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Child Trends & Chapin Hall

A Practical Tool for Building Data Collection and Data Use Capacity in Youth-Supporting Organizations

Module 1: Key Considerations for Collecting Sexual and Reproductive Health Data



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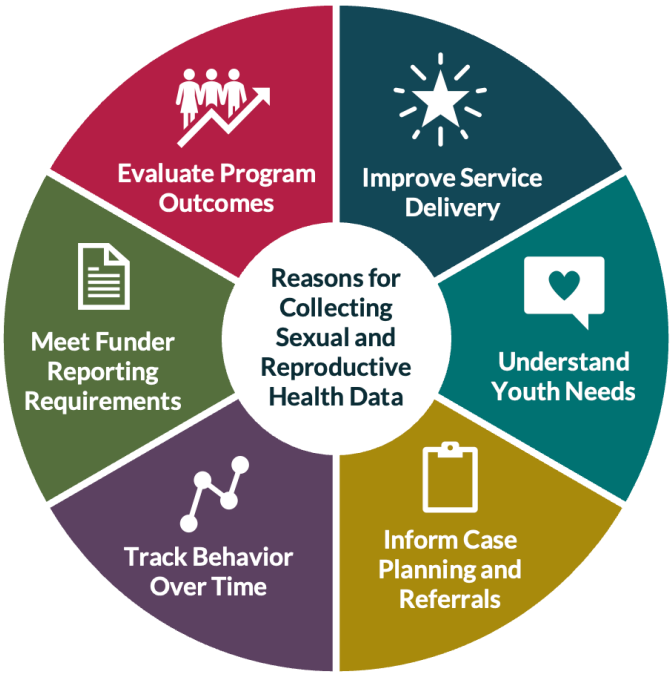
Before deciding what sexual and reproductive health data to collect, youth-supporting organizations might ask themselves the following questions:

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Why are they collecting the data?
- Who can support data collection?
- Will staff need training to collect the data?
- How will the data be collected?
- What will the timing of data collection be?
- How often will data be collected?

Why collect sexual and reproductive health data?

Collecting sexual and reproductive health data without a clear purpose can create an unnecessary burden for both youth-supporting professionals and the young people they work with. Hence, it is important for youth-supporting professionals to know that they are collecting sexual and reproductive health data for a reason and not just for the sake of data collection.



Youth-supporting organizations may collect data to improve service delivery, understand young people's needs, inform case planning or referrals, track change over time, meet funder requirements, or evaluate outcomes. Table 1.1 lists common reasons for collecting data about sexual and reproductive health with example scenarios and data-driven solutions.



Table 1.1. Reasons for Collecting Sexual and Reproductive Health Data, Example Scenarios, and Data-Driven Solutions

Reasons	Scenario	Data-Driven Solution
Improve Service Delivery	Staff collect data from young people about their access to contraception and find that they do not have transportation to access the local clinic that provides contraception.	Establish a bi-monthly free ride program from the organization's office to the local clinic.
Understand Youth Needs	Staff survey young people to learn what they know about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and find a significant knowledge gap.	Offer a workshop on STI prevention and treatment.
Inform Case Planning and Referrals	Staff routinely ask young people if they know where they can access sexual and reproductive health care services. Many young people report that they do not know where to go to obtain care.	Use Activate's *Identifying Accessible Sexual and Reproductive Health Resources in Your Community* to help identify and connect young people to local clinics.
Track Behavior Over Time	Staff observe an increase in the prevalence of risky sexual behaviors such as failure to use condoms based on data collected at intake and every six months thereafter.	Implement a new sexual health education curriculum.
Meet Funder Reporting Requirements	A youth-supporting organization is required to report the number of young people who participated in a sexual health education program to the funder.	Staff use a spreadsheet to track attendance in compliance with the funder's reporting requirements.
Evaluate Program Outcomes	Staff implement a sexual health curriculum and want to know if the sexual behaviors of the young people who participate in the training are changing.	Staff use a survey to ask young people about their sexual behaviors before and after the training.



Who can support data collection?

Responsibility for collecting sexual and reproductive health data does not need to fall on one staff member or team. Direct service providers, program administrators, data managers, and research partners may all play a role.



Will staff need training to collect the data?

Collecting data on sexual and reproductive health inevitably involves asking questions about sensitive topics. Consequently, youth-supporting organizations should ensure that the staff who are responsible for collecting those data are adequately trained to collect the data in a nonjudgemental, trauma-informed way that protects privacy and confidentiality (see **Module 3**). Organizations may choose to provide training themselves or bring in outside experts who have experience collecting this type of sensitive data.

How will the data be collected?

One option for collecting data is to ask young people to fill out an intake form, screening tool, or self-administered survey. Another option is for staff to ask young people questions and record the responses. Although some young people may feel more comfortable with the former, young people with limited literacy skills may prefer the latter. Building data collection into existing workflows can help make data collection more manageable and sustainable.

What will the timing of data collection be?

Timing is important when asking questions about sensitive topics such as pregnancy, STIs, or sexual health behaviors. In some cases, it may make sense to build rapport with young people before asking these questions. In other cases, such as when young people may need referrals or immediate support, asking these questions during intake may be more appropriate.

How often will data be collected?

Data should only be collected as frequently as needed to minimize the burden that collecting data places on both young people and youth-supporting professionals. Some information may only need to be collected once; other information may need to be collected repeatedly to understand change over time (e.g., increased access to contraception).

Module Takeaways

- Collect sexual and reproductive health data with a clear purpose, such as informing decisions or tracking change over time.
- Have a plan for how the data will be used to improve services, understand the needs of young people, or inform decision making.
- Integrate data collection into existing workflows to increase sustainability.
- Be intentional about the timing and frequency of data collection, especially when the data involve sensitive topics.

Reflection Questions

- What sexual and reproductive health related information could your organization collect from youth?
- How will collecting data on sexual and reproductive health benefit the young people your organization serves?
- Who in your organization could be involved in data collection, and in what ways?
- How will your organization make decisions about the timing of data collection?

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