

## Oklahoma City-County Health Department



### Teen Pregnancy Prevention Replication Project: Taking Evidence-Based Programs to Scale in OKC Neighborhoods with Greatest Need



**Empowering Youth to Make Healthy Choices**

*July 1, 2015 to September 30, 2020*

# Foreword

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In July 2015 the Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD) was awarded a 5-year grant to reduce teen pregnancy in Central Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma City-County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Replication Project, Tier 1B, was born. Core partners provided evidence-based, comprehensive, sexual health education in schools throughout the city, created linkages and access to teen-friendly health care services, and engaged community organizations, parents, and young people to address critical issues affecting the sexual health of our youth. Evidenced-based sexual health education was taught in school and clinical settings, health care clinics became more accessible and youth-friendly, and schools adopted policies that facilitate high school completion for pregnant and parenting teens. The teen birth rate declined 42 percent from 2013 to 2018 in Oklahoma County, in part, because of this project.

## Lead Agency

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### **Oklahoma City-County Health Department (OCCHD)**

OCCHD serves the residents of Oklahoma County by protecting health, promoting wellness, and preventing disease for its residents and the community. It offers a wide range of services and programs for infants, children/teens, and adults. OCCHD was the lead agency responsible for the oversight and direction of this program and also implemented direct services.



*Linsey Garlington, M.S.  
TPP Programs Supervisor*

# Core Partners

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### Teen emPower!

Founded in 2004, Teen emPower! is dedicated to preventing young persons from engaging in high-risk behaviors through youth development strategies. Its signature program, Sexual Health and Peer Education (SHAPE), trains high school students to be leaders and advocates for sexual health. These students become peer educators and allies for their younger peers.



*Kathy Harms  
Executive Director*



### Variety Care Teen Clinic

Variety Care is a federally qualified health center that operates 15 clinical sites and served 67,315 patients in 2019. As part of its programming, it operates the Variety Care Teen Clinic, which implemented evidenced-based sexual health programming in school and clinical settings, conducted teen clinic events and outreach, created linkages and services for young people including pregnant and parenting teens, and provided comprehensive mental and physical health care services to young people.



*Kali Parks, M.Ed.  
Manager of Adolescent  
Health Education*



### Thrive

Founded in 2016, Thrive serves as the backbone organization for the Central Oklahoma Teen Pregnancy Prevention Collaboration. In addition to other activities, Thrive led a year-long process of gathering data, listening to the community, convening, and developing a comprehensive plan outlining priorities and strategies to support adolescent sexual health. This work was done with the support of the Collaboration's key partners as well as this project.



*Laura Lang  
Chief Executive Officer*



### OU Hudson College of Public Health

Founded in 1967, the OU Hudson College of Public Health (OUCOPH) is the only accredited college of public health in the state of Oklahoma and is nationally ranked. OUCOPH served as the external evaluator for this project.



*Karla Finnell, J.D., M.P.H.  
Assistant Professor*



### Others

Other core partners contributing to the implementation of this project include Planned Parenthood Great Plains, Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy, Oklahoma City Public Schools, Healthy Teens OK!, and the Kirkpatrick Family Fund..

# Our Impact in Oklahoma County

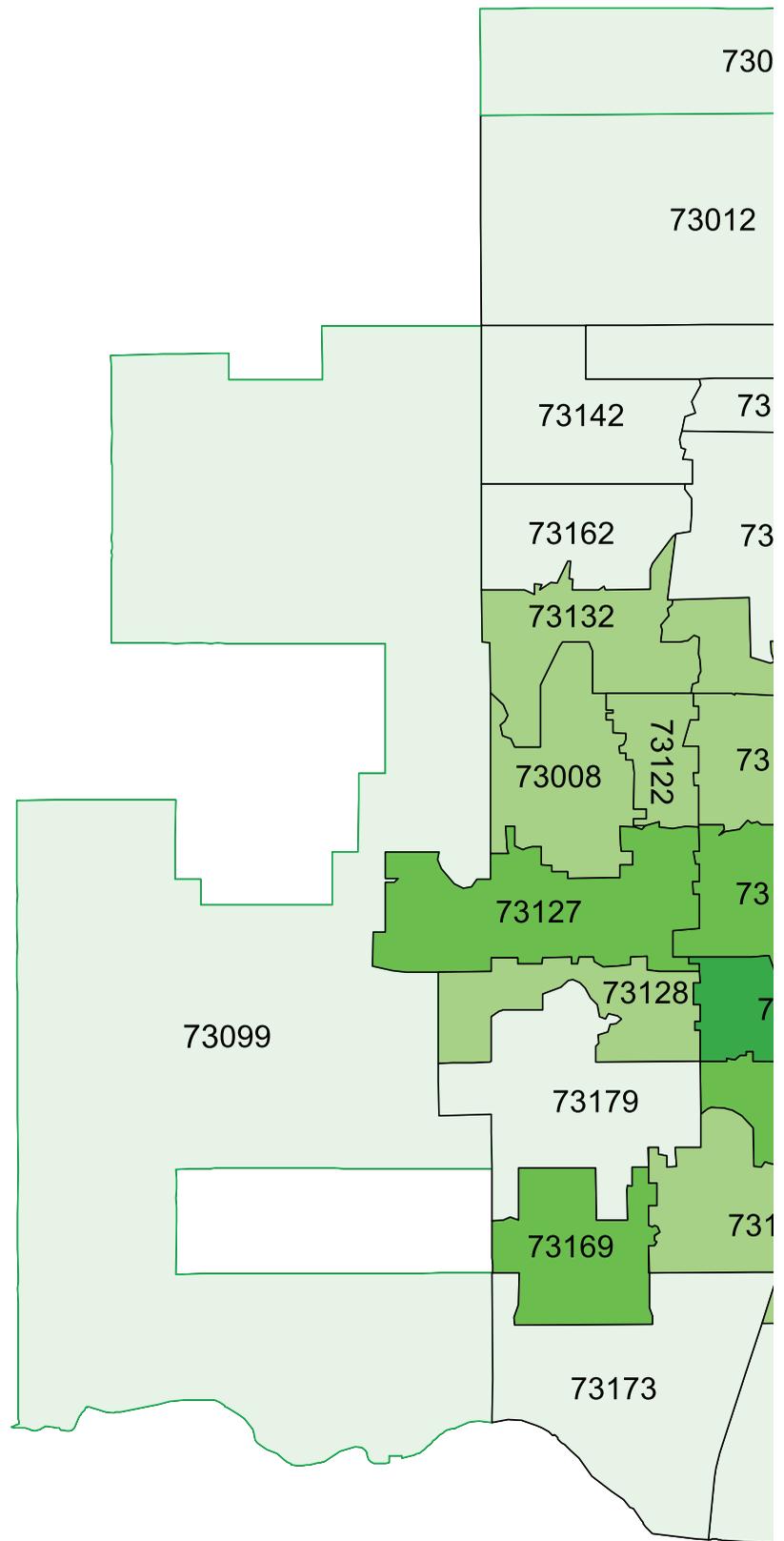
Concentrated poverty, racial segregation, and adverse childhood experiences impede successful transition into adulthood. High teen birth rates are often reflected in these environments and are compounded when youth lack knowledge and access to affordable, high quality reproductive health services.

Working in areas of highest need, this project strove to reduce these inequities by providing multi-level programming informed by positive youth development and an unrelenting belief that every young person deserves the opportunity to pursue their dreams. This work was done in collaboration with hundreds of community champions and partners, 35 schools, five school districts, and the support of parents. The core partners and staff were humbled that the community trusted them to provide this programming in their schools, churches, organizations, and with young persons.



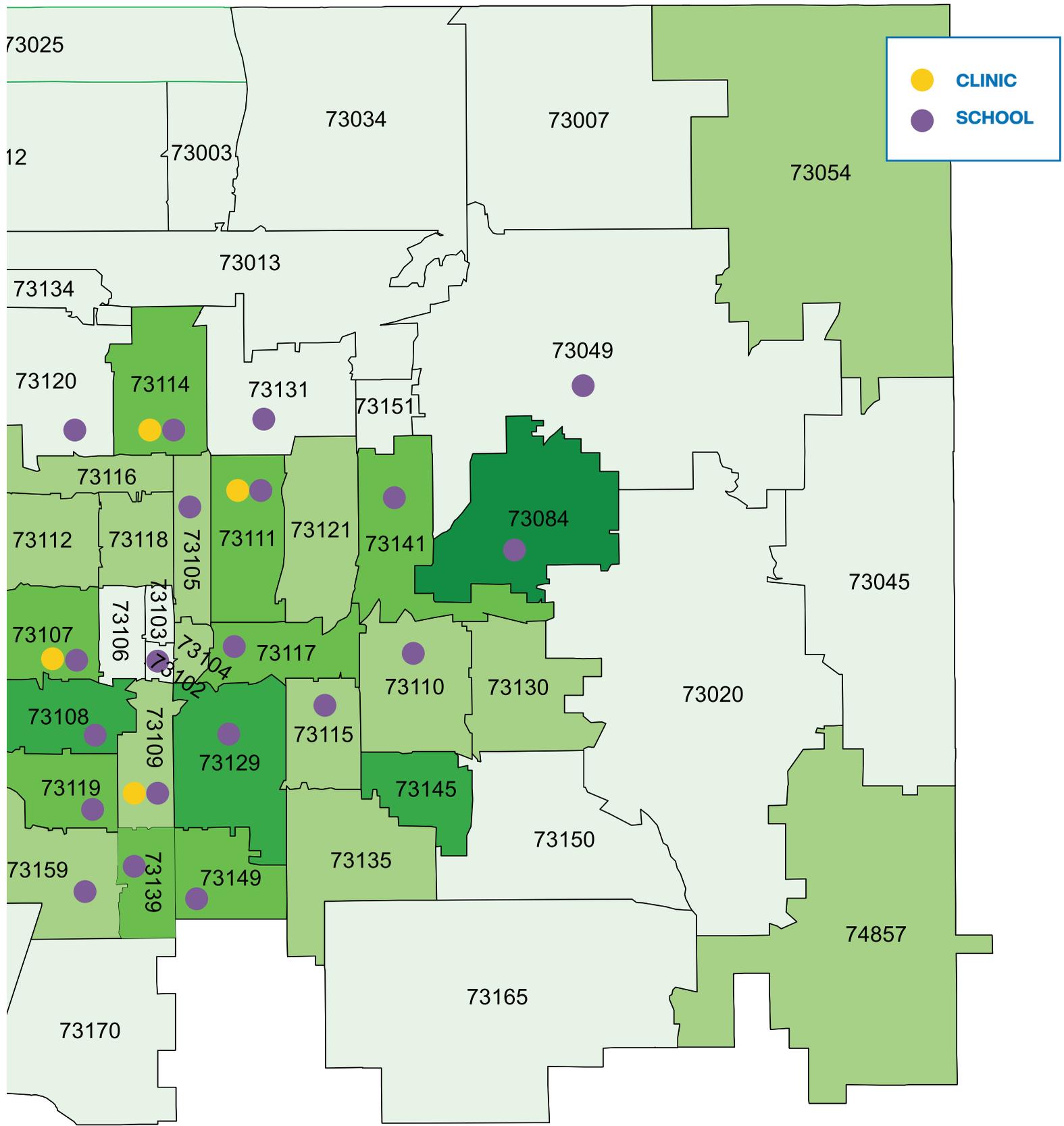
Oklahoma County, which includes Oklahoma City, has the highest number of teen births and represents one out of every five (21%) teen births in the state.

Teen birth rates in Oklahoma County are almost twice as high as the United States average.



Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), Center for Health Statistics, Health Care Information, Vital Statistics 2018 on Oklahoma Statistics on Health Available for Everyone (OK2SHARE). Accessed at <http://www.health.ok.gov/OK2SHARE>





**TEEN BIRTH RATE (AGES 15-19) 2014-2018  
OKLAHOMA CITY COUNTY**



# Dedicated Staff

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It is the skill and expertise of core partners that makes comprehensive sexual health education and other programming effective. Just as a lawyer or nurse would, sexual health educators and staff are professionals who have invested years in advanced education honing their craft. Multidisciplinary staff are trained in child development, public health, adult learning, psychology, and social work. Most have advanced degrees. Moreover, each year staff invest hours in continuing education on topics such as trauma-informed care, risks of early sexual involvement, human-centered design thinking, positive youth development, inclusivity, adolescent development, classroom management, and empowerment skills.

This professional workforce is necessary to promote healthy sexuality and to meet the needs of the young people. Many adolescents participating in programming are vulnerable because of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). While not always understanding the impact of ACEs, young people carry the emotional and cognitive burden of trauma. Programming is intentionally delivered in a manner that builds trust, self-confidence, and self-esteem and empowers young persons to take on the many challenges of transitioning to adulthood.

## Assurances

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All programming delivered was informed by research and had been shown to be effective. In addition, it met these criteria:

### **Positive Youth Development**

Programming promotes resilience, prosocial norms, and youth empowerment.

### **Age-appropriate**

Core partners review programming content and delivery to ensure a good fit and age-appropriateness.

### **Medically Accurate**

Subject matter experts review materials to ensure medical accuracy.

### **Trauma-informed**

Intentional language and teaching strategies avoids re-traumatizing adolescents and integrates linkages and referrals for those in need of additional services.

### **Inclusive**

The use of gender-neutral language and other strategies increase the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning youth.

**Experiencing traumatic events can cause social, emotional, and cognitive problems and increases the risk of early sexual initiation.** More children experience two or more traumatic events in Oklahoma than any other state. Moreover, in Oklahoma County, the adverse childhood experience index score is 42.1 for those under 19, placing it in the bottom third of all Oklahoma counties.

Source: America's Health Rankings; Kids Count.



# Comprehensive Sexual Health Education in Schools

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The Tier1B Project touched the lives of 15,640 young persons in school settings by providing comprehensive sexual health education in grades six through 12 in collaboration with 35 schools across five different school districts.

Comprehensive sexual health education has been proven to reduce sexual risk behaviors, teen pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases by equipping young persons with the skills and knowledge they need to make healthy decisions.

Programming encompasses relationship skills, emotional intimacy, parenting, and forming relationships with trusted adults. Youth envision their future and set goals. Not only do these classes and activities prevent unintended pregnancy and delay sexual initiation, this programming is proven to develop “soft skills” that support successful transition to adulthood including preparing youth for job success and healthy relationships.

## Education Criteria

The content of the curriculum varies depending upon the grade-level and is always age-appropriate. As adolescents advance in their education, the depth and scope of the curriculum builds on earlier programming.

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## Learning Objectives:

- Learn sexual health development and anatomy
- Delay the onset of sexual activity
- Embrace bodily autonomy and respect others
- Review the types of contraception
- Prevent sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancies
- Make informed decisions about health
- Promote social and emotional learning
  - » Regulate emotions and manage self
  - » Learn healthy communication skills
  - » Resist peer pressure and set limits
  - » Raise self-awareness

**Parents have a choice!  
The overwhelming majority  
opted for their children  
to participate.**



*Brittany Keck  
Education  
Capacity-Building  
Coordinator  
OCCHD*



*Maria Mancebo, M.S.  
Clinical Access  
Coordinator  
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*Kimberly Molitor  
Education Coordinator  
Teen emPower!*



*Holly Parker, C.H.E.S.  
Clinical Access  
Coordinator  
Variety Care Teen  
Clinic*



*Peyton Reiting,  
C.H.E.S.  
Lead Adolescent  
Health Specialist  
Variety Care Teen  
Clinic*

# Evaluation Findings

Educators are observed and evaluated on multiple criteria including subject matter knowledge, rapport with participants, and time management. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the best, the overall score was 4.91.

15,604 Adolescents Received Comprehensive Sexual Health Education in School Settings

"[I learned] how to talk with someone if you are not ready to have sex." -Middle School Student

"I would give this class five stars... You [educator] taught us stuff we didn't know... Now I know what can cause an STI, HIV and pregnancy. Thank you." -Middle School Student

"[I learned] ..... not having a sexual relationship is okay." -High School Student

"[What I liked best about this course was that] this course could save my life." -High School Student

"I liked that the course gave steps on how to set successful goals for yourself." -High School Student

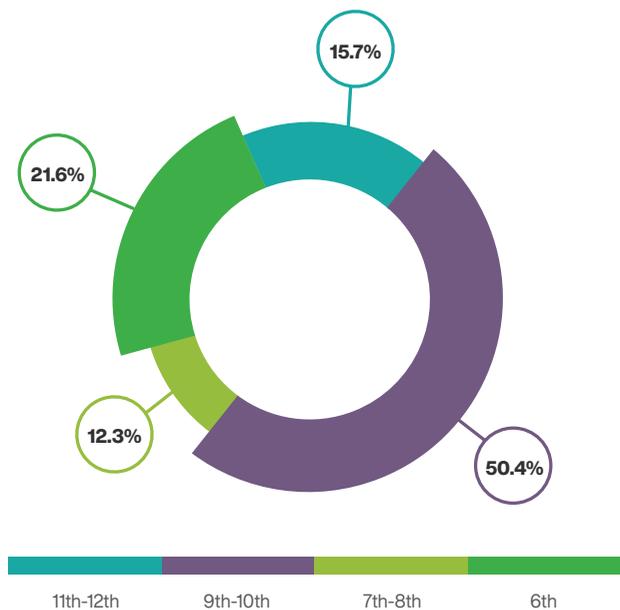
Something that I learned that I would share with others about this course . . . "Relationships aren't supposed to be toxic." -High School Student

"I like her [educator] because she always treats us with respect and she teaches really well." -Middle School Student

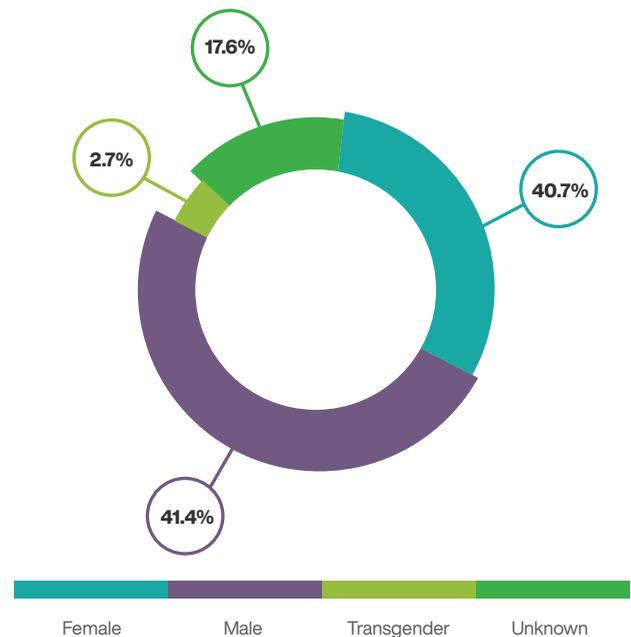
"She [educator] was always well prepared and patient with us. She made me feel comfortable with all the topics." -High School Student

Participants consistently demonstrated a significant improvement in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about key sexual health facts and attitudes from before to after participating in programming.

REACH BY GRADE (2015-2020)



REACH BY GENDER (2015-2020)



# Linkages and Access to Community-Based Clinic Services

Adolescents' rapidly changing intellectual, emotional, and physical development creates unique health care needs. Yet, adolescents historically have low utilization of health care services. Teen-friendly care has been proven to increase the quality and accessibility of health care for young persons. Teen-friendly health care is adolescent-centered and allows for increasing autonomy as youth transition to adulthood.

The Tier 1B Project promoted health care utilization to young persons. Variety Care and OCCHD improved the accessibility and quality of their comprehensive health care services to youth, including the testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health planning and services, access to contraception, and a full range of physical and mental health services.



**Text Hotline:** Text any question or request anonymously to Variety Care Teen Clinic.

**Referral Guide:** All of the facts young people need to know about how and where to access “teen-friendly” services, and must-know facts about preventive sexual health services. The guide is available digitally and in-print.

**Teen Clinic Outreach Events:** Variety Care hosted 72 special teen clinic events at their health care clinics. Teens could ask questions or hangout. Two out of every three youth attending chose to see a provider. OCCHD began hosting these types of clinic events in 2020.

**Pregnant and Parenting Teen Coordinators:** With other support and funding from this grant, coordinators linked pregnant and parenting teens to critical health and safety-net resources and supported youth in graduating from high school.

**Contraceptive Access:** No-cost over-the-counter emergency contraceptives were available at all Variety Care locations, and other steps were taken to improve the accessibility of low-cost birth control methods.

**Quality Improvement Training:** Providers and front-line staff listened to the voice of young persons and with this insight adapted services to meet the needs of youth.

**Dedicated “Youth-Friendly” Providers:** When scheduling an appointment at Variety Care, young people are “connected” to health care professionals who are trained and have a special interest in adolescent health care services.

**Leveraging Systems:** Critical policy changes were created within schools and clinics to benefit teens. For example, family medical leave is available for newborn care. This enables young parents to bond and care for their infant and supports them in graduating from high school.

# Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs)

Giving teens an active voice is a primary function of Youth Leadership Councils (YLCs). Youth can inform program development, implementation, and service delivery that directly and indirectly impacts their overall health and well-being. Over the course of Tier1B, Sexual Health and Peer Education (SHAPE) youth played a significant role in advocating for and participating in sexual health education. Additionally, during the last two years of the grant, Providers and Teens Communicating for Health (PATCH) emerged as a powerful voice in efforts to bridge the gap between providers and teens, assisting in creating a safe and trusted environment where teens are better able to openly discuss their health needs and concerns, whether that be in a drop-in teen clinic or with their long-term PCP.

## Sexual Health and Peer Education (SHAPE)

Sexual Health and Peer Education is a peer education program led by Teen emPower! High school students across the metro area are trained to become peer educators. Over the course of the Tier1B Project, 57 young persons were trained as emerging leaders and advocates.

### Peer Educator Training Intensives

Each cohort receives intensive training at retreats and other events throughout the year. The training includes:

- Human sexuality and development
- Leadership skills
- Team and asset building skills
- Public speaking
- Role modeling

### Benefits to Peer Educators

Participating young people develop as leaders and become experts on sexual health. A few of the benefits include:

- Self-esteem
- Social skills
- Communication
- Leadership
- Problem-solving
- Academic motivation and performance

### Peer-to-Peer Education

A foundational aspect of this training is positive youth development. Leveraging private and other federal funding, these trained peer educators reached nearly 2,000 7th grade students who attended five different schools in the metro area from 2017 to 2020.

### Learning Objectives

- Delay early sexual involvement
- Understand social and internal pressures
- Manage peer pressure
- Build assertiveness techniques



SHAPE provides peer educators the knowledge and opportunities to create positive changes within their communities.

Teen  
emPower!

# Providers and Teens Communicating for Health (PATCH)



## Empowering Youth and Promoting Accessible “Teen-Friendly Clinics”

Beginning in 2018, a diverse group of 13 young people from across the Oklahoma City area participated in PATCH. Through this year-long intensive program, they underwent in-depth training to become experts on and advocates for teen-friendly health care services.

PATCH youth learned leadership skills, set goals for the future, and practiced prosocial values. Participation in PATCH has proven to foster a sense of belonging, a known youth protective factor.

As part of this program, PATCH youth led workshops for providers, assessed the youth-friendliness of health care facilities, and raised their voices to promote the overall health and well-being of youth.

## Youth-Led Clinic Assessments

PATCH youth assessed the youth-friendliness of OCCHD and Variety Care clinics using the 23-point Youth-Led Health Center Assessment Tool developed by the Adolescent Health Initiative at Michigan Medicine. Clinics used these assessments to improve the quality of adolescent health care services.



## PATCH for Providers

PATCH youth led 90-minute workshops with health care providers describing their preferences and the realities that impact the health care choices of young people. This work makes an impact!

Post-workshop assessments revealed significant improvements in providers' confidence in providing care that addressed the needs, preferences, and concerns of teens and having open and honest conversations with teens. After participating in the workshop, providers felt they understood how to “make them feel welcomed.”

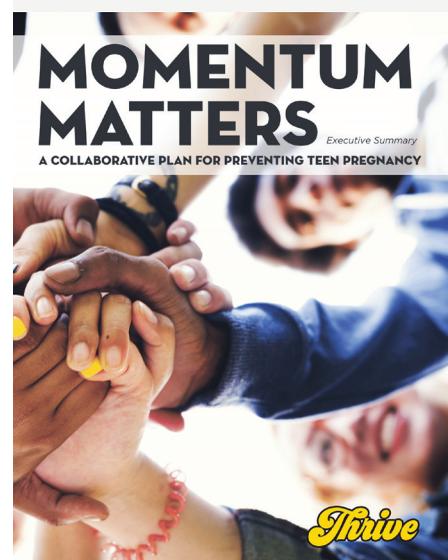


# Momentum Matters

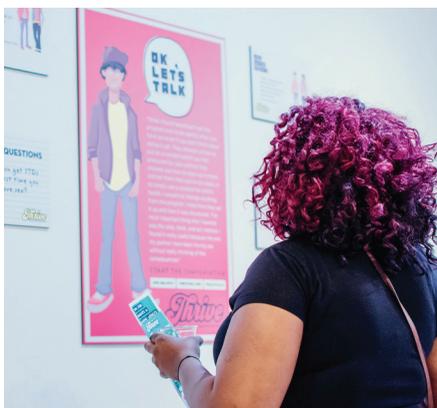
Thrive led the dissemination of the work of the Central Oklahoma Teen Pregnancy Prevention Collaborative and raised awareness of vital issues surrounding teen pregnancy prevention and reproductive health through many different channels. Thrive has a strong social media presence including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and maintains a website that serves as a hub for resources developed by working groups and core partners. Each month, Thrive disseminates an electronic newsletter to partners, organizations, schools, community, and other stakeholders.

Thrive was charged with engaging the community, education, and medical

working groups to inform, monitor, and promote teen pregnancy prevention. During the latter part of the grant, Thrive spent more than a year listening to and learning from experts and residents of the Oklahoma County community, engaging more than 500 stakeholders, including youth, to understand their perspectives, concerns, and priorities. Using stakeholder input, data, and evidenced-based practices, Thrive announced a common agenda and new comprehensive plan for the Collaborative in October 2019, establishing a path to move forward and continue the momentum to promote adolescent health and reduce the teen birth rate.\*



## Common Agenda: to reduce Oklahoma County's teen birth rate by an additional 25% by 2025.



### PRIORITY 1: INFORM

Empower all young people, and the caring adults in their lives, by providing medically accurate, age-appropriate sexual health information.



### PRIORITY 2: CONNECT

Facilitate relationships - within our Collaboration and the broader community - to ensure young people access the health care services, resources, and programs they need.



### PRIORITY 3: ENGAGE

Create an inclusive, community-wide movement by compelling meaningful participation and investment to support adolescent sexual health.



\*Multiple sources funded these activities.

# Lessons Learned

## Resilience

Core partners triumphed and rallied through reduction-in-forces, district restructuring, school closures, ice storms, tornados, and the statewide primary public school education teachers walkout to continue programming and meet performance measures.

## Strength through Collaboration

Core partners modified internal processes, procedures, and data collection protocols and instruments for greater program efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability and learned a far greater impact could be achieved through synergy and reliance on others' strengths.

## Clinical Systems Linkages

An in-depth understanding of the strengths and limitations of a teen-friendly clinical system was developed during this grant. The core partners have identified leverage points to continue to improve the quality and accessibility of teen-friendly clinical services moving forward.



**A legacy of Tier 1B is that it expanded the partners' capacity and created systems to teach healthy sexuality to teens.** Not only has the number of educators expanded but more training created a larger cohort of dedicated experts. These educators are now leaders and have the self-efficacy and skills to implement evidence-based programs, engage youth, and create safe and supportive environments. Moreover, many are now qualified as "train the trainers" and can train others, leading to further expansion of the network of highly skilled sexual health educators. These experts can also support school partners and other community-based organizations to shape healthy social norms.



# Highlights of Accomplishments

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**Invested** in 15,604 youth through evidence-based comprehensive sexual health programming, and surveys revealed a significant improvement in knowledge of key sexual health facts and preventive health practices (Years 2 to 5).

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**Taught** evidenced-based sexual health curriculums through 631 courses in grades six through 12 in 35 schools situated within five school districts.

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**Trained** 57 SHAPE peer educators who engaged and taught 2,000 youth in middle schools.

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**Hosted** 72 free events dedicated to teen access, providing care to 749 young persons (Years 2 to 5).

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**Created** clinical adolescent centers of excellence wherein young persons received care from dedicated health professionals trained in youth-friendly and accessible best practices at Variety Care clinics.

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**Developed** policies to provide low-cost or free contraceptives and over-the-counter emergency contraceptives, subject to Oklahoma consent laws at Variety Care clinics.

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**Managed** the medical care and services for pregnant, parenting, and at-risk teens using school-based teen-parent coordinators.

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**Designed** and implemented leave policies reducing barriers to successfully complete high school.

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**Distributed** 4,356 print referral guides, which provide facts young persons need to know to prepare for and schedule a visit to health care providers (Years 4 and 5).

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**Empowered** 13 PATCH youth-leaders to train health care professionals on strategies to communicate effectively with youth and increase their awareness of the challenges young people encounter when accessing health care.

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**Committed** to relationship equity, the Tier 1B Project worked in and with the community, collaborating with hundreds of community and faith-based organizations engaging parents and youth.

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**Raised** awareness of adolescent reproductive health and wellness issues and emerging trends through presentations, press releases, and social media.



Over the course of the last five years the core partners, along with teens, schools, parents, community groups, supporting organizations, and many others came together to successfully address the issue of teen pregnancy and empower youth to make informed choices that will help safeguard their futures. The work of these committed partners and individuals contributed to a 42 percent decline in the teen birth rate in Oklahoma County. However, more work needs to be done. The future of our young people is at stake, and they deserve an opportunity to reach their highest potential! Teen pregnancy isn't just an adolescent issue; it affects the community as a whole and takes the whole community commitment to make a long-term and sustainable difference.

# Thank You



*Words fail to express our gratitude to all who participated in this project, and we wish you a future filled with life, light, and well-being.*

Thank you to our brightest stars, our youth, whose energy, passion and zest for life and learning makes our work meaningful; our teachers, whose generosity and support opens the doorway and makes our work possible; our educators, whose knowledge, skills and dedication makes our work successful; our partners and community, whose unfailing support makes our work endure.

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**Designed by:** Ghost

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