

Families in Our Community United for Success (FOCUS) Year 02: From Process to Outcomes

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The FOCUS Approach

FOCUS represents more than 30 years of experience creating and implementing pregnancy prevention/abstinence education. Based on evaluation findings and empirical lessons learned, the FOCUS Project is guided by the following principles:

- ❖ **Importance of knowledge** about sexual health and the impact of early pregnancy;
- ❖ **Positive youth development** that emphasizes attainable goals and an environment of support;
- ❖ **Parents are pivotal** in the decisions teens make;
- ❖ **Cultural assumptions and influences** impact sexual health and other risk behaviors; and
- ❖ **Developing a world view** that includes individual, family, community and beyond gives teens greater confidence.

The FOCUS Service Model

- ❖ **School-Based Abstinence Education** curricula developed and evaluated with previous AFL grants;
- ❖ **Parent-Child Connectedness Training** based on the 8-session ETR curriculum;
- ❖ **Parent as Sexual Health Educator Training and Support** using locally designed and tested curriculum;
- ❖ **Support for goal setting and future planning** including annual family meetings with FOCUS staff to identify academic/career, personal and family goals; and
- ❖ **Enrichment experiences** incorporating field trips, service learning and travel.

FOCUS Participants

Recruitment: Wave I (5/08): 120
Wave II (5/09): 99
Total: 219

Active Teens:

Teens/Families:	192	(87.7%)
Grade:		
6 th	97	(50.5%)
7 th	52	(27.1%)
8 th	43	(22.4%)

Gender:

Females	97	(50.5%)
Males	95	(49.5%)

Race:

African-American	101	(52.6%)
Asian	3	(1.6%)
Caucasian	30	(15.6%)
Other	58	(30.2%)

Ethnicity:

Latino	82	(42.7%)
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Left the Program: 27 (12.3%)

Retention Rate 87.7%

Comparison Group

Wave I (11/08): 97
Wave II (11/09) goal: 125

Other measures of compatibility between study and comparison groups:

	Study	Comparison
•2007 % teen live births % to teens <18	15.9%	18.5%
•Size of school district	4,265	2,660
•% low-income students	84%	76%
•% of district schools failing to meet AYP	55%	43%
•No significant differences in baseline responses Core and Supplemental surveys		

Intensity/Dosage

Services for Teens

Total Contacts	1,215
In-School Groups (9 sessions x 7 grps.)	655 (54.5%)
Out-of-School (15 field trips)	274 (28.6%)
Family Events (20 sessions)	232 (19.3%)
Total Service Hours	2,988

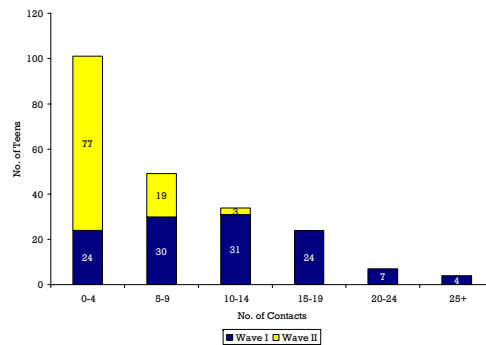
Ave. Wave I Service Hours ranging from 2.5 to 132 hrs

Services for Parents

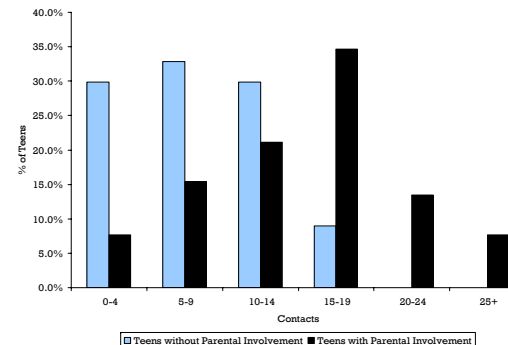
Total Contacts	444
Parent-Child Connectedness	298 (67.1%)
Ready or Not (Sexual Health)	86 (19.4%)
Family Events (20 sessions)	60 (13.5%)
Total Service Hours	884

Active teens with 1 or more parents involved in programming 91 (47.3%)

Intensity of Services for All Teen Participants



Distribution of Dosage for Wave I Teens with (n=52) vs. Teens without Parent Involvement (n=67)



Results

At the conclusion of the first full year providing direct service interventions, FOCUS has shown:

- ❖ a high degree of engagement among teens resulting in an **88% retention rate**
- ❖ a high rate of **parental involvement**
- ❖ **teens have more program contacts and service hours** if parents are involved
- ❖ **improved attitudes/intentions regarding early sexual activity** on 1st year follow up compared to baseline Core and Supplemental surveys responses

Discussion

The services provided by FOCUS to teens show promise in impacting attitudes, intentions and behavior, regarding early sexual activity. **A most remarkable aspect of the program to date is the high level of sustained parental involvement.** This is attributed to several factors.

- ❖ **Listening to parent guidance** on what they need in order to be able to be involved—early evening hours, dinner and care for all children.
- ❖ Using ETR's "Parent-Child Connectedness: New Interventions for Teen Pregnancy Prevention" (PCC) curriculum which **empowers parents to build a strong, sustained and loving emotional bond with their children.**
- ❖ **Offering parents concrete skills to talk with their children about sexual health** issues through the locally developed "Ready or Not" curriculum.
- ❖ Giving parents the **opportunity to share their experiences and values** in a supportive, respectful environment.
- ❖ Translating and presenting all parent programming so that it **meets the language and cultural needs** of immigrant, Spanish-speaking parents.

Implications

- ❖ FOCUS has demonstrated that African-American and Latino parents from a low-income community will engage in sustained programming designed to enhance their relationships and communication skills with their children.
- ❖ Program content must resonate with them and be presented in an atmosphere where their language, culture and values are respected and supported.
- ❖ Teens whose parents are involved engage in higher intensity services.