

A Behavior Change Approach to Teen Pregnancy and STD Primary Prevention

HERITAGE KEEPERS® ABSTINENCE & LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION



FOCUS Primary prevention relative to teen sexual activity, providing a proven-affective process model to increase risk avoidance (pregnancy, HIV and other STIs, as well as other associated risks)

RESEARCH-BASED BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES A year after the program, participants (across race, gender and age) abstained from initiating sex at a rate twice that of similar non-participants

ORIGINAL SITE Public-schools, with replication evaluated at more than 450 public and private middle and high schools, agencies and institutions in rural, suburban and urban communities across South Carolina, Kentucky and St. Lucia (150,000+ adolescents served)

APPROACH Abstinence education, with emphasis on benefits of marriage as required by SC Law, effectively targeting proven predictors of adolescent initiation of sex in program development, training, implementation, monitoring, feedback, and evaluation:

- Abstinence intentions
- Abstinence values
- Abstinence efficacy
- Sexual independence from peers
- Future impacts of sex

REVIEWS AND APPROVALS

- US Health and Human Services, Office of Population Affairs, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention - medical and referencing accuracy (2008)
- National Abstinence Education Association independent Institutional Review Board, which serves under the authorization of the US Health and Human Services Office of Human Research - protection of human research subjects (2008/09)
- National Abstinence Clearinghouse - compliance with the federal definition of abstinence education established under Welfare Reform, Title V, Section 510 (A-H)

COMPONENTS include lecture, group discussion, role play, videos, STD slides (optional), mentoring (optional), peer-advocacy clubs (optional), character-building intervention for students in detention (optional):

- School-based:
 - Heritage Keepers® Abstinence Education I
 - Heritage Keepers® Life Skills Education I-V (character-based)
- Community-based:
 - Heritage Keepers® Parent Video/Workbook Series
 - Heritage Keepers® Media Package: TV and Radio Spots; 30 min. video
 - Heritage Keepers® Faith Community Component

ORIGINAL STUDY *HERITAGE KEEPERS® ABSTINENCE EDUCATION*

Hypotheses:

- There will be a direct and significant relationship between the second-order, mediating variables *abstinence values, justifications for sex, abstinence efficacy, and future impact* and the first-order mediator *behavioral intention*.
- There will be a direct and significant relationship between the mediator *behavioral intention* and the behavioral outcome of *sexual initiation*.
- Program group students will demonstrate significant pre-post improvement on the mediating variables, and this improvement will be significantly greater than the pre- post-change for the comparison group. The program group will maintain a position that is significantly better on the mediating variables than the comparison group at the 12-month follow-up.
- After 12 months, virgin program students will be significantly less likely to have initiated sex than the virgin comparison group students.

Discussion: The results of this study provide support for all four hypotheses. Most notably, program virgins were about one-half as likely as comparison group virgins to initiate sex by the 12-month follow-up, after controlling for pretest differences (race, grade, and all mediating variables).

Description: Heritage Keepers® Abstinence Education is a 450-minute, interactive curriculum that is designed for middle and/or high schools. It is presented in 45-minute class periods over 10 consecutive school days or in 90-minute sessions for five consecutive days. The curriculum concepts are delivered with

attention to the mediating constructs identified as causal mechanisms for influencing teen sexual behavior. These concepts are delivered by teachers trained by Heritage to engage students in active learning processes that foster commitment to abstinence.

Sample: The sample for this study consisted of students in grades 7-9 from 34 program and 7 comparison schools in SC. The Heritage program was presented in required classes with 2,529 virgin students in the program schools and 417 in the comparison schools.

Instrumentation: A 58-question survey was administered at the pre, post, and 12-month follow-up. It included demographic questions, behavioral questions, and multiple items that formed five scaled measures of the mediating constructs. The key demographic questions included gender, ethnicity, grade and repeated grade. The behavioral questions included a basic question of whether or not students had ever had sexual relations, with follow-up questions, such as age of first sexual intercourse and last time they had sexual intercourse. These questions were used to improve the accuracy and reliability of the *ever had sex* questions.

