Building Bridges for Adolescent Sexual Health Through State-Local Collaboration

Maritza Valenzuela, MPH, CHES, Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs; Gretchen Weiss, MPH, National Association of County and City Health Officials

Issue

In this issue of perspectives, the editors discuss the role of health education, partnerships, and collaboration in improving adolescent sexual health. The authors highlight the importance of building consensus around shared priorities and strategies, and the role of technology in enhancing collaboration and communication. The issue emphasizes the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of initiatives to improve outcomes.

Project Description

The Building Bridges Project is a collaboration between AMCHP and NACCHO supported by funding from CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) to help build and enhance collaborative relationships among states and local public health and education agencies and their partners to support the adoption and implementation of evidence-based programs, policies, and practices that can improve adolescent sexual health outcomes.

Steps to Collaboration

1. Developing the Building Bridges Concept

In March 2012, AMCHP and NACCHO developed the concept to bring together a group of states and local health and education agencies to address adolescent sexual health issues. The goal was to create a collaborative environment where experts could share their knowledge and experiences, and develop strategies to improve adolescent sexual health outcomes.

2. Establishing Core Partner Buy-in

After developing the concept, AMCHP and NACCHO worked to establish buy-in from core partners who were interested in collaborating to improve adolescent sexual health outcomes. This involved holding introductory meetings with key partners, engaging in discussions about shared goals and priorities, and gaining commitment to the project.

3. Launching the Project

The project was launched in May 2012 with a meeting in Austin, Texas, where AMCHP and NACCHO project staff facilitated a workshop to introduce the project to core partners and gather feedback. The workshop included discussions about the project's goals, strategies, and mechanisms for collaboration.

4. Planning for the Virtual Meeting

AMCHP and NACCHO were responsible for planning the virtual meeting, which included coordinating logistics, developing an agenda, and facilitating the meeting. The meeting was designed to bring together core partners and provide opportunities for them to share their experiences and learn from each other.

Key Accomplishments

- Brought together key health and education agency partners to focus specifically on improving health and educational outcomes for adolescents
- Established collaboration to the Building Bridges Project from each of the core partner agencies
- Supported the development of new curricula and materials, such as digital games and apps
- Used this information to develop a collective vision to drive the project
- Secured support for the Building Bridges project from a national resource, partner, and advocate for state public health leaders
- Built consensus among a set of activities that aligned with the priorities of the core partners, as well as AMCHP and NACCHO project staff

Lessons Learned & Keys to Success

- Additional comments
- The presence of an efficient and effective facilitator was critical to the success of the project
- The Building Bridges process greatly benefited from the existing relationship between AMCHP and NACCHO

Organization Information

Maritza Valenzuela, MPH, CHES Program Manager, Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs

Gretchen Weiss, MPH, Interim National Director, National Association of County and City Health Officials

NACCHO, AMCHP, and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) are collaborating to develop the Building Bridges Project for Adolescent Sexual Health Through State-Local Collaboration. This collaboration will build and enhance collaborative relationships among states and local public health and education agencies and their partners to support the adoption and implementation of evidence-based programs, policies, and practices that can improve adolescent sexual health outcomes.

Project Setting

The project setting includes states and local public health and education agencies interested in improving adolescent sexual health outcomes. The project is supported by funding from CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) and involves collaboration among AMCHP and NACCHO.

Steps to Collaboration (cont’d)

4. Planning for the In-person Meeting

AMCHP and NACCHO were responsible for planning the in-person meeting, which included coordinating logistics, developing an agenda, and facilitating the meeting. The meeting was designed to bring together core partners and provide opportunities for them to share their experiences and learn from each other.

Key Accomplishments

- Brought together key health and education agency partners to focus specifically on improving health and educational outcomes for adolescents
- Established collaboration to the Building Bridges Project from each of the core partner agencies
- Supported the development of new curricula and materials, such as digital games and apps
- Used this information to develop a collective vision to drive the project
- Secured support for the Building Bridges project from a national resource, partner, and advocate for state public health leaders
- Built consensus among a set of activities that aligned with the priorities of the core partners, as well as AMCHP and NACCHO project staff

Lessons Learned & Keys to Success

- Key accomplishments:
  - "Developing a collective vision to drive the project was great to have the [DASH] project officers present to ensure everyone was on the same page, but also provided an opportunity to maintain contact with partners and maintain relationships.

- Lessons Learned:
  - Use of the facilitation methods provided great opportunities to learn from each other.

- Additional comments:
  - The presence of an efficient and effective facilitator was critical to the success of the project.