

EVALUATION ABSTRACT: THE EVALUATION OF THE LINKING FAMILIES AND TEENS (LiFT) PROGRAM IN THE NORTHWEST AND HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Grantee

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Intervention Name

Linking Families and Teens (LiFT)

Intervention Description

LiFT is an innovative program designed for families in rural communities, with the goal of reducing unplanned teen pregnancies by increasing family connectedness and increasing youth's self-efficacy, knowledge, and skills related to sexual health.

LiFT is a two-module curriculum workshop for youth and their parenting adults. Topics for youth include communication skills, condom use, and skill building to access sexual healthcare resources. For parenting adults, topics include building a climate of trust and open communication with youth about sexual health. Trained and certified facilitators deliver each 2.5 hour module. Sites can choose to deliver the modules in one or two sessions. Youth and parents participate in simultaneous but separate programming in community locations such as schools or health care settings. Youth and parenting adults also receive participant guides that encourage communication between them. Facilitators will encourage youth and parenting adults to opt-in to receive weekly texts that offer additional resources and suggestions for fun ways families can communicate; these continue for 12 weeks after the workshop. Finally, parenting adults receive a phone call from the facilitator 3 to 5 weeks after the workshop to reinforce the skills learned during the program.

Comparison Condition

Business as usual

Comparison Condition Description

The comparison group will receive business as usual. The youth and parents enrolled in the study will receive the existing services available within the broader community, which may include sexual education delivered in the local school system. Study staff will collect data throughout the study to track access to other TPP programming offered at the study sites. Comparison participants will not receive LiFT programming during the evaluation period. Facilitators can offer parenting adults a brief one or two hour parenting workshop at the final follow-up data collection.

Behavioral Outcomes

Ever had sex, risky sexual behavior in the past three months, pregnancy

Non-behavioral Outcomes

Self-efficacy to communicate about sexuality

Sample and Setting

Community partners (schools, health care settings, or other community organizations) assist with recruiting interested dyads of youth and parenting adults from their client base and the community. Each site holds a kickoff event or individual meeting or meetings describing the LiFT program in detail. To be eligible to participate in the study, youth must be of high school age (13 to 19 years old) and live in a rural community that has teen pregnancy rates higher than the national average. Each youth must be accompanied by a parenting adult who agrees to participate in the program.

Over the course of three years, the program will be offered approximately 50 times across five cohorts. The program takes place in rural communities across six states; Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. The study intends to enroll 2,000 dyads for participation.

Research Design and Data Collection

The LiFT study is a cluster randomized controlled trial. Dyads of youth and their parenting adults are randomly assigned to participate in the intervention or comparison group. Siblings are randomly assigned together within the same dyads. At kick-off events or through individual meetings, program staff will obtain parental consent and student assent and administer baseline surveys. After receiving consent, assent, and baseline surveys, the research team will conduct the random assignment of dyads and inform the site of the results. Program implementation occurs within two weeks of recruitment and baseline data collection.

All study participants will be surveyed at two points in time: (1) at the kickoff event or individual meetings before random assignment (baseline) and (2) immediately post-program. In addition, youth will be surveyed 9-months post-program. LiFT facilitators will administer the baseline surveys, whereas the evaluation team will administer the immediate post-program and 9-month post-program follow-up surveys. Surveys are in-person pencil-and-paper surveys for all survey points. Dyads who do not attend in-person follow-up data collection events will be contacted and offered multiple options for completing the surveys (for example, by web, over the phone, or via mail).

For the implementation evaluation, the evaluation team will collect data on attendance, fidelity, and quality. At the end of each module, LiFT facilitators will complete an attendance log, a referral log, and a fidelity form. On the fidelity form, they will report whether they covered all of the topics and activities scheduled for that lesson and any deviations from the planned lesson. Trained observers will observe 10 percent of all sessions to monitor fidelity and quality. The text messaging service will record the number of text messages sent and received.

Schedule/Timeline

Sample enrollment and baseline data collection began in October 2016, the immediate post-program follow-up data collection began in March 2017, and the 9-month post-program follow-up data collection began in September 2017. Due to the shortened project period, data collection with OAH funding will end in June 2018.