



Michel Clarke Director for Adolescent Initiatives

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Michel Clarke
Director for
Adolescent Initiatives
Brownsville Multi-Service
Family Health Center
Thomas Jefferson High School
Brooklyn, NY

Program Highlights

Goal:

- To educate and protect students who might not otherwise have access to health care and wellness information

Topics covered:

- Routine Primary Care
- Health Education
- RealCare Baby Program – pregnancy prevention for at-risk adolescents

School-based Health Center uses Infant Simulators for Teen Pregnancy Prevention

By Emily Kuhn

In addition to free medical care, dental hygiene exams and counseling, the 1,500 students who attend Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn, NY also enjoy access to a variety of health education programs that focus on topics like drug and alcohol abuse and teen pregnancy prevention.

Provided by the Brownsville Multi-Service Family Health Center (BMS), a school-based health center that is located in the high school, these programs aim to educate and protect students who might not otherwise have access to health care and wellness information – and in the case of their teen pregnancy prevention program, students who are at a higher risk for teen pregnancies.

"We've found that if we remove some of the barriers to health care, like access and insurance, then students will be healthier," said. "We're located in a high poverty area, where many students wouldn't otherwise have access to health care... and our center gives them access to vaccines, birth control, pain medication, and health and wellness information."

One of the most popular health programs provided by BMS is their RealCare Baby Program (formally Baby Think It Over program), which utilizes Realityworks' RealCare Baby infant simulators to educate students about the demands of parenthood. It is in such high demand, in fact, that what was once a successful after-school program serving 10 students at a time is now being integrated into the high school's regular wellness curriculum where it can serve up to 30 students at once.

Beginning early this year, BMS began presenting their RealCare Baby program to regular high school health classes in conjunction with the class's routine pregnancy prevention curriculum. Just like the students who had participated in the after-school program, sophomores

and juniors in those health classes have the opportunity to take home RealCare Baby infant simulators for the weekend. Throughout the weekend, they are responsible for monitoring the infant's needs and determining when it needs to be fed, burped, rocked and diapered, and they report their experiences the following week. Each program even includes discussion about finances, time commitments, parenting with a partner versus parenting alone and other issues real parents routinely face – all of which can now be presented to three times as many students as the center was previously able to reach at a time.

"This program was already extremely effective, and now it's even more so," said Clarke, adding that students used to sign up months in advance for the after-school program. "The kids come into it thinking that they are doing something for fun, that they're playing with a doll... and they come out of it with a good foundation, a good understanding of what it might be like to be a teen parent."

BMS's ability to target such a high number of students at a time is the result of a \$40,000 federal grant that they applied for last year. This grant enabled BMS to purchase an additional 24 RealCare Baby infant simulators and the pregnancy prevention materials that accompany them, which left the center with a total of 30 simulators that they can now use in the classroom at a time.



(continued)

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 Thomas Jefferson High
 School Brooklyn, NY

"Now, classrooms full of students can participate in a program that we once had waiting lists for," said Clarke. "If we are able to duplicate what we did with the after-school program into the classrooms, this will be a really valuable asset to the school."

According to Clarke, BMS is aware of only one student who became pregnant and took that pregnancy to full term in the 10 years they have been offering the after-school pregnancy prevention program. Although statistics are just starting to be collected on the in-classroom program, Clarke anticipates an even higher success rate going forward.

Health class schedules permitting, Clarke says that BMS's goal is to eventually present their RealCare Baby program to high school health classes at all levels, from freshman to seniors. In the previous after-school program, the center was reaching about 300 students every school year. Clarke anticipates that by presenting in just a few health classes every year to 30 or more students at one time, that yearly impact will triple.

"We knew teen pregnancy rates in our community and our school were high, and we needed something more reality-based, more adolescent-friendly," said Clarke. "RealCare Baby program is one of our most effective programs, and we want to continue to make these strides across the board. We know that students are sexually active, and with this program, we're doing our part to help combat the issue of teen pregnancy."



Evaluating Teen's Attitudes Toward Teen Pregnancy Before & After Intervention

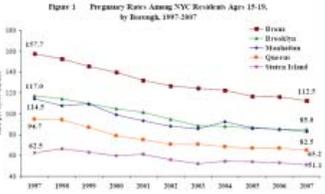
BMS
 School Based Health Center
 @ Thomas Jefferson
 H.S. Campus

Background

Statistics reported by The New York Department of Health and Mental Hygiene show that while teen pregnancy rates have steadily decreased from 1997-2007, rates per borough highlight that Brooklyn has the second highest rate for teen pregnancies. See Figure 1

Studies also show that teen pregnancy rates are highest among Black non-Hispanic and Hispanic teens. See Figure 2

Teen pregnancy can have serious consequences for mothers and their infants. The majority of teen pregnancies (86%) are unintended, and more than half (62%) end in abortion. Teenage parents are less likely to complete high school, and children born to teens are at increased risk of low birth weight, child abuse, behavioral disorders and future poverty.




Methods

BMS @ Thomas Jefferson H.S. School Based Health Center offers our clients The "Baby Think It Over Program" (BTIO) brought to us by Realityworks- RealCare@Baby (Describe babies)

This program allows our teens to get a real experience of what it is like to be a teen parent. Teens participate in two workshops. During the first workshops we implement a pre-test to gauge teens' attitudes towards teen pregnancy/parenting. The teens then take the "babies" home for the weekend and care for them like real babies. A post questionnaire is then distributed and the answers to both tests are compared and analyzed to identify if there was a change in attitudes towards teenage pregnancy and parenting. Twenty(20) participants were surveyed, 2 male and 18 female.

Goal

To positively influence teens' attitudes towards teen pregnancy by giving them a real experience of being a parent.

Future Goals: The SBHC would like to analyze the pregnancy rates of students who did not participate in this program versus that of students that have. By obtaining this information we will be able to further identify the effectiveness of this program for preventing teen pregnancy.



Results

QUESTION	PRE-TEST ANSWERS	POST-TEST ANSWERS
1. Do you plan to have children within the next five years?	Yes: 20 No: 0	Yes: 10 No: 10
2. How would you rate your ability now to care for a baby's needs?	A. Very capable: 6 B. Capable: 10 C. Not capable: 4	A. Very capable: 0 B. Capable: 5 C. Not capable: 15
3. How would you rate your ability to pay for a baby's needs?	A. Very capable: 7 B. Capable: 5 C. Not capable: 6	A. Very capable: 0 B. Capable: 0 C. Not capable: 20
4. Which one of these words best describes your feelings of being a teenage parent?	A. Scared: 1 B. Disappointed: 4 C. Happy: 4 D. Proud: 11	A. Scared: 12 B. Disappointed: 4 C. Happy: 1 D. Proud: 3

Teen Comments:

"I definitely am not ready for a baby right now!"

"So many people were staring at me on the train and shaking their heads in disappointment"

"People who say they sleep like a baby, don't have one!"



CONCLUSIONS

Based upon survey results and comments from participants it is clear that this program has positively impacted the participants attitudes towards teen pregnancy.

