



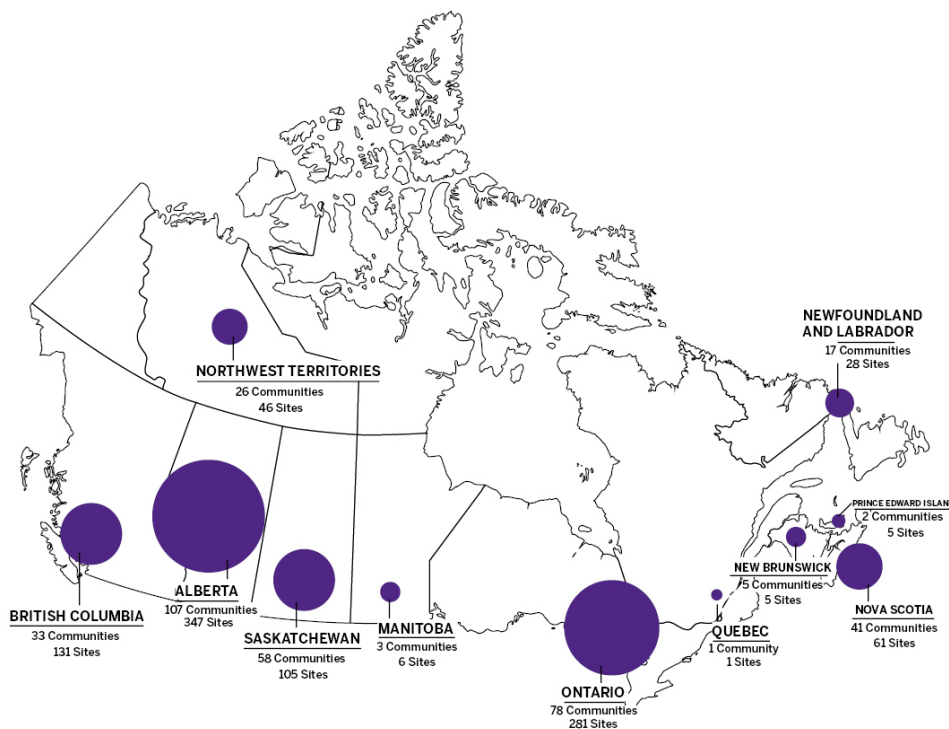
# Promising Practices: Implementing School-based Programming

## Fourth R Overview

The Fourth R includes a range of healthy relationships programs that have been shown to promote positive peer interactions and reduce dating and peer violence. There are different components for different grades, as well as community-based versions. Some of the recent program components have a particular emphasis on promoting positive mental health. In addition, we have developed strengths-based programming that is uniquely designed to meet the needs of Indigenous youth, LGBT2Q+ youth, and vulnerable youth. Between 2010 and 2018 we were funded through the Innovation Strategy of the Public Health Agency of Canada. Across three project phases we developed new programming components, evaluated programs, made regional adaptations, and scaled up nationally. By 2018 Fourth R programs were implemented in more than 5000 schools and community organizations nationally.

## School-based Implementation

Over the course of the three phases of PHAC funding, the Fourth R was implemented from coast to coast to coast and in numerous different education systems (i.e., English public, English Catholic, French public and French Catholic).



The purpose of this summary is to identify promising practices in the area of implementing school-based programming. It is one of eight issue-specific summaries designed to share actionable, positive strategies to improve effectiveness in the mental health promotion and violence prevention efforts underway.



## Promising Practices

### *Dedicate adequate resources to teacher preparation and develop an implementation plan*

Although initial enthusiasm for the *Fourth R* may be high and people want to implement immediately, it is important to take the time to develop an implementation plan. A strong implementation plan is multi-year and assigns key responsibilities to specific people. Providing training is an important part of an implementation plan, and it is essential to ensure that there are adequate resources for this. Although we have developed an online training, educators still show a strong preference for in-person training and have noted that it is difficult to learn the requisite skills without having the opportunity to practice with peers.

### *Expect and plan for some program modification*

There is an inherent tension between public health concepts of adherence and fidelity (in which an intervention is delivered exactly as designed) and implementation of programs in school settings, where educators are expected to tailor their programming to meet the needs of their youth. Since modification is going to occur, it is important to plan for it. Two strategies we use in the *Fourth R* include providing multiple options in the curriculum where possible (such that educators can pick and choose) and the use of a stoplight approach to modification. The stoplight provides guidance about what type of modifications can be made freely (green light), what type should be undertaken with caution (yellow light) and what type should be avoided (red light).

### *Engage decision-makers*

School boards have distinct decision-making protocols and it is essential to identify who the key decision-makers are in any particular board. Responsibility for healthy relationships programs can differ from one board to another. One key strategy for engaging decision-makers is to show them how evidence-based mental health promotion / violence prevention programming aligns with their particular mandate and / or other Ministry or board commitments. It is important to track turnover of key personnel and to ensure that new appointees are engaged.

### *Identify champions*

Champions help create the conditions for innovative approaches to successfully take root. Champions have the primary responsibility of providing leadership and expertise at the board level and supporting colleagues as they begin to implement the program. Champions do not replace having senior staff at the board level involved in planning, training and development, monitoring program fidelity and providing implementation support – both champions and senior leadership are critical. Effective champions value and believe in the program. They are enthusiastic about the *Fourth R* and prioritize it as a strategy for schools to implement. They also promote it among their colleagues. Effective champions understand the importance of training and evidence-based practice, yet are also cognizant of the needs of classroom teachers. They also know how to navigate the education system because they understand the organizational structure of school boards in terms of cost efficiency, and the bureaucracy of school boards.

## Consider a coaching and monitoring strategy

The research literature is clear that a “train and hope” model is not the most effective way to encourage high quality implementation. School boards can increase implementation quality by utilizing coaching and monitoring strategies. These strategies require a key person at the board level to oversee this as part of their portfolio.

## School-based Implementation: Fourth R Research and Resources

Over the course of this project we have developed numerous resources that include information and guidance about implementation. We have also published several research articles and chapters for edited books.

### Implementation Manual

The implementation manual includes numerous resources and considerations for partnering with school boards. It highlights opportunities and challenges associated with different implementation models. It also identifies important considerations across the whole implementation cycle.

Available at: <https://youthrelationships.org/implementation-manual>

### Engaging Aboriginal Youth Manual

This toolkit has many strategies and checklists to support respectful and effective work with Indigenous partners. There is a section on working with schools and numerous case studies. It is available in both English and French.

Available at: <https://youthrelationships.org/engaging-aboriginal-youth-toolkit>

## Journal Articles and Chapters

Crooks, C. V., Chiodo, D., Dunlop, C., Lapointe, A., & Kerry, A. (2018). The Fourth R: Considerations for implementing evidence-based healthy relationships and mental health promotion programming in diverse contexts. In A. W. Leschied, D. Saklofske, & G. Flett (eds.) (2018). *The Handbook of Implementation of School Based Mental Programs* (pp. 299-321). Springer Publishing, New York, NY.

Crooks, C. V., Exner-Cortens, Siebold, W., Rosier, M., & Baker, K (in press). Building capacity to implement teen dating violence prevention: Lessons learned from the Alaska Fourth R initiative. In D. Wolfe and J. Temple (Eds.) *Dating violence: Theory, research, and prevention*. New York: Academic Press/Elsevier.

Crooks, C. V., Chiodo, D., Zwarych, S., Hughes, R., & Wolfe, D. A. (2013). Predicting implementation success of an evidence-based program to promote healthy relationships among students two to eight years after teacher training. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 32*, 125-138.

Crooks, C. V., Zwicker, J., Wells, L., Hughes, R., Langlois, A., & Emery, J. C. H. (2017). Estimating costs and benefits associated with evidence-based prevention: Four case studies based on the Fourth R program. *The School of Public Policy, SPP Research Papers, 10*(10), 1-27.

Chiodo, D., & Kolpin, H. (2018). Both promising and problematic: Reviewing the evidence for implementation science. In A. W. Leschied, D. Saklofske, & G. Flett (eds.) (2018). *The Handbook of Implementation of School Based Mental Programs* (pp.11-31). Springer Publishing, New York, NY.