

NEWS RELEASE

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U OF M RESEARCHER RECEIVES \$3 MILLION GRANT TO REDUCE TEEN PREGNANCY

Prime Time project to help Twin City girls has “breakthrough potential”

Minneapolis/St. Paul (December 8, 2006) – Why does the teen pregnancy rate in the U.S. remain one of the highest in the industrialized world? A University of Minnesota School of Nursing researcher has received a \$3 million federal grant to help find the answer.

Associate Professor Renee Sieving, PhD, RN, C, leading a multi-disciplinary team of other University researchers, will use specific strategies to steer a group of 125 Twin City teens—all of whom are attending school and community health clinics—away from risky behaviors that can lead to pregnancy. At the end of 18 months in a program called Prime Time, the group will be compared with a similar group of girls who have not participated in Prime Time, but have continued to receive usual health clinic services.

Model has proved effective

“Previous research has shown that many factors contribute to teen pregnancy,” says Sieving. “They include inadequate education, risky sexual behavior, involvement in violence and not enough contact with adults who can provide resources and positive role models. The Prime Time intervention addresses all these factors – intensively and over a long enough period of time to have a lasting effect.”

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The project, Prime Time: Health Promotion for Multiple Risk Behaviors, involves girls in 22-week health promotion and youth leadership programs, and then pays them to share health information with others. The girls will also take on community service projects, and meet at least monthly with a case manager with the goal of establishing a one-on-one relationship with an adult.

In the process, Sieving says, they will become better connected at school, get help in coping with any violence they are dealing with in their lives, and become educated about risks of sexual behavior. “Our goal is to help participants build the skills, confidence, motivation, opportunities and social support that every teen needs to succeed,” she says.

Sieving and her colleagues tested Prime Time strategies in a 1999-2004 pilot study, and found the results encouraging. At the end of 12 months participants were reporting fewer sexual partners, and at the end of 18 months they were more consistently using contraception. “We also found that the program itself is highly acceptable to girls from resource-poor urban neighborhoods,” Sieving says.

The current project is a more stringent test of the Prime Time intervention than the 1999 study, since it randomly assigns girls to either Prime Time or a comparison group. Random assignment is considered a “gold standard” in intervention research.

Designed for use in clinics

Another goal of Prime Time is to improve the capacity of health clinics to prevent risky behaviors among their teen-age patients by promoting healthy youth development. The project represents one of the first times such a youth development model has been adapted and tested for use by health clinics. .

“We are excited—we think Prime Time has breakthrough potential,” says Sieving. “Because many adolescent girls at high risk for early pregnancy do go to health clinics, it stands to reason that boosting clinics’ ability to provide help that is proven to be effective could make a profound difference in the nation’s teen pregnancy problem—and in the lives of thousands of young people.”

Prime Time is funded by a five-year grant from the National Institute of Nursing Research, which is part of the National Institutes of Health.

Besides Sieving, who is the principal investigator, the multi-disciplinary research team includes School of Nursing professors Linda Bearinger, PhD, MS, RN, FAAN, and Ann Garwick, PhD, RN, FAAN; and Medical School Department of Pediatrics Professor Michael Resnick, PhD.

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The school educates 55 percent of the faculty in Minnesota's public and private nursing schools, advanced practice nurses, and nurses who can assume leadership positions.

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