



Reducing Sexual Risk Among Youth Through a Pharmacy Implemented Evidence-Based Curriculum

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Background

- Unplanned pregnancy and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are a growing issue among adolescents in Maryland. Rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and teenage pregnancy continue to rise in Somerset County, a medically underserved area in Maryland, and are higher than State averages.
- Making a Difference (MAD) is an evidence-based, 8-module curriculum that provides young adolescents with the knowledge, confidence and skills necessary to reduce their risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV, and pregnancy by abstaining from sex.

Objective

- The purpose of this study was to develop and implement a pharmacy-led initiative promoting safer sexual practices amongst Maryland adolescents using the MAD curriculum.

Methods

- One pharmacist and 3 pharmacy students implemented the MAD curriculum at two afterschool programs in Somerset County for adolescents aged 11-16.
- A total of 24 modular lessons were covered in the curriculum including self-esteem, personal boundaries, STDs, HIV, pregnancy, and the benefits of both sex and abstinence.
- Changes in a 5-point Likert survey before and after the curriculum was used to determine program efficacy. The survey questions assessed participant's likelihood to perform risky behaviors, decision making, emotional behaviors, ability to seek help, long term goals, and program performance.
- Descriptive statistics were collected with a paired student T-test with an alpha of 0.05.

Results

- A total of 51 youth completed the program over 2 weeks with an average age of 12 ± 0.71 years.
- Most sessions lasted for 1.5 hours. Forty-six students (90.2%) were Black/African American and 6 students (11.8%) were Caucasian, the majority of whom were female (68.6%).
- All of the participating youth stated that they were interested in the program and 50 youth (98.0%) felt that the discussions and activities helped them learn program lessons.
- After completion, all participants were better able to understand what made a relationship healthy ($P = 0.02$) and 96% stated they were able to resist sexual pressures ($P = 0.04$).
- Additionally, all of the participants were more likely to talk to a trusted adult if someone they were dating made them uncomfortable or pressured ($P = 0.04$).
- Finally, the majority of youth stated that they were able to manage their emotions in healthy ways (92.1%) and think about the consequences before making decisions (98.0%).

Conclusion and Implication

- The MAD curriculum taught by pharmacy staff appears to have some positive effects in educating adolescents about sexual behavior in relationships. Adolescents were able to gain knowledge and skills in sexual risk reduction after the program.
- Further studies need to be done to assess the long-term impact of the intervention on adolescents in reducing the consequences related to unsafe sexual practices.

References

1. Sexually Transmitted Infections: 2019 Annual Report. The Maryland Department of Health Center for STI Prevention. <https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDPCS/CSTIP/CSTIPDocuments/Reports/STI%202019%20Annual%20Report%20Maryland.pdf>
2. Making a Difference! 5th Edition. ETR. <https://www.etr.org/store/curricula/making-a-difference/>

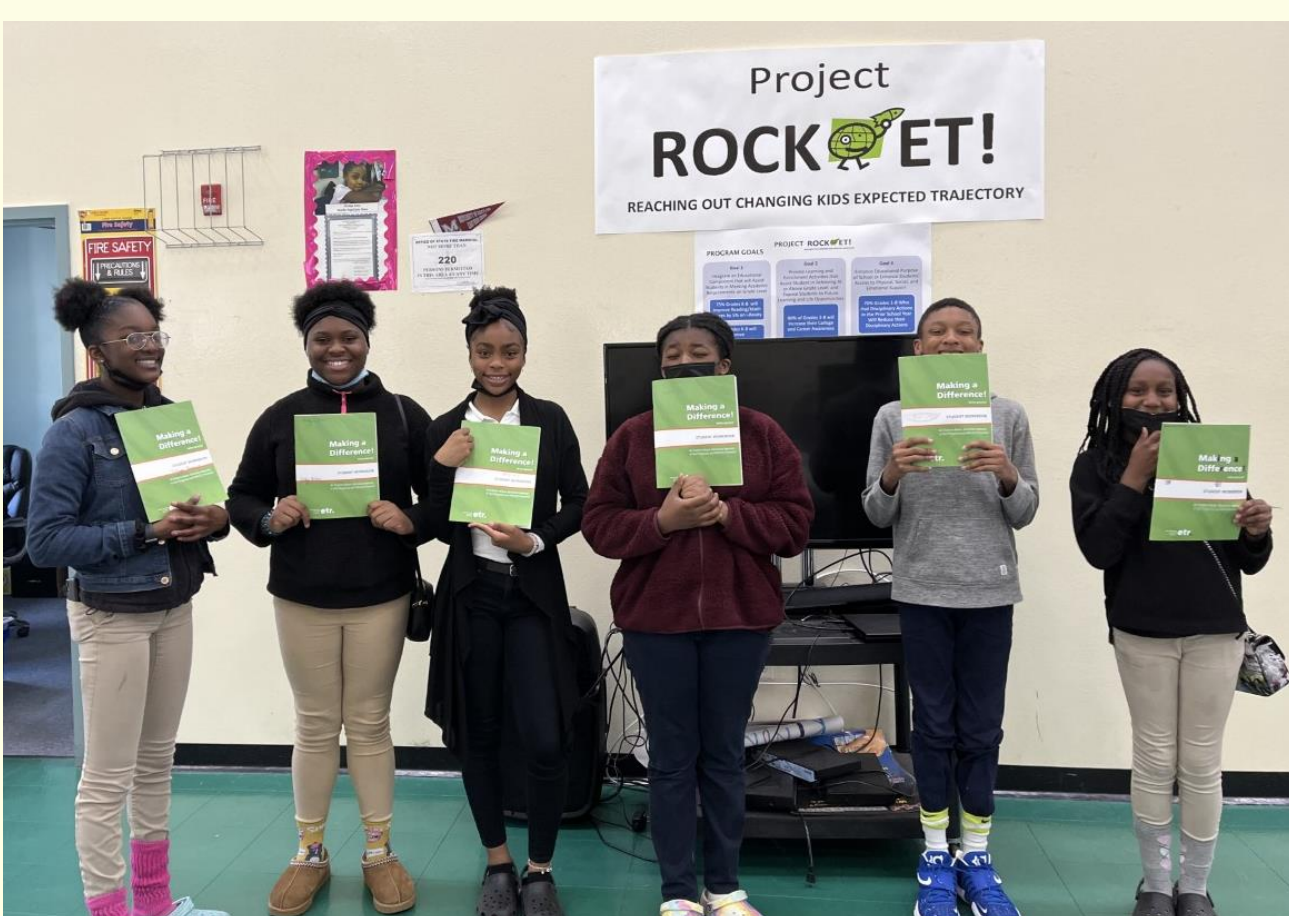


Figure 1. Adolescents graduating from the MAD! curriculum.