

Readiness Tool: The Blues Program *(Under Development)*

During program selection, it is important to research and compare possible evidence-based prevention programs to ensure that you are selecting the program that is the best fit for your school and/or community. This tool is intended to help you plan for the implementation of The Blues Program with a commitment to quality and long-term sustainability.

The Blues Program

What is the Blues Program?

The Blues Program is a school-based prevention program for adolescents (ages 15-18) with depressive symptoms or adolescents who are at risk of onset of major depression. [Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development](#) certifies this program as a Model Program.

Who delivers this program?

The program is delivered by 1 or 2 Facilitators. Master's-level mental health professionals are ideal to facilitate these group sessions, although, other school professionals who have two years of experience in providing mental health services to adolescents can also serve as facilitators. Facilitators of the program can include: Therapists, School Counselors, School Nurses, and/or Teachers.

What does program delivery look like?

The program is delivered to groups of 4-8 adolescents, in one-hour sessions over 6 weeks with home practice assignments included. Group sessions include: building group rapport, increasing participant involvement in pleasant activities, learning and practicing cognitive restructuring techniques, and developing response plans in future life stressors.

*Please note, if a youth's assessment reveals current major depression and/or serious suicidal ideation, he/she should be referred for appropriate treatment.

While researching and comparing possible programs, consider the following information to determine if The Blues Program is the best fit for the community.

Considering The Blues Program for your School/Community

Do you have the buy-in and resources to commit to BEFORE The Blues Program is implemented? Here are questions that you can explore while you are considering this program:

- Does your school/community have evidence that supports the need for this program?
- How will a youth be referred to the Blues Program?
- What information will be included in the referral packet for the program facilitator(s)?
- Who will be the facilitators of the Blues Program and what will their educational requirements and work experience require?
- Who is responsible for each aspect of the data collection process?
- What is the plan if staff turnover occurs?
- Is there interest in developing a TOT?
- Where will program delivery take place?

Implementation

The Blues Program is delivered over six group sessions, one hour each, and can be facilitated by one or two group leaders. Group Leaders utilize [The Blues Program Group Facilitator Manual](#) to deliver the program to 4-8 adolescents who are between the ages of 15-18. Required materials include: Student workbooks and/or weekly handouts, rewards/tokens, and the use of a whiteboard/chalkboard/flipchart.

It is vital for all group leaders and support staff for the program to receive training by the program developer. Training can occur in one full day (8 hours) or over two half days (4 hours of back-to-back days).

*Please note, on page 6 of The Blues Program Group Facilitator Manual, it lists how students can be paid to attend group sessions. This is listed in the script for when research studies are being conducted, therefore, this is NOT an eligible expense for PCCD grantees as it is not required of the model. There are additional sections of the script that also refer to research study protocol. These particular sections should be skipped during program implementation and will be noted during initial Blues Program training.

Steps for Assessing Program Impact

Does your school/community have the capacity to collect outcomes data and to monitor program fidelity?

While this process is in development, Blues Program providers can anticipate the use of the following:

- [The Blues Program Pre and Post Surveys – CES-D \(Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale, NIMH\)](#)
 - These are completed by all youth participating in the group sessions. The Pre-Surveys are conducted during session one and the Post-Surveys are conducted during session six. These are then entered into the data tracking tool that is submitted to PCCD on a quarterly basis.
- [The Blues Program Protocol Adherence](#)
 - This Protocol Adherence is required for the program facilitators to complete for each Blues Program group.
- [The Blues Program Group Leader Competence Assessment](#)
 - This Group Leader Competence Assessment is required if the group facilitator wants to pursue certification in becoming a TOT (Trainer of Trainers).
- [The Blues Program Attendance Tracking Sheet](#)
- The Blues Program Outcomes Analysis and PCCD Quarterly Reporting Tool
 - This tool is in development but will be required for all PCCD grant-funded program providers to input all performance measures and data collected during the grant period. This tool is submitted into Egrants at the end of each quarter during the grant period.

*Please note, on page 116 of the [Program Facilitator Manual](#), there is an Exit Questions handout included for each youth to provide feedback on what he/she liked and/or didn't like about the group. This is NOT a requirement of PCCD grant-funded program providers; however, it is optional as it can be a valuable resource for facilitators to monitor and assess their groups.

Steps for Sustainability

Can funds/resources be identified to sustain key implementation elements of the program beyond the initial seed funding?

Make sure to carefully consider and designate those responsible for sustainability planning and securing funds/resources.

- Will the Blues Program supply costs be built into the annual budget of the school/district?
- Will a TOT be developed to train new facilitators, or will there be funds to cover the cost of ongoing training by the program developer?
- Will there be funds to provide annual booster training, if offered, to program facilitators?
- Will there be capacity to collect and analyze outcomes data?
- Will there be capacity to continue to support staff time to conduct observations and monitor implementation quality?

Addressing Challenges during Implementation

By careful while pre-planning the Blues Program implementation in order to address most of the common barriers encountered, however, it is still important to develop a plan for addressing day to day challenges before starting the Blues Program.

- Who will be the main point of contact in each school when a teacher has question related to The Blues Program?
- Who will be the designated program contact be to relay questions and answers to teachers and staff?
- How will school administrators and/or coaches address teachers who are struggling with implementation?
- What resources will be made available to these teachers?

Additional assistance and resources for implementing the Blues Program can be obtained by contacting the EPISCenter at 814-863-2568 or by visiting <http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/ebp/blues> .



The EPISCenter is funded by PCCD, the PA Department of Human Services, and DDAP through PCCD grants VP-ST-28768 and VP-ST- 28935.



EDNA BENNETT PIERCE
PREVENTION RESEARCH CENTER

