



OAH TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM: SPOTLIGHTING SUCCESS

WestEd: Healthy U

In July 2015, the HHS Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) awarded 84 Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program grants. WestEd was funded to conduct a rigorous evaluation of *Healthy U*, a promising new intervention delivered via a tablet-based app to prevent teen pregnancy. WestEd's Justice & Prevention Research Center and Health & Human Development Program are collaborating with the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) and the designer of the app, Efficacy, to develop and test this intervention specifically for justice-involved male youth.



- ▶ In 2015, WestEd was awarded a grant from the HHS Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program to test an innovative new technology intervention, *Healthy U*—one of the first developed specifically for justice-involved male youth.
- ▶ WestEd and their partners have actively engaged incarcerated youth in the development of *Healthy U* to ensure it resonates with them.

About WestEd and the *Healthy U* Program

WestEd is a non-profit research, development, and service agency that works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd is conducting a cluster randomized control trial to evaluate changes in sexual behavior, as well as knowledge and attitudes related to sexual behavior, for youth who participate in the *Healthy U* program as compared to other young males in the custody of the OYA who do not participate in *Healthy U*.

Healthy U is an innovative teen pregnancy prevention program delivered through a tablet app—one of the first such interventions designed specifically for young males in a juvenile justice environment. OYA staff facilitate the self-guided intervention by passing out tablets and answering any questions youth might have based on their *Healthy U* experience. Youth access the tablets during their free time or times designated by the facilitator, depending on their location.

Healthy U has activities such as video narratives from teens, games, and an imagination challenge that prompts youth to view their sexual decision-making as something that can affect their goals and health in the future. The content is medically-accurate, inclusive, and trauma-informed.

During a focus group, 18 of 20 young men age 14-19 said they had never participated in any sort of sexual health education, either due to changing schools frequently or there being no formal health education services offered in the juvenile justice system.

"Healthy U changed my life."

- OYA youth

Efficacy tailored the *Healthy U* app to the OYA environment, ensuring it can be accessed without the internet and that it will appeal to the target audience. Through the partnership with WestEd, OYA provided multiple opportunities to pilot specific aspects of *Healthy U*, obtained feedback from youth regarding the program, and strategized with the research team to develop a research design that is feasible to implement. Feedback from participants, for example, led to the name of the app being changed from Virtual Student Health Center to *Healthy U*, as the youth and OYA realized the importance of the concept of “school or university.”

Why It Matters?

OAH's funding for the *Healthy U* program is an investment in reducing teen pregnancy. The work that WestEd and their partners are doing in Oregon:

- **Serves a high-risk, high-need population.** Incarcerated youth are separated from their parents or guardians and lack adequate access to information from trustworthy, knowledgeable adults during a critical period in their adolescent development. Three-quarters of incarcerated males in OYA have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and nearly two-thirds have a history of drug or substance dependency. Not only can youth get information from the *Healthy U* app, but OYA staff who interact with youth on a daily basis are trained on the content so they can answer questions youth might have and refer them to appropriate services such as mental health and substance abuse services.

"If I had taken Healthy U when I was 14 years old, I wouldn't be a teen father today."

- OYA youth

- **Builds evidence to fill an important gap in the knowledge base.** There are few interventions designed specifically for adolescent and young adult males, and even fewer designed for young males in a juvenile justice environment. In light of the critical yet under-addressed role of young men in preventing teen pregnancy, it is important to engage them. WestEd is conducting a randomized control trial of *Healthy U*, the gold standard of research, to help expand the knowledge base about what is effective for this high-risk population.

During the staff trainings, multiple staff mentioned that they were excited to finally have a program where youth could learn about sexual health and decision-making—they recognized that most youth had never had that education.

WestEd By the Numbers

- National Teen Birth Rate (2015*): 22 per 1,000 females age 15-19;
- Male teens (age 15-19) who have fathered a child (2015*): 10.4 per 1,000;
- Percentage of male juveniles in custody of the Oregon Youth Agency who are fathers (2016): 9%;
- Percentage of the eligible sample who have started Healthy U (2017): 95%;
- Program completion rate (2017): 100%.

**reflects the most recent year for which data are available.*

"I don't have to track down youth for their Healthy U time, they come find me."

- OYA staff

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About the Office of Adolescent Health TPP Program

The OAH [Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program](#) is a national, evidence-based program that funds diverse organizations working to prevent teen pregnancy across the United States. OAH invests in the implementation of programs identified as evidence-based by the HHS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review, and provides funding to develop and evaluate new and innovative approaches to prevent teen pregnancy.