

Engaging Community Stakeholders to Address the Social Determinants of Teen Pregnancy

Root Cause Analysis Case Study

August 2014

Background

In 2012, teen birth rates dropped to a record low with 29.4 births per 1,000 15-19-year-old females. This data also showed teen birth rates lowering across all racial and ethnic groups. However, even with strong prevention messages disparities persist among racial and ethnic groups with teen birth rates for non-Hispanic black (43.9) and Hispanic (46.3) over twice that of non-Hispanic white (20.5) 15-19-year-old females in 2012.¹

Where teens live, learn, work, and play influences their reproductive health decisions. Referred to as “social determinants of health” these factors include cultural, economic, environmental, and social conditions that influence health outcomes such as teen pregnancy.^{2,3} The availability of out-of-school or job training programs, exposure to violence, lack of educational opportunities, and unemployment are all examples of contextual factors that may impact rates of teen pregnancy in a particular community. A recent literature review conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) pointed to overwhelming evidence of the relationship and impact of social and economic influences on teen childbearing.⁴ Considering teen pregnancy through a social determinants of health lens, such as taking into account community risk factors (e.g., unemployment) and protective factors (e.g., access to culturally competent, youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services), can help identify root causes contributing to teen pregnancy and practical strategies to address these causes resulting in a deeper and more sustainable impact.

In 2010, the CDC in partnership with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, Offices of Adolescent Health (OAH) and Population Affairs (OPA), funded nine state- and community-based organizations in high need communities as part of the *Teen Pregnancy Prevention: Integrating Services, Programs, and Strategies Through Communitywide Initiatives: The President’s Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative*.⁵

The five key components of this program model are:

1. Community Mobilization and Sustainability
2. Evidence-Based Programs
3. Increasing Youth Access to Contraception/Reproductive Health Care
4. Stakeholder Education
5. Working with Diverse Communities

CDC funded five national organizations to provide training and technical assistance (T&TA) to grantees for each of the five strategies listed above. As a national partner, JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. (JSI) provides T&TA to grantees related to key component 5, raising awareness of social determinants of health and integrating a framework to address the social conditions that create adolescent health inequities and disparities in their communities.

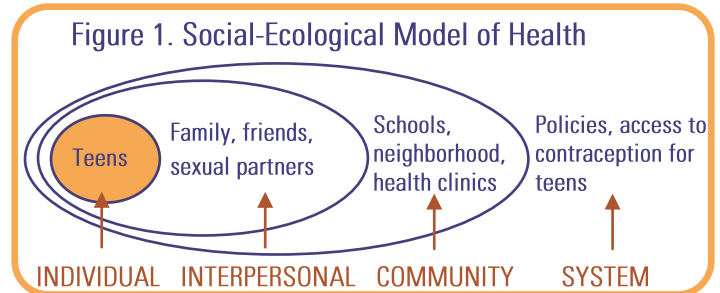
Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

JSI provided guidance and T&TA to grantees highlighted in this case study to conduct a **Root Cause Analysis (RCA)** to identify the social conditions (risk and protective factors) influencing teen pregnancy in their communities. First used in the field of engineering, RCA was adapted by the health care system to improve patient safety by examining adverse events (e.g., medication errors) and developing systems improvements to prevent them from happening again. This model is now widely used in a variety of fields including public health.^{6,7}

RCA

- Is based on the theory that addressing the root causes of an issue is more effective and efficient than addressing the symptoms of the issue.
- Is a process used to identify contributing risk and protective factors and underlying causes of a health issue such as teen pregnancy.
- Provides an opportunity for diverse stakeholders to contribute to the understanding of teen pregnancy in their community.

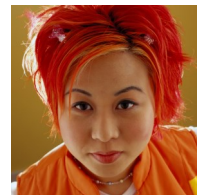
JSI developed a facilitator’s guide to equip grantees to conduct RCA with stakeholders to identify both risk and protective factors related to teen pregnancy in their communities. The process includes mapping these factors onto the Social Ecological Model (*Figure 1*) as individual, interpersonal, community, and system level factors influencing teen pregnancy.



The guide provides an overview of the process and step-by-step instructions to facilitate RCA with stakeholders to identify factors that impact teen pregnancy in their community, focus their activities to affect change, and develop an action plan. The RCA guide is available online at rhey.jsi.com/toolbox.

This case study highlights the use of the RCA process with varying stakeholder populations. The 3 grantees included in this case study are:

- ♦ Bronx Teens Connection, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- ♦ Alabama Department of Public Health, Mobile County Health Department
- ♦ UT Teen Health, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio



Mobilizing Youth to Address the Social Determinants of Teen Pregnancy

Bronx Teens Connection

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Bronx District Public Health Office
Bureau of Maternal, Infant & Reproductive Health

Using RCA to Engage Youth

The Bronx Teens Connection is a community engagement initiative focused on improving sexual and reproductive health and reducing unintended teen pregnancy rates in the South Bronx. The program aims to help teens avoid unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by creating a community where teens have the information, skills, and resources they need to make healthy decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.

In 2012, Bronx Teens Connections' self-selected Youth Leadership Team (YLT) included 7 male and 7 female members, ranging in age from 15-20 years. YLT members were recruited from South Bronx youth-serving organizations and high schools. The Bronx Teens Connection used the JSI tool to guide a Root Cause Analysis (RCA) with the YLT members. The process was led by the Bronx Teens Connection Director and YLT Coordinator during a single, hour and a half meeting, to engage youth members to think about community influences on teen pregnancy, focus their activities to affect change, and plan for action.

YLT members discussed the concept of social determinants of health, identified factors contributing to teen pregnancy in the South Bronx, considered causes they believed were most directly connected to each other to identify leverage points, and planned and prioritized activities to address the root causes of teen pregnancy in the South Bronx. Identified risk factors included:

- Negative influence of media (*community level*)
- Lack of sex education (*community and system level*)
- Limited access to contraception/clinic services (*system level*)



Bronx Teens Connection
Youth Leadership Team

Youth Action to Affect Change

The RCA process empowered YLT members as equal partners in Bronx Teens Connection efforts. As a result of the RCA, the YLT developed an action plan and mobilized YLT activities including:

PhotoVoice

A photojournalism project to spark a community discussion about the media depiction of teen sexuality and provide a reliable filter to decipher often confusing media messages. The YLT gathered examples of the media's negative influence, facilitated a workshop at the annual Bronx Teens Connection conference, and presented their PhotoVoice project to the Bronx Borough Presidents' annual health fair. To learn more about using PhotoVoice for social change, visit photovoice.org.



TeenSpeak Guide

An information booklet developed by the YLT to answer common teen questions about sexual health topics including relationships, birth control, right to reproductive health services, and STIs.



Teens in NYC: Protection + Application

The YLT assisted with the design and usability of the Teens in NYC smartphone application.

This application was designed to help adolescents locate teen-friendly clinics for reproductive and sexual health counseling and services.

Benefits & Lessons Learned

- The RCA was a flexible and adaptive process to foster youth engagement and guide action plans.
- The RCA was a participatory process that provided an opportunity for the youth voice to be heard.

Addressing the Social Determinants of Teen Pregnancy through a Collective Impact Process

Alabama Department of Public Health
Mobile County Health Department

Using RCA to Engage Diverse Stakeholders

The Mobile County Health Department (MCHD) has adopted the collective impact process to mobilize community organizations and service providers around adolescent health and teen pregnancy prevention. The collective impact process requires community partners to have a shared vision for change based on a common understanding of the issue and to develop a collaborative, mutually reinforcing approach to solving it.



Mobile County Community Partners

MCHD identified Root Cause Analysis (RCA) as the ideal process to build partner capacity to think critically about social factors influencing teen pregnancy in Mobile County and plan for lasting change.

In 2013, MCHD invited a group of diverse community stakeholders to participate in the RCA process. Participants included partners from youth-serving organizations, family planning health care providers, Mobile County Public Schools, and faith-based organizations. Since this meeting would be the first time so many community stakeholders met to discuss community factors influencing teen pregnancy in Mobile County, MCHD reached out to JSI to facilitate the RCA process. Two weeks prior to the RCA, JSI conducted a pre-RCA terms and definitions webinar to familiarize attendees with terms and concepts related to social determinants of health and allow them to fully engage during the meeting.

Using RCA, attendees identified priority factors influencing teen pregnancy in Mobile County, including:

- Limited male and parent involvement
(interpersonal level)
- Limited access to health and social services
(system level)
- Limited use of evidence-based programs
(system level)



Members of the MCHD & Kappa League

Collective Action to Affect Change

Through the RCA process participants gained a clearer understanding of community factors influencing teen pregnancy in Mobile County which they used to develop a coordinated action plan to mobilize community resources. The priority actions that resulted from the RCA were to:

Implement a Coordinated High School Model

This coordinated model expanded high school-based services to include: (1) evidence-based programs during the day, (2) a Healthy Start and a Fatherhood Initiative for pregnant and parenting teens, and (3) social services and counseling to support mental health and link teens to available services.

Enhance Opportunities for Male Engagement

Community activities focus on enhancing male engagement through: (1) a high school-based Fatherhood Initiative and



Kappa League Members & Alumni

(2) collaboration with the Mobile Kappa Leadership Development Program (Kappa League). Activities resulting from collaboration with Kappa League included barbershop condom drops, use of evidence-based programs (Project AIM (Adult, Identity, Mentoring) and Making Proud Choices), an intergenerational male conversation on responsible sexual activity, and a forum to inspire other community organizations to establish mentoring programs.

Increase Parent Engagement and Education

Community activities to increase parent engagement and education about parenting skills, adolescent development, and sexual health include: (1) "Parent University" a day-long workshop for parents of middle and high schools students, (2) "Lunch Crunch" educational workplace lunches, (3) a parenting website, and (4) after-school classes focusing on developing skills (e.g., cooking) while delivering educational messages.

Benefits & Lessons Learned

- The RCA created a common language for partners to talk about the factors influencing teen pregnancy in Mobile County.
- The RCA enhanced partner commitment which led to improved collaboration between organizations in the community.

Strategic Planning to Address the Social Determinants of Teen Pregnancy

UT Teen Health
University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Using RCA to Develop a Strategic Plan

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio - UT Teen Health, a community-wide teen pregnancy prevention initiative, focuses on decreasing the teen birth rate on the south side of San Antonio. UT Teen Health efforts have been guided by a diverse Core Partner Leadership Team (CPLT). Members include representatives from the county hospital, juvenile probation department, local school districts, and others.

In 2013, UT Teen Health conducted a Root Cause Analysis (RCA) with their CPLT as a way to assess what resources were currently available in the community and strategically plan for future activities. Using the JSI tool, the UT Teen Health team led the RCA through 4, one and a half hour meetings, over the course of four months. During the first meeting CPLT members identified a list of social determinants of teen pregnancy in San Antonio. Identified factors included education, lack of supervision or safe places to hang out, media messaging, inconsistent communication about sex, and healthy relationships.

In subsequent meetings the CPLT narrowed down the list of risk and protective factors into four categories and established work groups to develop action plans for each. Identified categories were:

- Limited access to resources (*system level*)
- Education (*community and system level*)
- Lack of role models (*interpersonal level*)
- Inconsistent communication (*interpersonal level*)



Core Partner Leadership Team

Community Action to Affect Change

To ensure the four action plans developed by the work groups were integrated into an overarching sustainability plan, the CPLT was combined with the UT Teen Health Community Action Team (CAT)—a grassroots, community mobilization group—to form the Community Leadership Team (CLT). The CLT includes members from the original CPLT and representatives from the CAT who represent such groups as social nonprofits, faith-based organizations, businesses, and foster care youth-serving organizations important to sustainability efforts. Each work group action plan resulting from the RCA was incorporated into the sustainability plan. Action plans included the following items:

Youth Leadership and Access

Continue bimonthly Youth Leadership Team (YLT) meetings and activities including the development of a “mobile” YLT for special populations such as youth in the juvenile justice system and foster care.



UT Teen Health Youth Leadership Team

Education and Awareness to Increase Access to Resources

Community ‘Meet-and-Greet’ events to increase awareness of resources. Clinical partners conducted ‘Meet-and-Greet’ events with school district personnel, including nurses, to increase knowledge of services offered.

Opportunities for Interactions with Positive Role Models

Staff from a foster care agency began implementing a Teen Outreach Program® (TOP®) to promote healthy role models through TOP® clubs for at-risk youth in a residential treatment center.

Benefits & Lessons Learned

- The RCA enhanced the stakeholders’ understanding of the availability of resources in the community.
- The RCA provided stakeholders with an opportunity to identify gaps, develop action plans to meet community need, and enhance individual organizational infrastructure to expand and sustain prevention efforts.

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Lessons Learned from the RCA Process

RCA in combination with an action planning process is useful in bringing stakeholders to a shared understanding of the social determinants of teen pregnancy in a particular community. This process can result in innovative ideas and strategies for addressing the underlying causes of teen pregnancy in a community. Grantees described in this case study identified a number of positive outcomes from the RCA process including:

Clear Understanding of Social Determinants of Teen Pregnancy

RCA helped partners develop a common language to talk about the social determinants of health influencing teen pregnancy in their community. Social determinants identified by grantees in this case study included:

- Negative media influence.
- Limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health and social services.
- Limited male and parent engagement and involvement.
- Limited use of evidence-based pregnancy prevention programs.

Enhanced Stakeholder Engagement and Commitment

RCA enhanced stakeholder engagement and commitment to teen pregnancy prevention efforts which led to strategic youth action and improved collaboration between organizations.

Strategic Planning

RCA supported the strategic planning process by providing community partners with an opportunity to identify gaps in teen pregnancy prevention efforts (e.g., limited use of evidence-based programs), develop action plans to meet specific need (e.g., collaborate to implement evidence-based programs), and expand and sustain effective prevention efforts.

Recommendations

RCA and action planning should be used early in a collaborative project to create a common understanding of the social conditions contributing to teen pregnancy and direct project activities.

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