

EVALUATION ABSTRACT: REDUCING THE RISK (RTR) AND LOVE NOTES (LN)

Grantee

University of Louisville Research Foundation/Kent School of Social Work. Program Director: Anita Barbee, Ph.D., anita.barbee@louisville.edu

Evaluator

Michael R. Cunningham, Ph.D., Department of Communication, University of Louisville; Michiel A. van Zyl, Ph.D., Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville; Kevin Borders, MSSW, Ph.D., Department of Social Work, Spalding University

Intervention Name

CHAMPS! (Creating Healthy Adolescents through Meaningful Prevention Services) offered both *Reducing the Risk* and *Love Notes*

Intervention Description

CHAMPS! Camps provided ten hours of programming each day over two consecutive Saturdays in 23 community based organizations. Two interventions were offered during these CHAMPS! Camps: *Reducing the Risk (RtR)* and *Love Notes (LN)*.

Reducing the Risk: Building Skills to Prevent Pregnancy, STD and HIV 5th Edition (Barth, 2011) seeks to help youth remain abstinent, become abstinent or engage in other safe sex behaviors and consists of 16 forty-five minute modules. The 16 modules included such topics as virtues of abstinence, using refusal skills, delay tactics, avoiding high risk situations, getting and using protection, skills integration focused on knowing and talking about protection, preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), implementing protection from STI and pregnancy, and sticking with abstinence and protection.

There were two adaptations to *RtR*. First instead of delivering the training across 16 weeks for less than an hour a week in a school setting by a health teacher, it was presented over 2 weekends during 10-hour days in community based organizations by social workers or youth workers. Second, six educational videos were used to ensure that youth understand reproductive anatomy, abstinence, contraceptives, sexually transmitted diseases and making sound sexual choices. The adapted intervention was 15 hours in total with other hours devoted to data collection and breaks. After the pilot and first training of youth, the six videos were added during the period October 2011-March 2014.

LN is a 13-module curriculum designed to educate youth about healthy relationships and aims to reduce teen dating violence and unprotected sex (and thus pregnancy, spread of STIs and injury). The curriculum meets the needs of youth who are alienated and in need of loving personal relationships. LN was developed to educate participants about healthy relationships, including issues of decision-making, communication and conflict resolution, as well as sexual and overall safety (Pearson, 2009). The 13 modules include: sliding vs. deciding, smart love, personality and family of origin issues in relationships, safety issues, communication warning signs, healthy communication strategies, problem-solving, commitment and relationship decision-making and sexuality in close relationships. LN presents info on domestic violence using the Johnson multidimensional model (Johnson, 1995, 2008) addressing issues of risk level related to dangerous intimate partner behaviors.

There were four adaptations of LN. First, instead of training youth in 13 one-hour sessions or four three-hour sessions, as had been done previously, youth were trained on two consecutive Saturdays. Second, the curriculum developer enhanced the module on sexuality before the study began. Third, four educational videos on reproduction, abstinence and birth control were added in October 2011. Fourth, given the change in duration to 15 hours, it was important that facilitators focus on key information and activities from the full training manual; therefore, PowerPoint slides and an outline of what information to emphasize were created to focus facilitators.

Counterfactual

The Power of We (*PoW*) was developed for this study.

Counterfactual Description

Similar to *RtR* and LN, *PoW* was developed to be delivered in 15 hours of contact over two consecutive weekends. The developer of *PoW*, Network Center for Community Change, delivered *PoW* to participants. *PoW* helps youth learn more about their neighborhoods and their assets and ways to bring about positive change. Youth took a neighborhood walk to gather information about neighborhood assets, watched films such as *Waiting for Superman* to learn how to bring about community change, and created a film or piece of artwork to demonstrate what they learned about community building and change and about their neighborhoods, in general.

Primary Research Question(s)

Research Question 1: (a) Do participants in the *Reducing the Risk* intervention use condoms and other forms of birth control more often than participants in the *Power of We* control condition at a point 3 months after the conclusion of the program? (b) Do participants in the *Love Notes* intervention use condoms and other forms of birth control more often than participants in the *Power of We* control condition at a point 3 months after the conclusion of the program?

Research Question 2: (a) Do participants in the *Reducing the Risk* intervention have fewer sexual partners from the commencement of the program to 3 months after the program, compared to *Power of We* control participants? (b) Do participants in the *Love Notes* intervention have fewer sexual partners from the commencement of the program to 3 months after the program, compared to *Power of We* control participants?

Sample

Youth-serving organization in the poorest and most vulnerable neighborhoods in Louisville, Kentucky recruited and enrolled unmarried youth ages 14 to 19, who met the following criteria. They had never been pregnant or impregnated anyone, could participate verbally in English, and had no cognitive impairment that precluded giving assent or informed consent for any reason. Thirty-nine CHAMPS! camps were offered between September 2011 and March 2014. The camps offered 109 sessions (39 *RtR*, 39 *LN*, and 31 *PoW*). 1,448 youth were randomized (515 *RtR*, 511 *LN*, and 422 *PoW*). All youth ages 14-17 received parental consent to participate and assented to participate, all youth ages 18 and 19 consented to participate and as youth reached age 18 all youth consented.

Setting

The programs were delivered in Louisville, Kentucky, at 23 community based organizations such as faith based agencies, community centers, social service agencies, and resource centers located in low performing schools in the western and southern parts of the city with the highest poverty rates and where most urban, foster and refugee youth live. The CHAMPS! camps were offered in the physical location of the host community based organization.

Research Design

The study is a three-arm, cluster randomized controlled trial that collected data at six points (pre-training baseline, immediate post-training, 3, 6, 12 and 24 months post training). Randomization occurred at the beginning of each CHAMPS! Camp to ensure it included only youth who were present at the time of randomization. A stratified randomization procedure was used to assign youth to clusters based on gender. Youth who were part of a larger household unit were placed in the same cluster, with one youth randomly sampled as the study participant. Intact clusters were then randomized to condition. Classes ran

simultaneously at each site and were given the same name to minimize the potential for students to determine their condition. Baseline data were collected at the start of the first session, immediately after randomization of cluster to condition. Follow-up data were collected in a similar manner for all three conditions. All youth were invited to participate in a “Data Daze” event at which they completed the follow-up survey and received food and an incentive. “Data Daze” events were planned for specific CHAMPS! Camps and surveys; however, youth could attend a later Data Daze if they were unable to attend their scheduled event. A rigorous implementation study was also conducted assessing fidelity.

Method

At the 3-month follow up, participants in *RtR* were (1) significantly less likely than those in *PoW* to have had sex without the use of birth control. Results for condom use was not significant. There was a trend for *RtR* participants to have fewer sexual partners than for participants in *PoW*. The secondary research question at 3-months found *RtR* participants were (2) significantly less likely to have ever had sex and (3) significantly less likely to have gotten pregnant or gotten someone pregnant.

At the 3 month follow-up, there were no significant differences between *LN* and *PoW* on the primary dependent variables of number of sexual partners, use of birth control or use of condoms. There was a trend for participants in *LN* to have been less likely than *PoW* to have gotten pregnant or gotten someone pregnant.

Secondary research questions regarding primary and secondary dependent variables also showed significant results at the 6 month follow up. There were no significant results at the 12 month follow-up period.

Impact Findings

The study found impacts on offering *RtR* and offering *LN*, to youth ages 14 to 19 for two consecutive weekends, compared with offering a community-organizing and -building program. Youth offered *RtR* were less likely than youth in the community program to have had sex without use of birth control at the three-month follow-up and six-month follow-up. Youth offered *RtR* were also less likely than youth in the community program to ever had sex, or be pregnant or caused a pregnancy during the past 3 months at the three-month follow-up. Youth offered *LN* were less likely than youth in the community program to have ever had sex, have had sex in the last 3 months, had sex without a condom in the last 3 months, had sex without birth control, or ever been pregnant or caused a pregnancy, at the six-month follow-up. There were no impacts for either *RtR* or *LN* at the twelve-month follow-up.

Implementation Findings

All five types of fidelity for both *RtR* and *LN* were at high levels giving validity to the impact results.

Schedule/Timeline

The full sample was enrolled as of March 2014. All 3, 6 and 12 month data are included in this report. All 24-month follow-up data will be in hand as of April 2016. A final report will be submitted by September 2016.