



## Success Story: Switchboard of Miami, Inc.

### Students Go the Extra Mile for a Special Needs Population

#### Overview

The county of Miami-Dade, Florida has a population of 2.6 million which is the state's most populated county.<sup>1</sup> It is racially and ethnically diverse with 64% Hispanic residents, 16% non-Hispanic white, and 19% black, including African American, Haitian and Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> Although the national teen pregnancy rate has been declining, it is higher in Florida than in the U.S. (73 per 1,000 female teens, 15-19 years old compared with 68, nationally).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in Miami-Dade County, significant racial and ethnic health disparities exist among youth of color; black and Hispanic teens experience far higher rates of teen pregnancy. Black teens in Miami-Dade County, for example, have a birth rate of 44.3 per 1,000 compared with a birth rate of 19.0 per 1,000 among white teens, 15-19 years old.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are prevalent among teens in Florida; two out of every three reported STD cases in Florida were under the age of 25.<sup>4</sup>

#### Program Description

Switchboard of Miami, Inc. is implementing Project WISE, a sexual health education program that uses the All4You! curriculum. All4You! is an evidence-based program with classroom instruction and community service-learning aimed to prevent STDs and pregnancy by enhancing protective factors and positive health behaviors.

In order to select the implementation sites for Project WISE, Switchboard Miami conducted a needs assessment and identified zip codes in the county with the highest rates of teen births, highest percentage of free or reduce lunches, and investigated school performance data, among other indicators. The selected sites include two alternative schools, three high schools, and three charter schools, all situated in high-risk urban settings within Miami. Each year, Project WISE reaches over 600 students ages 14-18 through their program.

#### Program Impact

One of the schools in which Project WISE works is Hialeah Education Academy (HEA), a school in a tough urban neighborhood of Miami with many immigrant families assimilating into American culture. Many students in the area are disconnected to the community, and have attitudes opposing teen pregnancy prevention. For example, one young student at HEA in Project WISE shared that his father encouraged him to start having sex; another student at HEA shared his thoughts that if you have more sex with your partner, you'll have less problems with them.

As part of the All4You! program, Project WISE arranged a service-learning opportunity for HEA students: spending time at the Edgar J. Hall Special Population Center, an organization that works with an adult developmentally delayed population. HEA students were initially timid and nervous about interacting with the developmentally delayed population at Edgar J. Hall. However, as the weeks continued, visits to Edgar J. Hall became more frequent and students grew more comfortable. Ultimately, Project WISE students were so



inspired that they proactively initiated a celebration for their new friends. With the help of staff, Project WISE students worked together to organize a party.

Working with the client's at Edgar J. Hall greatly affected the students from HEA, encouraging them to become more involved. After the experience, students approached facilitators to inquire about volunteering at the center during the summer. Project WISE facilitators then developed a list of interested summer student volunteers; approximately 30 students signed up to continue volunteering! The administration at HEA not only welcomed Project WISE back for another year, but also referred the program to another local school. Upon reflection, Project WISE educators were delighted with the students' response to the service learning project. The students showed a sense of self efficacy, believing in their ability to make a difference in someone's life, helping to serve as a protective factor against risky behavior.

To date, Project WISE and All4You! have shown positive impacts across participants, with encouraging preliminary results. The Switchboard of Miami independent evaluator, the University of Miami Comprehensive Drug Research Center (CDRC), housed within the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at the University of Miami (FL) School of Medicine, created and collected program satisfaction and behavioral intention data. A total of 96% of youth reported being satisfied with the program, 83% reported they would discuss what they learned with friends, and 85% reported they would discuss what they learned with a parent or guardian. The independent evaluator also measured behavioral intention at the posttest. When participants who had completed Project WISE were asked how likely they would be to use birth control, 81% stated they would be likely to use birth control. When participants who completed Project WISE were asked about intention to use a condom, 78% stated they intended to use a condom and when asked how sure they were about refraining from sex, 71% of youth stated they could wait.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2012). *Miami-Dade County, Florida*, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12086.html>

<sup>2</sup> Kost, K., & Henshaw, S. (2013). *U.S. teenage pregnancies, births and abortions, 2008: State trends by age, race and ethnicity*. New York, NY: Guttmacher Institute. from <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrendsstate08.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Original analyses of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics 2012 County-level data*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Health Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Florida Department of Health. (2012). *Are you in the dark about STDs?* Retrieved July 24, 2013, from [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Disease\\_ctrl/std/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Disease_ctrl/std/index.html)