

Healthy People 2010: Health Education Implications and Recommendations for Youth With Disabilities

Donna J. Bernert

The current national public health agenda set forth in the recent publication of *Healthy People 2010* acknowledged the need for targeted data collection and health promotion efforts for persons with disabilities. The professional literature has recognized that youths with disabilities exhibit similar health risks to those of their non-disabled peers that can influence their adult years, and that they may be predisposed to certain health risks because of their exceptionalities. Thus, establishing relevant, meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and ability-centered health education for youths with disabilities that is supported by a comprehensive public health agenda is essential. This article presents significant health education needs of youths with disabilities; health education issues and implications for the 2010 agenda for this population; and recommendations for improving the health status of youths with disabilities with regard to research, health education programs, and professional development for health education delivery.

Meanings of Abstinence and Sexual Activity for Rural Youth

Mary I. Hawkins, Melanie Davis, Carolyn Eady, Susan Rausch, Joseph Donnelly, and Michael Young

The purpose of this study was to examine adolescent perceptions of the terms *abstinence* and *sexual activity* and also to determine if age, gender, virginity status, attendance at religious services, and perceived religiosity were associated with any particular perception of these terms. Current federal efforts to prevent teen pregnancy have emphasized abstinence education. The legislation that authorizes funding for these programs requires that educators teach students that they should abstain from sexual activity until marriage. The terms *abstinence* and *sexual activity*, however, are not defined. Participants in this study (311 students in grades 7-12 in a southern rural school district) completed a questionnaire that included two open-ended questions asking them to define the terms *abstinence* and *sexual activity*. The most frequent definition of sexual activity (34.4%) identified it as "having", "participating", or "engaging" in "sex". Thus, the definitions given by students were not more precise than the terms they were asked to define. Analyses (chi-square) that examined the independence of age, gender, virginity status, attendance at religious services, and perceived religiosity with perceptions of abstinence or sexual activity found only age and perception of abstinence to be statistically significant. These findings have implications for programs that encourage young people to abstain from sexual activity.

A High School Depression and Suicide Prevention Program: A Collaboration between Health Education and Psychological Services

Donna L. Moilanen and Susan Bradbury

The involvement of health educators in designing programs to address the mental health needs of our youths has been increasingly recommended. This article focuses on the collaboration between health education and psychological services in the development and implementation of a depression and suicide prevention program for a high school population. The specific objectives of this program were to raise awareness about

teenage depression and suicide, increase communication about these issues within the high school and local community, and provide information about the resources available to help those feeling depressed or suicidal. A five-year component program was designed to achieve these objectives and included education about the warning signs and symptoms associated with teenage depression and suicide, depression screening of the entire high school population, mental health follow-up of the students following the screening, provision of resource information related to the available treatment and intervention resources within the high school and local community, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the prevention program in achieving its objectives. Data related to the achievement of these objectives are presented and suggestions for future directions of such a program are discussed.

Estimating the Prevalence of Adolescent Nonverbal Peer Pressures: An Exploratory Study

Elias J. Duryea, Denise Herrera and Jay Parkes

The basic forms of nonverbal communication include eye gaze (oculesics), emblems (gestures), proxemics (space invasion), haptics (touch), facial expressions, and paralanguage. This research project studied how frequently adolescents communicate nonverbally with each other to exert pressure in typical high school situations. The primary purpose of this study was to survey ninth grade students (N=135) regarding the prevalence of nonverbal pressures in their daily experiences and examine gender differences. Results analyzed by gender show differences in prevalence of receiving threatening gestures ($p<.001$); space invasion from males ($p<.001$); trust toward deceptive smiles from males ($p<.01$), and greater prevalence of males using gaze pressure to others ($p<.05$). Of 37 items, these nonverbal strategies were the only statistically significant gender differences. Despite the increasing interest in nonverbal communication, school-based sexuality education programs do not typically implement training programs that teach adolescents how to decode and negotiate nonverbal pressures exerted during interpersonal situations. Creative and relevant nonverbal peer resistance training could benefit the young population, particularly females. Applied training on detecting and managing nonverbal overtures designed to exert health-compromising pressures can assist youths in effectively negotiating these forces (i.e., unprotected sex, drinking, drug experimentation).

"Sticking To It—Diabetes Mellitus": A Pilot Study of an Innovative Behavior Change Program for Women with Type 2 Diabetes

Jodi Summers Holtrop, John Hickner, Steve Dosh, Mary Noel, and Teresa L. Ettenhofer

The goal of this project was to evaluate an innovative educational program for women with type 2 diabetes facilitated by trained lay health advisors from the local university extension service. The program focused on adherence to behaviors recommended to achieve optimal blood glucose control. We evaluated whether primary care physicians would refer to this program, whether the program would reach diabetic women in rural areas, and whether the program improved health behaviors and glycaemic control. Women over 40 with type 2 diabetes were recruited through their primary care physician's offices. Eligible participants were randomly assigned to intervention (program) or control (usual care) groups. The six-session educational program focused on encouraging

behavior changes through instructor and group support, learning specific behavior change skills, and developing a confident attitude about self-management of diabetes. Physicians supported referral to the program, and the utilization of a lay health advisor for delivery of the program in rural areas was feasible. At 6-month follow-up the mean change in hemoglobin A1c and body mass index did not differ significantly between the intervention (n=67) and control (n=65) groups. However, participants felt better about their ability to control their diabetes and demonstrated an improvement in behaviors related to control.

Evaluation of the RIPP-6 Violence Prevention Program at a Rural Middle School

Albert D. Farrell, Robert F. Valois, and Aleta L. Meyer

The effectiveness of the sixth grade component of Responding In Peaceful and Positive Ways (RIPP-6), a universal violence prevention program originally developed for urban middle schools that serve a predominantly African American student population, was evaluated at a school serving an ethnically diverse population in rural Florida. RIPP-6 was implemented with students assigned to one pod within the school; students within the other pod provided a comparison group. Both pods received the seventh grade RIPP curriculum the following year. Outcomes were assessed using a battery of measures completed by students at pretest, posttest, and 1-year follow-up. Compared with students in the comparison group, student who participated in RIPP-6 reported significantly lower approval of violent behavior, more peer support for nonviolent behaviors, less peer pressure to use drugs, and greater knowledge of the intervention at posttest. They also reported significantly lower posttest frequencies of physical aggression, drug use, and peer provocation. These effects were no longer significant following implementation of the seventh grade RIPP program with students in both pods. These findings have important implications for the development of effective prevention programs for middle school students.

Weight Preoccupation in Female Mexican American Adolescents

Bobby Guinn, Layne Jorgensen, Tom Semper and Vern Vincent The purpose of this study was to investigate the contribution of body size, self-esteem, mainstream acculturation, and athletic status to concern or preoccupation about weight among an understudied population, female Mexican American adolescents. Subjects (N=558) ranged in aged from 14 to 18 years and were drawn from four senior high schools located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley region of Texas. Data were gathered through a self-report survey instrument dealing with investigated variables and anthropometric measures to assess body size. Results indicated that subjects' acculturation to the U.S. mainstream was low; body fatness levels were high; self-esteem was moderate; and, with the exception of percentage of body fat, there were no variable differences between athletes and nonathletes. Greater body size and self-esteem emerged as the strongest predictors of weight preoccupation. Implications of these findings and suggestions for interventions are discussed.

"Texas Youth: Our Key to a Healthy Future" Town Hall Meeting 2000

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**AMERICAN JOURNAL OF
HEALTH EDUCATION**

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Through the collaborative efforts of a city health department, area high schools, and community stakeholders a town hall meeting was organized to promote dialogue between local high school students and elected officials concerning major health issues affecting youths. Due to the success of the event, the forum received recognition at a White House meeting and has served as a model for other cities interested in conducting similar events.