1 homework in class during Session 1 to ensure all students will have it completed for review in Session 2.
Session 3: Why Do People Abuse	<u>Part 3: Consequences of Dating Abuse</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss handout content as a group instead of passing them out. • Break students up into larger groups and assign fewer consequences (one or two) to each group for discussion. • Explain concepts that can be challenging for middle school students to understand, including “dating” and short-term and long-term consequences. <u>Part 4: Warning Signs of Abuse.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the “red flags” from the poster instead of using the “Dating Abuse Red Flags” handout or asking students to read them aloud.
Session 4: How to Help Friends	<i>No suggestions</i>
Session 5: Helping Friends	<u>Part 3: Being a Friend</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete activity in a large group instead of small groups. • Read handouts 15 and 16 (“Elijah’s Statements” and “Zoey’s Statements”) aloud to the class and have the class brainstorm responses.
Session 6: Overcoming Stereotypes about Males and Females	<u>Part 4: Associations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the free association activity as a group rather than in pairs.

Session 7: How We Feel, How We Deal	<u>Conclusion</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you anticipate students will have trouble completing the Feelings Diary exercise at home, do it in class.
Session 8: Equal Power through Communication	<u>Part 3: Role-Playing Communication Skills</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice Conflict 1 as a group as an example and then divide students into small groups to complete Conflict 2 and Conflict 3. Use student volunteers to act out the three different conflicts in front of the class. Other students can record whether or not they used each of the SAFE communication skills. Implement two conflicts rather than three. If students indicate difficulty with reading the conflict scenarios aloud, the implementer should read them aloud and then have them act out the scenarios.
Session 9: Preventing Dating Sexual Abuse	<u>Part 4: Precautions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read “Dating Tips” aloud and discuss them as a group. Easel paper with the “Dating Tips” written on it in advance would be beneficial. Do a partial scavenger hunt to get the students moving and then discuss the “Dating Tips” as a group.
Session 10: Reviewing the Safe Dates Program	<u>Part 1: Administering the Post-Test (optional)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are not using the post-test, instead use class time to complete the poster contest. <u>Part 3: Describe the Safe Dates Poster Contest</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there is no poster contest flyer, describe the poster contest verbally to the students. <u>Conclusion:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to keep their handouts if they did not receive a handbook during Session 1.
General Adaptations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there is not enough time to review key points from the session at the end, begin the next session with a review of the prior session instead.

*This adaptation guidance was developed for the 2nd Edition of Safe Dates. A 3rd Edition was published in 2021, and this guidance may not align with the revised program.

Phase 4: Planning for Evaluation and Sustainability

In this final phase, you will complete preparations for carrying out the HearT comprehensive model to prevent violence in adolescence by reviewing your goals and objectives and creating a plan to measure them. This is also a good time to kick off your work on the policy and indicators components of HearT. Finally, you will develop a plan to sustain HearT in your community into the future.

What you will do in Phase 4:

- Plan for program monitoring and evaluation
- Implement policy and indicators components of HearT
- Plan for sustainability
- Get started!

PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Evaluation is often an afterthought as an organization is planning for implementation. However, monitoring and evaluation should be a priority from the beginning of implementation planning. Evaluation can be a critical ingredient in the short- and long-term success and sustainability of your prevention efforts by helping you:

● Show Accountability

Your organization is accountable to your participants, community, donors/funders, and the organization itself to deliver the prevention programs as planned and to monitor outcomes. Data can demonstrate your progress and commitment to critical partners.

● Meet Program Objectives and Targets

You want to ensure your programmatic goals are met. For example: Did you deliver HearT to the planned number of schools and families? Did you help parents feel comfortable and confident discussing healthy, safe dating relationships with their children? Did participating teens increase their healthy communication skills and healthy relationship knowledge? Do teens in HearT schools report less exposure to dating and sexual violence over time? Data will tell you if you are accomplishing what you and your partners set out to do.

● Ensure Your Population of Interest Is Reached

Is HearT reaching the youth and parent audiences in your community that you intended? Data can help you determine whether course corrections are needed in your recruitment or messaging strategies.

● Continually Improve

Successful prevention initiatives use data to continually track their successes and make adjustments where needed. Implementation monitoring and evaluation data can help you determine whether changes are needed to the prevention approaches, messaging, partnerships, training, or other components of your implementation plan to continually improve your prevention model and outcomes.

Implementation monitoring and evaluation can take many forms, depending on the purpose of the evaluation. Most evaluations are intended to examine one or more of these topics⁵:

- **Implementation:** Were the prevention activities implemented as originally intended?
- **Effectiveness:** Are your prevention efforts achieving the goals and objectives they were intended to accomplish?
- **Efficiency:** Are your prevention efforts utilizing an appropriate amount of resources, such as budget and staff time, relative to their reach and impact?
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Does the value or benefit of achieving your goals and objectives exceed the cost of producing them?
- **Attribution:** Is progress or improvement on your goals and objectives related to your program or strategy, as opposed to other things that are going on at the same time?

⁵ CDC's Introduction to Program Evaluation for Public Health Programs: A Self-Study Guide. Available at: <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/26245>

Addressing these questions through an effective evaluation plan can help document progress, demonstrate accountability to funders and policymakers, or identify ways to make your prevention efforts work better.

If you used CDC's online tool, EvaluACTION (<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/evaluaction>), to create your logic model earlier in Phase 3, you probably learned a lot already about program evaluation and how to apply it to your work. In addition to the Logic Model Builder, the site also features an interactive Evaluation Plan that allows users to create customized tools for their organizations to use. EvaluACTION walks users through the evaluation process (i.e., planning and conducting program evaluation) and helps identify potential roadblocks.

Things to consider when you are planning your evaluation:

- The purpose of your program evaluation
 - To assess changes in outcomes?
 - To identify areas for program improvement?
- Who will be responsible for collecting the process and performance measures
- Who will be responsible for compiling the data
- Who will be responsible for analyzing the results
- Costs associated with your program evaluation plan
- Impact of data collection on your implementation timeline. (For example, any pre-test data needs to be collected before sessions with parent and youth begin.)

Do you need to obtain informed consent?

Informed consent is required in research with human participants and involves fully informing participants about the risks, benefits, and procedures of research participation to ensure they are making an informed decision to participate. If your community decides to conduct research (e.g., using surveys, interviews, and observations with participants to assess program effectiveness or answer other empirical research questions), obtaining informed consent may be necessary. However, program evaluation conducted solely for the purposes of program improvement is not typically considered "research" and may not

require informed consent. It is best to check with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or other entity overseeing research in your community organization or school system for guidance on the use of informed consent, as well as the potential need for IRB review and approval.

Program Evaluation Measures

There are two types of measures most relevant to evaluating HeART: process evaluation and outcome evaluation measures. Process evaluation measures focus on the implementation and delivery of a program, including the reach, quality, or fidelity of implementation, satisfaction, and barriers to implementation. These measures can help an evaluator understand what was implemented, how it was implemented, and areas for program improvement. Outcome evaluation measures focus on the program's effectiveness and the actual changes that resulted from prevention activities, such as participant knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors. These measures tell an evaluator whether and how a program is impacting the outcomes of interest and, when combined with a strong research design, whether it is an effective prevention strategy.

The specific measures included in your evaluation should depend on the purpose and aims of your program evaluation as identified in the planning stages of the evaluation process. An outcome evaluation of HeART implementation might assess, for example, teen dating violence perpetration and victimization; youth attitudes and relationship skills; parental self-efficacy to discuss dating violence with their teens; or self-reported quality of parent-child discussions regarding dating violence or sexual health.

The HeART Guide to Program Evaluation (<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/sites/default/files/heart-program-evaluation-guide-508.pdf>) provides information, guidance, and suggestions to conduct a successful program evaluation of the HeART model in your community. It includes recommended process and outcome measures, guidance for data collection and analysis, and suggestions for reporting findings to your partners or funders. The Guide to Program Evaluation focuses on evaluation of the youth programs. However, below you will also find sample outcome measures for the parent programs.

SAMPLE OUTCOME MEASURES FOR PARENTS

Parent-Child Relationship Quality

[Items from the Revised Parent-Adolescent Communication Form of the Pittsburgh Youth Study]

Regarding your middle school-aged child, how often...

- Can you discuss your beliefs with your child without feeling restrained or embarrassed?
- Is your child a good listener?
- Are you very satisfied with how you and your child talk together?
- Does your child try to understand your point of view?
- Are there things you avoid discussing with your child?
- Do you discuss child-related problems with your child?
- Does your child insult you when they are angry with you?
- Do you think you can tell your child how you really feel about things?
- Does your child tell you about their personal problems?
- Does your child keep their feelings to themselves rather than talk about them with you?
- Does your child hide being angry?
- Do you encourage your child to think about things and talk about them so that they can establish their own opinion?
- If your child is upset, is it difficult for you to figure out what they are feeling?
- Does your child let things pile up without talking or dealing with them until they are more than you and they can handle?
- Does your child let you know what is bothering them?
- Are there certain topics which you do not allow your child to discuss with you?
- Does your child admit mistakes without trying to hide anything?
- Can your child have their say even if you disagree?
- Do you and your child come to a solution when you talk about a problem?

Response Options: (1) Almost Never, (2) Once in a While, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often, (5) Almost Always

Parenting Behaviors

[Items from the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire-Short Form^{4,5}]

The following are a number of statements about your family. Please rate each item as to how often it TYPICALLY occurs in your home.

1. You let your child know when they are doing a good job with something.
2. You threaten to punish your child and then do not actually punish them.
3. Your child fails to leave a note or to let you know where they are going.
4. Your child talks you out of being punished after they have done something wrong.
5. Your child stays out in the evening after the time they are supposed to be home.
6. You compliment your child after they have done something well.
7. You praise your child if they behave well.
8. Your child is out with friends you don't know.
9. You let your child out of a punishment early (like lift restrictions earlier than you originally said).

Response Options: (1) Never, (2) Almost Never, (3) Sometimes, (4) Often, (5) Always

Teen Dating Violence Exposure

[Adapted from the evaluation of Families for Safe Dates⁶]

These next questions are about dating abuse as it relates to your middle school child.

1. How confident are you that you could recognize warning signs that your middle school child was being abused by a dating partner?
2. How confident are you that you could recognize warning signs that your middle school child was abusing a dating partner?

Response Options: (1) Very confident, (2) Somewhat confident, (3) Not very confident, (4) Not at all confident

3. In your opinion, how likely is it that your middle school child could become a victim of dating abuse?

Response Options: (1) Very likely, (2) Somewhat likely, (3) Not very likely, (4) Not at all likely; (5) Teen has already been a victim

4. In your opinion, how likely is it that your middle school child could abuse someone they are dating?

Response Options: (1) Very likely, (2) Somewhat likely, (3) Not very likely, (4) Not at all likely; (5) Teen has already been an abuser

⁴ Frick, P. J. (1991). *Alabama parenting questionnaire*. University of Alabama: Author.

⁵ Elgar, F. J., Waschbusch, D. A., Dadds, M. R., & Sigvaldason, N. (2007). Development and validation of a short form of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 16(2), 243-259.

⁶ Foshee, V. A., Reyes, H. L. M., Ennett, S. T., Cance, J. D., Bauman, K. E., & Bowling, J. M. (2012). Assessing the effects of Families for Safe Dates, a family-based teen dating abuse prevention program. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 51(4), 349-356.

Parental Beliefs about Teen Dating Relationships

[Adapted from the evaluation of Families for Safe Dates⁶]

The next questions are about your beliefs related to your middle school child's dating, or your their dating when they begin dating. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- You believe that you should not get involved at all in your middle school child's dating. Getting involved can mean anything from talking to your child about dating to deciding who your child can date, where they can go on dates, etc.
- You believe it is important to provide your middle school child with guidance on dating.
- You want to stay out of issues related to your middle school child's dating. Issues related to dating can be anything that has to do with your child's dating.
- You believe it is important to set rules for your middle school child about dating.

Response Options: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Somewhat Agree, (3) Somewhat Disagree, (4) Strongly Disagree

INFORMING POLICY AND USING INDICATORS DATA TO INFORM AND ADVANCE VIOLENCE PREVENTION

As you learned in Phase 1, there are two components of HearT that were designed to be used by the LHD to create community-level change that supports and informs the HearT model.

[The Interactive Guide to Informing Policy](#) provides an overview of policy approaches to teen dating violence prevention, important considerations for informing policy, guidance for developing a policy plan, and tools and resources for supporting policy development, implementation, and evaluation.

[Using Indicator Data to Inform Teen Dating Violence Prevention: A Guide for Local Health Departments](#) aids LHDs in collecting and using the best available health indicator data to inform community-level teen dating violence prevention activities.

Implementing these guides will help you create and enact your evaluation planning. Indicator data can be used to identify and track areas of need in the community and to examine progress on key outcomes over time. The Interactive Guide to Policy will help you identify relevant policies or gaps in your community and track policy development, implementation, and evaluation. If you haven't already identified staff to lead these activities, now is a good time. You can start identifying all of the ways that these tools can inform and advance your efforts to prevent HearT—and demonstrate your successes.

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

After you establish a logic model, you are ready to address sustainability planning. Sustainability, in this context, is

the ability to maintain programming and its benefits over time. Although addressed last in this Guide, the core components of sustainability planning should be a key part of your implementation planning from the start. Thus, many of the activities addressed in Phase 2 have already laid the groundwork for achieving sustainability.

Three types of capacity are critical to sustainability: leadership, programmatic, and adaptive capacity.

Leadership Capacity: Leadership capacity that is visionary, strategic, inclusive, decisive, motivational, and accountable is critical to a program's sustainability. Your program leadership should project a clear mission and vision to both staff and the community and make decisions anchored in cost-effectiveness. Work with your staff and partners to develop a mission and vision statement for HearT in your community. During implementation, this helps everyone work together and avoid deviating from the mission. As a leader in the HearT model, your strong leadership will motivate others to get behind your cause, and your decisive action when faced with a challenge will greatly benefit program sustainability. Strong leadership for HearT should be evident both within your organization and in external communications to community members and partners.

Programmatic Capacity: Programmatic capacity involves having the knowledge, experience, and tools

to not just get the job done but to deliver high-quality services. You should have enough staff and the staff should not only be knowledgeable and skilled, but also passionate about their work. You should also have adequate facilities to run the program efficiently.

Adaptive Capacity: Adaptive capacity is your organization's ability to react to internal and external changes and challenges. Financial adaptability is crucial. Long-term funding is often tenuous, which makes it important to maintain financial stability and be able to predict how funding changes will affect programming. Financial adaptability also means tracking funding trends and making sure to gather evaluation data that will address these trends. For example, if positive youth development is a current funding trend, you could track outcomes related to that. The ability to adapt to the fiscal environment is key to sustainability.

Sustainability planning for the Healthy Relationships Toolkit involves seven core activities:

- Strategic planning
- Community support
- Financial stability
- Partnerships
- Organizational capacity
- Evaluation
- Communication

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning uses processes to guide your program's direction, goals, and strategies. Without long-term vision and goals, programs find themselves reacting to day-to-day demands. Strategic planning ensures that HeaRT is aligned to both your organizational (e.g., LHD, CBO) and external environments. In addition to engaging in HeaRT-specific strategic planning, it is important to think about being involved in the strategic planning efforts of schools, partner organizations, and the larger organization in which HeaRT is housed (e.g., LHD, CBO)—working to ensure that HeaRT is a part of their strategic vision and planning as well.

Action steps:

- Conduct programmatic strategic planning in line with your larger organization and external partners to ensure buy-in to your program goals and direction.
- Ensure that any implementation plan outlines clear roles and responsibilities for program staff and other partners.
- Make sure to maintain communication among partners and staff during the strategic planning process. This allows the free flow of ideas and provides an opportunity for members at all levels of the program to talk about what is, and is not, working.
- Use your strategic plan to guide fiscal management decisions that affect your program's immediate and future needs.
- Regularly assess and plan for sustainability as part of your strategic planning activities. Consider how you will be funding implementation going forward.

Strategic Planning Resources:

- [Creating Effective Strategies, The Prevention Institute](#)
- [Strategic Planning Guide for LHDs, NACCHO](#)
- [Developing a Strategic Plan, Community Tool Box](#)

Community Support

Community support entails having a supportive internal and external climate for your program. As noted in Phase 2, building and sustaining community support must start early, while still in the initial phases of implementation planning. When you have community support, people within your organization, as well as partners and community members, value and support your work. The overall economic and political climate of your community will affect your ability to ensure program sustainability. Programs that operate within schools, like HeaRT, may be influenced by the decisions and policies of school boards, county agencies, and the state legislature. Thus, it is important to have program champions outside your organization to ensure you have someone on your side who can articulate the importance of your work, should you need that support. Champions get resources and support outside of the programs. Implementation can also be impacted by policies within your community; it is important for organizations to understand the policies which affect their issues. For example, communities should know if teen dating violence prevention education is mandated in public schools. The Interactive Guide to Informing Policy will help you identify relevant policies in your community.

Action steps:

- Conduct an analysis to assess who your current partners and program champions are and to identify any additional partners or champions your program might still need to cultivate. Consider conducting this analysis with your CAB to ensure diversity and adequate representation from partners and the community. The CAB can provide ongoing input regarding the community climate for teen dating violence prevention.
- Increase partner buy-in through outreach and education.
- Conduct a policy analysis on relevant policies to better understand how they may affect your work on HeaRT.
- Craft talking points to further engage community support.

Community Support Resources:

- [Identifying and Analyzing Partners and Their Interests, Community Tool Box](#)
- [Increasing Participation and Membership, Community Toolbox](#)
- [Media Advocacy, the Prevention Institute](#)
- [Influencing Policy Development, Community Tool Box](#)

Financial Stability

The most important thing to consider when thinking about financial stability is having a plan in the first place. A funding plan is like a strategic plan—but for how you will fund your program. It is a good idea to revisit your funding plan once a year, to assess how current funding is supporting your programming, what gaps in funding exist, and what funding you plan on trying to obtain in the coming year, two years from now, and in the future. Planning for financial sustainability should be strategic and address both the long-term and short-term needs of your program, and will need to adjust to changes in community priorities and goals as they occur. For example, when a recession hits, funding for programs like HeaRT may be lower. Consider and plan for potential decreases in public health funding. Alternatively, as teen dating violence prevention becomes a more widely recognized issue, more funding may become available. The ability to remain financially nimble contributes positively to sustainability. Additionally, within your funding plan, it is important to grow a diverse funding base (e.g., public and private grants) and ensure that stable funding sources remain available.

Action steps:

- Develop a funding plan. Be sure to include short- and long-term goals for building a diverse funding portfolio. Construct your funding plan so that it can easily adapt to trends, new funding opportunities, and unanticipated shortfalls in funding that sometimes happen. Stay on top of current funding trends by making sure you are connected to the field through relevant organizational newsletters or website.
- Explore different funding opportunities, such as federal and state grants, local community grants, foundations, individual business donors, fundraising events, and fees for service. For example, your organization could start providing trainings on teen dating violence to other community organizations and groups, and charging for them.
- Ask for in-kind donations when possible.
- Identify and grow partnerships ahead of funding opportunities. This can be especially helpful when responding to funding trends that you may not entirely match up with, but a partner might. Consider how your organizations can work together.
- Reduce program costs. Identify which parts of your program are necessary and which parts are bells and whistles so that if cost reduction becomes necessary, you will be prepared.
- Avoid chasing after dollars that do not support your core mission. Sticking to your mission contributes to the original values of your program and, ultimately, your sustainability.

Partnerships

Partnerships with other organizations and within your community contribute to sustainability by connecting your program to resources or expertise and advocating on behalf of your program or cause. Partners can also help refer schools and parents to your programs. Partnerships should reach across sectors (e.g., public health, education, criminal justice) as well as public and private organizations. You will be working with schools as part of HeaRT but also consider ways to reach out to and involve non-traditional partners as well, like faith-based organizations, local businesses, and law enforcement. Sharing the HeaRT model with partners is critical to sustainability. Of course, maintaining partnerships can be challenging. Partnerships must be both intentional and nurtured over time. Engaging partners in your CAB is a great way to keep them involved consistently, maintain communication, and help them understand the value of your work and become champions for HeaRT.

Action steps:

- Conduct a partnership analysis. Who are your partners and what partnerships do you want to pursue?
- Identify clear goals for each partnership.
- Develop plans for communicating with partners.
- Be mindful of leadership transitions. Without strong communication channels, partnerships can falter during transitions.
- Involve partners in planning process.
- Work with partners to engage partners.
- Use partnerships to foster community involvement.
- Share success stories with partners to keep them excited and further enable them to work with the community on your behalf.

Organizational Capacity

Organizational capacity is having the internal support, technical capacity, expertise, and resources you need to effectively manage HeaRT. This includes having a well-trained, stable, and capable staff; adequate resources; logical organizational structure; and clear policies and processes. Efforts to lower turnover rates and ensure your staff members have all the resources (i.e., materials, tools), training, and ongoing professional development they need helps them to succeed in their roles—and, thus, helps HeaRT succeed. Having capable staff also means determining the best strategy for hiring facilitators in the first place. Will you use contractor staff, health department staff, or teaching staff? What is the capacity of these individuals and how much capacity-building will you need to do with them? Which choice is more financially sound?

You also need to ensure staff have adequate time and resources to help you implement your sustainability plans. Ensuring sustainability can take substantial amounts of staff time and resources (e.g., writing grants, attending fundraising events, or communicating with partners and the media), and it is important to factor these investments in staff work plans and budgets. Additionally, having organizational structures, policies, and processes that are clear and well-managed ensures that the capable program staff you have can do their jobs efficiently and easily.

Action steps:

- Make sure the stated mission of your efforts clearly aligns with the mission of your larger organization. Without alignment, organizational support and capacity—financial or otherwise—may be limited.
- Include HeaRT within the larger organization by identifying opportunities to share staff and physical resources across programs or departments.
- Ensure ongoing training and development opportunities for staff.
- Work to reduce staff turnover rates. Staff turnover makes it difficult to provide consistent, high-quality services. Listen to your staff and make sure they have everything they need to do their jobs well.
- Ensure that your program's policies and processes are clear, and that they are working for all staff.

Organizational Capacity Resources:

- [Organizational Structure: An Overview, Community Tool Box](#)
- [Improving Organizational Management and Development, Community Tool Box](#)
- [Group Facilitation and Problem-Solving, Community Tool Box](#)

Evaluation

Effective and continuous evaluation is critical to ensuring program sustainability. Evaluation ensures that your program is reaching its goals and achieving its intended outcomes. Evaluation also helps to ensure that your program is being implemented with fidelity. Demonstrating that HeaRT is relevant, needed, and effective is key to ensuring funding and sustainability. Evaluation data can also help you make changes to your organizational structure or the prevention model that keep it relevant, improve program quality, and increase your ability to achieve the intended outcomes. Of course, when making any modifications to the programs, be sure to consider the guidance on program adaptation below to ensure that any changes made are not negatively impacting fidelity to the program's core content or effectiveness.

Action steps:

- Develop a comprehensive evaluation plan and engage staff and partners to see it through.
- Develop and maintain a logic model that is tailored to your community.
- Regularly collect or review data on your population of interest and teen dating violence in your community to advocate for the need for and effectiveness of your program. The Guide to Using Indicator Data can help you identify and use publicly available data for this purpose.
- Collect and use implementation data to ensure the ongoing quality, fidelity, and reach of HeaRT prevention components and activities.
- Share relevant data with staff, partners, and stakeholders—even at the state and national level.
- Regularly review evaluation data to determine the need for changes.
- Include evaluation planning and activities as part of your strategic planning efforts.

Evaluation Resources:

- [Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan, CDC](#)
- [EvalAction: Putting Evaluation to Work](#)

Communication

Communication is how you share your successes, maintain partnerships, and how you keep teen dating violence prevention in the spotlight. This component of sustainability affects almost all the others. Without good communication, you cannot share the work you are doing and link it to issues important to your community. Maintain clear communication both internally, within your program and organization, but and externally.

Action steps:

- Develop an external communication and marketing plan that conveys the goals, successes, and necessity of your program to a variety of audiences (e.g., funders, partners, the media).
- Develop talking points about your work on HeaRT. Tailor your talking points and communication to each audience by using different forms of communication and tweaking your message. For example, you will market to and communicate with students very differently than you do with parents.
- Use consistent messaging and logos to “brand” your efforts. See the HeaRT website for logos and other branded materials to use in your communications.
- Train and nurture staff and partners as spokespeople for HeaRT in your community.
- Develop an internal communication plan to determine who needs to know what and when. Keep organizational leadership aware of your progress and successes.
- Use social media to reach different audiences with your messages and success stories.
- Maintain contact with key media contacts.
- Document and celebrate successes. Include frontline staff—like program facilitators—in celebrations to keep morale and excitement high.

YOU'RE READY TO IMPLEMENT THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TOOLKIT!

Congratulations! You have worked through all four phases of this Guide and are well-prepared to implement the HeaRT comprehensive model to prevent violence in adolescence in your community. Let's review some of your key accomplishments so far.

You have:

- Learned about the HeaRT model and the importance of comprehensive prevention
- Engaged community partners with an interest in preventing teen dating violence
- Assessed your community's capacity for implementing HeaRT and developed a plan to address gaps
- Created an Implementation Action Plan
- Established a Community Advisory Board
- Planned your budget and secured start-up funding and resources
- Engaged with a Community Advisory Board in planning for sustainability
- Planned for Program Evaluation
- Obtained implementation manuals and materials
- Adapted program materials, if needed
- Created a HeaRT Logic Model
- Developed an Evaluation Plan
- Started hiring and training key staff, including a HeaRT Coach
- Started engaging with schools and community organizations as venues for and partners in implementation

If you have not done so already, your next step should be to join the HeaRT listserve to stay up to date on the latest news about the Healthy Relationships Toolkit, including new resources, webinars, and opportunities to connect with other HeaRT communities.

As you continue with the day-to-day tasks and triumphs of implementation, the following items can help keep you grounded and on track towards your goals:

- HeaRT Logic Model
- Implementation Action Plan and Timeline
- Evaluation and Sustainability Plans
- Community Advisory Board
- Success Stories

Consider marking your calendar now with the goal of revisiting and updating these plans, reinforcing these relationships, and documenting your successes at regular intervals. Collecting success stories—and sharing them with your partners—will also support sustainability and help include HeaRT in your community.

Implementing a comprehensive violence prevention model, like HeaRT, is not easy. It takes initiative, drive, commitment, and a lot of community support. Give yourself a huge pat on the back for making it through the implementation planning process so far and for preparing your community to improve health, reduce violence, and ensure a lifetime of healthy relationships for youth and families.

LET'S GET STARTED!

