

# Characteristics Summary Table\*

Name of Curriculum: SAFER CHOICES

For more detailed information about this program, visit the [Safer Choices](#) page at ETR's [Program Success Center](#) website.

Category 1	
Characteristic	Safer Choices
1. Involved multiple people with different backgrounds in theory, research and sex and STD/HIV education to develop the curriculum.	Developed by a multi-disciplinary team from the University of Texas Houston Health Science Center and ETR. Drs. Joyce V. Fetro, Richard P. Barth and Karin K. Coyle led the curriculum development. Other primary team members included Drs. Guy Parcel, Douglas Kirby, Karen Basen-Engquist, Christine Markham, Jesse Nodora, Marsha Weil as well as Barbara Collins and Duane Wilkerson.
2. Assessed relevant needs and assets of target group.	Developers assessed needs and assets of the target group during the development process, and this step is encouraged as part of planning for implementation.  <i>Safer Choices</i> is a 2-year, multi-component STD, HIV, and teen pregnancy prevention program for high school students. The program aims to reduce the frequency of unprotected sex among high-school-age students by reducing the number of sexually active students and increasing condom use and other methods of pregnancy protection among students who are sexually active. It seeks to motivate behavioral change by addressing factors such as attitudes and beliefs (including self-efficacy), social skills (particularly refusal and negotiation skills), functional knowledge, social and media influences, peer norms and parent/child communication.
3. Used a logic model approach to develop the curriculum that specified the health goals, the behaviors affecting those health goals, the risk and protective factors affecting those behaviors, and the activities addressing those risk and protective factors.	See the program <a href="#">Logic Model</a> .

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\* Kirby, D., Rolleri, L. & Wilson, M. M. (2007). *Tool to Assess the Characteristics of Effective Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs*. ETR and Healthy Teen Network.

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4. Designed activities consistent with community values and available resources (e.g., staff time, staff skills, facility space and supplies).	The curriculum component of Safer Choices consists of 21 sessions taught over 2 years: 11 lessons in Level 1, taught during ninth grade, and 10 lessons in Level 2, taught during tenth grade. <i>Safer Choices</i> classes are designed for 45-minute periods. The curriculum relies on 5 to 8 peer educators from each classroom. The other components of the program are planned and conducted throughout the school year. Students receive the most intensive exposure to the program from the curriculum component and the school-wide peer-sponsored events. <i>Safer Choices</i> allows schools to tailor messaging in the peer, parent, and community components to ensure they are consistent with community values and available resources.
5. Pilot-tested the program.	The <i>Safer Choices</i> curriculum was pilot tested as part of the development process (e.g., testing curriculum activities and revising as needed based on observations and feedback). Educator review and student feedback were used throughout the process to improve the lessons and make them relevant.

Category 2	
Characteristic	Safer Choices
6. Focused on clear health goals — the prevention of STD/HIV and/or pregnancy.	<p>The primary goal of <i>Safer Choices</i> is to prevent HIV, other STD and unintended pregnancy among participating students.</p> <p>Key features of the program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of HIV, other STD and pregnancy prevention to identify both shared and specific risk behaviors and teach prevention strategies.</li> <li>• Clear and consistent messages, which highlight that it is not healthful to engage in unprotected intercourse.</li> <li>• Emphasis on skills training and practice. Student skill practice using the in-class roleplays is an essential part of the curriculum.</li> <li>• Use of peer leaders as facilitators for selected activities. Five to 8 students from each classroom are elected by their classmates to serve as peer leaders.</li> </ul> <p>See the program <a href="#">Logic Model</a>.</p>

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# Characteristics Summary Table

## Category 2

Characteristic	Safer Choices
<p>7. Focused narrowly on specific behaviors leading to these health goals (e.g., abstaining from sex or using condoms or other contraceptives), gave clear messages about these behaviors, and addressed situations that might lead to them and how to avoid them.</p>	<p>Consistent with the health goals (to prevent HIV, other STD, and unintended pregnancy), the program is designed to reduce the number of high school students engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse in 2 ways: (1) by reducing the number of students who begin or have sexual intercourse during their high school years, and (2) by increasing the use of latex condoms and other methods of protection among students who do have sex. The program includes key messages to reinforce these behaviors in every lesson. It also includes opportunities for youth to examine and discuss ways to handle situations that might lead to unsafe behaviors.</p> <p>See the program <a href="#">Logic Model</a>.</p>
<p>8. Addressed multiple sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors affecting sexual behaviors (e.g., knowledge, perceived risks, values, attitudes, perceived norms and self- efficacy).</p>	<p><i>Safer Choices</i> is based on Social Cognitive Theory, Social Influence Theory, and Models of School Change, and the program addresses multiple sexual psychosocial risk and protective factors stemming from these theories through the five key components of the intervention.</p> <p>The uniqueness of the intervention is its focus on schoolwide change and the influence of the school environment on student behavior. The program addresses (1) School Organization through the establishment of a Health Promotion Council, composed of teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community members; (2) Curriculum through the 21 classroom lessons taught over two years. (3) Peer Resources and School Environment to reinforce the curricular messages through schoolwide activities, events, and services; (4) Parent Education through newsletters, parent-child homework activities and parent education workshops or speakers; and (5) School-Community Linkages that connect students with community resources such as local information hotlines, clinics, and testing services.</p>

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Category 2	
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9. Created a safe social environment for youth to participate.	The lessons at each level begin with activities to establish group agreements so that all students can feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions and will agree to respect others. Students also nominate Peer Leaders. The use of same-age peers as classroom facilitators along with the classroom teacher has been found to be an effective means of educating teens about important health issues. Peer Leaders help with recording and reporting small-group activities, modeling and demonstrating various skills, and assisting with the small-group roleplays to ensure that all participants have a chance to practice and observe during each roleplay.
10. Included multiple activities to change each of the targeted risk and protective factors.	<i>Safer Choices</i> makes use of interactive teaching methods, which include a variety of experiential activities such as roleplays, games, small-group activities demonstrations, and guided discussion. It also includes other non-classroom based components to address risk and protective factors. The program <a href="#">Logic Model</a> shows how the various activities relate to the targeted risk and protective factors.
11. Employed instructionally sound teaching methods that actively involved the participants, that helped participants personalize the information, and that were designed to change each group of risk and protective factors.	<i>Safer Choices</i> uses interactive approaches to provide information about HIV and STDs; teach skills, such as effective condom use and refusal skills; and promote positive attitudes and norms about refusing sex and using condoms and other protection if having sex. Peer leaders, selected by their classmates, facilitate several activities to promote positive norms. The program <a href="#">Logic Model</a> shows how the various activities relate to the targeted risk and protective factors.
12. Employed activities, instructional methods and behavioral messages that were appropriate to the youths' culture, developmental age and sexual experience.	<i>Safer Choices</i> is a school-based program that was evaluated with students in urban and suburban settings. The curriculum was tested with students in Grades 9 and 10. It is a co-educational program suitable for all racial/ethnic groups. The program is also suitable for all teens regardless of sexual experience. Activities have been used and well received by high school youth from across the United States representing different cultural backgrounds.
13. Covered topics in a logical sequence.	See the program <a href="#">Logic Model</a> .

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# Characteristics Summary Table

Category 3	
Characteristic	Safer Choices
14. Secured at least minimal support from appropriate authorities such as ministries of health, school districts or community organizations.	<p>This characteristic would be addressed during program implementation by the project team.</p> <p>ETR's <a href="#">Program Success Center</a> website offers a framework for successful implementation of our programs, including free tools that can help with for assessing, selecting, developing, implementing and sustaining programs.</p>
15. Selected educators with desired characteristics (whenever possible), trained them and provided monitoring, supervision and support.	<p>This characteristic would be addressed during program implementation by the project team.</p> <p>ETR offers training on all of our sexual health programs through our Professional Learning Services. For more information visit our <a href="#">Training and TA</a> pages.</p>
16. If needed, implemented activities to recruit and retain youth and overcome barriers to their involvement (e.g., publicized the program, offered food or obtained consent).	<p>This characteristic would be addressed during program implementation by the project team.</p> <p>ETR's <a href="#">Program Success Center</a> website offers a framework for successful implementation of our programs, including free tools that can help with for assessing, selecting, developing, implementing and sustaining programs.</p>
17. Implemented virtually all activities with reasonable fidelity.	<p>ETR offers Fidelity Logs for our programs, see the Adaptation Guidelines and Tools tab on the <a href="#">Safer Choices</a> page.</p>