

MSHARE

NEWS LETTER

You Are Invited to
Attend the Next Quarterly

YIPESHARE MEETING

Y.I.P.E.S.

Youth Intervention Prevention
Education in Schools

NM SHARE
Sexual Health and Risk
Education

Friday,
August 19, 2005
10:00 AM to
12:00 NOON

Cooperative Education Services
4216 Balloon Park Road NE
344-5470

Please join all of the people and
organizations working to reduce risky
sexual behavior among school-age
youth in New Mexico

**Communicate,
Cooperate,
Collaborate &
Draw Strength
from
One Another**

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NM SHARE Summit 2005 "Kids in the Middle" Explores Facts of Life Caring Adults Cannot Ignore

The New Mexico SHARE Collaborative held its statewide Summit at the MCM Elegante in Albuquerque on March 16 & 17, 2005. It was the third annual conference sponsored by the Collaborative, which is directed by the New Mexico Teen Pregnancy Coalition (NMTPC) and is funded by the NM Public Education Department, School and Family Support Bureau through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Summit, entitled "Kids in the Middle II: Some Facts of Life Caring Adults Cannot Ignore," hosted over 60 individuals representing 45 organizations throughout the state working to reduce risky sexual behavior among school-age youth in New Mexico. A major early spring snow storm kept many registrants from attending.

The Summit objectives were to provide information on promising approaches, opportunities to explore and collaborate on a "common ground" in prevention principles, and networking opportunities.

Jacquelyn G. Sowers, M.Ed., nationally renowned keynote speaker and facilitator in health promotion and education, facilitated the Summit again this year as she did in 2004. Those who attended extolled the effectiveness of Jacquelyn's inspirational insight, knowledge, and keen sense of what caring adults can do to reduce risky sexual behaviors. Jacquelyn helped to provide a safe and equitable environment for communication and collaboration on principles of prevention in New Mexico.

An activity in the first session gave everyone an opportunity to write down and share their individual "cherished illusions" and "current realities" in working to reduce risky

sexual behaviors. The shared "cherished illusions" revealed the participants' values and beliefs through messages believed important in protecting the health of our youth. The "current realities," on the other hand, gave us some idea of how the adults envision what is really going on with our kids in today's world. Some of the responses are listed on page 3.

This exploration of illusions and realities was conducted in a respectful environment and made a good lead into the current trends in youth sexual activity and related behaviors, and some facts of life caring adults cannot ignore. Presented in this section was the

"Factors Related to Risky Sexual Behaviors among New Mexico Teens" fact sheet, which was researched by the NM SHARE Collaborative for the Summit 2005.

The developmental characteristics of children ages 5 – 19 was then presented by Jacquelyn Sowers as a part of the current trends. "Even younger children know more about sexuality than we think," she said.

"Our youth are in a pseudo sophisticated space...influenced by the media and engaging in anonymous sex, just for the experience."

Anonymous sex, or "hooking up," has become widespread on campuses in the U.S. Researchers at James Madison University found that 77.7 percent of women and 84.2 percent of men had hooked up. A *Newsweek* article by Daniel McGinn called "Mating Behavior 101" cites Professor Elizabeth Paul as having published the first academic article that explored college hookups in depth. Her survey of 555 undergrads found that 78 percent of students had hooked up. The article states that



Jacquelyn Sowers, M.Ed.

NM SHARE Summit 2005 "Kids in the Middle"

alcohol is usually involved.

New findings reported by *USA Today* in a March 2000 issue regarding adolescent brain development were presented. These new findings have major implications for adolescent decision-making and behavior. Jay Giedd, Neuroscientist with the National Institute of Mental Health, has dedicated more than 10 years of research on the pre-puberty and adolescent brain. Up

That all parents love and care for their children.

That all adults desire to provide youth with the information that will help them to make healthy choices in "the real world."

A Proclamation

Conversely, it is also true that the outcomes of risky sexual behaviors stand in the way of school success.



FYI

Teen Abuse of Common Medications Increases at Alarming Rate

The Partnership for a Drug-Free America® recently reported that more and more teens are abusing prescription and over-the-counter medications, according to its 17th annual national study of teen drug abuse. The study, which is said to be the largest of its kind, involved more than 7,300 teenagers across the country. It includes detailed statistics about how many children report abusing Vicodin®, OxyContin®, Ritalin®, cough medicine, and more.

Read the full story at:

New Study Links Self-Mutilation to Sexual Risk-Taking

Researchers at the Bradley/Hasbro Children's Psychiatric Research Center in Rhode Island have discovered a "previously uncharted link" between self-mutilation and risky sexual behavior among teens. The study involved a group of adolescents undergoing intensive psychiatric treatment, and compared their responses to a general community survey of teens and college students. Results of the study appear in the February 2005 issue of the journal *Psychiatric Services*.

Read the full story at: http://www.lifespan.org/news/2005/02/BH_study_2_10_05.htm

Child Trends DataBank Indicator Shows Increase in AIDS Cases Among Teens

A recent indicator posted on the Child Trends DataBank shows that in 2003, there were 458 newly diagnosed cases of AIDS among teens (ages 13-19) in the U.S., the highest number ever recorded in a single year for this age group. The raw data for this indicator came from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.childtrendsdatbank.org>

Health Wise

The Spring 2005 Bulletin for school and community Health available at UNM Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website: <http://hsc.unm.edu/chpdp>

Funding

For funding opportunities in Education, Community Based Health Care, Community Development, Service Learning, go to <http://www.channing-bete.com> and click on "Funding Opportunities."

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA – Health Resources and Services Administration Grants: <http://www/hrs.gov/grants/default.htm>

Summit Panel Discussions

Honest and Revealing

The NM SHARE Summit 2005 hosted a five-member teen panel and a five-member adult professional panel in two separate sessions. Jacquelyn Sowers facilitated the panel discussions. This article reflects what the panel members observe is going on with teen sexuality in their communities.



The youth panel members with Jacquelyn Sowers.

"Peer-pressure, absent parents, teachers not enforcing rules, drugs, and nothing to do in class," are some of the reasons that teens engage in risky sexual behaviors. These were the responses the NM SHARE Summit 2005 participants heard from the teen panel members who had been asked "what's going on with teen sexuality in your community?" When asked how other kids regard or think about high school youth and sexual activity, one teen panel member answered, "A girl wants to see how many guys she can sleep with...it makes her more popular, especially if she is a younger girl, like a freshman, going with older guys, like seniors."

The panel agreed that kids they know are having sex but are not knowledgeable about the impacts of risky sexual behaviors. They also stated that schools, and adults/parents don't seem to know how to approach the topic. "All we learn about is the physical stuff – the basics." "We're only taught the anatomy," one panel member said, "let us explore, but teach us to explore in a safe way."

Jacquelyn then asked if they see kids valuing abstinence as the "best way." The teens answered, "most of my friends don't" and "they don't buy the message." The teens went on to say that "we want to know how to have protected sex, and we need to learn about the programs and services to get protection and information."

When asked what age they see kids having sex, the teens responded that they feel that middle school and high school youth are having sex, but that the middle school kids are talking about it more than doing it. The panel then said that they feel that 60% to 65% of 10th graders are sexually active. One panel member stated that she thought it might be around 40% in smaller towns.

The teens were then asked if they thought that kids talk with their parents about sexuality. The teens feel most parents are clueless, and that they would be more trusting of a counselor or teacher than their parents. One youth shared that it depends on the parent: "my grandmother raised me, and she said never to talk about sex." Another said that they didn't want their mom to talk to them about sex. "Kids don't want to hear from parents about sex." "I would be embarrassed; it would be weird and uncomfortable." "Kids don't want parents to get disappointed in them" was another statement from the panel.

Pregnancy was the only thing mentioned when asked what kids worry about or care about. "The slides on STDs are scare tactics, but need to be shown" because most kids say "(STDs) won't happen to me."

On people and places one could go if one needed sexual

information, counseling, testing, or treatment, all panel members agreed that they had at least one person they knew of that they could talk to. One said his confidant was a counselor and another said that her biggest support was her mom. They felt that these confidants are the best source of information and that they "know what they are talking about." Most of the teens knew about specific health clinics like Planned Parenthood and UNM health clinic they would go to for information and/or treatment. *Confidentiality* is a big part of who the kids would talk to and where the teens would go.

The panel said that they think oral sex incidences are increasing and that it is not seen as being sex. They have heard kids say that you can't get STDs from oral sex, that you're still a virgin, it's safe, and it makes one popular. The panel agreed that oral sex is most prevalent in middle school aged youth.

When asked what caring adults need to know and do to help young people make responsible decisions about sex, the teens answered "Let the teens speak on their behaviors and talk to their peers about the dangers and consequences," and "I can understand about how adults feel about abstinence, but everyone should have a choice," and "give us information so we don't get pregnant or get a disease."

The teens didn't seem as concerned as the adults about mixed messages affecting their choices. They said they think that having both abstinence and comprehensive messages in their sexuality education classes in school is "ideally okay." They are not sure if having parental permission on sexuality education is a good idea.

The messages from the teens on drugs and alcohol were pretty clear: "Lock liquor in liquor cabinet"... "it's easiest obtained in [one's] own house." To parents: "Don't drink excessively yourself!" "Drugs are out of adults' control," so "adults need to warn (their kids) about drugs and set good examples."

The teens said that they think that it's easier for adults to talk to kids about drugs than sex because "sex is an intimate, emotional, and personal subject" and that "drugs are dangerous and can harm you." They agreed that talking to kids about sex is difficult, but that, even though they said earlier they didn't want to hear from their parents, parents should talk to kids about sex. They stated that parents are the biggest role model.

When asked about other concerns, one teen shared the difficulties faced when one is gay and how the discrimination is difficult to deal with. That same teen also shared that intolerant people have said to her that her problems would be solved by just rejecting her homosexuality. The suicide rate among kids who are judged on being different is prevalent, and this teen

Continued on page 7

The professional adults began their panel discussions reflecting on what they heard from the teen panel. They described the teens as “articulate” and “bright” and recommended that adults “listen to what they have to say.”

In addressing the lack of programs, one panel member stated that the “programs are out there...our job is finding a way to help orientate communities to the programs avail-



(Sexual Health And Risk Education) Collaborative

*Strengthening Communication, Coordination, and
Collaboration Throughout New Mexico*

- **SHARE** is a NM Collaborative providing support for organizations and individuals working to reduce risky sexual behavior among school-age youth.
- **SHARE** provides opportunities for networking, collaboration, and continuing education.
- **SHARE** activities are designed to improve members' ability to successfully impact the youth in their programs.
- **SHARE** has a newsletter, listserv and website access to support the collaborative.

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**Funded by the
New Mexico Public Education
Department, School and
Family Support Bureau
through a Grant for the
Centers for Disease Control**

Directed by the