

# Project ROOTS Building Blocks

1. **Select and train appropriate Facilitators.** Facilitators should have a basic understanding of the subject matter and experience working with youth to influence ingrained attitudes and achieve positive behavior change. Facilitators should be the same sex and of similar background who can ultimately serve as a “credible messenger” or someone who has a good understanding of the environment and risks that the Participants face daily. Facilitators should be comfortable and enjoy working with children age 8-13 since they may have to respond to questions about their own beliefs and values in an age appropriate manner. Facilitators are not limited to school or after school staff such as at the Boys & Girls Clubs or any similar program or affiliation.

Sites should always vet Facilitators through background checks, interviews, reference checks, and any other specific selection criteria that best fits the organization.

See the section entitled “Project ROOTS Facilitator Checklist” for more information on the role and responsibility of the Facilitator.

2. **Carefully select and hold a safe space conducive to learning.** It is imperative that Project ROOTS Facilitators create physically and emotionally safe environments where Participants openly share their feelings and ideas. Demonstrating an investment to the group will cultivate a learning-conducive environment. To achieve this, a Facilitator should be consistent, fair, and empathetic. Posters and room decor including encouraging quotes, Participant produced art, and program-related visuals of people of various ethnicities, statures, and professions could support a more equitable environment. Safe spaces are primarily located in public locations including schools, recreational centers, religious spaces, after-school centers, and other community spaces.

3. **Participant recruitment** should be targeted towards children in vulnerable communities and/or youth who engage in risky behaviors. Because Project ROOTS aims to create a safe and comfortable space, encourage Participants to come on a regular basis. Continuously introducing new Participants may disrupt the group’s progress and solidarity; however, the Facilitator’s role is to ensure that every Participant feels welcomed by the group. Facilitators should maintain no more than a 1:20 Facilitator to Participant ratio, typical to a group mentoring setting.

4. **Parent/Caregiver engagement and support** sets the tone for Project ROOTS as a holistic approach to prevention education. This is an integral and necessary component of the group that can be achieved through a 1) parent/caregiver orientation, and 2) selective and strategic involvement. During the caregiver orientation, caregivers should be given Participant Permission Slips that also communicate the goals and schedule for the program. Permission slips are recommended, if not legally required, for field trip participation. Create intentional opportunities for caregivers to volunteer at Project ROOTS functions, but do not require participation in all sessions. Keep in mind that

caregiver involvement should be limited to specific sessions to uphold the group's "safe space." It is highly recommended that all forms of communication, verbal and written, be in the language spoken by the caregiver(s) in the home (Please refer to the *Caregiver Orientation* section. A sample *Participant Permission Slip* is provided in Appendix A).

**5. Monitoring and evaluation plan.** *Monitor* the program on a weekly or monthly basis by conducting informal program evaluations, such as suggestion boxes and end-of-program questionnaires. Based on Participant feedback, the Facilitator may make real-time adjustments and modify or integrate new teaching methods fitting for that specific cohort. This could potentially identify lessons that were unclear and need to be revisited. *Evaluate* the program to determine whether the cohort is meeting its objectives by administering baseline and endline assessments (pre and post assessments). When possible, qualitative interviews and focus groups should be conducted with both Facilitators and Participants to complement the quantifiable data. *For access to Project ROOTS' monitoring and evaluation plan and tools, please send a request via the 'contact us' feature on [www.rootstoolkit.org](http://www.rootstoolkit.org). PCI may support data analysis and provide technical assistance to an implementing partner.*

**6. Incorporate all possible learning tools and pedagogical methods.**

Facilitators should not dictate entire activities, rather they should be guided by Participant responses and feedback. Avoid didactic facilitation and instead promote reflective participation. Promote leadership, group discussions, reflection and rapport. Technology should be utilized appropriately. Videos and applications of online activities or interactive sessions can be a great technique in engaging children. Games, role playing, and group discussions are all great tools to supplement self-reflection.

**7. Apply an ethical and trauma-informed approach to avoid unintended harm to Participants.**

It is crucial that Participants feel safe when commenting on sensitive issues and sharing their personal experiences and/or asking questions related to violence, sexuality, reproductive health, and any other sensitive issues that may transpire in conversation. Group solidarity must be continuously nurtured and reaffirmed. The Facilitator should be aware of questions or comments that may trigger a Participant and result in unintended emotional harm. It is critical that Facilitators are clear on their institutional response protocols and procedures if a Participant self-identifies as a victim of abuse or discloses other harmful behavior and refer the child to the appropriate services and/or make a mandated report to the proper authorities.

