



# The Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Grant Program: Understanding Implementation Experiences

**December 2023**

Theresa Neelan, Betsy Keating, Lindsey M. Bryant, Katie Hunter, Erin Boyle, Briana Starks, and Susan Zief

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# The Sexual Risk Avoidance Education National Evaluation: Understanding Program Implementation Experiences

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**OPRE Report 2023-307**  
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Theresa Neelan, Betsy Keating, Lindsey M. Bryant, Katie Hunter, Erin Boyle, Briana Starks, and Susan Zief

## **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Calonie Gray, Tia Brown, Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation  
Nakia Martin-Wright, MeGan Hill, Family and Youth Services Bureau  
Administration for Children and Families  
330 C St SW, 4th Floor  
Washington, DC 20201

## **Mathematica**

Susan Zief, Project Director  
Mathematica  
1100 1st Street, NE, 12th Floor  
Washington, DC 20002

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## Executive Summary

The federal government funds grant programs designed to help youth avoid or reduce the risks associated with sexual initiation. In support of this approach, the Family and Youth Services Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) began funding General Departmental Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) grants in 2016. Then in 2018, Congress amended Title V, Section 510, of the Social Security Act, authorizing the Title V State and Title V Competitive SRAE programs. If a state or territory does not apply for the Title V State SRAE program, the unused funding transitions to the Title V Competitive SRAE program and is made available to direct service providers or organizations in the state or territory through a competitive process open to all applicants.

The goal of SRAE programs is to teach youth to voluntarily refrain from nonmarital sexual activity and avoid other risky behaviors. Programs are also required to teach youth about personal responsibility, self-regulation, goal setting, healthy decision making, healthy relationships, dating violence, resisting sexual coercion, and prevention of risk behaviors, such as underage drinking and illicit drug use.

ACF awarded Mathematica a contract for the SRAE National Evaluation (SRAENE) in 2018. SRAENE has three distinct activities: (1) the National Descriptive Study (NDS), (2) the Program Components Impact Study, and (3) Data and Evaluation Support. The goal of the NDS is to tell the story of the SRAE grant program and point the way toward promising practices.

The NDS has two study components, the Early Implementation Study (EIS) and the Nationwide Study (NWS). The NWS builds on the findings from the EIS, which gathered information from SRAE program grant recipients in 2020. The NWS has two main goals: (1) to understand program implementation experiences and (2) to examine relationships between program implementation and outcomes. This report focuses on the findings related to the first goal, understanding program implementation experiences.

The NWS collected data on SRAE programming from fall 2022 to spring 2023 to answer two research questions:

1. What are grant recipients' and providers' experiences in delivering SRAE curricular content? What are youths' experiences in receiving SRAE curricular content?
2. How did grant recipients and providers interpret, understand, and address the six topics required by the legislation (referred to as the A–F requirements, which concern personal responsibility, the advantages of refraining from nonmarital sexual activity, the greater likelihood of avoiding poverty, healthy relationships, reducing other youth risk behaviors like drug and alcohol use, and resisting and avoiding sexual coercion and dating violence)?

To answer these research questions, the SRAENE team collected data through online surveys with SRAE grant recipients, providers, and facilitators and in-person youth focus groups. Grantee survey respondents included individuals from organizations with Title V State grants. Provider survey respondents included individuals from organizations that provide services to youth, including Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients. Facilitator survey respondents included individuals who delivered SRAE programming to youth. The results presented in this report reflect SRAE programming offered by grant recipients, providers, and facilitators who had SRAE funding and were delivering SRAE programming at the time of NWS survey administration during the 2022–2023 school year. Altogether, 38 individuals from Title V State grant recipients completed the grantee survey (90 percent response rate), 331 individuals from Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V State grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients completed the provider survey (90 percent response rate), and 535 individuals completed the facilitator survey (71 percent response rate).

Youth who participated in programming during this period shared their experiences during focus groups held in spring and summer 2023. (A separate report [Inanc et al. 2023] summarizes findings from two other NWS research questions that examine relationships between program implementation and outcomes.)

Key findings for the NWS are as follows:

- / The SRAE programming offered by Title V State, Title V Competitive, and General Departmental grant recipients that participated in the NWS survey in 2022–2023 is similar to that described by Title V State, Title V Competitive, and General Departmental grant recipients in the 2020 EIS survey. Similarly, few Title V State grant recipients and program providers (Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients) made changes to their programs since the start of their grant, although a small number of providers did make changes to their curricular content to make the material more interactive or to cover specific topics.
- / The most prevalent curricula among Title V State grant recipients are Teen Outreach Program, Making a Difference, Choosing the Best, and REAL Essentials. Teen Outreach Program is the most used curriculum among Title V State grant subrecipients and Love Notes Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) is the most used curriculum among Title V Competitive and General Departmental grant recipients that participated in the survey. Title V State grant recipients primarily serve middle school–age youth. Most providers across all funding streams reported that they implemented SRAE programming in middle schools during school, but many also delivered SRAE programming in high schools during school and at community-based organizations.
- / Overall, facilitators and providers reported that their SRAE programming meets the needs of most youth, and that they think the SRAE curricular content is age appropriate.
- / Most Title V State grant recipients reported that staff at their organization, parents and guardians, and the broader community were supportive of their SRAE curricular content. Likewise, providers and facilitators reported that implementation site staff were supportive of the SRAE curriculum.
- / Youth participants felt that SRAE curricular content was relevant and engaging, but some wanted more information on specific topics, including relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, sexuality, setting healthy boundaries, the consequences following sexual activity, and deciding the appropriate age to start engaging in sexual activity.
- / Most Title V State grant recipients have not changed their understanding of or emphasis on program content that addressed the A–F requirements in the legislation since the start of their grant. Most of the providers that made changes to their SRAE curricular content did not change how they covered program content addressing the A–F requirements in the legislation.

## I. Introduction

### A. Background on the Sexual Risk Avoidance Education grant program and structure

Rates of teenage sexual activity and births have steadily declined for decades; even so, the United States has the highest rate of births to teens among all industrialized countries (Osterman et al. 2022). In addition, condom use among teens is declining and youth ages 15 to 24 account for almost half of new sexually transmitted infections in the United States (CDC 2023). Furthermore, teen sexual activity is associated with alcohol and substance use, dating violence, and sexual assault (Clayton et al. 2016; Cavazos-Rehg et al. 2012).

To help youth avoid or reduce the risks associated with sexual initiation, the federal government funds a range of grant programs. For nearly a decade, these programs have increasingly focused on health outcomes that are associated with a delay of sexual activity until marriage. They emphasize the social, psychological, and biological factors that can eliminate risk and encourage healthy behaviors. In support of this approach, in 2016, the Family and Youth Services Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) authorized a discretionary Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) grant, the General Departmental SRAE program. Then in 2018 Congress amended Title V, Section 510, of the Social Security Act,<sup>1</sup> which authorized the

Title V State and Title V Competitive SRAE programs. If a state or territory does not apply for the Title V State SRAE program, the unused funding transitions to the Title V Competitive SRAE program and is made available to direct service providers or organizations in the state or territory through a competitive process open to all applicants.

Most Title V State grant recipients design their SRAE programs and select the curricula offered to youth and have subrecipients that provide SRAE programming directly to youth. Most Title V Competitive and General

**In accordance with the Title V SRAE legislation, programs must address the following six required A–F topics:**

- (A) The holistic, individual, and societal benefits associated with personal responsibility, self-regulation, goal setting, healthy decision making, and a focus on the future.
- (B) The advantage of refraining from nonmarital sexual activity to improve the future prospects and physical and emotional health of youth.
- (C) The increased likelihood of avoiding poverty when youth attain self-sufficiency and emotional maturity before engaging in sexual activity.
- (D) The foundational components of healthy relationships and their impact on the formation of healthy marriages and safe and stable families.
- (E) How other youth risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use, increase the risk for teen sex.
- (F) How to resist and avoid, and receive help regarding, sexual coercion and dating violence, recognizing that—even with consent—teen sex remains a youth risk.

State and Competitive SRAE grant recipients are required to cover A–F topics. General Departmental grants do not have these requirements. Appendix A presents the full list of A–F topics required by the legislation and specific content for each of them.

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<sup>1</sup> The Title V SRAE Program was authorized and funded by Section 510 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. § 710), as amended by Section 50502 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-123) and extended by the CARES Act of 2020 (Pub. L. No. 116-136). See [https://www.ssa.gov/OP\\_Home/ssact/title05/0510.htm](https://www.ssa.gov/OP_Home/ssact/title05/0510.htm).

Departmental grant recipients (also referred to as discretionary grant recipients in this report) design their SRAE programs and select the curricula offered to youth. Most of these grant recipients also provide services directly to youth, though some General Departmental grant recipients rely on subrecipients that provide programming to youth.<sup>2</sup>

The goal of SRAE programs is to teach youth to voluntarily refrain from nonmarital sexual activity and avoid other risky behaviors. Programs are also required to teach youth about personal responsibility, self-regulation, goal setting, healthy decision making, healthy relationships, dating violence, resisting sexual coercion, and prevention of risky behaviors such as underage drinking and illicit drug use.

### B. Overview of Nationwide Study

ACF awarded Mathematica a contract for the SRAE National Evaluation (SRAENE) in 2018. SRAENE has three distinct activities. One is the National Descriptive Study (NDS), which describes the implementation of programs funded by SRAE grants. The second activity is the Program Components Impact Study. This activity uses systematic and rigorous approaches to test and improve the components of programs. The third is Data and Evaluation Support, which not only helps grant recipients build their capacity to use data and research to improve their programs but also supports grant recipients when they conduct their own evaluations.

The goal of the NDS is to tell the story of the SRAE grant program and point the way toward promising practices. The NDS has two study components, the Early Implementation Study (EIS) and the Nationwide Study (NWS). The EIS gathered information from Title V State, Title V Competitive, and General Departmental SRAE program grant recipients through an online survey that Mathematica conducted in summer 2020.<sup>3</sup> The NWS builds on the findings from the EIS.

The NWS has two main goals: (1) to understand program implementation experiences and (2) to examine relationships between program implementation and outcomes. This report focuses on the findings related to the first goal, understanding program implementation experiences. The report describes SRAE programming and data reported through online surveys administered in fall 2022 and winter 2023 and in youth focus groups conducted in spring 2023 (Exhibit I.1).

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<sup>2</sup> Based on EIS data and grant applications, none of the currently funded General Departmental grantees have subrecipients; however, some former grant recipients provided programming through subrecipients.

<sup>3</sup> The brief series that summarizes findings from the EIS can be found online (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/brief-sexual-risk-avoidance-education-programs-plans>).

Three NWS surveys collected information from SRAE grant recipients, providers, and facilitators. Grantee survey respondents were individuals from organizations with Title V State SRAE grants. Provider survey respondents were from organizations that provide services to youth, including Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients. Respondents to the facilitator survey were individuals who delivered SRAE programming to youth. The results presented in this report reflect SRAE programming offered by grant recipients, providers, and facilitators that had SRAE funding and were delivering SRAE programming at the time of NWS survey administration.<sup>4</sup> Altogether, 38 individuals from State Title V grant recipients completed the grantee survey (90 percent response rate), 331 individuals from Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients completed the provider survey (90 percent response rate), and 535 individuals completed the facilitator survey (71 percent response rate). Appendix B presents sample sizes and response rates by survey and type of respondent.

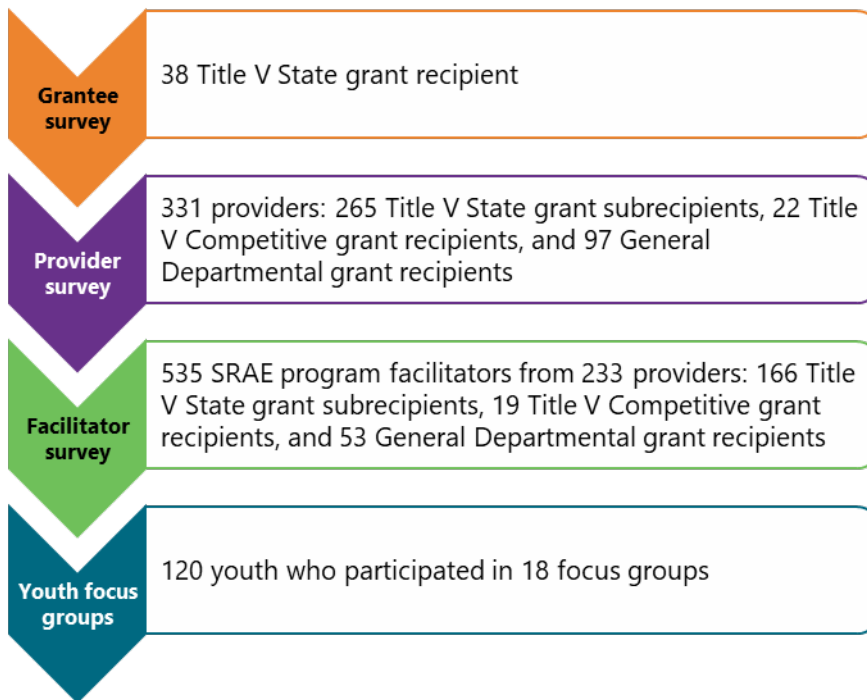
### Survey respondents

**Grantee survey:** Title V State grant recipients

**Provider survey:** Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients

**Facilitator survey:** Individuals who delivered SRAE programming to youth

### Exhibit I.1. Survey and focus group respondents



Altogether, 120 youth participated in 18 focus groups across 15 different providers. We conducted these focus groups with youth in 14 states in all five regions of the country (Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and West).

<sup>4</sup> To be eligible to complete the survey, grantee and provider survey respondents needed to have active SRAE grant funding or a no-cost extension to continue SRAE programming. To be eligible to participate in the survey, facilitators needed to be teaching or providing SRAE programming to youth at the time they took the survey.

Two research questions guided our NWS data collection and analysis:

1. What are grant recipients' and providers' experiences in delivering SRAE curricular content? What are youth experiences in receiving SRAE curricular content?
2. How did grant recipients and providers interpret, understand, and address the A–F requirements?

Under the first research question, we explored whether Title V State grant recipients modified statewide program plans and, if so, why. We also looked at changes that organizations providing SRAE programming made since the start of their grants to curricular content, intended program recipients, setting, mode of delivery, dosage, and type of facilitator, and why. Finally, we explored whether facilitators, schools and communities, and youth were receptive to curricular content.

The second research question came from findings around A–F topics in the EIS survey. In the EIS data, grant recipients reported covering the A–F topics to varying degrees, potentially due to lack of familiarity with the requirements in the early years of the grant program (Neelan et al. 2022a, 2022b). We examined whether SRAE grant recipients' understanding of these grant requirements changed as they gained more experience delivering SRAE programming.

### C. Roadmap

The remainder of this report comprises three sections, along with additional information in the appendices. Chapter II presents findings on the first research question concerning Title V State grant recipient and provider experiences with the SRAE curriculum content. This chapter also presents findings on facilitator, youth, and community receptivity to the SRAE curriculum content. In Chapter III, we describe the findings for the second research question concerning how grant recipients and providers interpret, understand, and address the A–F requirements. Chapter IV summarizes the findings. We present the full list of A–F subtopics in Appendix A, additional information on the sample and survey response rates in Appendix B, and additional information on subgroup analyses in Appendix C.

## II. Grant Recipient, Provider, and Youth Experiences with SRAE Curricular Content

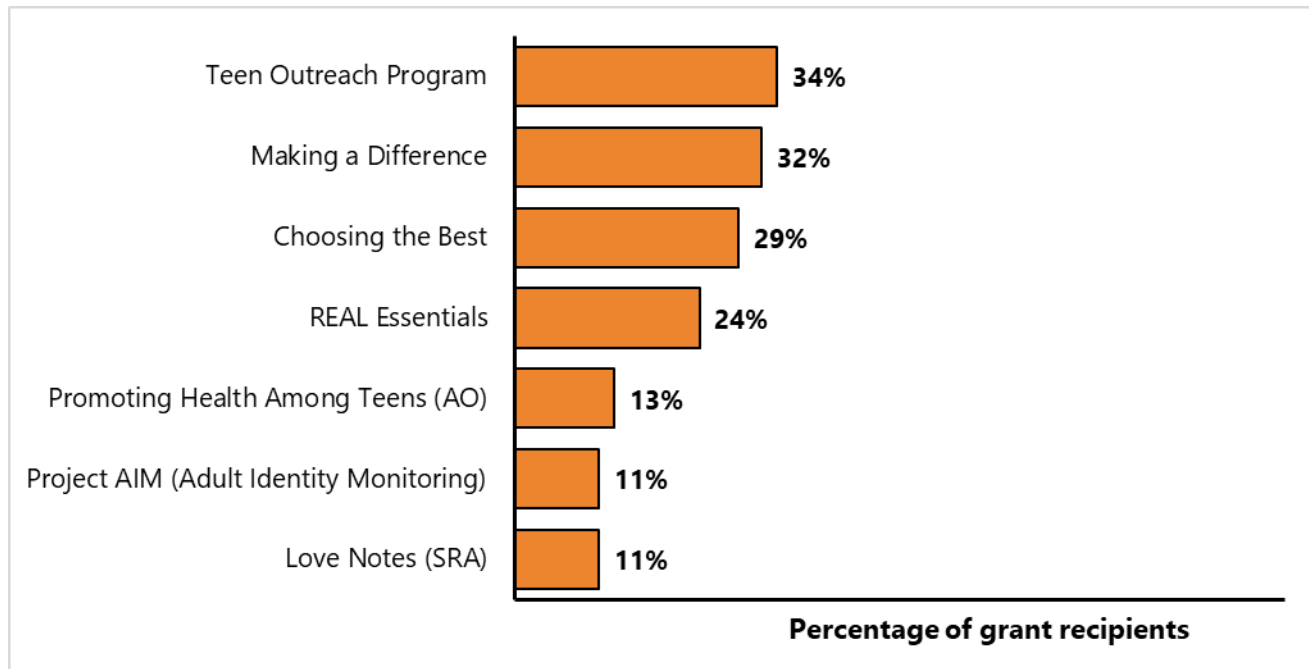
### A. State grant recipient experiences

Title V State SRAE programming offered in 2022–2023 is consistent with the plans the Title V State grant recipients shared when they participated in the EIS survey in 2020. Title V State grant recipients and their subrecipients continue to implement the same curricula in the same settings with the same types of facilitators. In addition, few Title V State grant recipients made changes to their statewide programs since the start of their grant.

#### 1. Title V State grant recipients implement similar curricula over time

Together, Title V State grant recipients implement 50 curricula. The most prevalent curricula among these grant recipients are the Teen Outreach Program (34 percent), Making a Difference (32 percent), Choosing the Best (29 percent), and REAL Essentials (24 percent) (Exhibit II.1). A smaller number of Title V State grant recipients reported that they implement Promoting Health Among Teens Abstinence Only (AO), Project AIM (Adult Identity Mentoring), and Love Notes Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA). One to three Title V State grant recipients are implementing each of the 43 other curricula. These findings are consistent with EIS survey findings.

**Exhibit II.1. Most common curricula used by Title V State grant recipients**



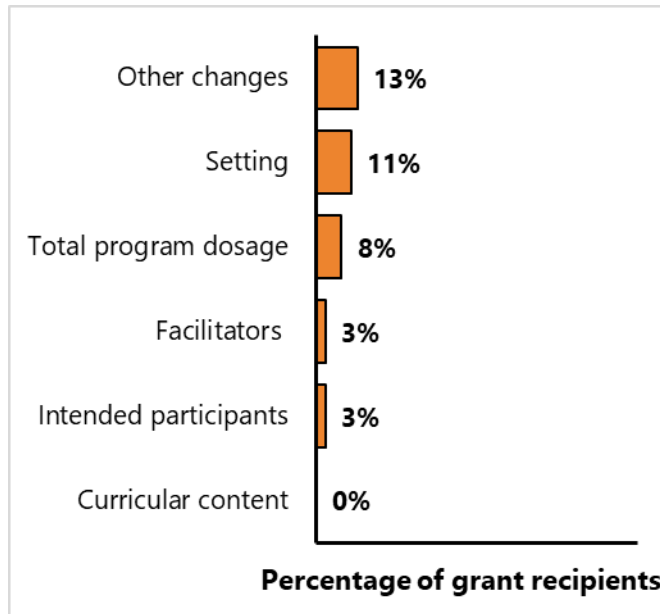
Note: Sample includes 38 Title V State grant recipients.

#### 2. A small number of Title V State grant recipients reported that their statewide program had changed since the start of their grant

Seven of the 38 surveyed Title V State grant recipients (18 percent) made changes to their SRAE programming (Exhibit II.2). Four Title V State grant recipients made a change to their setting; three shifted to more out-of-school

sites and one shifted to more school sites.<sup>5</sup> Three Title V State grant recipients reported that they changed program dosage, one changed the intended program recipients, and one changed the type of facilitator for delivering programming. Five Title V State grant recipients reported that they made some other change (for example, changing the number of subrecipients providing services and adding a media campaign to expand program awareness). No Title V State grant recipients reported that they made changes to their SRAE curriculum content at the state level.

**Exhibit II.2. Title V State program changes**



Note: Sample includes 38 Title V State grant recipients.

Regardless of whether they made changes, most Title V State grant recipients gave their subrecipients the flexibility to modify their SRAE programs. About two thirds (66 percent) of Title V State grant recipients reported that their subrecipients have some flexibility to propose program changes and about a third (29 percent) said their subrecipients have a lot of flexibility to propose program changes. Only one Title V State grant recipient reported that its subrecipients have no flexibility to propose program changes.

## **B. Provider experiences**

Providers—Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients—that participated in the study implement several curricula, primarily in schools during school. Most of these providers have not made changes to their SRAE programming since the start of their grant periods.

### **1. Although providers implement many different curricula, a few are prevalent**

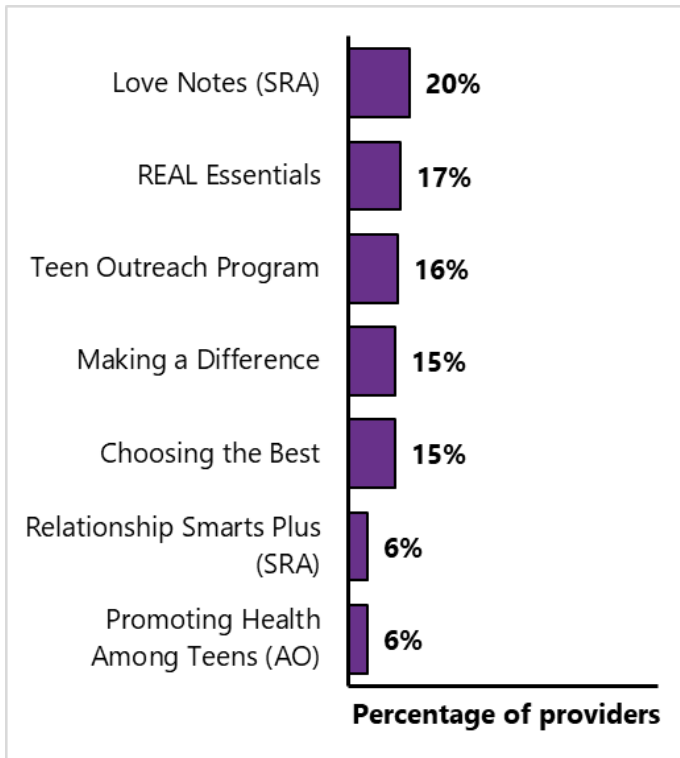
Collectively, providers reported that they are implementing 77 curricula. The most prevalent curricula implemented by providers are Love Notes (SRA), REAL Essentials, Teen Outreach Program, Choosing the Best, and Making a Difference (Exhibit II.3). A smaller percentage of providers are implementing Relationship Smarts Plus Sexual Risk

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<sup>5</sup> Out-of-school sites include sites in any non-school setting and can include community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, juvenile justice detention centers, foster care group homes, and hospitals and clinics.

Avoidance (SRA) and Promoting Health Among Teens (AO) (6 percent for both). One to 17 providers are implementing each of the other 70 curricula. These findings are consistent with EIS survey findings.

**Exhibit II.3. Most common curricula used by providers**



Note: Sample includes 331 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients.

**State and discretionary grant recipients made different curriculum choices**

The most prevalent curricula reported among Title V State grant subrecipients are Teen Outreach Program (22 percent), Making a Difference (19 percent), Choosing the Best (18 percent), and REAL Essentials (18 percent). The most prevalent curriculum reported among Competitive and General Departmental grant recipients are Love Notes (SRA) (51 percent), REAL Essentials (15 percent), and Relationship Smarts Plus (SRA) (11 percent).

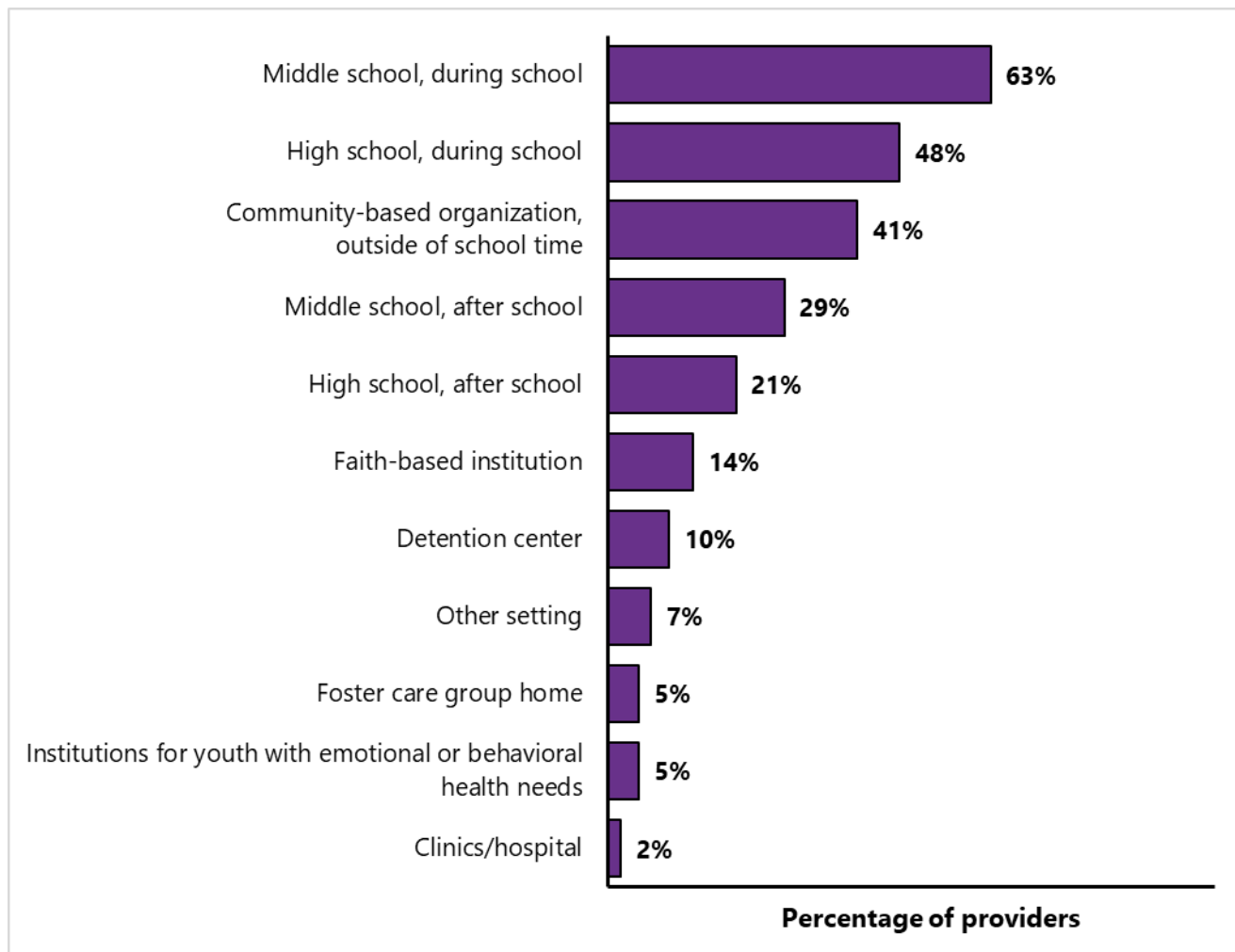
## 2. Schools remain the most common setting for SRAE programming

Most providers reported that they are implementing SRAE programming in schools, whether during the school day or after school (Exhibit II.4). They mostly reported implementing SRAE programs in middle schools during the school day. About half of providers reported serving youth in high school during school. A smaller portion of providers serve youth in schools after school in either middle or high school. In addition, over two thirds of providers implemented in community-based organizations. Smaller portions of providers also implemented in other non-school community settings, among them faith-based institutions, juvenile justice detention centers, and foster care group homes. This is consistent with the 2020 EIS findings, which suggest schools have continued to be the primary implementation sites for providers over time (Neelan et al. 2022a, 2022b).

**Discretionary grant recipients were more likely to serve high school-age youth**

More discretionary grant recipients delivered SRAE programming in high schools during or after school (70 percent) than state subrecipients (55 percent).

**Exhibit II.4. SRAE provider program implementation settings**



Note: Sample includes 331 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients. Because respondents could select multiple settings, the categories are not mutually exclusive and thus percentages do not total 100.

### Providers reflected on the curricula they used and the setting in which they served the most youth

The grantee, provider, and facilitator surveys asked respondents about all the curricula they used and all the settings in which they delivered programming at the beginning of the survey. They also asked respondents to share the combination of curriculum and setting that served the largest number of youth. On subsequent questions throughout the survey, respondents reflected on the curriculum and setting combination that served the largest number of youth.

Provider survey respondents served the most youth with Love Notes (SRA) (15 percent), REAL Essentials (15 percent), Teen Outreach Program (14 percent), Making a Difference (13 percent), and Choosing the Best (11 percent). The rest (31 percent) served the most youth with one of 53 other curricula (the percentage of Title V State SRAE grant subrecipients and discretionary grant recipients that served the most youth with each curriculum varied between 0.3 and 4.0 percent).

Provider survey respondents served the most youth in middle school during school (46 percent), high school during school (21 percent), community-based organizations outside of school time (15 percent), middle school after school (9 percent), and high school after school (4 percent). The rest (6 percent) served the most youth in another school or non-school setting.

The rest of the findings related to curriculum content presented in the report focus on responses to questions that focus on the curricula and setting combination that respondents said served the largest number of youth.

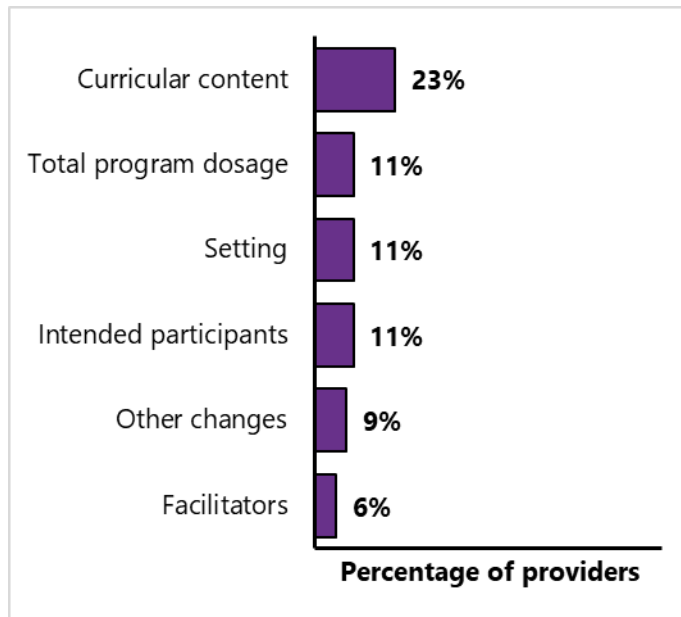
### 3. Most often, providers changed their curriculum content if they made changes to their SRAE program

About a quarter of providers reported that they made changes to their SRAE programming after the start of their grant for a reason that was not related to the COVID-19 pandemic, with most changes made to curriculum content (Exhibit II.5).<sup>6</sup> A smaller number of providers made changes to the setting in which they implemented SRAE programming, total program dosage, the youth they intended to serve, and the type of facilitator that delivered SRAE programming. A small proportion of providers reported that they made some other change to their SRAE programming. Among them were changing the number of staff who provided programming, changing the number of youth they served, changing the area in which they delivered, and doing something different to engage with or provide services to parents.

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<sup>6</sup> Providers reported whether they made changes to facilitators, target population, setting, total program dosage, and curriculum content. The survey asked respondents to differentiate between changes made only in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and changes made for other reasons not related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this report, we focus on changes providers made that were not related to the COVID-19 pandemic. A separate study (Keating et al. 2022) assessed SRAE grant recipients' experiences during the pandemic.

Exhibit II.5. SRAE provider program changes

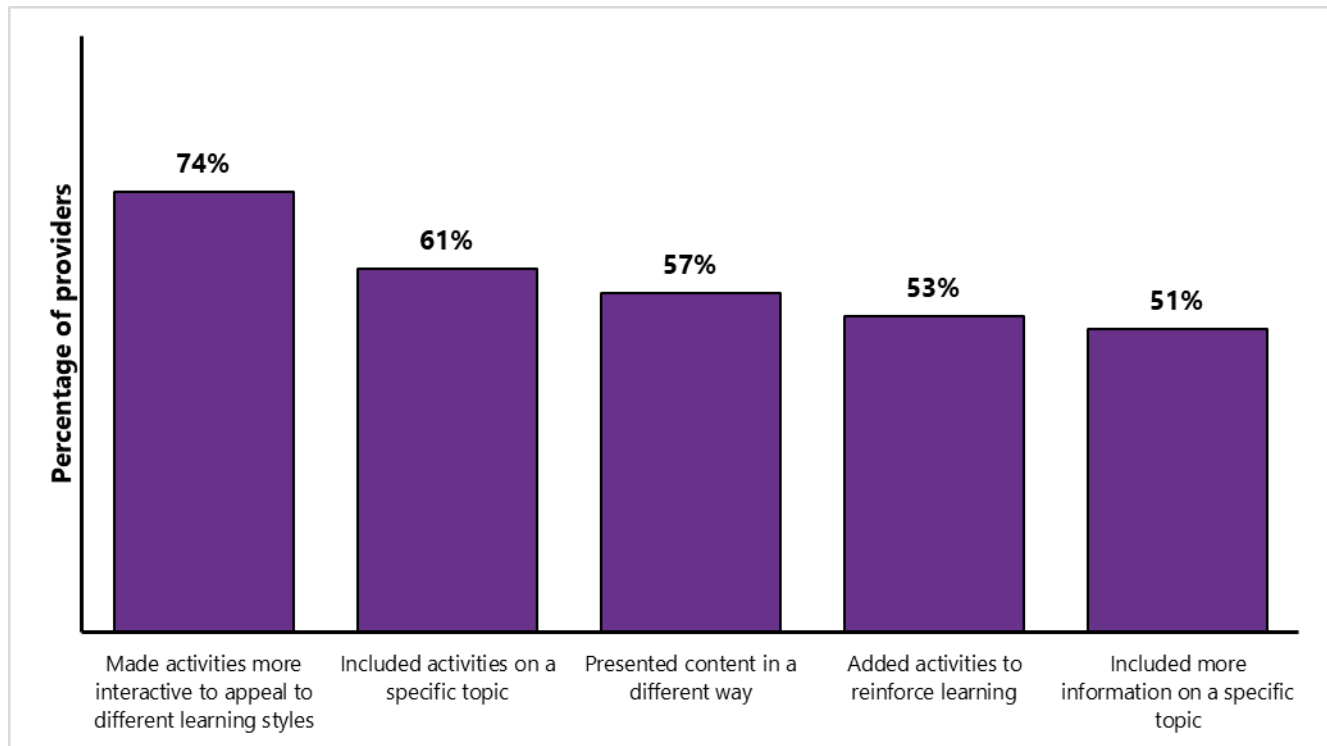


Note: Sample includes 331 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients. Because respondents could select multiple types of changes, the categories are not mutually exclusive and thus do not total 100.

Providers who made changes to their curricular content also reported on whether they made changes to program content that addressed the A–F requirements in the legislation. Of the 76 providers that made changes to their SRAE curriculum content, less than half made changes that addressed the A–F requirements in the legislation. Among those that did change program content that addressed the A–F requirements in the legislation, they most often changed content related to the subtopics of sexual health (41 percent of 76 providers) and sexual consent (32 percent of 76 providers). About a third (29 percent) of the providers that changed curriculum content on sexual health did so because of medical accuracy reviews.

Most often, providers made changes to curriculum content to make it more interactive, present information in a different way, or to add information (Exhibit II.6). Of the 76 providers that made changes to curriculum content, about three quarters made activities more interactive to appeal to different learning styles and about two thirds included more participatory activities on a specific topic. About half reported that they presented content in a different way, added activities to reinforce learning, or included more information on a specific topic.

**Exhibit II.6. Provider curriculum content changes**



Note: Sample includes 76 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients. Because respondents could select multiple types of changes, the categories are not mutually exclusive.

Providers made these changes to their curricular content primarily to meet the needs of the youth they serve. They changed their curricular content to tailor it the population they intended to serve (63 percent), make it culturally relevant (54 percent), and to be age appropriate (51 percent). Providers reported that input from youth (71 percent), facilitators (58 percent), and implementation site staff (47 percent) were influential in the changes they made.

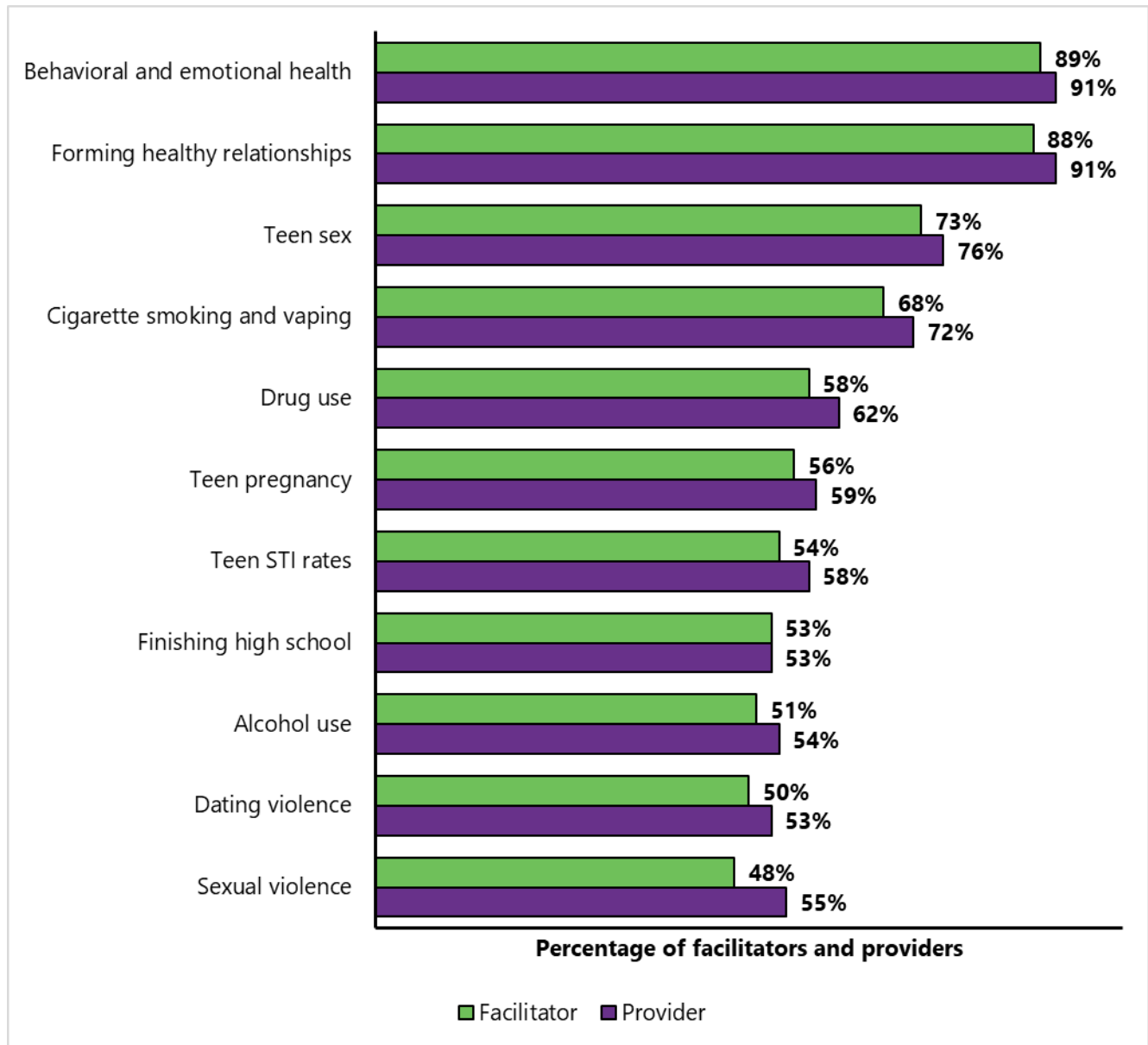
### C. Facilitator and provider receptiveness to curricular content

Overall, facilitator and provider survey respondents shared that their SRAE programming meets the needs of most youth, and that they think the A–F subtopics are age appropriate. Facilitators and providers reported that SRAE programming is aligned with the needs of youth.

#### 1. The SRAE A–F subtopics are aligned with facilitator- and provider-reported youth needs

Facilitators and providers identified issues that were most prevalent or of concern for the youth served with SRAE programming. Most commonly, facilitators reported that behavioral and emotional health and forming healthy relationships were of concern among youth (Exhibit II.7). Similarly, almost all providers indicated that both issues were of concern for the youth served. In addition, about three quarters of facilitators and providers felt that teen sex and cigarette smoking and vaping were a concern for youth. About half of all facilitators and providers reported that drug use, sexual violence, dating violence, alcohol use, finishing high school, and teen sexually transmitted infection (STI) rates were a concern. These needs are consistent with the content for the A–F topics, such as social and emotional health, healthy romantic relationships, sexual health, and drug and alcohol use.

**Exhibit II.7. Facilitator and provider reported issues of concern among youth SRAE program participants**



Note: Sample includes 331 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients and 535 facilitators. Because respondents could select multiple concerns, the categories are not mutually exclusive and thus percentages do not total 100.

**Providers serving the most youth in high school were more likely to report that dating violence, sexual violence, finishing high school, and alcohol use were a concern for youth**

Providers that reported they served the most youth in high school were more likely to state these topics were of concern for the youth they served, compared with providers that reported they served the most youth in middle school. Less than half of the surveyed providers serving youth in middle school indicated that dating violence, sexual violence, finishing high school, and alcohol use were of concern.

**2. Facilitators and providers reported that the SRAE curriculum content matches the needs of different groups of youth**

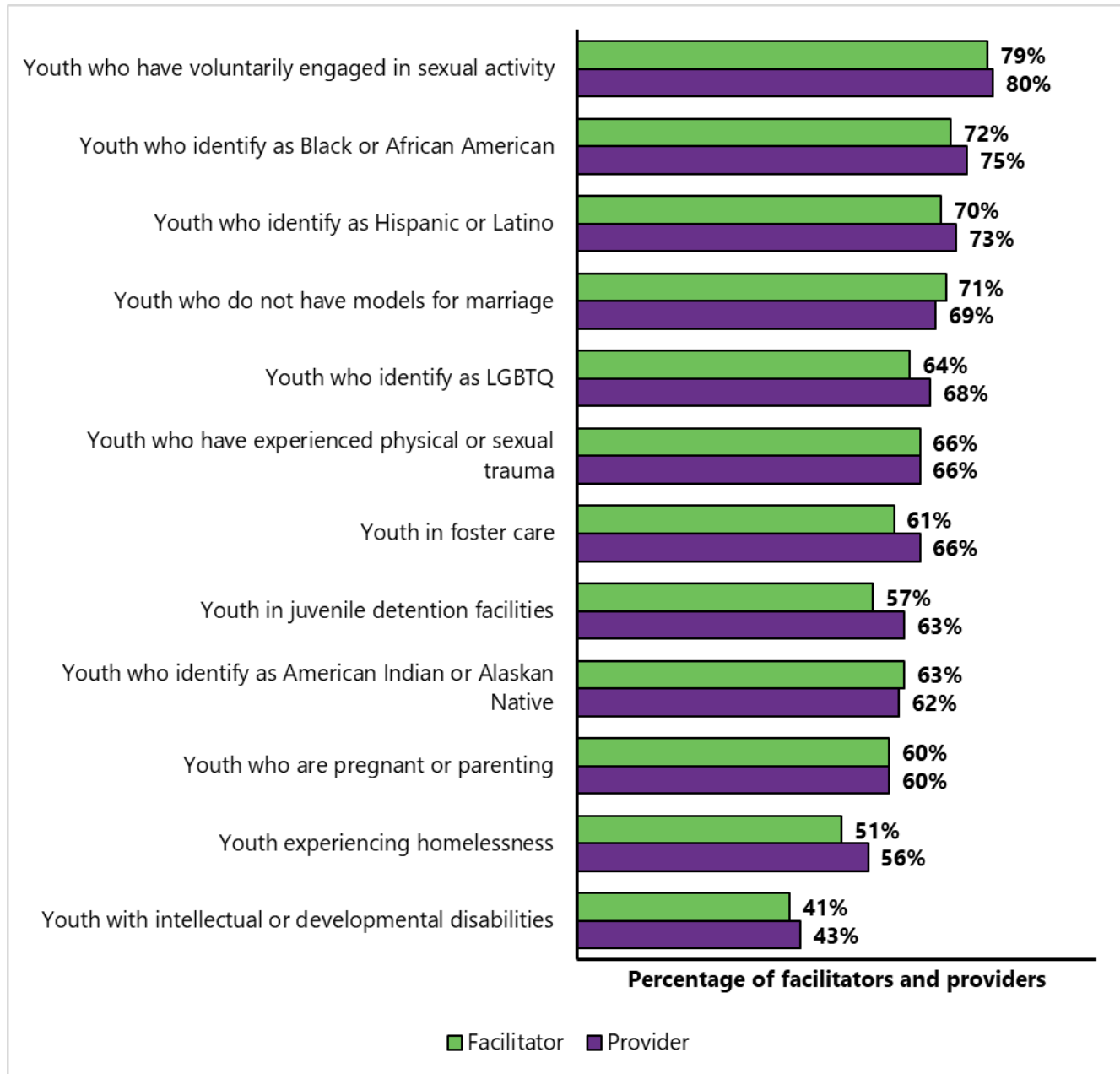
Many facilitators and providers reported that their SRAE curriculum meets the needs of groups of youth with different characteristics and backgrounds (Exhibit II.8).<sup>7</sup> The largest proportion of respondents indicated that their curriculum meets the needs of youth who voluntarily engaged in sexual activity in the past. Between 57 and 72 percent of facilitators and 62 and 75 percent of providers reported that their curriculum meets the needs of most other populations with specific characteristics or backgrounds.

SRAE programming among those surveyed may not meet the needs of all youth, however. A smaller portion of providers and facilitators felt that their curriculum meets the needs of two groups of youth. First, less than half of respondents (41 percent of facilitators and 43 percent of providers) reported that their SRAE curriculum content is aligned with the needs of youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Second, just over half (51 percent of facilitators and 56 percent of providers) reported their curriculum meets the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

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<sup>7</sup> The provider and facilitator surveys asked to what degree did respondents agree or disagree that their curriculum matches the needs of the following groups of youth: youth who identify as LGBTQ; do not have models for marriage; have voluntarily engaged in sexual activity; have experienced physical or sexual trauma; identify as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx, American Indian or Alaskan Native; have an intellectual or developmental disability; are pregnant or parenting; are experiencing homelessness; are in foster care; are in juvenile detention facilities.

**Exhibit II.8. Facilitator and provider reports of whether their SRAE curriculum meets the needs of different groups of youth**



Note: Sample includes 331 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients and 535 facilitators. Because respondents could select multiple concerns, the categories are not mutually exclusive and thus percentages do not total 100.

**Providers serving high school–age youth more often reported that their curriculum meets the needs of different groups of youth**

Eight one percent of providers serving the most youth in high school reported that their curriculum meets the needs of youth who do not have models for marriage, compared with 66 percent of providers serving middle school–age youth.

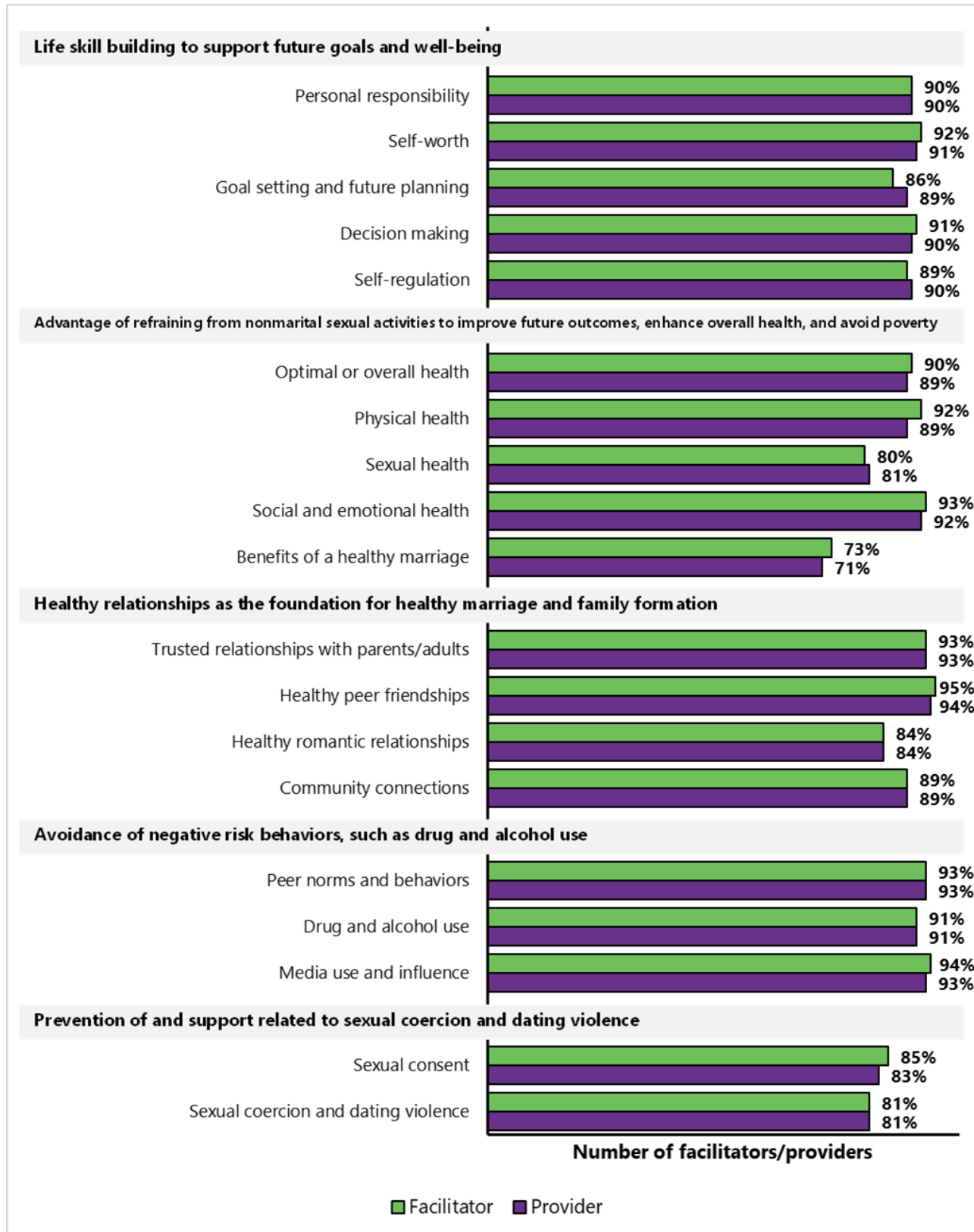
**3. Facilitators and providers felt most A–F subtopics were appropriate for both high school and middle school students**

For most A–F subtopics, almost all facilitators (86 to 95 percent) and providers (89 to 94 percent) felt the subtopic was age appropriate for both middle and high school youth (Exhibit II.9).<sup>8</sup> However, a smaller percentage of facilitators and providers reported that the following subtopics were appropriate for both middle and high school youth: sexual consent, healthy romantic relationships, sexual health, sexual coercion and dating violence, and the benefits of healthy marriage. For these subtopics, between 73 and 85 percent of facilitators and 71 and 84 percent of providers reported the topic was appropriate for both age groups. In addition, 10–21 percent of facilitators and 11–20 percent of providers reported that these subtopics were appropriate only for high school students. The benefits of a healthy marriage subtopic had the highest proportion of respondents stating that it is only appropriate for high school students (21 percent of facilitators and 20 percent of providers).

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<sup>8</sup> The provider and facilitator surveys asked whether respondents thought each of the A–F subtopics covered in their SRAE curriculum were appropriate for the following age groups: middle school age, high school age, both middle school and high school age, and neither middle school– nor high school–age. Provider and facilitators only reported on the subtopics that their SRAE curriculum covered. Across all A–F subtopics, the sample sizes ranged from 426 to 523 facilitators and 273 to 327 providers.

Exhibit II.9. Facilitator and provider reports of appropriateness of A–F subtopics for middle and high school youth



Note: Sample includes 330 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients and 531 facilitators.

### **Providers serving the most youth in high school were more likely to report that the A–F subtopics were appropriate only for high school youth**

Providers serving the most youth in high school were more likely to report that the A–F subtopics were appropriate only for high school youth, compared with providers serving the most youth in middle school (who were more likely to report the subtopics were appropriate for both middle school and high school). For instance, 26 percent of providers serving mostly high school youth felt the benefits of healthy marriage subtopic was appropriate only for youth in high school, compared with just 14 percent of providers serving mostly youth in middle school. In addition, 31 percent of providers serving mostly high school youth felt sexual coercion and dating violence was appropriate only for high school youth, whereas 11 percent of providers serving mostly youth in middle school felt the same.

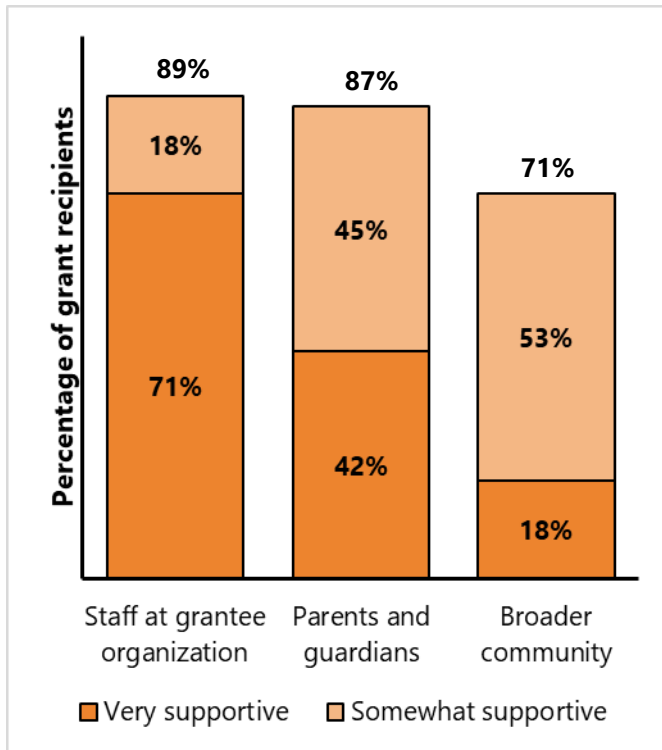
## **D. School and community receptiveness to curricular content**

Provider, facilitator, and grantee survey respondents all reported that site staff and parents and guardians were generally supportive of SRAE curricula and the A–F topics. They also reported that the A–F topics are engaging for youth.

### **1. Parents and guardians, staff, and communities are supportive of SRAE programming**

Respondents indicated SRAE programming had support within the communities served. Almost all Title V State grant recipients (89 percent) reported that staff at their own organization were somewhat or very supportive of their SRAE curriculum (Exhibit II.10). Looking outside their organization, most Title V State grant recipients noted that parents and guardians (87 percent) and the broader community (71 percent) were somewhat or very supportive of the curriculum as well.

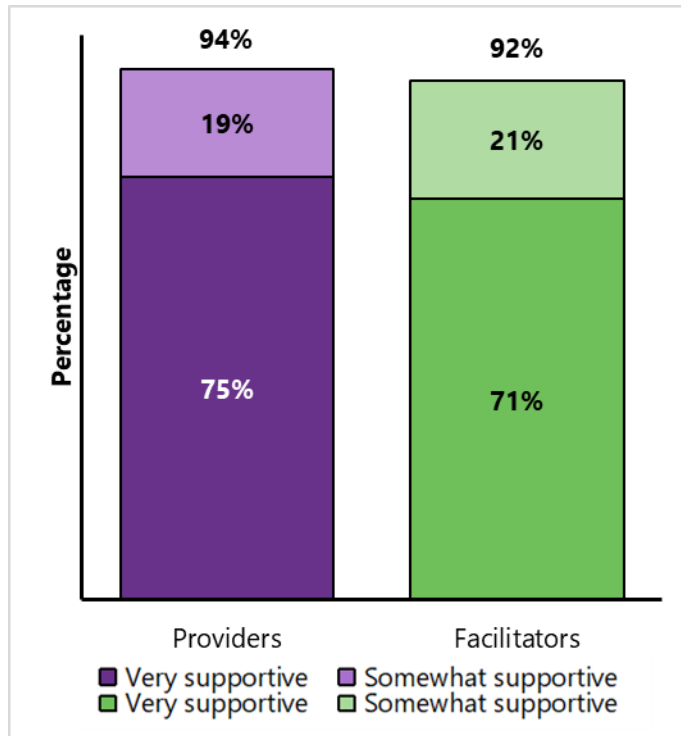
**Exhibit II.10. Title V State grant recipient-reported levels of support for SRAE curriculum from staff at their organization, parents and guardians, and the broader community**



Note: Sample includes 38 state grant recipients.

Similarly, almost all providers (94 percent) and facilitators (92 percent) felt staff at implementation sites (for example, teachers and counselors at schools and staff at community-based organizations) were somewhat or very supportive of their SRAE curriculum (Exhibit II.11).

**Exhibit II.11. Provider- and facilitator-reported levels of support for SRAE curriculum from staff at implementation sites**

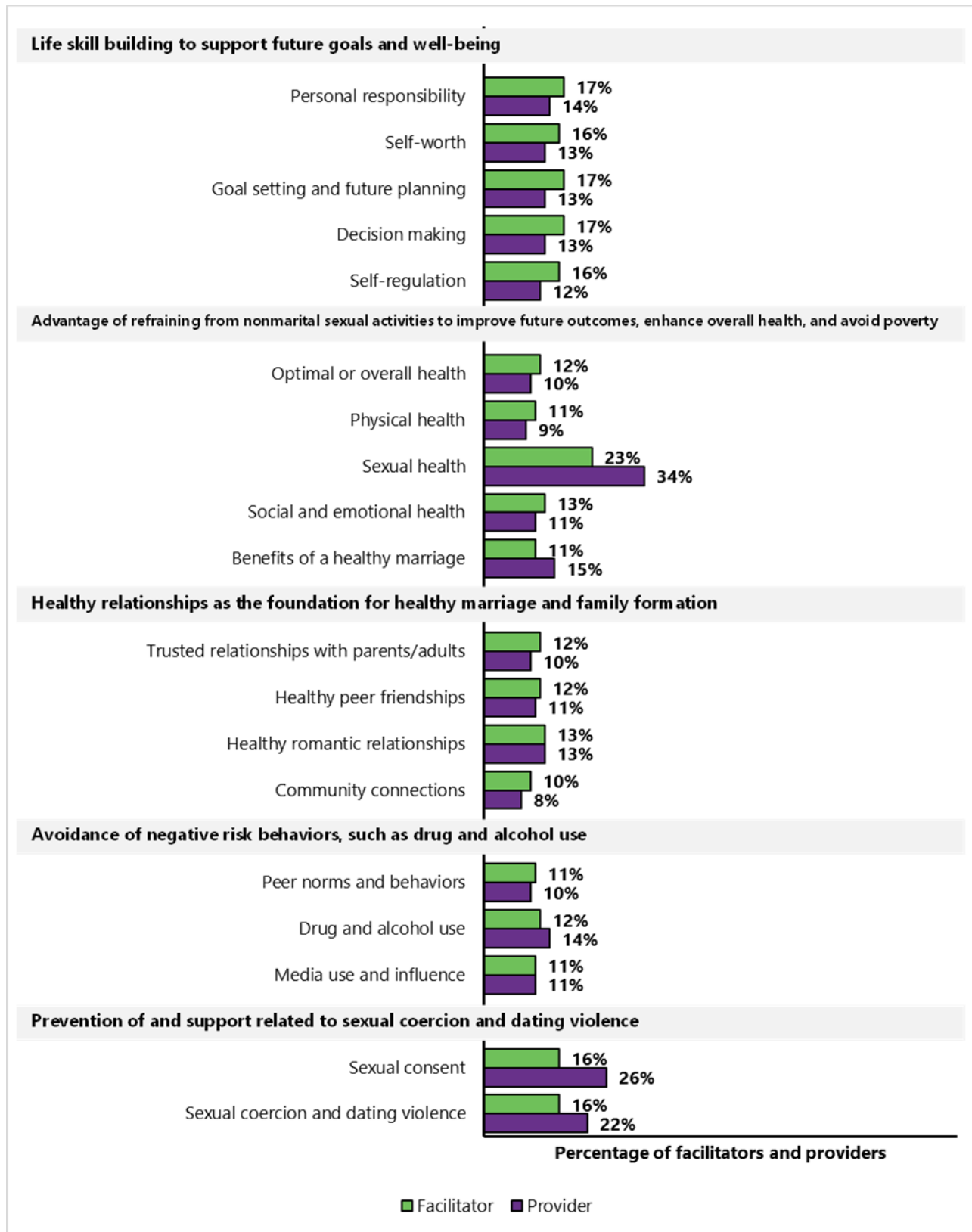


Note: Sample includes 331 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients and 535 facilitators.

**2. Providers and facilitators noted that site staff generally did not express concerns about teaching most A–F topics**

For most A–F topics, less than 15 percent of providers and facilitators reported that implementation site staff expressed concerns about teaching the topic (Exhibit II.12). A higher proportion of providers reported that implementation site staff had concerns about topics related to sexual education: sexual health (34 percent), sexual consent (26 percent), and sexual coercion and dating violence (22 percent). Fewer facilitators noted concerns about these subtopics from site staff; 23 percent indicated staff had expressed concerns about sexual health and only 16 percent noted that staff had concerns about either sexual consent or sexual coercion and dating violence.

Exhibit II.12. Facilitator and provider reports of implementation site staff concerns about A–F subtopics



Note: Sample includes 331 Title V State grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Departmental grant recipients and 535 facilitators.

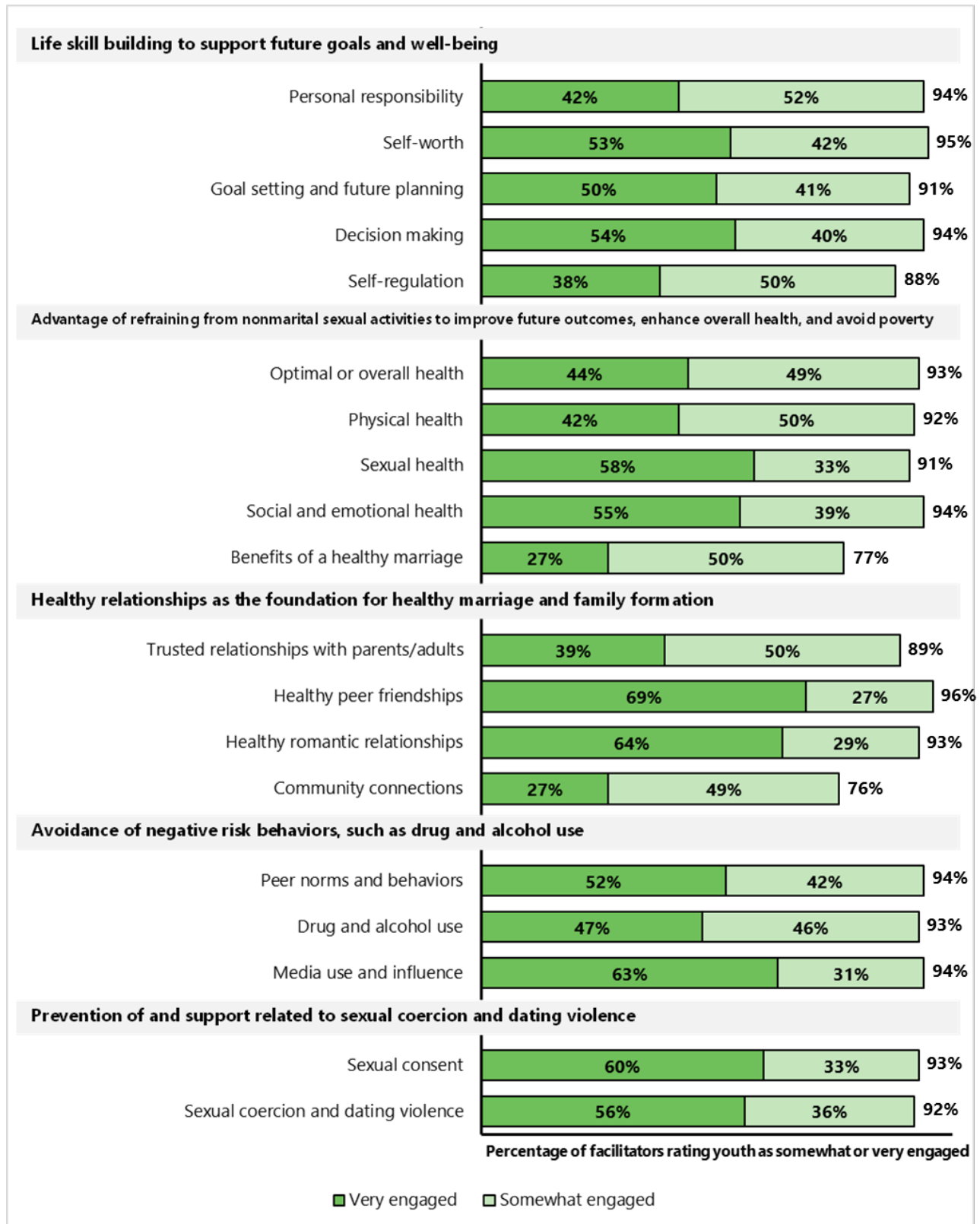
## **E. Youth receptiveness to curricular content**

Overall, facilitator survey respondents thought youth were engaged in most A–F subtopics. Similarly, most youth focus group participants found SRAE programming to be both relevant and engaging.

### **1. Almost all facilitators reported youth were engaged in most A–F subtopics**

Facilitators generally reported that youth were engaged in SRAE programming. For nearly all A–F subtopics, at least 88 percent of facilitators said that youth were very or somewhat engaged (Exhibit II.13). The subtopics with the highest rates of youth engagement (94 to 96 percent) included healthy peer relationships, self-worth, decision making, and social and emotional health. A smaller proportion of facilitators indicated that youth were engaged in content covering the benefits of a healthy marriage (77 percent) and community connections (76 percent).

Exhibit II.13. Facilitator ratings of participant engagement in A–F subtopics



Note: The sample size was between 426 and 523 facilitators, depending on the subtopic. Only facilitators who reported that their curriculum covered the particular subtopic received this question.

## 2. Youth felt that SRAE program content was relevant, though some wanted more information on some topics

In all focus groups, youth shared that they found almost all the topics covered in their SRAE program to be useful and meaningful. Consistent with the facilitator reports on youth engagement, youth reported that they found content on health relationships helpful. Throughout the focus groups, youth said they found information on abstinence, setting boundaries, sexually transmitted diseases, and drug use useful. One focus group participant said, “I feel like this information will be useful later on in life, it’s good to know now so I know for the future” and another said, “The things we learned, we can use them in situations... like for things in a toxic relationship that we can use in the future.” A few focus group participants found some topics less useful because they perceived them to be less applicable to their daily lives or they had already learned about them. These topics included peer pressure, cyberbullying, and abstinence.



*“I feel like this information will be useful later on in life, it’s good to know now so I know for the future.”*

— Youth focus group participant

In some focus groups, youth shared topics that their SRAE curriculum did not cover enough, or they wanted to learn more about. Some youth said they wanted more information on relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, sexuality, setting healthy boundaries, the consequences following sexual activity, and deciding the appropriate age to start engaging in sexual activity. Some youth wanted to learn how to access resources, like contraceptives for pregnancy prevention and therapy for healthy relationships.

## 3. Youth felt that SRAE programming was engaging

Across all focus groups, youth provided positive feedback on SRAE program facilitators. Most youth felt the facilitators were relatable and dedicated to their classes. Many youth throughout the focus groups felt that facilitators established a culture of trust and respect, which allowed youth to share openly. One youth focus group participant said, “Every time they asked a question, they reminded us it was a judgment free zone, or they wouldn’t share answers with anyone else, so it made us feel comfortable.” In addition, youth found some program components fun and engaging, including performing skits, filming videos, and doing hands-on activities that allowed for movement and interaction in the classroom. Facilitators sometimes brought incentives, offered positive encouragement, and praised youth.



*“Every time they asked a question, they reminded us it was a judgment free zone or they wouldn’t share answers with anyone else, so it made us feel comfortable.”*

— Youth focus group participant

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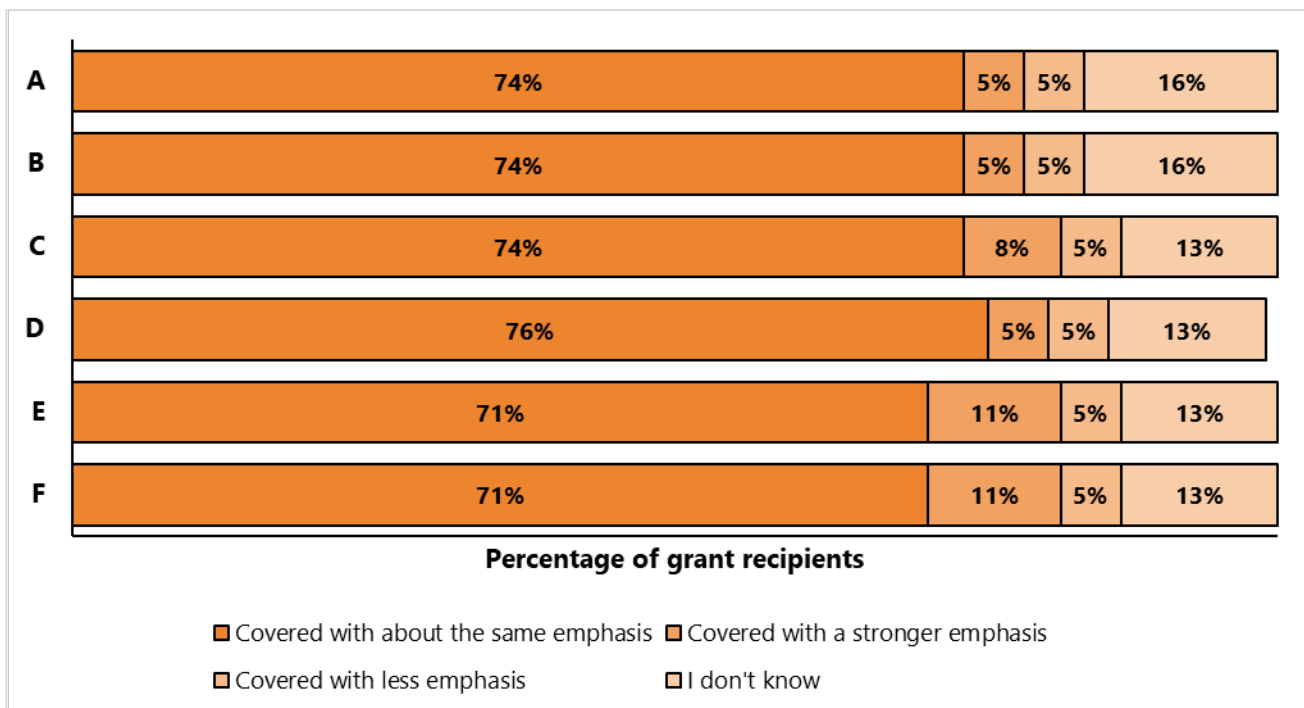
### III. State Grant Recipient and Provider Interpretation and Coverage of A–F Topics

Since the start of their grants, most Title V State grant recipients have not changed their understanding of A–F topics. In addition, they have not changed how they cover or emphasize the topics. Similarly, most providers reported that their curricula cover the A–F subtopics, and that they have not changed how they cover A–F content.

#### A. Since the start of their grants, most Title V State grant recipients have a similar understanding of or emphasis on A–F content

Most Title V State grant recipients did not change how their program covered and emphasized the A–F topics over time. For all A–F topics, about three quarters of Title V State grant recipients (71 to 76 percent, depending on the topic) covered the required content with the same emphasis as they did at the start of their grant (Exhibit III.1). A small number of Title V State grant recipients (eight grant recipients) reported that they covered A–F content with more emphasis than they did at the start of the grant (two to four grant recipients, or 5 to 11 percent, depending on the topic). For all topics, two Title V State grant recipients (5 percent) covered the topic with less emphasis than they did at the start of their grant.

**Exhibit III.1. Title V State grant recipient emphasis on A–F topics**



Note: Sample includes 38 state grant recipients.

A = Benefits associated with personal responsibility; B = Advantage of refraining from nonmarital sexual activity; C = Increased likelihood of avoiding poverty when you attain self-sufficiency before sexual activity; D = Foundational components of healthy relationships and their impact; E = How other youth risk behaviors increase the risk for teen sex; F = How to resist and avoid, and receive help regarding, sexual coercion and dating violence.

Of the eight Title V State grant recipients that changed their emphasis on A–F content for at least one topic, three noted their changed emphasis was because they had changed their interpretation of the A–F topics. Title V State grant recipients also changed the emphasis of A–F content for other reasons, such as response to needs in their community, feedback from community members, or conversations with other SRAE grant recipients or providers.

## **B. Most providers reported their curricula covered all the A–F topics, and they have not changed how they covered related content**

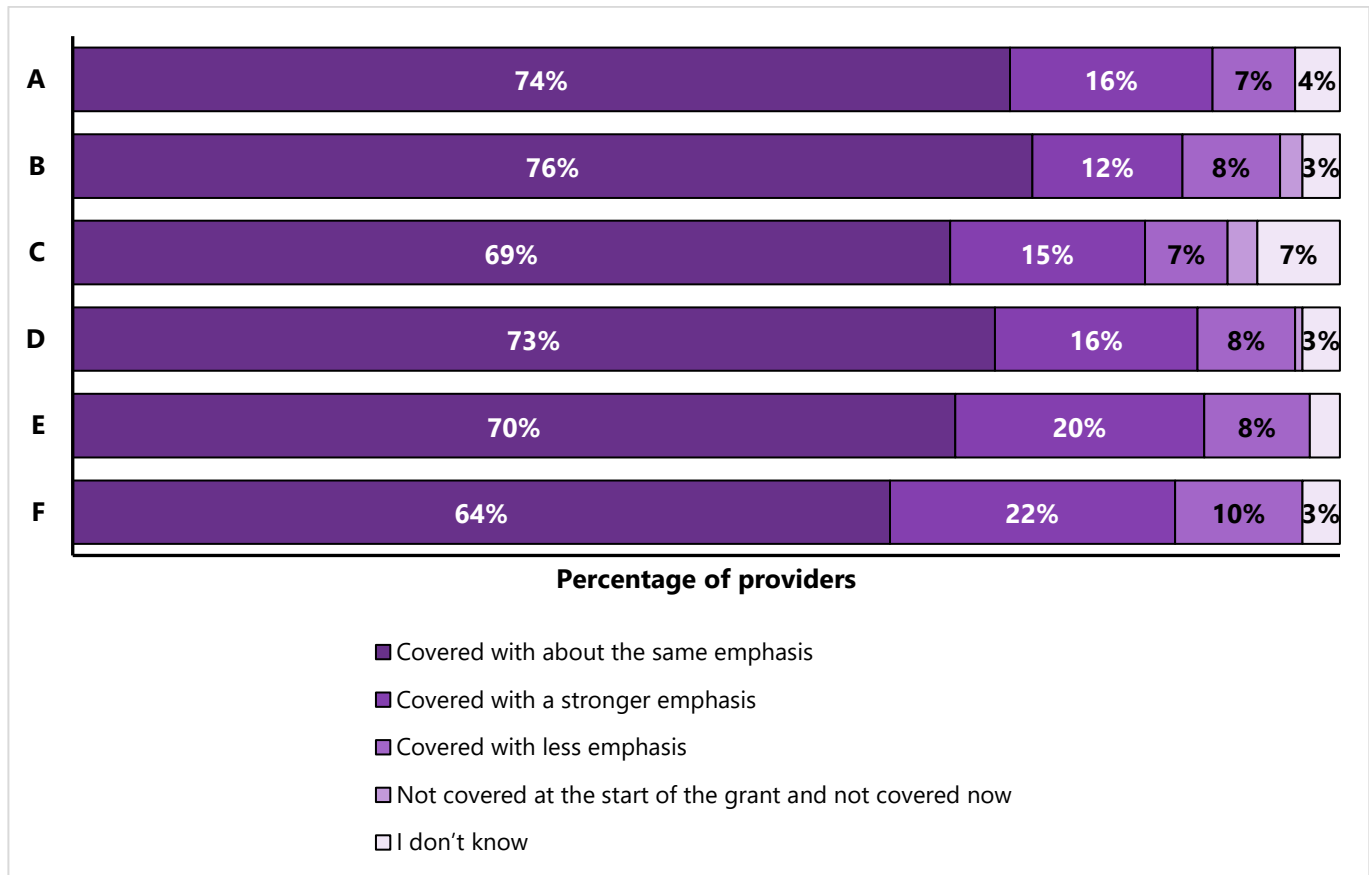
Over 80 percent of providers reported that their selected SRAE curriculum covered nearly all A–F subtopics somewhat or a lot. Of the A–F subtopics, a smaller number of providers reported their curriculum covered the benefits of healthy marriage (65 percent) or community connections (78 percent).

Most providers reported that they have not changed how much they emphasize the A–F topics since the start of their grant. For all A–F topics, about three quarters of providers (64 to 76 percent, depending on topic) covered the required content areas with the same emphasis as they did at the start of their grant (Exhibit III.2).<sup>9</sup> A small proportion of providers reported that they covered A–F topics with less emphasis than they did at the start of the grant (7 to 10 percent, depending on the topic). A larger portion of providers reported that they covered A–F topics with more emphasis than they did at the start of the grant (12 to 22 percent, depending on the topic).

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<sup>9</sup> Two hundred and fifty-eight providers received questions about the interpretation, emphasis, and changes to A–F content. While 26 providers received these questions as part of their NWS survey, 232 providers received a separate survey with these questions because of an error that resulted in Title V State and Competitive grant recipients skipping some questions they were eligible to respond to. The response rate for these questions was lower than that of the NWS survey overall (66 percent, compared with 90 percent). The data presented here is based on responses from 169 providers out of the 258 eligible respondents who received these questions.

Exhibit III.2. Provider emphasis on A–F content



Note: Sample includes 169 Title V State grant subrecipients and Title V Competitive grant recipients. Bars without percentage labels have values less than three percent.

A = Benefits associated with personal responsibility; B = Advantage of refraining from nonmarital sexual activity; C = Increased likelihood of avoiding poverty when you attain self-sufficiency before sexual activity; D = Foundational components of healthy relationships and their impact; E = How other youth risk behaviors increase the risk for teen sex; F = How to resist and avoid, and receive help regarding, sexual coercion and dating violence.

Providers reported that they put more emphasis on two A–F topics now than they did at the start of their grant: how other youth risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol usage, increase the risk for teen sex (20 percent) and how to resist and avoid, and receive help regarding, sexual coercion and dating violence, recognizing that even with consent teen sex remains a youth risk behavior (22 percent). The providers that changed their emphasis of the A–F content (either to increase or decrease emphasis) did so most often because of feedback from the community or because the needs of the community changed.

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## IV. Summary

State programming offered in 2022–2023 is consistent with the plans the Title V State SRAE grant recipients shared in 2020, closer to the start of their 2018 grant. State grant recipients are still primarily serving middle school–age youth. The most prevalent curricula among state grant recipients are still the Teen Outreach Program, Making a Difference, Choosing the Best, and REAL Essentials. A small number of grant recipients made changes to their statewide SRAE programs, such as changes to implementation setting, facilitator, program dosage, and intended program recipients. No state grant recipients changed their curricular content. Similarly, most state grant recipients have not changed their understanding of the A–F topics required by the legislation, nor have they changed how they cover or emphasize the topics.

Overall, providers have not made changes to their SRAE programs since the start of their grant period. A small number of providers made changes to implementation setting, facilitator, program dosage, and intended program recipients. Most providers continued to implement SRAE programming in middle schools during school; many also delivered SRAE programming in high schools during school hours and at community-based organizations. Of the providers that made changes to their SRAE program, most often such changes were made to the curricular content to make it more interactive, include additional information, or to present information in different ways. Most providers reported that their curricula cover the A–F content, and that they have not changed how they cover A–F content.

There is support for SRAE programming among people involved in delivering SRAE programs, parents and guardians and other community members, and youth. Overall, facilitators and providers reported that their SRAE curricular content meets the needs of most youth, and that they think the content is age appropriate. Most grant recipients reported that staff at their organization as well as parents and guardians and the broader community were supportive of their SRAE curriculum. Likewise, providers and facilitators reported that staff at the implementation sites, such as school staff, were supportive of their SRAE curriculum. Youth who participated in focus groups shared that they found SRAE programming relevant and engaging.

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## V. Discussion

More could be done to learn from grant recipients, providers, community members, and program advocates about their interpretation of the NWS findings and potential implications for SRAE programming. Two evident areas for additional exploration include (1) the lack of changes to SRAE programming over time, and (2) the interpretation and understanding of the A-F topics.

As described in the report, findings from both the EIS and NWS suggest that most State Title V grant recipients and providers—State Title V grant subrecipients, Title V Competitive grant recipients, and General Department grant recipients—have not changed their programming since the start of their grants. There is more we could learn about why grant recipients and providers have not changed their programming, particularly since the NWS surveys assumed grantees and providers would make changes to programming based on early experiences delivering programming under a new grant. The lack of changes could mean that these organizations have determined that they are achieving their SRAE program goals. The fact that most grant recipients, providers, and facilitators believe their SRAE curriculum is well-received by community members, including parents and participants supports this interpretation. Yet, without additional data, we cannot draw a firm conclusion as to why programming has not changed much. It could be useful to learn more about why organizations have not changed their programming, and whether these decisions were data driven.

Most State Title V grant recipients, State Title V grant subrecipients, and Title V Competitive grant recipients that responded to the surveys indicated that their interpretation of and the emphasis they put on the A-F topics has not changed since the start of their grant. However, the survey did not assess grant recipients' or providers' understanding of the A-F requirements, or dive deeply into how they covered these topics. Grant recipients and providers may have interpreted these requirements and the content their SRAE programming should cover differently, so even though their own interpretation has not changed over time, we cannot conclude that all grant recipients and providers share a collective understanding or that their understanding is aligned with the intent of the legislative requirements. Conversations with grant recipients, providers, and advocates could provide insight into the findings in this report and inform additional information or technical assistance needs. These conversations could, for example, inform whether there is a need for more in-depth information on grant recipients' and providers' understanding of each A-F topic and subtopic, and the extent to which it aligns with the true intent of the legislation.

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## Appendix A. Topics A–F and Subtopics

### **A. Life-skill building to support future goals and well-being**

Personal responsibility

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Self-worth

---

Goal setting and future planning

---

Decision making

### **B and C. Advantages of refraining from nonmarital sexual activity to improve future outcomes, enhance overall health, and avoid poverty**

Optimal or overall health (defined as a dynamic balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health)

---

Physical health

---

Sexual health

---

Social and emotional health

---

Benefits of a healthy marriage

### **D. Healthy relationships as the foundation for healthy marriage and family formation**

Trusted relationships with parents/adults

---

Healthy peer friendships

---

Healthy romantic relationships

---

Community connections

### **E. Avoidance of negative risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use**

Peer norms and behaviors

---

Drug and alcohol use

---

Media use and influence

### **F. Prevention of and support related to sexual coercion and dating violence**

Sexual consent

---

Sexual coercion and dating violence

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## Appendix B. Sample Sizes and Response Rates, by Survey

**Exhibit B.1. Grantee survey**

Grantee survey	Title V State grant recipients
<i>N</i>	38
# complete	38
% complete	100%

**Exhibit B.2. Provider survey**

Provider survey	Title V State grant subrecipients	Title V Competitive grant recipients	General Departmental grant recipients	Total sample
<i>N</i>	265	27	77	369
# complete	234	24	73	331
% complete	88%	89%	95%	90%

**Exhibit B.3. Facilitator survey**

Facilitator survey	Title V State grant subrecipient facilitators	Title V Competitive grant recipient facilitators	General Departmental grant recipient facilitators	Total sample
<i>N</i>	508	48	194	750
# complete	359	31	145	535
% complete	71%	65%	75%	71%

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## Appendix C. Subgroup Analysis

For the provider survey, we examined survey data for several subgroups of interest to see if there was variation in findings. We analyzed the data by looking for meaningful differences that would complement the main findings and included those findings in call-out boxes throughout report. These subgroups were grant recipient type, youth grade level and age, implementation setting, curricula, and region. For grant recipient type, we looked at differences between Title V State grant recipients and discretionary grant recipients. Among providers that reported that they served the largest number of youth in a school setting, we looked at differences between those that served the most youth in middle school and those that served the most youth in high school. Similarly, among providers that served the most youth in a non-school setting, we looked at the differences in data between two age groups: middle school youth ages 10–13 years old and high school–age youth 14 years old and older (providers could serve one or both age groups). We also compared survey data from providers that served the largest number of youth in a school setting with data from providers that served the largest number of youth in a non-school setting. For the curricula-based subgroups, we focused on the five most prevalent curricula implemented among providers. Last, we looked at differences among providers that delivered SRAE programming in five regions: Midwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and West (this analysis excluded respondents from territories outside of these regions). Table C.1 presents the sample sizes for all subgroups.

**Exhibit C.1. Sample sizes for subgroup analysis**

<b>Grant type</b>	<b>N</b>
Title V State grant recipients	234
Discretionary grant recipients (Title V Competitive and General Departmental)	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>Youth grade level</b>	<b>N</b>
Middle school	182
High school	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>Youth age (years)</b>	<b>N</b>
10–13	53
14 and older	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Implementation setting</b>	<b>N</b>
School	266
Non-school	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>328</b>

<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>N</b>
Love Notes (SRA)	51
Choosing the Best	38
Real Essentials	48
TOP	47
Making a Difference	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>

<b>Region</b>	<b>N</b>
Midwest	62
Northeast	42
Southeast	134
Southwest	39
West	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>323</b>

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