



Executive Summary

RappTAP Year Two Evaluation Report

October 2009

Introduction

In the fall of 2007, The Rappahannock Teen Abstinence Program (RappTAP) was awarded a Community-Based Abstinence Education (CBAE) grant. Administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, this grant program provides funding to organizations to allow them to offer abstinence education programs to area youth. RappTAP is utilizing the funding to offer the Worth the Wait curricula to middle and high school students in a five country region just south of Washington, DC in order to reduce teen pregnancy and STD rates in the region.

The program focuses primarily on the provision of the Worth the Wait curriculum to students in grades 6-12 at eight area middle schools and 10 area high schools. Services were also provided to students and parents at area churches, shelters and juvenile detention centers. In total, 177 parents and 12,277 students received program services ranging from one to six hours.

Overall, evaluation results show that RappTAP has succeeded in increasing student knowledge dramatically and has produced statistically significant changes in student attitudes and behavioral intentions.

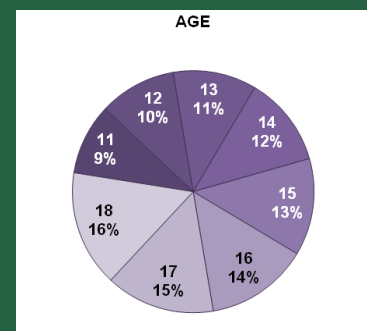
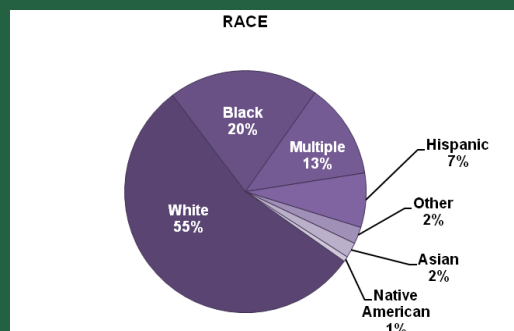
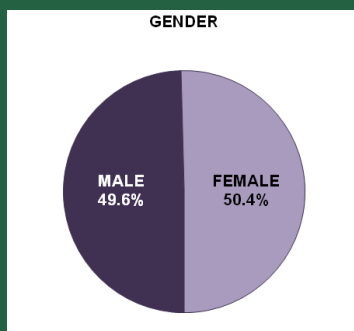
Evaluation Methodology

The Center for Applied Research is in the second year of its comprehensive program evaluation of RappTAP intended to assist with program improvement and showing the impact of the program on student participants. This evaluation consists of a curriculum review, best practices research, observations of program activities, interviews with program staff and stakeholders, student surveying, and a community needs assessment to gather opinions about abstinence and teen pregnancy prevention.

The results discussed in this report are based primarily on pretests and posttests administered to 4,633 middle and high school students who received the Worth the Wait curriculum. The pretest and posttest were designed to gather demographic information about program participants and to assess changes in their knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Surveys were matched on a unique code created by each student based on the first three letters of their first name and the first three letters of their last name converted into numbers using a telephone keypad. The evaluation team was able to achieve a match rate of 82% as a result of changing the coding method after year one when the match rate was only 50%. The surveys that could not be matched appeared to typically be a results of absenteeism on either the first or last day of class.

Student Information

Survey respondents were almost equally divided between male and female students, were predominantly white, followed by black and then multiple races, and were distributed in age between 11 and 18 years old. Middle school results are based on 1,101 male and 1,115 female middle school students while the high school results are based on 1,196 male high school students and 1,221 female high school students .



MIDDLE SCHOOL RESULTS

Because RappTAP is following a theory of health behavior change whereby changes in knowledge lead to changes of attitudes and then changes in behavior, middle school students were asked four knowledge-based questions on the pretest and posttest along with two attitude questions and two behavioral questions. Overall, knowledge gains were substantial and there were statistically significant changes in attitudes and behavioral intentions for both male and female students.

Changes in Knowledge and Attitudes

Middle school students showed substantial improvements in knowledge about STDs and the benefits of abstinence in preventing STDs and pregnancy.

- At posttest, the majority of males (65%) and females (68%) correctly identified HPV as the most common STD although approximately a quarter continued to think HIV/AIDS was the most common.
- At posttest, the majority of both males (77%) and females (79%) correctly answered that Gonorrhea can be cured. However a small minority continued to think that Herpes and HPV were also curable.
- Males in particular increased their knowledge about the benefits of abstinence with substantial improvements in the knowledge that condoms and the birth control pill are not 100% effective against STDs or pregnancy.

After the program, both male and female students showed a statistically significant change on the two attitude questions on the surveys.

- The percentage of males saying they thought that having sex as a teenager could have a negative effect on their future increased from 68% to 78% and for females increased from 83% to 92%.
- The percentage of males saying they thought that waiting to have sex until marriage is a good thing increased from 66% to 74% and for females increased from 85% to 90%.

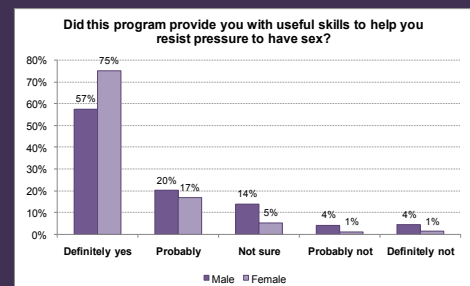
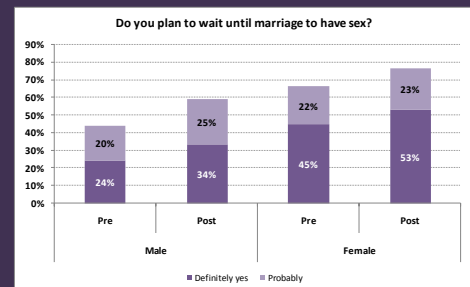
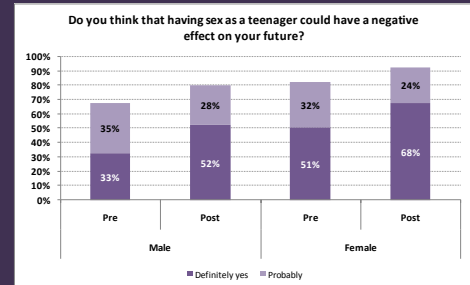
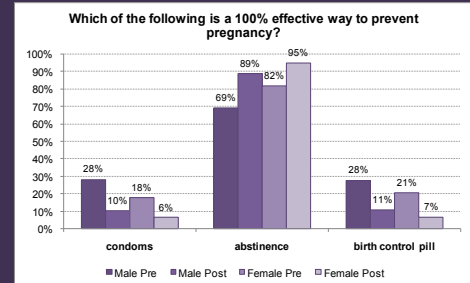
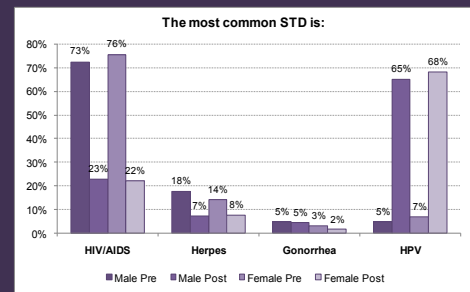
Changes in Skills and Behavioral Intentions

Both genders showed a statistically significant movement towards planning to wait to have sex and the majority indicated that they had learned skills to help them resist peer pressure and to talk to their parents about sex.

- The percentage of males saying they planned to wait until after high school to have sex increased from 50% to 59% and for females increased from 66% to 78%.
- The percentage of males saying they planned to wait until marriage to have sex increased from 44% to 59% and for females increased from 67% to 76%.
- The majority of both males (77%) and females (92%) indicated that the program definitely or probably provided them with skills to help them resist pressure to have sex.

Opinions about the Program

In order to improve program services in the future, students were asked what they liked best and least about the program. Students appeared to enjoy the fact that the teachers produced an environment conducive to open discussion and were willing to answer questions. They also really enjoyed the games and activities.



"It made me think about my future and how if I make a girl pregnant how much it would affect my football and basketball career."

HIGH SCHOOL RESULTS

In addition to the questions asked of the middle school students, the high school students were also asked additional questions about sexual activity. The majority of both males (74%) and females (79%) indicated that they had not yet had sexual intercourse.

Changes in Knowledge and Attitudes

High school students showed comparable improvements in knowledge to the middle school students and were asked one additional knowledge based question about the percentage of high school students in the US who have never had sexual intercourse.

- At pretest, 66% of males and 68% of females overestimated the level of teen sexual activity in the US. This decreased to only 19% of males and 16% of females at posttest. The goal with this question is to see if students become more aware that not “everyone else is doing it.”
- At posttest, the majority of males (59%) and females (54%) correctly identified HPV as the most common STD although approximately a quarter continued to think HIV/AIDS was the most common.
- Both genders increased their knowledge about the benefits of abstinence with improvements in the knowledge that condoms and the birth control pill are not 100% effective against STDs or pregnancy.

After the program, both male and female students showed a statistically significant change on the two attitude questions on the surveys.

- The percentage of males saying they thought that having sex as a teenager could have a negative effect on their future increased from 60% to 78% and for females increased from 78% to 91%.
- The percentage of males saying they thought that waiting to have sex until marriage is a good thing increased from 62% to 75% and for females increased from 83% to 92%.

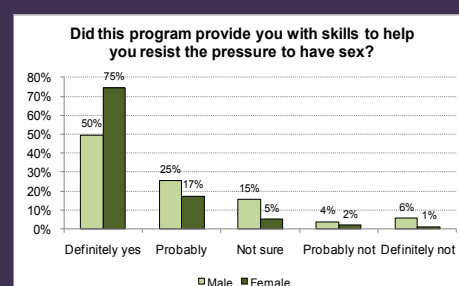
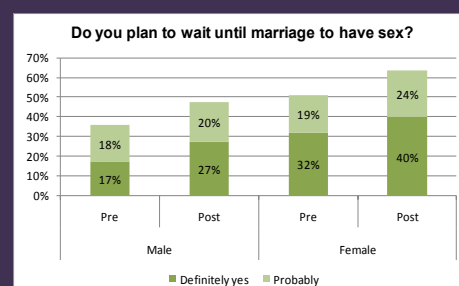
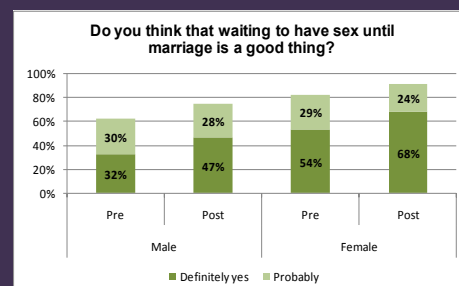
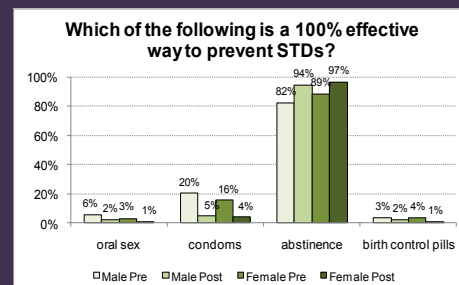
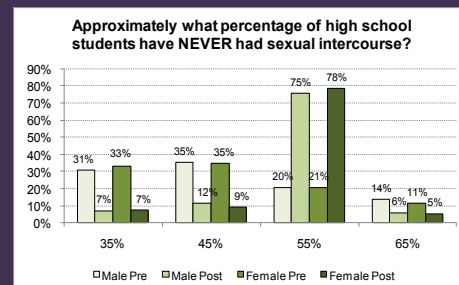
Changes in Skills and Behavioral Intentions

Both genders showed a statistically significant movement towards abstinence and indicated that they had learned skills to help them resist peer pressure. There was not as much of an impact on their ability to talk to their parents about sex.

- The percentage saying they planned to wait until after high school to have sex increased from 40% to 50% for males and 60% to 67% for females.
- The percentage saying they planned to wait until marriage to have sex increased from 35% to 47% for males and 51% to 64% for females.
- The majority of both males (75%) and females (92%) indicated that the provided them with skills to help them resist pressure to have sex.

Opinions about the Program

Unlike middle school students who were asked more open ended questions about the program, high school students were asked a multiple choice question about how the program influenced their opinions about sex. A majority of female high school students (78%) said that the program reinforced their commitment to remain abstinent or influenced them to become abstinent (renewed abstinence). A smaller majority of males (58%) answered similarly. It should be noted that students were allowed to choose multiple answers. However, only 9% of males and 3% of females said it didn't influence them at all.



“I think that using the powerful pictures of the effects of the STDs made a lot of people think twice about having sex.”

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation results for year two confirm the positive results from year one. With a relatively short program (typically six hours long), administered in a condensed time frame (typically one to two weeks), RappTAP has produced substantial gains in knowledge and statistically significant changes in attitudes and behavioral intentions among both middle and high school students of both genders on all of the following indicators:

- Do you think that having sex as a teenager could have a negative effect on your future?
- Do you think that waiting to have sex until marriage is a good thing?
- Do you plan to abstain from sex during the next year?
- Do you plan to wait until after high school to have sex?
- Do you plan to wait until marriage to have sex?

In year one, many of the schools only allowed the program to present a shortened version of the curriculum but in year two RappTAP has shown great success in gaining more access to area schools and more of the targeted schools are now implementing the full program. This appears to have produced even more consistent results. A comparison of high school results from year one with year two shows that the cohort of students targeted in year two showed greater changes in their mean scores. While only about one-third of the students indicated that they had received the RappTAP presentation in year one, it will be interesting to see if the program will have a cumulative effect over time so that knowledge and attitude changes from one year are maintained into the next year and then improved upon even further. In year three, it will be possible to more accurately track which students have received the program in multiple years and whether this reinforcement of the message has a measurable impact.

The program has also changed much of its staffing and this appears to have had a positive impact as well. The abstinence educators in year two who are returning from year one are now more seasoned and comfortable with the presentation and with their skills as presenters while the new educators hired in year two have showed great enthusiasm for the program. Although some of the educators are still working to improve their presentation and classroom management skills, the quality of the presentation has greatly improved since year one.

The primary challenge faced by the program appears to be classroom discipline. Some of the educators are more adept at maintaining classroom control, a skill which comes naturally to some and will require more experience for others, but a key component is the support of the classroom teacher. In some instances, the classroom teacher is an integral part of the program, awarding the students participation points for behavior and assisting the abstinence educators with their duties. However, in other cases, the teacher is more passive and allows disruptive behavior to continue. Finding methods for ensuring support from the classroom teachers is critical.

In year two the program has also greatly enhanced the classroom presentation by adding more games and activities and creating student workbooks. One of the major complaints from students in the first year was that the program was boring. They indicated that there was too much lecture and that they especially enjoyed the games. Consequently the program has increased student interaction, thus keeping the students more engaged.

Year two of the program built upon the foundations of year one and RappTAP is clearly having a greater impact on students through the expansion of their program in terms of number of classroom hours in addition to other improvements to the program which make it more interesting to the students. Particularly with a program like abstinence education, it is critical that the students remain engaged and actively interested in the information being presented as opposed to viewing the program as just one more instance where they are being lectured about facts and data. RappTAP has shown that a great deal of impact can be achieved with just five or six hours of abstinence education. It will be interesting to see in year three whether the positive results of year two can be maintained and built upon so that it has a cumulative effect in the targeted schools.

"I think this program was very helpful because most teens don't know the things that could happen if you have sex before marriage."

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