

**Keepin' It Real: Our Beat Our Rhythms
An Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Pilot Program**

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Introduction

Keepin' It Real (KIR) is a middle school program facilitated by Austin Learning Academy at five schools in Austin, Texas. Austin is located in a county that has one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy among urban counties state wide. Texas ranks fifth highest in the nation in the percent of its total births to teens. KIR is comprised of four components aimed at preventing adolescent pregnancies. The four components of the project are: (1) Out of School Time programs facilitated during after school hours, winter break and summer break; (2) Family Life Workshops emphasizing parent-adolescent communication; (3) Teen Leadership Development focusing on social-problem solving skills, character development and reinforcement of the abstinence choice; and (4) Family/Community events. Literature suggests that quality Out-of-School Time (OST) programs for teens, as well as abstinence-based programs that targeted teens and families have been effective. KIR uses elements of both types of programs to converge into a unique program. The program hypothesis is that participating adolescents that acquire the knowledge, skills and supportive relationships with their parents¹ will remain (or become and remain) abstinent from sexual intercourse until marriage. The objectives of the KIR Our Beat Our Rhythms summer program were to pilot program procedures and processes and to learn from the implementation of the assessment procedures.

Methods

Daily activities offered to 6th grade students at a participating middle school during the week long summer pilot included: (1) Interactive Teen Leadership activities; (2) Outdoor recreational activities; and (3) African drum instruction. The purpose for implementation of the assessment procedures was: (1) to determine the completion time and readability of the core and parent instruments; (2) to examine the suitability of the survey dissemination process to both parents and students; and (3) to gather feedback via a focus group about summer pilot programming and messages that students may receive about sex. Students participated in a focus group discussion and completed the Adolescent Family Life Core Measurement along with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. Parents also completed a questionnaire designed to assess how well they knew their child. One sample question from the parent's survey included "What is your child's favorite subject in school?" No comparison group was used in the pilot. No statistical analyses were employed in the pilot given that the main purpose was to test procedures. KIR will begin full programming in the fall of 2008 and employ an evaluation

¹ The term "parent" is used in this proposal and by the Project to include all adult individuals who have or share primary responsibility for adolescents' care and upbringing, including step parents, adoptive parents, grand parents, foster parents and other parent surrogates.

design that includes a comparison group. The context and process components will employ focus group and interview methodology and the outcome component will employ a Pre-test Post-test Comparison Group Design to ascertain the direction and strength of Project effects (e.g., pregnancy rates, school achievement, knowledge about pregnancy, communication with parents, media impacts) as well as to assess the reactive effects of history, maturation and pre-testing on adolescent and parent outcomes of interest.

Results

Eleven students (64% boys, 100% Hispanic, mean age 13 years old.) and twenty-seven of their family members participated in the pilot. Nine parents, each from a separate family, completed the survey designed to assess how well they knew their child. The results of the pilot study indicated that students completed the CORE instrument in approximately 15 to 20 minutes. In addition, parent participants were receptive to completing surveys. To overcome the challenge of low literacy level of two of the parent participants, surveys were read aloud and responses were privately dictated. During student focus group discussion, student participants were reluctant to answer questions related to sex and abstinence. Students reported learning to play drums and watching their parents dance at the student showcase event as their favorite part of the program.

Discussion

Based on the pilot study, some additions and modifications will be made to the main study. First, students will be assigned to gender specific focus groups in attempt to increase the level of discussion participation. Because of the nature of some of the topics (e.g., sex), it appeared that the participants were reluctant to discuss issues in the presence of the opposite sex. Second, bilingual research assistants will be available to read survey questions and answer questions for parent participants who may have lower literacy levels. Third, it was determined that a parental socialization questionnaire should also be included with the study instruments.

Implications

KIR Project will share results, lessons learned and Best Practices during and after the Project period. Wide dissemination of results through publications (print and electronic) and presentations to professional audiences is planned. Completion of the main study will hopefully provide results that will advance the field of adolescent health.

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