

Minneapolis Health Department and Youthprise
Young male sexual health in Minneapolis: A youth-led participatory research project
Highlights and recommendations

Research Overview:

In 2014, the Adolescent Health and Youth Development Division of the Health Department conducted a data analysis and programmatic review of our work around adolescent and youth sexual health. While teen pregnancy rates continue to decline, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) rates have increased or remained stagnant across the City. 15-24 year olds across the City have the highest rates of Chlamydia and Gonorrhea, with significant disparities for young men of color. To better understand the social determinants of health that have created this public health issue, we invested in a qualitative participatory youth-led project, conducted in 2015 in partnership with Youthprise. Youth researchers defined the issues present in communities for young men of color, and made recommendations that could further the impact of potential programs, practices, and policies.

Twelve youth research consultants were trained in social justice research, youth participatory action research processes including data collection and analysis, and sexual health data interpretation. Over the summer and fall of 2015, over 100 young men from the African American, American Indian, and Latino communities participated in focus groups and interviews. The transcripts were then analyzed for themes, and a report was created that captured stories of young men's experiences with sex education and sexual health, and how they connect these experiences to their community environment. The youth research consultants made recommendations for how we can better connect with young men to provide access to high quality sexual health education, access to clinics for testing and health care with male and adolescent friendly services.

Findings:

1. Youth believe that disparities in sexual health are linked to systemic segregation, inadequate sex education, and other negative social factors.
2. Themes that emerged:
 - a. Experiences with sex education
 - b. The influence of the media
 - c. Decision-making
 - d. Race, gender, and heteronormativity
 - e. Understandings of sexual health and evaluation of sexual health
 - f. Spaces of interaction, strength and support
 - g. Participant solutions
3. Youth believe that the following recommendations will support youth male sexual health, ultimately benefitting their partners, and reducing disparities across the City:
 - a. Develop common set of principles and policies for sex education in schools. (Currently the state of Minnesota does not have standards for sex education. National standards are available, but there is no consistent implementation of sex education across the state).

- b. Students want to learn from people that reflect their gender and racial background. (School districts should continue to push equity in recruitment and hiring practices).
- c. Incorporate mental, emotional, and relationship health into comprehensive sexual health education. (Making connections to holistic health and wellness, not just biology or prevention information).
- d. Incorporate same-sex sexuality in health sources. Many queer youth do not have the opportunity to learn about their sexual health. (Sex, Sexuality, Biology, Gender spectrums exist and we need to meet the needs of ALL youth).
- e. Invest in more research measuring risky behavior (also connecting the relationship between higher risk in social sexual networks due to systemic barriers such as no health insurance, no access to clinics, no access to accurate sexual health information)
- f. Launch public health campaigns that are accessible to young people in spaces they spend time in, such as malls, libraries, athletic associations, and community organizations.
- g. Condom campaigns that illustrate the benefit of condom use (comprehensive safety beyond pregnancy prevention).

Potential outcomes and next steps:

1. *The City including our public health department, and other youth serving and adolescent health organizations, schools, and partners will use this information to better inform sexual health programming.*
2. *More engagement, awareness, and collaboration between the City and men of color to understand the relationship between systemic and structural racism and oppression, and male sexual health.*
3. *Increased investments to support programs, practices, and policy recommendations to support access to targeted adolescent and male friendly health and education services.*

For additional information or access to the full report, please contact Mageen Caines at Mageen.caines@minneapolismn.gov.

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