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Introduction letter

Hennepin County’s teen pregnancy prevention initiative, Better Together Hennepin: Healthy Communities – Healthy Youth (BTH), launched in 2006 to address Hennepin County’s high rates of teen pregnancy.

Since then, teen birth rates in Hennepin County have dropped by 66 percent, outpacing the drops in both state and national rates.

Yet, there continue to be critical disparities in teen birth rates by geography, race, and ethnicity. And while teen parents and their children can and do succeed, their health, socio-economic, and cognitive outcomes are poorer. And they can remain caught in a cycle of generational poverty with costly reliance on public aid and services.

In our 2016-2017 annual report, we discuss the ways we are trying to target these disparities and the progress we’ve made at utilizing our funding for maximum effect.

Thank you for supporting us in our efforts to drive down the teen birth rate, increase health equity, reduce generational poverty, and help our children and youth achieve their full potential.

What’s next? Better Together Hennepin is supported by a substantial federal grant that ends in mid-2018 due to changes in our federal administration’s priorities. We are working to diversify the initiative’s funding base and rally community support. To find out how you can participate, contact Kathy Wick at 612-543-3020 or Kathleen.Wick@hennepin.us.

Mike Opat  
County Commissioner, District 1 Chair,  
Hennepin County Child Well-being  
Advisory Committee

Kathy Wick  
Program Manager,  
Better Together Hennepin,  
Hennepin County Public Health
Vision and approach

Our vision
We recognize that young people are valuable resources to be developed – not problems to be solved. By seeking to understand, educate, and engage youth in productive activities and conversations, Better Together Hennepin works toward a future in which all Hennepin County youth delay parenthood until they are ready, and fulfill their potential as individuals and as community members.

Our approach
With the help of numerous community partners, Better Together Hennepin delivers four key supports proven to prevent teen pregnancy:

1. Connections to caring adults
2. Healthy youth development opportunities
3. Evidence-based sexual health education
4. Accessible, youth-friendly reproductive health care

Success story
Students had “ah-ha” moments during the transmission game that is part of the evidence-based curriculum. The transmission game really gets the point across to students. They’re able to tangibly see how easily sexually transmitted infections and HIV can spread – from even just one infected person. In the discussion afterwards, students responded with disgust at how quickly STI’s and HIV can spread and expressed disappointment that they were exposed so easily during the activity. Many students said that in the future they would practice safer sex by practicing abstinence or using a condom correctly.

~ Harmony Russell, health educator
A decade of progress

Phase one: 2010-2015

Funded by a five-year grant from the Office of Adolescent Health, Better Together Hennepin was able to test the best use and effectiveness of two different sexual health curricula. These efforts, in turn, contributed to a new and nationally recognized reference roster of evidence-based sexual health curricula to use in programs for teens.

Highlights:

- Funded and implemented youth positive, evidence-based programs in almost 48 clinics, schools, and special settings in eight cities
- Worked to change systems and practice
- Contracted with community service providers at nearly 50 sites.
- Launched MyClinic initiative that developed standards of care, assessment tools, and established a network of high quality and youth friendly health care organizations listed on MySelfMyHealth.org
- Completed a vigorous evaluation of two curricula, contributing to the national pool of evidence-based curricula
- 10,000 youth and parents received Better Together programming. Participants demonstrated numerous positive changes like increased use of birth control and health care services.
  - Increased use of condoms and other forms of birth control
  - Increased use of health care services
  - Increased knowledge of reproductive and sexual health
  - Improved attitudes towards engaging in responsible sexual behavior and increased self-efficacy

Phase two: 2015 to present

When Better Together Hennepin was awarded a second, smaller, five-year grant from the Office of Adolescent Health, we narrowed the focus from eight cities to five diverse communities (Brooklyn Center, Robbinsdale, North Minneapolis, Central Minneapolis and Richfield) that exceeded the national teen birth rate of 26.2/1000. Notably, there were few evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programs in these communities (or the programs were being implemented without fidelity). We support programming with county funds, and grants from the state and Youthprise.

Highlights:

- Implementing evidence-based sex education, youth development, and clinical interventions in 25 schools and nine clinics
- Added health mentors to six school locations, and expanded our reach to North High School, the Hennepin County Public Health Clinic, the Hennepin County Juvenile Detention Center, and the Hennepin County Home School
- Directing state, county, and Youthprise dollars to Brooklyn Park and other high-need communities not targeted by our federal grant
- Offering parent education

Success story

At the beginning of the evidence-based, safer sex curriculum, my students appeared neutral to negative about condom usage. But over the course of the curriculum, they increasingly asked good questions and seemed genuinely curious.

At the end of the curriculum, we did an exercise where students responded to excuses partners might give to avoid barrier use. The hardest excuse was one where a partner said, “We haven’t used condoms before – why start now?” When I read this to the class, one student said, “Well that was before and I didn’t know better. Now I’m educated and know how to use them!”

~ Emily Scotto, health educator
2016-2017 strategy and results

Schools
We are exposing youth to sequential, consistent, and reinforcing evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention programming multiple times over the course of their adolescence. Highly skilled health mentors work with youth and on changing systems.

Highlights:
• Health educators are implementing evidence based curriculums: Making Proud Choices!, All4You!, Be Proud! Be Responsible!, Project AIM and Positive Prevention Plus.
• We expanded our programming to 5 school districts, 7 charter schools, and 5 alternative schools.

By the numbers:
4,984 students received an evidence-based sex education curriculum since February 2016
6 health mentors working in 11 schools during the 2016-2017 school year

Clinics
The evidence-based Safer Sex Intervention (SSI) program pairs young women ages 13 to 19 with a health educator for one-to-one counseling in four sessions over the course of one year. SSI fills the gap revealed in our 2015 Community Needs and Resource Assessment indicating providers’ frustration that fast-paced clinic flow left too little time to provide in-depth education or counseling to patients.

Highlights:
• In communities with the highest teen birth rates, we are funding and supporting Safer Sex Intervention at youth-friendly clinics: Annex Teen Clinic, Brooklyn Center Health Resource Center, Minneapolis school-based clinics (Henry, Roosevelt and South), Planned Parenthood of Richfield, and Red Door Clinic
• SSI educators were trained in the use of motivational interviewing techniques, a technique which has shown to be effective with youth
• Over 70 percent of Better Together Hennepin participants said they were more likely to return to the clinic because of their experience with SSI. Almost all participants said they would recommend the program to a friend.

By the numbers:
925 young women reached with an initial Safer Sex Intervention session between September 2015 and June 2017
Parent education: It’s That Easy!

Through the Annex Teen Clinic, Planned Parenthood, NorthPoint Health and Wellness, and formerly with The Family Partnership, we offer It’s That Easy (ITE) to adults who are significantly involved in the lives of Hennepin County youth ages 11 through 18. This outreach and education program empowers adults to connect with youth, share family values, and engage in meaningful conversations about sexuality.

Highlights:
• Established a goal to reach 2,000 parents over the five-year grant period

By the numbers:
43 parent educators were trained to support adults in their role as sexuality educators (2016-2017)
732 parents talked with youth about sex (between May 2016 and September 2017)

Success story
The house workshop went really well. The relaxed vibe allows participants to feel like this is casual every day conversation which is what we want! A couple days later the host reported back that several of the parents said they gave and/or talked to their child about the message they wrote at workshop. One parent and her 16-year-old talked, cried, and had a very meaningful conversation about sexuality, values, and concerns.

~ It’s That Easy! facilitator
Systems change

A Better Together Hennepin assessment found that the Hennepin County communities with high teen birth rates offered inadequate clinic access for youth. In response, Better Together Hennepin launched MyClinic, an initiative that developed standards of care for clinics and a clinic assessment tool. A local advisory committee of adolescent health providers and educators developed a set of standards, a clinic assessment tool, and an assessment process. The process is unique because it trained youth to make calls to clinics to seek help or information and then rate their experience. This valuable feedback was provided to clinics.

The MyClinic initiative is a national model for adolescent health care. MyClinic materials are available for public use at hennepin.us/bettertogether

Highlights

• Created an online training on the Minnesota Minor Consent law to help clinic staff better understand and protect adolescent confidentiality in clinic visits.
• Better Together Hennepin used the MyClinic model to complete 22 clinic evaluations in 2014 and 29 clinic evaluations in 2016. Many health care organizations used their evaluation results to guide quality improvement.
• An evaluation completed in 2017 revealed that participating clinics perceive Better Together Hennepin’s standards of care as a helpful framework for providing youth friendly care, that our trainings are helpful even for high-performing clinics, and that being connected as a group through Better Together Hennepin fills a gap in clinics’ ability to share ideas and best practices.
• Better Together Hennepin provided trainings on topics like sensitive care for LGBTQ youth, culturally competent care to youth of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual violence, IUDs and implants, pregnancy options counseling, confidentiality, and establishing paternity.

By the numbers:

26 clinics that met Better Together Hennepin standards of care are listed at MySelfMyHealth.org and in a widely distributed pocket guide for youth

17 clinics and 184 clinic staff have participated in Better Together Hennepin’s quarterly trainings for MyClinic participants since 2014

28,248,562 digital and print media impressions made through MyClinic’s summer campaign. Of the 47,971 visits to MySelfMyHealth.org, 87 percent were from new visitors.
We learned that teens face considerable barriers to obtaining and retaining health insurance. Programs specifically designed for youth to receive reproductive health care (MFPP) are riddled with application requirements and approval wait times that necessitate alternative and less effective birth control options until approval is received. When the county funding was used as bridge funding until insurance was approved, it enabled many young women/teens to obtain a LARC when they needed and wanted it and allowed the clinic to provide it and capture insurance coverage later.

**Highlights:**

- In 2017, comprehensive evaluation of the Health Mentor Model program was completed, indicating it is an effective means to reach youth.
- Heath mentors completed both basic and advanced motivational interview training.

**By the numbers:**

- 6 health mentors worked in 11 schools during the 2016-2017 school year
- 1,827 youth received evidence-based classroom sex education by a health mentor in 2017
- 14,037 contacts with young people through all health mentor activities in 2017

**Success Story**

The biggest success for us was that we were able to put LARCs in as soon as the patient had transportation and wanted one. Often the window is short so we want to be able to act while the interest is high.

~ Diane Murray, clinic director, Annex Teen Clinic
Our partners

Better Together Hennepin programming is successful because of our committed partners reaching youth in schools, clinics, and community based organizations throughout the County.

Annex Teen Clinic
City of Minneapolis Health Department, School-based Clinics
Minneapolis Public Schools
Richfield schools
Brooklyn Center schools
Osseo schools
Robbinsdale schools
Brooklyn Center Health Resource Center
Richfield Health Resource Center
The Family Tree
Katie Pierson, Consultant
Lynn Bretl, Consultant
Marilyn Colby Rivkin, Consultant
Neighborhood HealthSource
NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center
Planned Parenthood Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota (PPMNS)
Red Door Clinic
Youthlink Clinic
The Family Partnership
Youthprise

Community advisory group
Diverse leaders committed to improving the lives of youth meet quarterly to support Better Together Hennepin on strategic planning, community mobilization, implementation, and sustainability of teen pregnancy programming.

Alisa Johnson, Hennepin County Public Health
Ann DeGroot, Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board
Brenda Lynn, Northpoint Health and Wellness
Brian Russ, Annex Teen Clinic
Bridge McKay, Richfield Public Schools Health Resource Center
Carly Jarva, Brooklyn Center Secondary School
Coral Garner, Minneapolis Health Department
Donna LaChapelle, Minnesota Indian Women Resource Center-retired
Jill Farris, UMN PRC
Juliana Tillema, HealthPartners
Julie Neitzel Carr, Minnesota Dept of Health
Youth leadership councils

Annex Teen Clinic – Annex Advisory Council (Robbinsdale)

Annex Teen Clinic - Expect Respect Group (Brooklyn Center)

Minneapolis School-based Clinics – T.H.E. Council (Minneapolis)

Richfield Youth Leadership Council (under development)

Kathleen Wick, Hennepin County Public Health
Libby Lincoln, Park Nicollet Foundation
Linda EagleSpeaker, Minnesota Indian Women Resource Center
Marcus Pope, Youthprise
Maureen Alms, Minnesota Department of Health
Migdalia Loyola, Planned Parenthood Minnesota South Dakota
Molly Snuggerud, Richfield-Bloomington-Edina Public Health
Monique Drier, Brooklyn Center Police Dept.
Naomi Taylor, Minneapolis Public Schools
Nigel Perrote, City of Minneapolis - Health
Rebecca Gilgen, Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth
Robbinsdale Area Schools
Sarah Loch, Minneapolis Public Schools
Steffany Truax, Hennepin County Contract Management
Susan Palchick, Hennepin County Public Health
Ursula Reynoso, Hennepin County Medical Center
Aquí Para Ti
More information

Website: www.hennepin.us/bettertogether
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bettertogetherhennepin

Contact

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