Brotherspeak

A research study that engages young black men in community settings throughout Philadelphia to examine the effectiveness of a theater-based, innovative teen pregnancy prevention intervention.

Why Brotherspeak?

- Teen pregnancy and birth rates in the U.S. have declined in the past 25 years, and since the federal Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program started in 2010, rates dropped faster than in any previous five-year period. However, rates remain high for young people of color, and more evidence-based interventions are needed to address the unique needs of diverse communities.
- Most teen pregnancy prevention interventions are focused on females and are based in school settings, but males start having sex at a younger age than females, and young men are, on average, three years older than their female partners.
- Young men have limited access to reproductive services and education.
- It is important to build the science around evidence-based teen pregnancy prevention for young men.
- The Office of Adolescent Health’s TPP Program has identified about 40 evidence-based programs, but only one of those is specifically for males. However, males have different risks, needs, and attitudes related to teen and unplanned pregnancy.

What is Brotherspeak?

Brotherspeak is a randomized control trial for 15 to 22-year-old black men designed to test the effectiveness of Promoting Awareness through Live Movement and Sound – Teen Pregnancy Prevention (PALMS-TPP). PALMS-TPP uses elements of theater and music, interactive activities, and open discussion to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy and empower young men to be proactive in protecting their health and well-being. The study will reach about 660 young men in 10 community-based settings across Philadelphia. The Brotherspeak Study is funded through a five-year, $3.7 million grant from the Office of Adolescent Health.
What is PALMS-TPP?

PALMS-TPP is a theater-based, trauma-informed, group-level intervention that has been adapted from an evidence-based HIV prevention intervention for black male adolescents, developed by Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC).

PALMS-TPP focuses on increasing knowledge and skills related to sexual and reproductive health and reducing behaviors that increase risk for teen and unplanned pregnancy, but also addresses communication skills, goals and goal-setting, social connections, and positive youth development through:

- theater-based strategies using elements of popular culture especially designed to capture the interest of young urban black males;
- the use of peer actors who model behaviors and skills;
- opportunities for young men to actively take part in working out solutions to problems and practicing skills; and
- intervention content and procedures that can be implemented in a variety of community settings.

How is the study being conducted?

The study is conducted at 10 community based partner sites across Philadelphia. Each site serves as both an intervention site and a control site at different times during three 10-month periods. Men in intervention sites receive PALMS-TPP. Men in comparison sites get the existing services offered: recreational activities, GED preparation, job readiness and training, etc., depending on the site. Intervention and comparison groups will be compared on a host of factors including: number of vaginal sexual partners in the past three months, condom use during vaginal sex, use of birth control, delayed initiation of sex, sexual and reproductive health knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and confidence in goal setting.

When are study results expected?

June 2020.

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