



Sex Initiation Rates in Marlboro County Teens Before and After the SC PIE Abstinence Education Program

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Introduction and Current Literature

Adolescents are subjected to increasing pressure to initiate sexual activity at younger ages. Influences from the media, peer groups, social media, music and other aspects of adolescent culture have increasingly become more sexual in nature. Effectively helping teens to cope with this pressure requires broad-based community initiatives with cooperation from parents, the community, health professional and schools (Olsho, et.al, 2009). "Abstinence only" education programs targeted at adolescents have been shown to delay initiation of sexual activity by as much as two years (Tortolero, et.al.). Evaluations of "abstinence only programs" have shown them to be more successful than comprehensive sex education programs (Torolero, et.al. 2010, Weed, et.al.2008, Jemmott, et.al., 2010). Students in comprehensive sex education programs were anywhere from 30% more likely, to twice as likely, to initiate sex sooner than those in "abstinence only" programs.

In a survey of parents and teens on sexual issues (Olsho, et.al, 2009), the majority of parents surveyed favor their adolescents receiving abstinence messages from multiple sources. School systems were one of the most preferred sources for abstinence education, behind places of worship and health professionals. Abstinence education programs eligible for state funding in South Carolina must have "a proven and public history of having effectively implemented abstinence programs in this State." For the purposes of this proviso, a program is "effectively implemented" if the program has published positive behavioral outcomes by an independent and nationally recognized private or government agency demonstrating that a year after the program, program participants initiated sex at a rate of at least thirty percent lower than comparable non-program students." This study demonstrates that the SC PIE Abstinence Education Program meets these guidelines.

Methods

The sources of data for the evaluation were the pre and post tests for the Worth the Wait curriculum used in SCPIEs Abstinence Education Programs in Marlboro County. SCPIE also

worked in the faith community in Marlboro County implementing the Healthy Image of Sex curriculum. The program began in 2005. Three years of evaluation data was used for this analysis. The data was compared to 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data for the State of South Carolina. Sex Initiation Rates were determined in both surveys by the response of “Yes” to the question: “I have had sexual intercourse (penis in vagina)” by 8th and 9th graders.

Results

Table 1. Trends in Sex Initiation Rates* in Marlboro County by Gender and Race

	0506 Pre	0506 Post	Pre 0607	Post 0607	Pre0708	Post0708	% Change from baseline (Pre- program 2005)
Total	51%	42%	32%	38%	37%	38%	-27%
Male	61%	50%	40%	47%	32%	37%	-39%
Female	42%	35%	24%	31%	35%	37%	-10%
White	40%	35%	28%	38%	24%	45%	13%
African- American	58%	44%	33%	38%	40%	32%	-44%

*based on the answer to the question: "Have you ever had sex?".

Table 1. shows the trends in sex initiation rates since the beginning of the program. Overall, sex initiation rates decreased by 27% since the program’s inception. In the highest-risk groups, including males and African Americans, the rates have dropped dramatically. In males, sex initiation rates dropped by 39%, from 61% at baseline to 37% at the end of the third year. In African Americans, there was a 44% decrease in sex initiation rates for the same time period.

Table 2. Sex Initiation Rates in Marlboro County School Program Compared to YRBS Data

	Post0708	YRBS 2007	Percent difference
Total	38%	53%	29%
Male	37%	56%	34%
Female	37%	51%	26%
White	45%	46%	1%
African- American	32%	67%	52%

Table 2. shows a comparison of the sex initiation rates in Marlboro County teens compared with those for South Carolina overall, as represented by the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The Marlboro teens who participated in the SCPIE Abstinence Education Program had significantly lower sex initiation rates than teens in SC overall. This was particularly true in males and African American teens. Marlboro County teens had a 29% lower sex initiation rate overall than SC teens as a whole, with lower rates for males and African Americans. Males had a 34% lower sex initiation rate than SC YRBS data, and African Americans in Marlboro County were half as likely to have sex as African Americans in South Carolina as a whole.

Conclusions

The SCPIE Abstinence Education Program is effective in reducing the sex initiation rates in the students who have been exposed to the program for a year or more.

References

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