

Proposed Title (short, catchy & descriptive)

We Need Sex Ed, Too! : Addressing the Sexual Risk Behaviors of System Involved Youth

Relevance:

HEALTH Strand - This workshop describes current and ongoing intervention research conducted with urban youth placed in child welfare and juvenile justice systems. It is designed to (1) identify the sexual and reproductive health risk behaviors of these youth; (2) describe the related social determinants of health; and, (3) improve awareness of how educators and other providers can promote the development of positive sexual risk behaviors and reduce pregnancy within this vulnerable population.

Brief Description (30-60 words)

System involved youth (e.g., youth in child welfare or juvenile services) are a vulnerable population with increased risk for unintended pregnancy, HIV, and STIs. This workshop is designed to (1) identify their sexual reproductive health risk behaviors; (2) describe the related determinants; and, (3) improve awareness of how educators can promote the development of positive sexual risk behaviors among them.

Summary (250-350 words)

System involved youth (e.g., youth in child welfare or juvenile services) are an extremely vulnerable population with increased risk for unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections. These youth have a double vulnerability – adolescence, a critical stage marked by increased risk for negative social and behavioral outcomes, and, being system involved. Sexual risk behaviors, such as early age of sexual initiation and unprotected sex, pose a threat to youth well-being because of increased risk of STIs and unintended pregnancy. Many system involved youth exhibit elevated sexual risk behaviors posing a serious threat to their well-being. Engaging in sexual risk behavior can set the stage for engaging in other risky behaviors, thus increasing the likelihood of self-injury, victimization by others, and other negative consequences that result from these behaviors among an already vulnerable population.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to describe the sexual risk behaviors of system involved youth and identify factors associated with their higher risk for STIs and unintended pregnancy. Through lecture and activities, workshop participants will be provided with in-depth descriptive information about the unique sex education and reproductive health needs of system involved youth which highlights the importance of working with them. Time will be allotted to compare and contrast the issues related to working with youth-at-risk due to system involvement with the needs of other youth in urban environments. Participants will discuss how they can incorporate the sexual health needs of system involved youth into their current work as educators and school professionals. Among the strategies discussed will be how to incorporate teen sexual health lessons into life skills/health education curricula in a way that accounts for the unique needs of system involved youth; as well as how they can work collaboratively with caseworkers, child advocates, and foster parents.

Evidence (How is this based in research...)

This workshop uses social science research to examine the needs for sexual reproductive health education among system involved youth. This research has been guided by Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework which considers how the individual is embedded in and influenced by numerous systems or groups. Consistent with this framework, an understanding of social learning theory has been applied which recognizes that system involved youth's behavior is a result of "reciprocal determinism", the continuing interaction between the youth, the youth's behavior, and the environment in which the behavior is performed. A logic model was used in the evaluation design. This logic model served to guide the implementation of a reproductive health curriculum designed for youth in out of home care placements.

Format – Individual presentation to a group

Biographical Sketch:

Nadine M Finigan-Carr, Ph.D., is a prevention research scientist focused on the application of behavioral and social science perspectives to research on contemporary health problems, especially those that disproportionately affect people of color. Her scholarship is grounded in theories and methods found primarily in the field of health behavior change among individuals and the environments that support or impede chronic disease prevention or management, injury, and violence. She is a nationally recognized expert on domestic minor human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In 2018, she presented a TedX talk titled, *Child Prostitutes Don't Exist*. Currently, Dr. Finigan-Carr is a Research Associate Professor and the Assistant Director of the Ruth Young Center for Families and Children at the University of Maryland: School of Social Work where she leads the Prevention of Adolescent Risks Initiative. She is the Principal Investigator of research projects at both the state and federal levels designed to intervene with system involved youth – those in foster care or the juvenile justice system. These youth have a double vulnerability – adolescence, a critical stage marked by increased risk for negative social and behavioral outcomes including aggression and sexual risk behaviors; and, being removed from their families of origin. Dr Finigan-Carr is the author of *Linking Health and Education for African American Students' Success* (Routledge Press). She was the guest editor for the Journal of Negro Education's 2015 special issue on "Out-of-School Time and African American Students: Understanding the Health, Environmental, and Social Determinants of Academic Success." She also serves as a Commissioner of Community Relations in the Baltimore City Office of Civil Rights.

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