

El Camino

How to Implement a Goal-Setting Sexual Health Promotion Curriculum in a Virtual Setting

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need to tailor many social programs—including sexual health programs for adolescents—to be implemented in virtual settings. Even in 2022, many schools are pivoting back and forth between in-person and virtual classes. Child Trends and its implementation partners at Identity, Inc gained experience with virtually implementing the El Camino goal-setting sexual health promotion curriculum in high schools in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Given the uncertainty of the post-pandemic world, it is important that facilitators and administrators of sexual health promotion curricula have the flexibility for virtual implementation to ensure that youth receive the education they need to promote their sexual health. While Child Trends previously [published lessons learned from adapting the program and implementing it virtually](#), this tip sheet presents those lessons in an easy-to-use table format to allow program facilitators and implementation staff to easily access information while implementing a sexual health promotion curriculum.

Recommendations and Tips for Virtually Implementing Sexual Health Curricula

Recommendations	Tips for Implementation
Plan for virtual implementation to take more time than in-person implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Plan for implementation to take 10 to 15 minutes longer than the originally allotted time due to the need to present materials via PowerPoint and incorporate features such as reaction emojis and the chat box. ★ Consider that time may need to be spent engaging youth early in the lesson to ground them in the curriculum and to wait for late comers to join. ★ Work with the program developer to prioritize activities, talking points, and discussion questions to ensure fidelity to the curriculum if you are short on time.
Have more than one facilitator to alleviate technical challenges with virtual implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Plan to have at least two facilitators implement: One facilitator can deliver the curriculum while the other monitors technological needs. ★ The facilitator who monitors technological needs can implement virtual features and troubleshoot any technological issues that arise without major interruption or time delays to the lessons. ★ Consider that implementing virtual programs in school settings may also require more than one facilitator to satisfy online security and student privacy requirements.* <p>*Note: some school districts require that each breakout room has an adult staff member, so breakout groups may be limited to the number of facilitators on a call.</p>

¹ Valerie Martinez and Bianca Faccio authored this tip sheet, which is based on findings and content from the following brief: Parekh, J., McClay, A., Faccio, B., Gates, C., Garcia, J., Coryell, A., & Manlove, J. (2021). Adapting an In-person Sexual Health Program for a Virtual Setting. Child Trends. Available at: <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/adapting-an-in-person-sexual-health-program-for-a-virtual-setting>

Recommendations	Tips for Implementation
<p>Dedicate time, effort, and creativity to build adequate rapport and relationships between facilitators and youth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Conduct regular check-ins to connect with youth; this may encourage more consistent attendance and greater participation in the next lesson. ★ Check in with participants as they join the lesson, validate their answers to prompts, and thank them for participating. ★ Send participants direct chats or a text immediately following a lesson to thank them for their participation. ★ Conduct individual check-in calls and send text messages to follow up on youth comments or observations from the lesson.
<p>Consider that students' privacy may be more limited virtually because students are at home around family or in public settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Be welcoming and accommodating of challenges. ★ Do not assume that students' environments are all the same. ★ Do not require the use of video and measure engagement based on youth responses to the material. ★ Employ trigger warnings before any images or content that might make students uncomfortable. ★ Give youth time to put headphones on, adjust their screens, or move to a different location. ★ Promote sexual health inquiries by providing cell phone numbers and/or email addresses to youth, using an anonymous virtual question box via Google Forms, and by being the last to log off after each session in case youth want to ask questions.
<p>Plan to spend more effort engaging youth during virtual programming than during in-person implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Consider that, in a virtual setting, facilitators may miss bodily cues indicating that youth want to participate (or not). ★ Consider that the added requirement of having to mute or unmute on Zoom takes time and may lead to fewer youth participating. ★ Engage youth by beginning each session with an icebreaker or grounding exercise, using visuals and PowerPoint presentations to present detailed/technical material, and leveraging features like chat boxes or Zoom reactions to keep youth engaged throughout the lesson. ★ Nonverbally engage youth who are less likely to speak or who have their cameras turned off—for example, via chat box or reactions. ★ If youth are not responding during periods of silence, ask whether they are unclear about the lesson content to aid in lesson engagement and provide helpful information for implementation.

More About the El Camino Sexual Health Promotion Curriculum

El Camino is a goal-setting sexual health promotion curriculum that is available in both English and Spanish and targeted toward Latino youth. El Camino is based in Positive Youth Development and encourages youth to set goals, make informed sexual and reproductive health choices, and have healthy relationships. [Preliminary research](#) on El Camino's in-person implementation suggests that youth across seven cities responded well to the curriculum and that participation led to changes in their sexual health attitudes and knowledge.²

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² Before implementing the curriculum in a virtual setting, Child Trends adapted the El Camino program. This required an iterative approach that prompted changes to the curriculum's implementation instructions. Additional information about El Camino and links to the English- and Spanish-language curriculum materials (including more detailed virtual adaptation instructions) can be [found here](#).