



MISSION WEST VIRGINIA, INC.

Program Type: Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program

Agency and Location: Mission West Virginia, Inc., (MWV) in Hurricane, WV.

Population Served: Through its Teaching Health Instead of Nagging Kids (T.H.I.N.K.) program, MWV serves more than 1,300 youth and young adults ages 12 – 24 years old in a variety of settings such as middle and high schools, juvenile detention facilities, group homes, residential treatment facilities, and youth emergency shelters in seven counties within West Virginia.

Program Description: MWV educators teach the T.H.I.N.K. program using two evidence-based curricula. The 13-lesson, relationship-focused program gives youth tools to create healthy relationships and build communication skills while lowering rates of pregnancy and STIs. Program components are interactive and include group discussion, role playing, games, art, and media.

MWV's unique T.H.I.N.K. program emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships through goal setting and following the millennial success sequence of graduating from high school, working full-time, and marrying before having any children. For example, "Decide, Don't Slide" teaches youth how to avoid high-risk behaviors in their relationships that could lead to negative or unintended outcomes. Educators focus on building youth's knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy to make choices that will help them, rather than create barriers, for achieving their education, employment, relationship, and family goals.

Results: Educators conduct pre- and post-test surveys with youth to assess outcomes of program aspects. Approximately 80% of participants reported improvements in communication, conflict resolution, and relationship skills. Students also experienced a 93% decrease in school suspensions and a 95% improvement in money management.

Program Perspective: Through MWV's T.H.I.N.K. program, educators encourage youth to visualize their potential success through building healthy relationships and focusing on setting goals in line with the success sequence. Upon completion of the last class (which teaches about fatherhood and the youth's plan for their future), one male student came up to the educator in tears and said: "Thanks so much for coming and teaching these classes. I liked all of them, but today's lesson really made me think. You know, about my Dad and stuff and where I'm going. It really touched me."

Federal Funding Streams Used: Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program and Personal Responsibility Education Program (Family and Youth Services Bureau, HHS) | Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Program (Office of Adolescent Health)

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