



# Prepare >>>

# Adapting Programs

## Making Adaptations to Your Program

Before program implementation begins, your team may feel that some changes or adaptations to the program are needed. It is important to make as few changes as possible so that you can deliver a program that is as close as possible to the program that was designed (i.e., with fidelity).

There are a few adaptations that can be made without greatly affecting the integrity of the program. Be sure to visit **Helpful Links: Adaptation Kits & Resources** to access more resources on program adaptation. Your team should also contact the program developers directly if you have any questions about what changes can be made. Below are general guidelines for common “Green”, “Yellow”, and “Red” adaptations with examples of each.

### Green Light Adaptations

These are safe changes. They modify the program or curriculum activities to better fit the age, culture, and context of the target population:

- Update data/statistics
- Customize role-plays by using wording more reflective of youth being served
- Tailor learning activities to youth culture, developmental stage, gender, sexual orientation

### Yellow Light Adaptations

These are changes that should be done with caution. It is highly recommended that an expert in behavior change theory and curriculum development be consulted before the change is implemented:

- Change sequence of activities
- Add activities (e.g. handouts or interactive group discussion) to address additional risk and protective factors
- Modify condom information activities
- Use other models or tools that cover the same topic (e.g., decision-making)

### Red Light Adaptations

These types of changes should be avoided because they compromise or delete one or more core components.

- Shorten the duration of the program
- Reduce or eliminate activities that allow youth to personalize risk
- Reduce or eliminate opportunities for skills practice (e.g., replace interactive activities with lectures or individual work)
- Remove condom information activities
- Contradict, compete with, or dilute the program’s focus
- Failing to reinforce and repeat key messages

Adapted from ETR Associates and CDC Division of Reproductive Health  
<https://www.etr.org/ebi/assets/File/GeneralAdaptationGuidanceFINAL.pdf>



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## Practice Identifying Types of Program Adaptations

| Scenarios   | Possible Adaptation |        |     |
|---|---------------------|--------|-----|
|   | Green               | Yellow | Red |
| <b>Instructions: Read each scenario and check a box for a green, yellow or red light adaptation.</b>  |                     |        |     |
| 1. You are implementing an evidence-based program (EBP) <sup>1</sup> that targets both males and females; however, managing your large class size is a big concern. You decide to reduce your group number by implementing the program for females only.  |                     |        |     |
| 2. When reviewing the selected EBP, you feel the program does not discuss sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as much as you would like. In the past you have shown pictures of STD symptoms and feel that that has had a great impact on your students. You substitute the original program activity on STDs with your activity instead.  |                     |        |     |
| 3. You are excited to implement your EBP in the school, but when you look at the program activities you realize that the characters all have Caucasian names while your student population is primarily of Vietnamese origin. You decide to change the names of the characters to make them more relatable to your students but you do not change any other parts of the program                            |                     |        |     |
| 4. Your district has decided to use a seventh grade-targeted EBP. The program was unanimously approved by the school board, but the classroom teachers do not feel comfortable teaching the condom information lesson in one of the schools. You must implement the program this semester in order to receive the grant funding money so you allow the teachers to leave out the condom information lesson. |                     |        |     |

### Answers:

- Yellow – Ideally, it is best to implement the program as intended with both males and females; however, you are not adding or removing any activities, changing the sequence, or making any other modifications.
- Red – In this case you are deleting an activity from the evidence-based program (EBP) and adding an activity that may not be effective. Additionally, the pictures may be misleading as most STDs have no symptoms and only escalate to the point of the pictures when they are at a more advanced stage.

<sup>1</sup> Evidence-based programs have undergone peer review and rigorous evaluation through a randomized controlled trial or strong quasi-experimental design and have shown impact on behaviors.

3. Green – In this adaptation, you are only changing the names of the characters, not eliminating or altering the activity significantly. However, be careful when choosing names for the activities; some names are selected specifically for a program (e.g. gender neutral names). Also, keep in mind that changing names to make the program more culturally appropriate may not be sufficient if your population is substantially different – you may need to consider other programs that more closely match your student population.

4. Red –Components should not be removed from the program without consent from the program developers.