

Evaluation Abstract: Evaluation of the Children’s Aid Society (CAS)-Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program in Chicago, IL

Grantee

Children’s Home + Aid (CH+A).

Evaluator

Philliber Research & Evaluation (Philliber).

Intervention Name

Children’s Aid Society (CAS)-Carrera Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program.

Intervention Description

The CAS-Carrera program is an adolescent pregnancy prevention program that uses a holistic approach to empower youth, help them develop personal goals and the desire for a productive future, develop their sexual literacy, and educate them about the consequences of sexual activity. The program works to develop a participant’s capacity and desire to avoid pregnancy and other risky behaviors during adolescence. The program, which is geared toward boys and girls in middle school, provides opportunities for young people to discover interests and develop talents.

To accomplish its goals, the program uses seven components including: (1) an academic component, (2) family life and sexuality education (FLSE), (3) a mental health component called Power Group, (4) an employment component called Job Club, (5) an arts component called self-expression, and (6) a lifetime individual sports component, and (7) comprehensive medical and dental care. This afterschool program typically occurs over a 45-week period, five days per week (Monday through Friday). Saturday programming when possible is also encouraged. Programming is also provided during school breaks and during the summer.

This program was delivered in Englewood, Chicago but was adapted from the original afterschool design. In Chicago Public Schools, the program was typically offered after school, four days per week (Monday through Thursday) for 39 weeks per year. Job Club, mental health, and FLSE sessions were offered weekly, academic sessions were offered daily, and lifetime individual sports and self-expression sessions were offered weekly for 6 to 8 weeks per year. Each session lasted approximately 50 minutes. This program was evaluated over a 44 month period from November 2011 through June 2015. In addition to the modified program dosage, another Chicago adaptation was the inclusion of elementary school youth - rising fourth graders.

The CAS-Carrera program was delivered by trained program facilitators who received ongoing staff development as prescribed by the evidence-based model.

Control

The Children’s Home + Aid Community Schools program.

Control Description

The goal of the CH+A Community Schools program is to bolster the healthy development and educational success of children and youth. The program promotes academic achievement and social-emotional development and consists of a core instructional program (academic support), enrichment (arts and sports), and social-emotional services (mental health services). The program was offered 39 weeks per year. Students received a minimum of 12 hours of educational programming, 5 hours of parent programming, and 12 hours of enrichment programming per month. Each session lasted one hour. This program was evaluated over a 44 month period from November 2011 through June 2015.

Because the control condition also used an after-school program that included several similar activity components, the main contrast in services being tested in this evaluation is the effect of FLSE, Job Club and medical care.

The Community Schools program was delivered by facilitators who received training from Chicago Public Schools-Community School Initiative, the Illinois Federation for Community Schools, and the Illinois School Board of Education.

Primary Research Question(s)

1. What is the impact of the CAS-Carrera after-school program relative to a community after-school program at the end of four years of programming (fall 2011 to spring 2015) on the incidence of students in grades 7 and up ever having sex?
2. What is the impact of the CAS-Carrera after-school program relative to a community after-school program at the end of four years of programming (fall 2011 to spring 2015) on the incidence of sexual intercourse without use of effective contraception in the past three months among students in grades 7 and up?

Sample

The study included one cohort of 338 4th- through 7th-grade youth from three Chicago Public Schools.¹ All youth obtained active parental consent for either the treatment or control group before randomization and voluntarily enrolled in the program.

Setting

Both the CAS-Carrera program and the Community Schools program were delivered in the same three Chicago Public Schools in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago. One school separated into two sites (schools) in year 2. Additionally, a fifth site/location was created for CAS-Carrera program youth who had aged out of the original study schools in year 3.

Research Design

In this individual randomized controlled trial, 338 4th- through 7th-grade youth from three Chicago Public Schools were randomly assigned into either a treatment group (n=166) or control group (n=172) in August 2011 after parental consent was obtained. Philliber staff conducted the randomization.

This evaluation uses three sources of data: youth survey data (used to estimate program impacts on behavioral and attitudinal/knowledge outcomes), attendance data, and observation data (used to describe program implementation). Students in the treatment and control groups were surveyed twice per year for four years. All youth survey data were gathered by Philliber staff, attendance data were gathered by CH+A facilitators/staff, and observation data were gathered by a CAS-Carrera fidelity manager.

Impact Findings

There was no evidence that this adapted version of the CAS-Carrera program impacted the two primary research outcomes: ever had sex and incidence of sexual intercourse without use of effective contraception during the past three months at final follow-up. Additionally, there were no impacts among males and females on these measures (secondary research questions).

Implementation Findings

While there were some elements of programming in Chicago that adhered to the CAS-Carrera model, the demonstration overall was not delivered with fidelity, due in large part to the instability of the Chicago Public School (CPS) system, which created unplanned adaptations during this evaluation study: (1) in the beginning of year two (fall 2012) a teacher strike in CPS delayed the start of programming for

¹ One student reported being in the 8th grade at baseline.

two full months; (2) in the summer of 2013, two of the study schools closed and moved about one mile away due to district consolidation. When programming resumed in fall 2013, 14% of the youth chose not to attend these new locations and, as a result, could no longer be offered program services. Additionally, attendance data suggest that only 12% of program youth attended at least 75% of scheduled sessions (the initial goal). This is partially a reflection on student mobility in this neighborhood; (3) CPS policy also limited the access to school facilities which decreased program duration (from five days a week to four) and overall program dosage. These factors affected participation and were beyond program staff control. As it relates to the delivery of programming however, observed sessions were rated favorably with respect to participant understanding of materials and/or active participation in group activities. Program implementers received favorable scores about 80% of the time; the overall program sessions were rated favorably 74% of the time. However, these data represent a convenience sample of less than 10% of all sessions delivered; thus they may not be a true representation of all sessions.

Schedule/Timeline

Sample enrollment took place in August 2011. Baseline data collection occurred in fall 2011, interim follow-up data collection occurred in both the fall and spring of each year (spring 2012 through fall 2014), and final follow-up data were collected in spring 2015. The program ended in June 2015.