

## **Evaluation Abstract: Promoting Health Among Teens Abstinence-Only Intervention**

### **Grantee**

Program Reach, Inc. Project Director: Nanci Coppola, ncoppola@programreach.org.

### **Evaluator**

Elaine Walker, elaine.walker@sametricresearch.com; elaine.walker@shu.edu

### **Intervention Name**

Promoting Health Among Teens! Abstinence-Only Intervention

### **Intervention Description**

Promoting Health Among Teens! Abstinence-Only Intervention (PHAT-AO) is an eight-hour abstinence-only intervention originally developed for African American youth in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was replicated in Yonkers, New York, with 6th and 7th graders of predominantly Hispanic backgrounds. The PHAT-AO curriculum is delivered in a small-group setting (class size ranges from 6 to 10) by trained facilitators from New York Medical College. Facilitators were randomly assigned to deliver the curriculum. The PHAT-AO curriculum is organized into eight one-hour modules and delivered on two consecutive Saturdays, with four modules delivered on the first Saturday and the remaining four on the following Saturday. The first four modules cover the following topics: (1) getting to know you and steps to making your dreams come true, (2) puberty and adolescent sexuality, (3) making abstinence work for me, and (4) the consequences of sex: HIV/AIDS. Topics covered on the second Saturday are (1) the consequences of sex: sexually transmitted diseases, (2) the consequences of sex: pregnancy, (3) improving sexual choices and negotiation, and (4) refusal and negotiation skills. The primary pedagogical strategies used to deliver the curriculum include talking circles, video presentations, role plays, and group activities. At the conclusion of each day, participating youth are asked to complete a short debriefing questionnaire that asks for their feedback on the day's activities. Incentives offered for program participation include tee shirts, gift cards, and enrollment in a raffle with a variety of prizes.

### **Counterfactual**

Promoting Health Among Teens! Health Intervention

### **Counterfactual Description**

The Promoting Health Among Teens! Health Intervention (PHAT-Health) curriculum is an eight-hour health curriculum delivered on the same days and at the same sites as the PHAT-AO curriculum. The curriculum was also taught by trained facilitators from New York Medical College, who were randomly assigned to deliver the curriculum. The PHAT-Health curriculum is organized into eight one-hour modules and delivered on two consecutive Saturdays. The four modules delivered on the first Saturday cover the following health topics: (1) introduction to Promoting Health Among Teens, (2) introduction to healthy exercise, (3) introduction to healthy eating, and (4) practical tips for healthy eating. The remaining modules focus on (1) the body—putting it together; (2) smoking, drinking, and drugs; (3) stress and the body; (4) role-plays; and (5) wrap up. Similar to the PHAT-AO treatment intervention, the health curriculum uses talking circles, video presentations, role plays, and group activities to deliver program content. Youth in the control program are asked to complete the same debriefing questionnaire as youth in the treatment group at the conclusion of each program day, and are offered the same incentives for program participation as youth in the treatment group, including tee shirts, gift cards, and entry into a raffle.

### **Primary Research Question(s)**

Does PHAT-AO result in a lower rate of sexual initiation at 12 months after the program ends, compared with the PHAT-Health control condition?

## **Sample**

The study sample was drawn from 6th and 7th graders in Yonkers, New York. Participants were recruited from 30 public schools, two private schools, five community sites, and one charter school located in sections of Yonkers with high rates of teenage pregnancy. Youth were considered ineligible if they had a special education classification or if they were classified as having limited English proficiency. All youth obtained parental consent for the treatment or control group before randomization and voluntarily enrolled in the program. The study enrolled 35 program cohorts of youth, or 1,319 students.

## **Setting**

The PHAT-AO and PHAT-Health programs were delivered in nine public schools, two community sites, and one charter school located in Yonkers. The treatment and control programs for a given cohort were delivered concurrently at the same site.

## **Research Design**

The research design was an individual randomized controlled trial. Parental consent and program assent occurred before baseline data collection and randomization. Randomization occurred immediately after completion of the baseline survey on the first Saturday of the program. A stratified random assignment design was used, in which youth within each program cohort were stratified by gender and age before assignment. Data collection occurred at baseline; post-test; and 3, 6, and 12 months post-intervention. Multiple modes of administration were used for the follow-up surveys, including pencil-and-paper administration at the program site on the scheduled follow-up survey date, make-up paper-and-pencil administration in schools and community libraries, and telephone interviews.

## **Method**

The evaluation relied upon a mixed-method approach. Qualitative techniques were used to address some of the implementation questions; and logistic regression was used to determine program impact.

## **Impact Findings**

PHAT-AO had no impact on the primary outcome, ever having sex at the 12-month follow-up. No impacts were observed for the secondary outcomes.

## **Implementation Findings**

The program was delivered in 105 classrooms. Ninety-two percent of the intended content was delivered. Approximately 85% of participating youth attended both Saturdays. Staff-participant interactions were rated highly. In 90% of the modules taught, facilitators received a score of 4 or higher on this measure.

## **Schedule/Timeline**

Sample enrollment ended in July 2014. The final 12-month follow-up survey for the last program cohort ended in August 2015.