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Providing the Teen Outreach Program in school settings

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More Than Conquerors Inc. (MTCI)
Presentation Proposal for the National Youth-At-Risk Conference

1. Title:

Putting the right spin on the Teen Outreach Program (TOP)
(Replicating the evidence-based TOP in school settings)

2. Relevance:

The presentation will relate directly to strand IV, as the Teen Outreach Program is a pregnancy prevention program that was developed providing services to at-risk youth. More indirectly, it also relates to the strand II, as developing student leadership is an essential part of the program, with all activities being planned with student input and direction.

3. Brief Description:

MTCI will share the experiences of providing the Teen Outreach Program (TOP). The challenges of providing a year long program within school systems where most students change classes each semester will be addressed, along with effective strategies. The presenters also provide practical insight on conquering the challenges of replicating an evidence-based model with excellence, while maintaining strict fidelity and achieving high outcomes. The presenters will also offer instruction regarding successful program activities for the youth service professional working with high school populations.

4. Summary:

Morris Brown College has been responding to the needs of African-American young people for more than a century. This tradition has included attempting to impact the overall person, beyond simply

providing for academic development. Similarly, More Than Conquerors Inc., a community based non-profit organization, has been equally committed to responding to the needs of youth at-risk, from middle school through high school. These organizations have joined together their areas of expertise in order to connect young people by providing the Collegiate Health Awareness Messages Protecting Students (CHAMPS) Project.

CHAMPS meets the needs of program participants (ages 13 through 19), by integrating educational strategies that support teen pregnancy prevention, as well as prevention of other risky behaviors through the implementation of the *Teen Outreach Program (TOP)* in a school-based program. In addition to the teen pregnancy prevention focus, the youth development model incorporates multiple components such as personal development, academic support and community engagement through service learning.

The intervention has a proven track record of encouraging pregnancy prevention among young people and was designed to be offered to at least 500 high school aged youths annually. The overarching goal is to reduce teen pregnancy, behavioral risks underlying teen pregnancy, or other associated risks factors. Given that the TOP program necessitates that the curriculum be offered over a full school year, the change in semester proved to be a significant challenge for the program, as half or more of the program participants were lost to other classes. The presentation will review these experiences including each of the steps taken by the project to address this issue, and the final intervention that proved the most effective. The presentation will also address many of the program successes including strategies for recruiting more than twice the number of students needed each program year, and very creative service learning projects that were conducted within the school setting and local community.

5. Evidence:

Allen et al. (1997) conducted a study between 1991 and 1995 involving 25 TOP sites nationwide. All active TOP sites were invited to participate in the evaluation. A total of 695 students were randomized at the start of the study, with 342 students in the treatment group and 353 in the control group. All participants were assessed via questionnaire at entry (one to two weeks into the course) and upon

completion of the program (at the end of the school year) on their background characteristics and histories of problem behaviors.

Allen et al. found the following:

- The TOP participants' school suspension rate decreased by 24 percent over the course of the study (from 17 percent at baseline to 13 percent at posttest), while the control group experienced a 21 percent increase in suspension rate (from 24 percent at baseline to 29 percent at posttest).
- The TOP group's course failure rate decreased by 12 percent after the study (from 30.3 percent to 26.6 percent), whereas the control group experienced a 24 percent increase in failure rate (rising from 38 percent to 47 percent).
- Program participation had a significant impact on the pregnancy rate among female participants, with the TOP pregnancy rate decreasing 31 percent (from 6 percent at baseline to 4 percent at posttest), and the control group's pregnancy rate decreasing only 2 percent (10 percent at baseline to 9.8 percent at follow-up).

Allen and Philliber (2001), using a somewhat less rigorous design with a sample that included the same students assessed in Allen et al. (1997) as well as additional students, suggests that the program's effects are particularly robust for youths at higher risk of the specific types of problem behaviors being measured. For example, the authors found that the program had a larger effect in reducing pregnancies among youths who had already given birth to a child (compared with those who had never given birth). For this group of study participants, the likelihood of an additional pregnancy was less than one-fifth as large in the intervention group as in the comparison group. Similarly for the outcome of academic failure, TOP had a larger impact for youths who had been previously suspended than for those who had not. The program also displayed greater effectiveness for members of racial ethnic minority groups than for Caucasian students.

References:

Allen, J. P. & Philliber, S. (2001). Who benefits most from a broadly targeted prevention program? Differential efficacy across populations in

the Teen Outreach program. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(6), 637-655.

Allen, J., Philliber, S., Herrling, S., & Kuperminc, G. (1997). Preventing teen pregnancy and academic failure: Experimental evaluation of a developmentally based approach. *Child Development*, 64(4), 729-742.

6. Format:

Individual presentation to a group of 50 – 70 conference attendees

7. Biographical Sketch of Presenters:

Tina Thomas, LPN, SRAS, graduated from the Connolly School of Nursing in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania in 1983. After relocating to Atlanta for a change of scenery and weather, she gained employment at Egleston Children's Hospital of Atlanta for ten-years; Director of Patient Access Services and Director of Customer Service at Rockdale Medical Center for twelve years. As an avid traveler, she is also retired from AirTran Airways and has worked in Adolescent Health Education since 2003.

Mrs. Thomas has been the Coordinator of Programs for More Than Conquerors, Inc. since 2004. She is responsible for the daily implementation and replication of all of the youth development programs and services that currently hosts over 100 weekly healthy relationship skills classes serving more than 3500 high school students per year across Metro Atlanta in both in school and community settings. Other responsibilities include developing and maintaining relationships with school officials and classroom educators who host the youth development programs, coordinating with the hiring, training, scheduling, observing as well as evaluating of all staff.

Mrs. Thomas has been married for 25 years and is the mother of two sons and grandmother of two grandsons. She also is an enthusiastic Steelers Fan. She can be contacted at tthomas@mtciga.org.

Gregg Johnson, BA, SRAS, has nearly 30 year of experience in working with teens and young-adults. He is the Co-Founder of Pure Solutions, LLC. And the Executive Director of Campus Ministries United, Inc. As a conference speaker and clinician, Gregg has made presentations in England, France, Jamaica W.I., Bahamas, and throughout the continental United States. The passion, humor, appropriate age-level examples and personal stories, along with current and accurate information combine to provide a dynamic and life changing presentation.

As a Sexual Risks Avoidance Specialists, Gregg has developed a network of relationships that afford him access to the most recent developments in the world of Abstinence and Healthy Relationship Education. His training includes several nationally recognized leaders in curricula development including **W.A.I.T.**, Jane Fonda Institute of Emory University, Wyman's Teen Outreach Program, Connections, Pairs, **The Choice Game**, and the **Rockdale Adolescent Health & Peer Leadership Project**, to name a few. Gregg is a nationally certified Abstinence Educator and has taught over 1300 classes in Metro Atlanta's Public Schools. Additionally, he has presented on several college campuses, after school programs, and charter schools.

Gregg is the Corporate and Community Trainer for More Than Conquerors, Inc. and is responsible for professional development and program fidelity for the various curricula implemented by MTCI and its team of educators. He has been married for 23 years to Carol and they have 5 children.

8. Contact Information:

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