Health Education for Youth: An Evidence-based Curriculum for Improving Sexual Health Outcomes among At-risk Youth

Courtney Waters, Claudia Powell, & Alison Greene
University of Arizona Southwest Institute for Research on Women

STEP FORWARD

- A collaboration between University of Arizona Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW), CODAC Behavioral Health Services, and Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (SAAF).
- Comprehensive sexuality education and confidential HIV testing in conjunction with substance abuse treatment services for youth ages 12 to 17.

BACKGROUND

- 30% of 12- to 17-year-olds report experimenting with drugs.¹
- 46.8% of high school students have had sexual intercourse.²
- Youth who use substances are more likely to have early sexual initiation, unprotected sexual intercourse, and a greater number of sexual partners than their non-using counterparts.³
- Substance use puts youth at risk of sexually transmitted infections including HIV, unplanned pregnancy, and sexual violence.³

SIROW HEALTH EDUCATION FOR YOUTH

- Comprehensive sexuality education curriculum
- Meets Arizona state educational standards
- Incorporates factual age-appropriate information and skill-development exercises on topics including:
  - Sexual/reproductive anatomy/physiology
  - Disease transmission and prevention
  - Safer sex protection
  - Relationships/communication
- SIROW-HEY principles include creating a safe space, celebrating diversity, using universal responses, clarifying values, and validating participants’ questions and concerns.

METHODS

- 412 youth ages 12-17
- Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN), Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), SIROW-HEY knowledge assessment

DISCUSSION & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Preliminary data analysis shows promising program outcomes.
- Identify links between participants’ substance use and sexual behaviors.
- Study knowledge assessment data to ascertain SIROW-HEY topics to further emphasize.

RESULTS

- Those participants who were engaging in sexual behaviors has more protected sexual contacts six month post-intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past 30 Day Sexual Activity and Protection Outcomes</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>6-months post-baseline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in sexual activity (n=336)</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of sexual contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>480 (115 sexually active youth)</td>
<td>466 (109 sexually active youth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprotected sexual contacts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually active youth engaging ONLY in protected sex</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender (n=412)
- Male: 45%
- Female: 55%

Ethnicity (n=412)
- Hispanic/Latino: 23%
- Non-Hispanic: 77%

Race (n=412)
- None of the above: 57.8%
- White: 25.2%
- Black or African American: 8.5%
- American Indian: 5.6%
- Multi-racial: 1.2%
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 0.7%
- Asian: 0.5%
- Alaska Native: 0.5%


*The Step Forward project is funded by SAMHSA/CSAT.*