

Report on *an Evaluation of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Program*

Anne Badgley, MEd, November 22, 2005

The US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Population Affairs with the Administration for Children and Families, has published manuscripts and documents from a November 3-4, 2005 Conference entitled "Strengthening Abstinence Education Programs through Scientific Evaluations." A paper on the Heritage Community Services program entitled *An Evaluation of the Heritage Keepers Abstinence Education Program* was selected as one of seven to be presented during the two day conference. The paper is authored by Stan E. Weed, PhD, Irene H. Ericksen, MS, and Paul James Birch, MS, all of the Institute for Research and Evaluation in Salt Lake City, Utah. The presentation on the Heritage Community Services program was given by Dr. Stan Weed.

The primary purpose of the study is to evaluate the impact of this abstinence education intervention on both the mediating variable amenable to change in the classroom and the behavioral outcome of sexual initiation rate for students in the sample. A secondary purpose is to examine further the relationship between the mediating variables and the behavioral outcome of teen sexual initiation. A third purpose is to assess the program's system for continuous improvement, i.e., for monitoring and maintaining a high level of implementation and fidelity to program design and for optimizing teacher effectiveness.

The related hypotheses and results are in the complete article; tables and graphs are in the presentation power point.

In summary, a year after the program was presented, program students compared with similar non-program students are found to initiate sexual activity at a rate approximately half that of non-program students. This rate held true when comparing the entire set of program and non-program students, as well as in comparisons between subsets of the program and non-program students. Subsets created for additional comparison included only African American students, only Caucasian students, only males and only females. Furthermore, nearly perfectly matched subsets were created by matching demographics as well as pre-survey predictors, and the rate held true in this comparison as well. The conclusion that there was a significant and sustained program effect on sexual initiation rates seems warranted.

The following provides an overview of the Review Process.

Manuscripts were evaluated based on four major categories, using a 35-point scale with 20 points allocated for methods:

- Introduction

- Methods, with subcategories such as “sample/participants,” “attrition,” “measures/instruments,” “design/comparison strategy,” “follow-up,” and “statistics.”
- Results
- Conclusions/discussion

A multi-disciplinary team of nine reviewers (federal and non-federal) with evaluation expertise was selected to review the manuscripts. The Office of Population Affairs engaged the outside consulting services of Matt Stagner, PhD, to oversee the selection of reviewers and to manage the review process for manuscript submissions.

The Reviewer Roster

- Christine Bachrach, PhD, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
- Brenda H. Donnely, PhD, Director of Research, Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, University of Dayton
- Sally Flanzer, PhD, United States Department of Health and Human Services
- Stephen R. Jorgensen, PhD, Dean, College of Human Environmental Sciences and Professor, Department of human Development and Family Studies
- Meridith Kelsey, PhD, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, United State Department of Health and Human Services
- Dennis McBride, PhD, Associate Director for Research, The Washington Institute for Mental Illness Research and Training, The Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science, School of Medicine, University of Washington
- Joao B. Ferreira-Pinto, PhD, Senior Researcher, Border Planning and Evaluation Group, Chris Trenholm, PhD, Senior Economist, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
- Howell Wechsler, EdD, MPH, Acting Director, Division of Adolescent and School Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Questions on the article may be submitted to Dr. Weed via e-mail at weedstan@aol.com. Program questions may be submitted to Anne Badgley via e-mail at abadgley@heritageservices.org.