



## A Guide to Evidence-Based Programs for Community College Stakeholders

Welcome back to the Community College Health Study newsletter! As part of this newsletter, you're receiving the inside scoop on the latest data and updates. We'll be sending regular updates, so stay tuned.

In [previous newsletters](#), we have highlighted the need for evidence-based programming to promote healthy decision-making and ultimately encourage a healthy lifestyle among community college students. But what exactly are evidence-based programs, and how do we identify them? In this newsletter, we will discuss the meaning of "evidence-based" programs and outline some helpful resources for identifying programming that might be right for your college.

### What are evidence-based programs and why are they important



*An evidence-based program is an intervention or curriculum that has been rigorously evaluated—such as through experimental studies—and found to have a positive impact on a target population's (e.g., college students') outcomes.*

- In many cases, this may mean that the program has a positive impact on a health outcome (e.g., reduced symptoms of depression, increased condom use) or that the program has a positive impact on other important outcomes (e.g., increased student retention, increased GPA).
- Criteria for an "evidence base" may differ; for example, some resource repositories may only include programs evaluated through randomized controlled trials (RCTs), which compare outcomes experienced by similar groups of people who do or do not receive a program (see [Figure 1](#) for more information).
- Evidence-based programs may be especially successful if they have been found to not only be effective at changing a target outcome (e.g., condom use), but also feasible to implement, sustain, and disseminate to different groups.
- By carefully selecting evidence-based programs for students, colleges can be reasonably confident that these programs will be beneficial to the health and wellbeing of their students.

### What constitutes high-quality evidence?

*Researchers and practitioners often refer to a hierarchy of study types based on the strength of the evidence they produce—in other words, how reliable their results are in evaluating how well a program works.*

*Figure 1 shows this hierarchy of study types, with the top of the pyramid representing studies that produce the most rigorous evidence.*

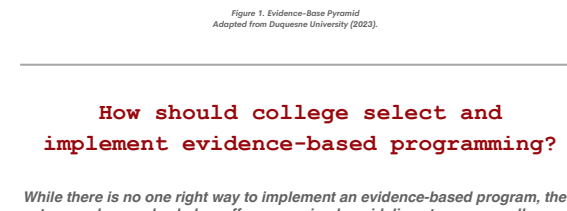


Figure 1. Evidence-Based Pyramid Adapted from Duquesne University (2023).

### How should college select and implement evidence-based programming?

*While there is no one right way to implement an evidence-based program, the steps and examples below offer some simple guidelines to ensure colleges choose the right evidence-based program for their students when it comes to promoting health and wellness.*

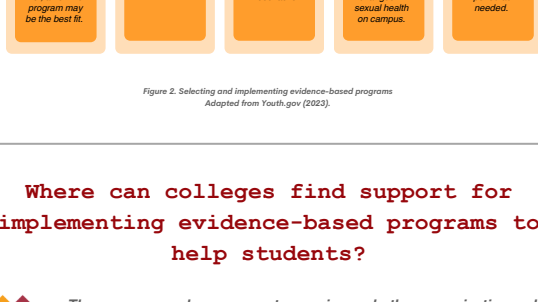


Figure 2. Selecting and implementing evidence-based programs Adapted from Youth.gov (2023).

### Where can colleges find support for implementing evidence-based programs to help students?

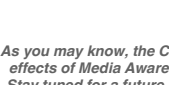


*There are several government agencies and other organizations who offer databases of evidence-based programs and practices, summarize available evidence, and provide other helpful tips, links, and resources.*

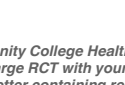
*In addition, some agencies offer grant funding for organizations—like community colleges—to implement evidence-based programs focused on specific health issues or populations.*

- **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program** – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Population Affairs funds organizations that aim to reduce teen pregnancy through effective prevention programs. Of note, the Office of Population Affairs considers young college students (e.g., 18–19-year-olds) to be "teens", and thus, would potentially fund organizations aiming to reduce unplanned pregnancy among this population.
- **GLS Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program** – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds public and private colleges in the U.S. to implement programs aimed at reducing suicide, substance use disorders, and other mental health problems in college students and improve treatment and identification services on campus. The funding opportunity is forecasted to renew in February 2024: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=349701>.
- **Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP)** – The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) funds organizations and communities, including colleges, that implement evidence-based programs to prevent pregnancy and STIs. FYSB funds organizations that work with youth, ages 10–19, who are homeless, in or aging out of foster care, living with HIV or AIDS, victims of human trafficking, or living in areas with high adolescent birth rates, as well as pregnant and/or parenting youth who are under 21.
- **Strategic Prevention Framework – Partnerships for Success for Communities, Local Governments, Universities, Colleges, and Tribes/Tribal Organizations** – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funds colleges to support the development and delivery of community-based substance misuse prevention and mental health promotion services and to help colleges and organizations implement evidence-based prevention programs. Applications for this funding opportunity will close in June 2025: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=347282>.

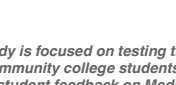
*Some organizations, like [Innovation Research & Training \(IRT\)](#), focus on developing evidence-based programs for schools, colleges, and other organizations to use with their communities. Some of IRT's evidence-based programs for college students and/or young adults include:*



**Media AWARE** is an online, media literacy education-based sexual health education program for young adults that leverages college students' passion for pop culture to teach medically-accurate sexual health and behavioral skills to prevent sexual assault, sexually transmitted infections, and unplanned pregnancy.



**Connected Scholars** is an instructor-led, semester-long course designed to teach high school and college students the rarely taught relationship- and network-building skills needed for academic, social, and career success.



**Plan My Ride** is a comprehensive, eLearning safe driving education program designed for new drivers, including but not limited to college students. Through the interactive program, young people learn about the risks of impaired and distracted driving and build skills to prevent it.

*As you may know, the Community College Health Study is focused on testing the effects of Media AWARE in a large RCT with young community college students. Stay tuned for a future newsletter containing recent student feedback on Media AWARE and results on the program's effectiveness, and check out our previous [research studies](#) documenting the positive impact of Media AWARE on student sexual health outcomes.*

### Want to learn more about Media AWARE?

[Visit the Media AWARE Website](#)

### Feedback

We're interested in hearing your feedback, questions, and ideas about the Community College Health Study newsletter. Your feedback will help us continue providing newsletter updates that are relevant to you. Complete the brief survey below to share your thoughts!

[Click Here](#)

### Next Steps

#### Want more information?

Find more information about the Community College Health Study on our website.

[Visit Our Website](#)

### Want to share this information with other stakeholders at your campus?

Click the button below to visit our study website where you can find a downloadable slides presentation. Feel free to use these slides to share information presented in this newsletter at your next staff meeting or on other relevant platforms. If you decide to share this information, please cite the information using the following:

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### Meet the People Behind This Newsletter



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**Lead Author and Public Health Intern**

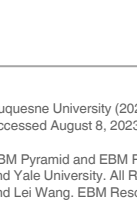
Micaela Brewington is a Master of Public Health student with a concentration in health behavior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has several years of experience conducting health communications research on a wide variety of topics including sexual and relationship health, vaccination, and substance use. Her main interests in public health include developing and evaluating programs aimed at promoting healthy behaviors and improving health literacy.



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**Senior Author and Project Director**

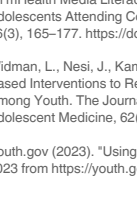
Dr. Evans-Paulson conducts research related to adolescent and young adult health with a focus on implementation and evaluation of sexual health interventions, parent and family influences on adolescent sexuality, and sexual communication. Dr. Evans-Paulson has published in esteemed peer-reviewed journals such as JAMA Pediatrics, Journal of Sex Research, and Pediatrics. She received her doctorate in applied social and community psychology from North Carolina State University.



#### Elizabeth Porter

**Content Marketing Specialist**

Elizabeth Porter studied communication media, rhetoric, and professional writing at North Carolina State University, and she is passionate about creating content that is relevant, engaging, and helpful for others. She has experience in marketing, writing, social media management, web content creation, email design, and editing.



#### Tracy Scull, PhD

**Senior Author and Principal Investigator**

Over the past 16 years, Dr. Scull has conducted rigorous research on child, adolescent, and family health, with specific focus on promoting sexual health and preventing substance abuse. Dr. Scull has secured over 10 million dollars in federal funding for her research and has published her work in esteemed peer-reviewed journals such as Pediatrics, Developmental Psychology, and the Journal of American College Health. She holds a doctorate in developmental psychology from Duke University.

Duquesne University (2023). "Evidence-Based Medicine & Practice." Duquesne University. Accessed August 8, 2023 from <https://guides.library.duq.edu/clickablepyramid/home>

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Youth.gov (2023). "Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes." Youth.gov. Accessed August 8, 2023 from <https://youth.gov/evidence-innovation>

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