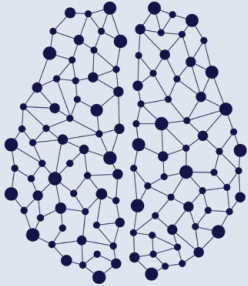


Substance Use & Sexual Risk-Taking

Connecting the Dots for Adolescent Health Professionals



In 2019, according to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 21% of adolescents who were sexually active reported drinking alcohol or using drugs before their last sexual experience.¹ Because the brain is still developing executive functioning skills around decision-making and judgement, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of substances.² This increases their likelihood of engaging in risky sexual behaviors.³


Substance use is linked to all of the following:



Early sexual initiation⁴



More sexual partners⁵



Higher frequency of unprotected sex and unintended pregnancy⁶



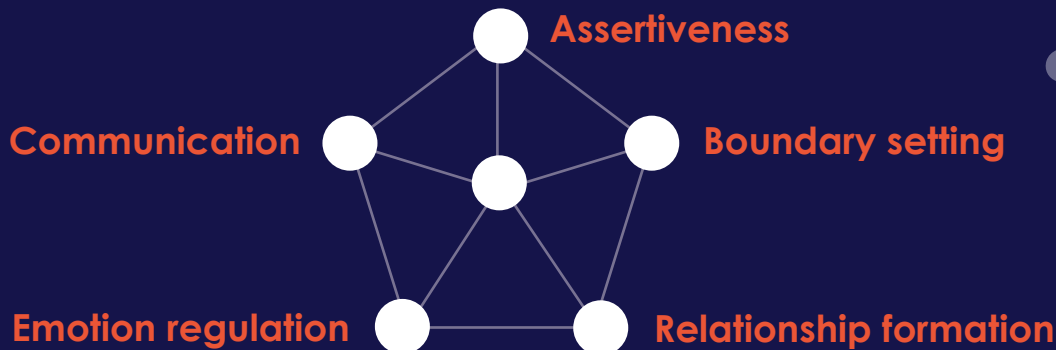
Increased risk of STI and HIV infection⁷



Increased risk of sexual and dating violence^{8,9}

Youth who don't use any substances are the **least likely** to engage in sexual risk-taking.¹⁰

The **same skills** that help youth abstain from sexual activity can prevent substance use.



By focusing on both behaviors, programs can identify the **shared risk factors** and promote healthy outcomes by leveraging their **shared protective factors**.

How to incorporate substance use prevention into your Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP) program

Substance use prevention can be incorporated into the **design and selection, implementation, or evaluation** of your APP program. Consider what makes the most sense for your program — the more holistic your programming can be, the greater impact it will have on the well-being of youth in your community.

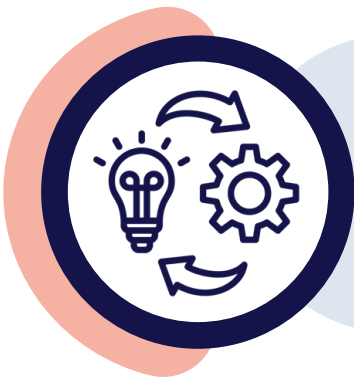
PROGRAM DESIGN & SELECTION

- Select programs that have evidence of reducing substance use and sexual risk-taking
- Develop evidence-informed supplementary materials on substance use
- Explore family-centered activities focused on communication and relationship building
- Partner with [drug-free community coalitions](#) to leverage resources



IMPLEMENTATION

- Make explicit connections by including statistics and real-life role-playing activities that involve substance use
- Ask youth questions or prompts on how substance use can hinder decision-making or overall health



EVALUATION

- Add survey questions about substance use behaviors
- Analyze the data and report on the impact of your program on both substance use and sexual risk-taking behaviors



Additional Resources

- [A Systematic Review on Sexual Health and Drug Use Prevention Interventions for Black Girls](#)
- [Finding Evidence-based Program and Practices](#)
- [Prevention Research Synthesis \(PRS\) Compendium Intervention Search](#)
- [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Program Guide](#)
- [Teens Linked to Care \(TLC\)](#)
- [The Dreamer Girls Project](#)

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