

EVALUATION ABSTRACT: ALASKA PROMOTING HEALTH AMONG TEENS, COMPREHENSIVE ABSTINENCE AND SAFER SEX (AKPHAT)

Grantee

State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services
Project Director: Mollie Rosier, mollie.rosier@alaska.gov

Evaluator

University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research
Evaluation Lead: Stephanie Martin, smartinak@gmail.com

Intervention Name

Alaska Promoting Health Among Teens, Comprehensive Abstinence and Safer Sex Project (AKPHAT)

Intervention Description

AKPHAT is an adaptation of Promoting Health Among Teens (PHAT). PHAT was developed by Select Media and combines two other curricula: Making Proud Choices!, which focuses on safer sex, and Promoting Health Among Teens-Abstinence Only, which focuses on abstinence. AKPHAT comprises 12 modules. Each is designed to last about 60 minutes. According to developers, the 12 modules can be delivered over 2 days or could take up to several weeks.

The AKPHAT curriculum is designed to provide teens aged 14 to 19 with:

- Increased knowledge about prevention of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and pregnancy.
- More positive attitudes/beliefs about abstinence and condom use.
- Increased confidence to negotiate abstinence.
- Increased confidence to negotiate safer sex and correct condom use.
- Stronger intentions to abstain from sex, or use condoms if they have sex.
- A lower incidence of HIV/STI risk-associated sexual behavior.
- A stronger sense of pride and responsibility in making a difference in their lives.

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services made five adaptations to PHAT.

1. Use of peer educators, rather than adult facilitators, to deliver the program. Peer educators are true peers of at-risk youth, 16- to 21- year-olds who have been trained in the curriculum. The peer educators work in teams of two with an adult supervisor in attendance.
2. Implementing with rural and at-risk youth. This includes homeless youth and youth living in remote rural communities, many of whom are Alaska Native people. PHAT and Making Proud Choices! was originally tested among African American youth (ages 11-13) in urban middle schools.
3. Implementing with older teens (14-19). PHAT and Making Proud Choices! were originally designed for and implemented with 11- to 13-year-olds. Because teen pregnancy and STI rates are highest in Alaska among older teens, and program developers noted that PHAT was effective with older teens, Alaska initially identified 11- to 19-year-olds as the target age group. However, the governor ultimately restricted program participation to youth ages 14 years and older.
4. Changes to the curriculum to make it more culturally relevant, including use of talking circles and talking sticks.
5. Modification of condom demonstration to use fingers instead of a penis model.

Counterfactual

Business as usual

Counterfactual Description

Youth in the control group received whatever services were available to them through school or the community.

Primary Research Questions

1. What is the impact of AKPHAT compared to no program on recent sexual intercourse six months after the program ended?
2. What is the impact of AKPHAT compared to no program on the use of a condom during recent sexual intercourse six months after the program ended?

Sample

The study sample is drawn from the client base of community organizations. Youth ages 14 through 19 become eligible to participate in the evaluation when they and a parent or guardian (in the case of youth under 18) return signed consent/assent forms. (A parent or guardian may also provide consent over the telephone.)

Setting

There were two rural sites—one in Homer, Alaska and one in Bethel, Alaska—and two urban sites in Anchorage, Alaska. Two of the four sites serve primarily Alaska Native youth. The other two serve an ethnically diverse clientele. These four sites, in turn, serve communities across their regions.

Research Design

The research design is an individual randomized controlled trial. Randomization occurred while youth took baseline surveys. Baseline and end-of-program surveys were administered in a paper-and-pencil format. Follow-up surveys at 3, 6 and 12 months after baseline used paper or online surveys. Youth chose which method they preferred.

Method

The analytic sample for the primary analysis includes youth who were randomized and completed their 6-month online survey, and who have valid responses to questions in both the baseline and 6-month follow-up surveys.

Linear probability models compare sexual intercourse and unsafe-sex behavior of treatment and control groups.

The dependent variable for the first research question is a dichotomous (yes/no) variable: whether or not the respondent had sexual intercourse in the past 3 months.

The dependent variable for the second research question is a dichotomous variable: whether or not the respondent had sexual intercourse during the past 3 months without using a condom.

The following covariates are included: the baseline measure of each outcome, a treatment group indicator, cohort indicators, and demographic variables (age, race, gender). Race variables are American Indian/Alaska Native alone or in combination with one or more other races, White alone, and other.

Impact Findings

Our study failed to demonstrate that the offer of or participation in AKPHAT had an effect on either behavioral outcome: sexual intercourse during the past 3 months or failure to use a condom during sexual intercourse during the past 3 months.

Implementation Findings

Implementation adhered closely to the program as it was designed. It does not appear that implementation issues affected outcomes.

Schedule/Timeline

Randomization and baseline data collection started August 7, 2012 and ended July 30, 2014. Six-month follow-up data collection started February 5, 2013 and ended January 30, 2015.