

Application to Conduct Research and Distribute Surveys

Researcher Identifying Information

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Teacher Who Has Expressed Interest

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Introduction to the Oklahoma Better Futures Project



The name of the research study is the Oklahoma Better Futures Project. We are conducting this research because Oklahoma, along with the rest of the U.S., has seen a decline in teen birth rates over a timespan of nearly three decades. However, the rate of decline in Oklahoma has been much slower-Oklahoma experienced a 54% reduction in teen birth rates between 1991 and 2016, while the U.S. as a whole has seen a reduction of 67%. Not only has the Oklahoma teen birth rate remained higher than the national average since 1991, Oklahoma also reported the second highest teen birth rate in the U.S. in 2016. The 2018 Oklahoma birth rate for teens aged 15-19, as reported in *County Health Rankings and Roadmaps*, is 42 births per 1,000 females in the population, compared to the U.S. rate of 27 births per 1,000 females.

The widespread high-risk status in the state of Oklahoma is further worsened by the geographical makeup of the state where 59 of the 77 total counties (77%) are considered by the U.S. Census Bureau to be “mostly” or “completely” rural. In these rural counties, birth rates tend to be higher than the Oklahoma state average, with birth rates reaching as high as 72 births per 1,000 females. Additionally, 2019 Oklahoma state data shows that rural counties consistently scored the lowest in rankings of life expectancy, quality of life, health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. Youth living in rural areas of Oklahoma face greater risks to their health and wellbeing because of general lack of community resources. Those risks can magnify during adolescence, when many risky behaviors may be tried (i.e., sexual activity, unprotected sex, smoking, substance use and abuse) that can have lifelong negative implications. The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that Oklahoma teens who reported that they were engaged in sexual activities were more likely to report that they used tobacco, drank alcohol, used marijuana, attempted suicide, or contracted a STI, and even shows that they earned lower grades than their peers.

The Oklahoma Better Futures Project plans to target 1,800 youth (ages 12-19) from high-risk, impoverished rural communities where the teen birth rate is above the national average and where the school districts are members of the Oklahoma Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (OK-FCCLA).

Selected teachers will be trained in the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum. The research and evidence based for the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance curriculum is extensive. It has been evaluated over the last decade with more than 20 published peer reviewed journal articles, professional presentations, and published evaluation reports supporting the effectiveness of the approaches it teaches. Love Notes is in a class of its own in the field of teen sexual risk prevention education and is recognized as an evidence-based program in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs Practices by SAMSHA.

The Oklahoma Better Futures Project will be approved by Solutions IRB, an Institutional Review Board, before the first cohort of teachers begin the curriculum in their classrooms. An IRB approval letter is available upon request from the research team.

Proposed Teacher and Student Participants for the Oklahoma Better Futures Project

Teenage mothers are likely to be found in communities with decreased graduation rates and fewer job opportunities, making them more vulnerable to upward economic mobility challenges. This increases the likelihood of their children having worse health outcomes and fewer social and economic supports. Approximately fifteen teachers will receive training to provide the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum in January 2020 and an additional 30 teachers will receive training in the curriculum in the summers of 2020 and 2021.

Demands on Teachers and Students for the Oklahoma Better Futures Project

Teachers will be asked to participate in an online project orientation webinar and complete an online human subject protection training including the submission of a certificate of completion. Social Innovation Laboratory asks that teachers provide their school's written parental "opt-out" policy regarding health and human sexuality courses and attend an in-person 3-day training on the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum in January 2020. Teachers also will be asked to provide student class enrollment and attendance information (numbers and initials only, no names included to maintain anonymity), complete accurately and submit timely monthly project performance measures, agree to periodically be observed in the classroom to assess fidelity to the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum and (if necessary) accept coaching to improve delivery of services, complete and submit electronically a survey, and participate actively in all requests for assistance and response.

Students will be asked to voluntarily complete electronic pre-curriculum surveys at near the beginning of the semester and electronic post-curriculum surveys near the end of the semester.

Privacy Protection for Teachers and Students

We respect the information that is shared with us and will make every effort to keep it confidential. We follow strict rules to protect participant privacy and assure legal rights are protected during instruction, data collection, and reporting procedures. All individuals who work on the study project are trained to protect confidential information and have signed a confidentiality pledge. We are not asking for student names on any data collected. The research team will never know who students are and student answers will not be shared with their teachers or anyone else. Online survey completion where students can take surveys at their own pace is also recommended so students feel more comfortable answering honestly without worrying about peers seeing their responses. Student participation in responding to survey questions is voluntary. Students have the right to not participate at all, to skip any questions they choose not to answer, or to stop answering questions at any time. If students decide not to answer the survey questions, there will be no penalty. All survey responses are confidential and will be reported as group results to maintain anonymity of students, teachers, and schools.

Benefits to Taking Part in the Oklahoma Better Futures Project

Students in classes being taught the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum will potentially benefit by being exposed to the innovative and strength-based Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum that teaches about forming and maintaining healthy relationships. It empowers youth to make healthy sexual choices that boost sexual delay and sexual risk avoidance. The curriculum was developed especially for teens at risk for unstable and poor-quality relationships, risky sexual behaviors, unplanned pregnancies, and for those who are pregnant or are already parenting. The content of the curriculum is relevant to any young person and appeals to young people's aspirations, rather than merely emphasizing what they must avoid. It encourages them to learn more about themselves and supports them in cultivating a vision for their future. It also empowers them with the skills needed to further their own personal development and build their skill capacity to follow through with their intentions.

Teachers will benefit by receiving in-person training either in January 2020, Summer of 2020, or Summer of 2021 from a certified Dibble Institute instructor in the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum and receive an instructor's manual upon completing training as well as student workbooks and class materials. In addition, teachers will be provided \$100 per day to cover substitute teacher pay during days of the in-person training. Teachers who complete the training and participate in this project will receive a \$500 stipend for sexual risk avoidance education efforts during the 2020-2021 school year. These funds can be used to purchase updated programs, peer helper or educator programs, wellness fairs, prevention plays, and awareness campaigns that focus on prevention for students, parents, and community members or other suitable activities (i.e., development of activities that help increase healthy teen relationships and decrease sexual risks are appropriate uses of the funds). Teachers will receive \$5 gift cards per student who participates in the program, to assist with facilitation of student data collection that occurs near the beginning and end of the semester. These data facilitation funds can be used at the teachers' discretion, but it is suggested that they be used to provide a reward such as class pizza or treats for participation in survey completion.

Once teachers have completed training in the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship Smarts curriculum and are established as effective providers, these teachers can continue to teach the Love Notes-Sexual Risk Avoidance and Relationship

