

*Choices for Success Program*

The original WATCH (Wayne Action Team for Community Health) *Choices for Success* program concept began in 1998-1999 when the number of teen pregnancies at an inner-city high school reached 58, and there were additional concerns about rates of teen pregnancy in a high school in one of the rural areas of Wayne County. A grant was written to The Duke Endowment by Sissy Lee-Elmore, Community Outreach Coordinator for Wayne Memorial Hospital, and approximately \$500,000 was obtained to pay for a pregnancy prevention program for 5 years beginning in 2001, in order to reduce student pregnancies in one rural area of the county and the inner-city schools. When the grant funds were depleted, the Wayne County Public Schools absorbed the costs for the health education program at the inner-city high school. By the end of the grant-funded timeframe, the Wayne Initiative for School Health had established school-based health centers in two of the high schools and four of the middle schools targeted by the program.

All participants had parental consent to participate in the *Choices for Success* Program. The educational element of the program involved weekly 90-minute classes that strived to increase the teen(s) knowledge in the areas of: effective communication skills, self-esteem, goal-setting, future employment, nutrition and proper diet, money management, health, stress and anger management, decision-making, healthy lifestyle choices, and relationships. These groups took place on school campus during elective class periods. Recommendations for participation were made by first-hand knowledge of particular personal risk behaviors observed by these same personnel.

The health educator had excellent relationships with other providers including the WISH school-base health centers. School faculty and staff made referrals based on knowledge of risky behaviors and students could make self-referrals. The students were identified by personnel at several other facilities, such as: maternity clinic, DSS (Department of Social Services), family planning clinic, middle or alternative schools, obstetrician's office, mental health clinic, and other agencies. Participants' risky behaviors may include the following: excessive school absences, delinquency, poor academic performance, having multiple sex partners, having older sex partners and identification of STI's (Sexually Transmitted Infections).

The educator was also available for one-on-one sessions on campus to others who may or may not be enrolled in the program. She ate lunch in the school cafeterias to foster familiarity with the students at the school. The educator attends student activities, i.e. pep rallies, athletic events, graduations, etc., to show support of the students. The WATCH health educator is an inspiration to the youth of our community. She works to empower the youth of our community to make the choice not to parent a child until later in life. This is a conscious decision for many who respect the teachings and guidance of health educators.

The *Choices for Success* Program addresses the following needs for pregnancy prevention:

- The need to complete high school education
- The need to excel in academics
- The need to seriously consider college options and preparation
- The need for proper adult support
- The need for a healthier lifestyle
- The need to improve self-esteem and to develop a positive self-image
- The need to preserve or establish family stability
- The need for a positive appropriate social life
- The need to prevent pregnancies
- The need to prevent sexually transmitted disease
- The need to establish realistic, positive goals
- The need for referral to mental health services and other support services
- The need for positive recognition
- The need for career exploration and development
- The need for proper guidance

These needs have been identified by information gathered by the WATCH Teen Pregnancy



Prevention Task Force, the Wayne County Health Department, Goldsboro Pediatrics, Wayne County Public Schools and “like” teen parenting program models that have been implemented nationwide. We have also gathered information from the constant interaction between the WATCH Health Education team and the current *Choices for Success* Program participants. Information regarding needs has been obtained from dialogue with teachers, principals, school social workers, school nurses, school-based health center personnel and public school officials.

Due to a number of scheduling conflicts and the lack of classroom availability in the last 2 years, the “Choices for Success” program has gone through a number of revisions. The initial “peer” group meeting format has been replaced with the provision of health education sessions to Physical Education and Freshman Academy classes, as well as other events based on requests made by school officials. Information presented to students during health education sessions includes adolescent sexuality, HIV/AIDS awareness, teen pregnancy prevention, and drugs and alcohol education/prevention. Additional information can be provided based on the needs of the expected audience. The WATCH health educator also provides in-kind services to the WISH (Wayne Initiative for School Health) school-based health center by delivering both individual and group sessions to current enrollees referred by providers. In an effort to reach the entire student body, the health educator creates mass messages and campaigns for the school (i.e. World AIDS Day, making positive decisions, African American adolescents and STI’s).

We were able to document significant decreases in pregnancies in the inner high school and are convinced that on-site health education by a culturally effective health educator is effective in addressing significant sexuality issues in student populations.

The following statistics collected in the inner-city high school document the cost-effectiveness of the program:

School Year	Number of pregnancies
97/98	48
98/99	?
99/00	41
00/01	42
01/02	30
02/03	28
03/04	21
04/05	26
05/06	20
06/07	10
07/08	24

During the 2007-2008 school year, 14 female students came to the WISH school-based health center at the high school to request pregnancy tests; 3 were positive.

During the 2008-2009 school year, so far, 4 students have requested pregnancy testing in the school-based health center, and none have been positive. 2 pregnant students have recently transferred into the school from other high schools in the county.

Contact Person: Sissy Lee-Elmore
(sissy.lee-elmore@waynehealth.org; 919-731-6653)
Wayne Memorial Hospital
2700 Wayne Memorial Drive
Goldsboro, NC 27534

