

# Teen ACTION Qualitative Evaluation

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# Background of NYC Teen Needs

- 38% of high school students engage in sexual intercourse
- 50% more teen births than national average
- High rates of sexually transmitted infections
- 58% citywide high school graduation rate
- High rates of other risky behaviors



# Motivation for Teen ACTION

- NYC CEO and DYCD developed Teen ACTION: *Achieving Change Together in Our Neighborhood*
- Teen ACTION is designed to:
  - Reduce risky behaviors
  - Promote positive youth development
  - Promote community engagement



# Teen ACTION Evaluation Objectives

- Describe the services received, experiences, and satisfaction
- Document the implementation of Teen ACTION across sites
- Describe self-reported short-term outcomes of participants
- Describe experience and perspectives of staff
- Report lessons learned
- *Particular focus on the SRH curriculum*



# Teen ACTION Evaluation

- Conducted site visits with 7 program sites  
In November and December 2013
  - Collect in-depth information about services
  - Understand perspective of participants and staff
- 46 focus groups, staff and participant interviews were conducted across the sites



# Teen ACTION Providers

Teen ACTION Provider	Location of Organization	Service Area	Service Target (Middle or High School)
<b>BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy</b>	CBO located in a Public School	Bronx	High School
<b>The Child Center of NY- MS 72</b>	CBO located in a Public School	Queens	Middle and High School
<b>Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy</b>	CBO	Manhattan	High School
<b>El Puente</b>	CBO	Brooklyn	Middle and High School
<b>NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse</b>	CBO	Manhattan	Middle and High School
<b>SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School</b>	CBO located in a Public School	Brooklyn	High School
<b>St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV</b>	CBO located in a Public School	Brooklyn	High School



# Why Youth Enroll in Teen ACTION

- Desire to engage in after-school activity
- Safe, warm, and friendly environment
- Social connection
- Future college and professional careers
- Incentive payments



# Enrollment Goals

- Enrollment goals range is 50 – 75 participants
  - Based on program capacity and organizational history
- Rate of Participation (RoP) goal is 70%
  - 70% of enrolled participants must receive 150 hours of Teen ACTION activities
    - 50 hours of structured learning
    - 50 hours of service learning activities.



# Program Structure

- **Structured-learning activities**
  - Understanding of the environment they inhabit
  - Youth development and interpersonal skills
  - Risky behaviors and sexual reproductive health
- **Service learning activities**
  - “experiential approach to developing [...] academic, civic, leadership, and life skills”
- **Reflection activities**
- **Youth-led decision-making**



# Flexibility of Program Structure

- Individual programs had variation in their program structure
  - CBO v. School-based
- Occasional service or college trips
- Staff availability during school day



# Variation in Structured Learning

- Include special topics relevant participants
  - Stress workshops
  - College and career activities
  - Bullying and stereotyping
- Communication
  - Vocabulary words
  - Spoken word, art, dance
- Structure of lessons



# Key Risky Behavior Services

- Sexual Reproductive Health component
  - HIV/AIDS
  - Teen pregnancy
  - STI prevention
  - Abstinence
  - Condom use
  - Birth control
  - Healthy relationships
  - Sexual harassment



# Key Risky Behavior Services

- Implementation of SRH component varies across site
  - Planned Parenthood
  - Outside presenters
  - Interactive lessons
  - Gender-specific lessons



# Variations in SRH Component

- School rules and state laws presenting condom use or distribution
- Highly religious populations
- Delayed start to SRH lessons



# Key Services Across Sites

- The most common service activities that the youth participated in were
  - Presentations and performance
  - Food assistance
  - Charity walks
  - Community clean-up projects



# Reflection Across Sites

- Schedule of reflection activities
- Discuss varying perspectives of participants
- Discuss decision making process
- Review reflections to ensure implementation of thoughts into daily lives



# Participants' Outcomes

- Both participants and provider staff are highly positive about the program services, with many noting:
  - Increased connection to their communities;
  - Changed their own behaviors to ensure a better future; and
  - Many figured out how better negotiate dating relationships and sexual activity.
- Teen ACTION provides a safe place to be on an almost daily basis for several hours after school.



# Outcomes: Risky Behaviors

- An increased knowledge of risky behaviors, especially as it relates to SRH. For some the program is their first exposure to learning about SRH. Many noted they had personally referred peers to community resources or advised against risky behaviors because of the knowledge accrued through this program.
- Only a few said their behavior toward sex had changed, with most stating they plan to wait to engage in sexual behaviors. Some also reduced their engagement in other risky behaviors, including violent activities and drug use.



# Outcomes: School Work and Goals

- Participants noted a positive immediate effect on their school participation because of skills they learn in Teen ACTION.
  - Mentoring, tutoring and other educational services offered by the providers help participants feel prepared for higher education.
- Setting goals and understanding how to achieve them were key long-term outcomes of the Teen ACTION program.
  - Several providers noted that by treating participants respectfully, the participants gain greater ownership of their lives and develop longer-term goals.
  - Long-term career goals are supported with one student saying, “They inspire you. They help you push through your dreams. They will always respect your career. They never tell you yes or no, they just let you know.”



# Outcomes: Community and Communication

- Service activities have a profound effect on the participants' knowledge of and connection to their community. Many are able to better conceptualize their community and envision what they want it to be in the future.
  - Some said that learning about the spread of disease and hunger in the world led them to think locally about what could be done in their own community.
- Communication - Participants also believed that the program improves their interactions with their parents, allowing them to express themselves more openly.
- Participants often spend a great deal of time one-on-one with program staff that teach, tutor, listen, and guide the participants. In some cases, staff members fulfill a maternal or paternal figure for participants.



# Effective Program Components

- Youth-driven model
- Skill or social interaction development
- Consistent and intensive interaction between program staff and participants
- Connection to the schools



# Key Implementation Achievements and Challenges

- Achievements
  - Flexibility of curriculum
  - Staff members
- Challenges
  - Recruitment and retention
  - Too few resources
    - Space



# Conclusions

- Coordinate age-based plan for serving youth
- Develop long-term plans for participants
- Provide transitional services for older youth
- Create separate funding specifically for trips
- Re-focus and separate SRH classes
- Officially integrate Teen ACTION with other provider programs

