

Backgrounder: Affordable Care Act Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Grant

GRANT INFORMATION

North Dakota State University (NDSU) faculty members have received a \$1.2 million three-year competitive grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Administration for Children and Families. The grant is for implementing an Affordable Care Act Personal Responsibility Education Program that focuses on preventing teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The program will target high-risk youth ages 14- 19 in the Fargo area.

NDSU PROGRAM APPROACH AND GOALS

To reduce risky sexual behavior among teens, Reach One Teach One: North Dakota (ROTO ND) will be implemented in January 2013.

The goals of the program are to prepare participants for healthy, productive adulthood and reduce the high societal costs of teen pregnancies. While this program will focus on the group of teens that is most likely to fall through the cracks – vulnerable, high-risk youth aged 14 to 19 years old – it is open to all teens who are interested.

The program will provide strong, clear messages about abstinence as well as medically accurate information about human reproduction and disease transmission. Life skills, such as developing healthy relationships and communicating effectively, will also be part of the curriculum. A peer education element is a unique aspect of the programming. Once participants complete the twelve-week program, they can earn money by relaying program messages to their peers. Peer-to-peer education has been proven to be one of the most effective ways of influencing behavior and choices among young people.

In addition to program implementation, the grant will result in two full-time community educator positions and two graduate assistantships at NDSU for data collection, management and analysis. The program and research are funded by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families' Family and Youth Service Bureau under award No. 90AK0012.

YOUTH IN NORTH DAKOTA

While the pregnancy rates among teens in the state is lower than the national average, North Dakota's most vulnerable teens are actually experiencing disproportionately high rates of early pregnancy and childbirth.

According to the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, 45 percent of North Dakota youth attending school are sexually active and 13 percent have had more than four partners. The data also shows teens that choose to be sexually active are not adequately protecting themselves from unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STISs). Further, teens who aren't enrolled in school or who are disconnected from school are even more likely to engage in risky behavior.

TEEN HEALTH

According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, adolescent girls involved in foster care are 2.5 times more likely to become pregnant compared with their peers. Boys in foster care are also more likely to be involved in early pregnancy and childbearing. Half of men who age out of foster care systems by 21 have been involved in a pregnancy compared with only 19 percent of their non-foster peers.

Virtually every study shows a link between teen child-bearing and long-term disadvantages for both the teen parent and their baby – including being at higher risk for poverty, being less likely to get an education, and being more likely to have adverse health outcomes.

Teens receive information about sexuality from a variety of sources, but many of them are inaccurate. Research also shows teens are most likely to ask their peers questions rather than parents, teachers or other adults in their lives.

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