TEEN ACTION
QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

Teen ACTION is an afterschool program that builds on the highly successful Teen Outreach Program. Developed by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), in partnership with the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), Teen ACTION is designed to reduce teen pregnancy and other risky behaviors, cultivate an ethic of service and civic engagement, and develop life skills and critical thinking skills among New York City adolescents.[1] Teen ACTION (Achieving Change Together in Our Neighborhood) targets teens in grades 7–10 in high-risk neighborhoods across the city. The program is operated by 17 community-based organizations and served 1,404 youth in 2012.

Reducing teen pregnancy and instilling a sense of a future is critical for New York City teens. In 2010, more than 7,200 children were born to teenagers in New York City, a much higher rate than national averages.[2] Teen mothers are more likely to live in poverty and be unemployed, and their babies are more likely to have health and developmental issues and perform poorly in school. Furthermore, high school graduation rates are alarmingly low at 58 percent citywide. Among Black and Latino males, the graduation rate is only 34 percent.[3] Life without a high school degree is increasingly difficult today, as jobs require more education and the wages of those with only a high school degree are lower today than they were in 1970.

This report describes the results of a qualitative evaluation of Teen ACTION's effectiveness in meeting its goals. The research team interviewed teens, program administrators, and staff at seven sites (see box), and conducted focus groups with participants, as well as one-on-one interviews with four teens at each site.

Program Design

Students in Teen ACTION are required to commit 150 total hours to three components throughout the course of a school year, including at least 50 hours of structured learning and at least 50 hours of service learning activities. Most do far more than that.

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[1] The Teen Outreach Program is a national program designed to reduce risky behavior, school failure, and school suspension. A random assignment evaluation of 25 programs found that participants were 42 percent less likely to be suspended from school than a control group, they were 39 percent less likely to fail a course, and 41 percent less likely to become pregnant. See J.P. Allen et al., "Preventing Teen Pregnancy and Academic Failure: Experimental Evaluation of a Developmentally Based Approach," *Child Development*, vol. 64 (4) (1997): 729–42; J.P. Allen and S. Philliber, "Who Benefits Most from a Broadly Targeted Prevention Program? Differential Efficacy across Populations in the Teen Outreach Program," *Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 29 (6) (2001): 637–55.

[2] New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, "Summary of Vital Statistics 2010." (New York: Bureau of Vital Statistics, December 2011), available at www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vs/vs-population-and-mortality-report.pdf. See also, K. Kost and S. Henshaw, "U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions, 2008: National Trends by Race and Ethnicity," (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2012), available at www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends08.pdf.

[3] Parents for Inclusive Education, "Small Schools, Few Choices: How New York City's High School Reform Efforts Left Students with Disabilities Behind," (New York: Parents for Inclusive Education, October 2006), available at www.nylpi.org/images/FE/chain234siteType8/site203/client/DLC%20-%20Education%20-%20High_School_Report.pdf.

The three components are as follows:

1. **Structured-learning activities,** which are guided by the Teen ACTION curriculum and instill an understanding of the environment youth inhabit (such as their communities and the natural environment), youth development and interpersonal skills (such as team-building, leadership skills, and peer-to-peer interactions), and information on risky behaviors and sexual reproductive health (SRH).

The SRH lessons focus on a range of topics, from HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, STI prevention, abstinence, condom use, birth control, healthy relationships, body image, sexual harassment, peer pressure, and resources in the neighborhood, such as health clinics. Staff follow the guiding principles of communication from Planned Parenthood. Some sites use outside educators or draw on their own organizational capacity. According to program staff, the focus on SRH goes beyond what was provided in school by giving participants the insight and knowledge they will need to make smart decisions.

2. **Service learning activities,** which are hands-on volunteering opportunities to develop academic, civic, leadership, and life skills. Examples include cleaning up local parks and conducting charity walks or orchestrating community food drives. After a shooting in a local park, students, for example, spearheaded a park clean-up and created a video game about gun violence to raise community awareness. Students also organized events to raise awareness about sexual health issues, such as organizing a World AIDS Day in the community.

Typically designed by youth, the activities are meant to create meaningful change in youths' communities, but often create meaningful change in youth themselves. As one participant stated, "the community service we undertake helps you make better choices and realize there are other people in need. It ensures that you don't just think about yourself and think about others in the community. Everybody here in this community is connected."

3. **Reflection activities,** which allow teens to reflect on the connection between the structured learning and service learning components. The reflection periods offer teens an opportunity to become more aware of their own feelings and decision-making processes as well as better understand the perspective of others.

Table 1 describes the programming for each of the three components in each site.

Fidelity to the Teen ACTION programming is high. All program sites reported that they used the Teen ACTION curriculum and logic model as the cornerstone of their program design.

Table 1. Examples of Programming Components at Each Site

Teen ACTION Provider	Service Learning Activities	Structured Learning	Reflection Activities
BronxWorks	Charity walks, building houses, AIDS day presentation to school	Teach lessons and offer workshops throughout the week on SRH, academic enrichment and career building	Discuss lesson topics and reflect after every service activity
The Child Center	Presentations on risky behaviors to school	Teach lessons and engage in conversation with the participants regarding topic of the day	Participants share opinions on lesson of the day and discuss the different opinions compared to the facts; focus on discussing thought process involved with decisions and risky behaviors
Children's Aid Society/ Hope Academy	Recycling project, charity walks	Tutoring and peer mentorship available; discuss Teen ACTION curriculum Friday	Discuss curriculum lessons
El Puente	Renovating neighborhood park, perform plays and dances	Discuss curriculum in gender groups	Discuss lessons, reflect on service activities, focus on learning successful decisions, improvement areas, and youth empowerment
NYC Mission Society	Hand out food to community, collect and hand out Christmas gifts to needy, perform for community	Lessons on curriculum every Friday	Reflect on Fridays as a Teen ACTION community
SCO Family Services	Present movie to school, put together school's	Teach lessons once a week on Teen ACTION	Reflect on leadership

	Winter Wonderland night	curriculum centering around leadership; play leadership games and have a question of the day	building, lessons, and service activities at end of the day
St. Nick's	Charity walks, hand out food to community, basketball tournament promoting healthy lifestyles	Teach and discuss curriculum through 5 components: sexual reproductive health, jobs and careers, college career and job expectations, advocating for jobs, and healthy minds healthy bodies	Discuss and reflect on lessons every day; focus on self-empowerment, confidence, and acceptance; staff always available for one-on-one discussions

Why Students Joined and Why They Stayed

Many students are drawn to the program for "something to do," in neighborhoods with few alternatives after school. Many teens were interested initially in programming such as help with college or internships and employment connections, but they soon came to Teen ACTION for its programming as well. Still others enrolled because of the small stipend used as an incentive. Few enrolled because of the focus on sexual health.

The main hurdles to recruitment included students' initial wariness about the time commitment (150 hours). Some parents were worried about their children walking home after dark or learning about sexually transmitted diseases and other sex education. As one provider noted, "A lot of parents signed kids up because they thought the program was focused on teaching and tutoring," and many lost interest once they realized that Teen ACTION had a "community-based focus."

Youth voice was an important aspect of the program. All programs give participants ownership of the programs and allow youth to select the themes and activities that guide the program implementation; some programs allow a greater degree of involvement from the youth in the decision-making and leadership components of the themes and activities. Many of the sites encouraged teens to suggest activities and programming. Giving teens more ownership of the program was ultimately key to keeping them engaged. Across the majority of the study sites, teens reported that the ability to have input into the program topics and structure was more motivating and created a more welcoming and interesting program. In addition, the teen-led activities and service projects increased teens' leadership skills. The teamwork required in the program helped participants develop their decision-making skills and to realize how decisions lead to successful (or less successful) outcomes.

Study Sites

BronxWorks, Validus Prep Academy is a community-based organization at Validus Prep Academy in the Bronx. BronxWorks offers early childhood learning, summer learning programs, afterschool programming, and GED training and testing, among others. Teen ACTION targets students in grades 9 and 10.

The Child Center of New York, MS 72 is a mental health agency with locations throughout Queens and Brooklyn. Child Center provides the Teen ACTION services in both a middle school and high school. The Child Center location affiliated with Teen ACTION is a mental health facility. Teen ACTION is referred to as Teen Impact Prevention Program (TIPP) at this site. Teen ACTION targets students in grades 7 and 8.

Children's Aid Society – Hope Academy is an adolescent center whose mission is to develop participants' skills and motivation to encourage college enrollment. Hope Academy serves high school students at their site location, as well as older students through their Keystone program. Teen ACTION participants engage in many of the other programs offered through Hope Academy throughout the week, including summer job programs, tutoring, law programs, and financial literacy. Teen ACTION targets students in grades 9 and 10.

El Puente is an established community-based organization that has provided services to teens in Bushwick for 20 years, including academic support, cultural programs, leadership programs, and community service. Mentors are an important aspect of El Puente's work. El Puente serves middle and high school students, and participants refer to Teen ACTION simply as El Puente. Teen ACTION targets students in grades 7-10.

NYC Mission Society, Minisink Townhouse is an established community-based organization serving Harlem for 40 years. Mission Society provides service and leadership components in all of their programs. Mission Society serves high school and middle school students at their location. Teen ACTION targets students in grades 8-11.

SCO Family Services, Sunset Park High School is a service provider to the Sunset Park community and provides Teen ACTION to Sunset Park High School tenth graders. SCO is an umbrella organization providing transition programming to those moving from middle to high school and from high school to early adulthood. The organization that provides the Teen ACTION services is the Center for Family Life. Teen ACTION targets students in 10th grade.

St. Nick's, Frederick Douglass Academy IV is a community-based organization in Brooklyn that has served the surrounding community for 15 years. The organization offers summer employment programs, Beacon programs, and learning-to-work programming. St. Nick's provides the Teen ACTION services to the students of a local, public high school. Teen ACTION targets students in grades 7-10.

The Sexual Health Curriculum Is Well Received

Participants noted that although the SRH programming was effective, the broader goals of the program were equally engaging and often a key strength of the programming. Participants saw the Teen ACTION programming as an avenue not just to avoid risky behaviors but also as a means of engaging in meaningful discussions about a variety of topics pertinent to their lives. Perhaps this attraction to broader issues lies in their neighborhood conditions. The majority of participants across

all 17 Teen ACTION sites ranked alcohol, drug use, gangs and violence, and peer pressure as significant concerns in the community, as well as teen pregnancy and STIs.[4] In addition, the broader set of services offered by the community-based organizations themselves that housed Teen ACTION buttressed the Teen ACTION curriculum and largely focused on improving school performance more than reducing risky behaviors.

That said, teens gained valuable information on SRH. While some participants had previous knowledge of SRH from school, one participant noted that Teen ACTION "feeds it to you to make it stay in your head." Participants also noted that the programming helped reinforce the messages taught in the classroom and provide greater context and support for students. Most teens felt comfortable talking with program staff about these topics and many sought out staff regularly to discuss personal issues.

The SRH programming often had more impact when combined with programming on goal-setting and other elements. Delaying sex or practicing safe sex became more important because teens had also set clear, attainable goals. One teen said, "Before I came to the program I thought I was invincible and I didn't need condoms, but once you were teaching us and not just trying to scare us, I had to think about my behaviors."

The Program Helped Students Set Long-Term Goals

Teens reported that the program had helped them see a more promising future largely because they learned how to set goals and achieve them. As one teen said, "staff helps us make positive decisions and make sure we're on track." The reflection segment in particular allowed teens to "connect and think about it."

The programs also provided clarity about their future ambitions and positively shaped their career goals, making them realize that "not everything is a joke," as one teen put it. One participant said that before the program, "he wanted to dance and sing," but now he is considering becoming a doctor or lawyer because he wants to "fight for people's justice and be a doctor to help save people lives and continue having an impact on community." Another participant said of the program, "before I knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't know how to get there." Although not everyone spoke as highly as these teens of the programming, no one thought the program had a negative effect on their goals.

The Program Bolstered School Achievement and Soft Skills

Teens reported that they could more clearly see the connection between success in school and their later goals. "I connect what I learn here at school," said one. Much of the school-related programming was not part of Teen ACTION but instead was offered through the larger

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[4] One site mentioned racial profiling as a concern, and another site, SCO Family Services in Sunset Park High School, which was somewhat of an outlier on other respects, did not believe that many of these issues were pressing concerns for them.

community-based program that Teen ACTION was embedded in. Tutoring and help with college applications and preparation were particularly welcomed by teens and their families. Teens also learned invaluable soft skills that employers prize. One participant "learned not to just follow," while another learned to be truthful with others and be honest." Others learned to contain their temper and seek more peaceful solutions. Teens also believed the program improved their relationships with their parents.

The Program Created Stronger Connections to Community

The service learning programming effectively engaged youth in their communities. Before joining the program, several teens said they felt disconnected from their neighborhoods and saw only problems. But the service helped them see their community in a new light, both good and bad. "I didn't notice there were so many liquor ads before I did this project," said one teen. Another said that the program taught him that "community is home, so we need to take care of it. If it is dirty, it is our job to clean it up." Not everyone was enamored with all of the activities that took place. One teen thought some projects did not help the community as effectively as others. Another teen thought the projects were boring, but then had second thoughts after participating. "In regards to community service, at first I thought it's boring but then you look at what you did and you're proud of it."

The Ongoing Need for Teen Programming

Most teens truly enjoyed the programming. Interestingly, they sometimes pointed to programming beyond the Teen ACTION elements, such as tutoring or college preparation, or summer jobs and internships. (Teens did not know which programs were part of Teen ACTION and which were not.) Their high scores for all of the programming suggests an ongoing need for programming for this age group, and points to the spillover effects when teens are encouraged to join up. As one teen said, "Once you are in this program, you will probably join another program, so it gets you connected."

Staff Views Were More Tempered But Still Positive

Program staff were largely positive toward the curriculum, although they were quick to caution that they did not view it as a panacea for participants. Staff noted that not all teens alter their behavior substantially as a result of the program, although some stated the program had not been underway long enough to see impact. They also noted that there was not one "silver bullet" that made a key difference for teens. Instead, the three programming elements combined with mentors and available staff was the most effective approach. Staff thought the reflection activities were among the most helpful for teens, providing a framework for how to think about issues and make decisions. Staff confirmed that giving teens a say in program design was very effective in engaging teens.

To improve the program, staff had several recommendations. A first was to include older students (grades 11–12) because they believed older students could benefit more from a focus on risky behaviors. A second recommendation was for additional professional development opportunities beyond the monthly meetings and site visits that are currently offered by DYCD.

Others also thought that providing more opportunities for peer sharing between the Teen ACTION providers would be helpful.

Funding is a perennial concern. With pending changes in the city government, staff were uncertain about the stability of future funding, making it difficult to plan or expand services to older teens. Funding also limits travel for field trips to colleges and other outings, which all agreed were highly beneficial. Finally, staff recommended that the program offer actual health supports. While providers were given a guide of clinics that were specifically identified as being teen-friendly, the staff member seemed unaware of the resource.

Recommendations

Given the results of this study, several recommendations follow.

1. **Develop a more coordinated plan for serving participants based on age and/or grade.** For providers that work with both middle and high school populations, serving the participants together can be difficult owing to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, and the different maturity levels and needs of both groups of participants. Therefore, providers that do work with youth in larger age ranges should develop plans to serve specific groups of participants on the basis of age or grade level. It may benefit the program to further demarcate participants by background. Doing so could lead to more concise delivery of services and potentially greater impacts.

2. **Provide transitional services for older participants.** Ending the program at tenth grade was a shortcoming, according to many. DYCD could develop transitioning guidelines for these older students, linking them with other services. Another option is to expand the program to include those in grades 11 and 12.

3. **Create separate funding specifically for trips.** A number of providers highlighted the visits they conduct. However, the Teen ACTION program does not provide specific funding for these visits and sites have to use funds at their discretion for this activity. Funding for trips to college campuses or different areas of the city would benefit many teens. For many participants, seeing a different community was an eye-opening experience that bolstered their goals. The separate funding for field trips should be flexible enough to tailor to a site's needs within certain parameters.

4. **Develop two- or four-year plans for participants.** While participants can remain in Teen ACTION for multiple years, some providers noted that they were starting over each year with new participants. This could at times lead to trust issues and delays in implementing the program's curriculum. A more structured two- or four-year plan could improve outcomes for those providers by ensuring a long-term vision for services and reducing duplication each year. For example, a program that serves those in grades 7 and 8 could develop plans for recruiting and enrolling participants as they enter the seventh grade and plan on a two-year program. If a program serves participants from grades 7–10, then a three or four-year plan could be developed. This would both reduce the annual turnover and the time needed to recruit and enroll participants. It would also help to establish relationships and program benchmarks.

5. **Consider refocusing the sexual reproductive health classes and splitting classes**. Although many participants spoke positively about the SRH classes, some thought they were redundant to what they learned in school. To avoid this problem, programs could gauge youth knowledge of SRH prior to the beginning of these classes, and if necessary, divide classes by different knowledge levels. In addition, classes could be modified to focus more on interpersonal relationships. Peer pressure was a dominant topic. Although knowing the facts about sex is important, it may be equally important for providers to focus on enabling participants to avoid these activities by successfully interacting with their peers and learning how to handle peer pressure. Many participants said that they learned how to engage in interpersonal behavior somewhat from these classes, but often learned more simply by working one-on-one with program staff.

6. **Integrate the Teen ACTION curriculum into other programs offered by providers.**

A recurring theme was that participants enjoyed many of the other services offered by program providers beyond the Teen ACTION programming, particularly employment and college help and tutoring. Teen ACTION providers could be encouraged to work in concert with DYCD to tailor their curriculums to their own extant programs with a goal of developing a logic model that successfully serves program youth.

CEO RESPONSE TO URBAN INSTITUTE EVALUATION OF TEEN ACTION

Spring 2015

In November 2007, the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), in partnership with the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), launched Teen ACTION (Achieving Change Together in Our Neighborhood)—an after-school program designed to reduce risky behavior among teens in middle and high school through service learning, which combines community service with structured classroom activities. In addition to service and classroom instruction, Teen ACTION also includes a reflection component and provides opportunities for youth to partake in decision-making and shape both classroom and service activities.

Prior to the program's launch, service learning had already been documented to be an effective strategy for reducing risky behavior among teens in multiple random assignment studies, including evaluation of the nationally replicated Teen Outreach Program (TOP). While not a direct replication, Teen ACTION draws heavily from the TOP model which has been demonstrated to produce a 42 percent lower risk of school suspension, 60 percent lower risk of course failure, 60 percent lower risk of school dropout, and 53 percent lower risk of teen pregnancy for participants.[i]

A 2009 evaluation of Teen ACTION documented some positive findings, but was severely limited by a combination of factors, including low survey take-up, and generally did not capture the effect of the program on risky behaviors.

The limitations of this initial evaluation made Teen ACTION ripe for a new research study. In addition, largely in response to qualitative findings from the first evaluation, DYCD adjusted Teen ACTION's program model to focus on serving younger teenagers while emphasizing sexual and reproductive health through a partnership with Planned Parenthood of New York City.

This second evaluation focused on the modified program model, with the goal of identifying participant experiences of the program, as well as any outcomes with regard to risky behavior, including sexual health and academic achievement. The findings suggest that Teen ACTION has had positive effects on participants' knowledge, behaviors, school performance, interpersonal relationships, and community engagement. The program helped participants to set long-term goals and understand how to achieve them. In doing so, participants reported being able to connect their choices to potential outcomes and avoid risky behaviors and their consequences such as unplanned teen pregnancy, drug use, violent behavior, and school absenteeism.

Many teens also cited participation in service learning as leading to positive outcomes including improved academic performance, increased community connectedness, and the development of important soft skills. The evaluators also highlighted the importance of incorporating youth input and youth-driven decision making as a key element for keeping youth engaged and motivated while also contributing to their development of leadership skills and overall growth.

The report also documents the need for after-school programming as identified by the Urban Institute at the time the research was conducted in 2013, with many participants facing few alternatives for after-school activities. However, since the research was conducted for this report, Mayor Bill de Blasio has announced an unprecedented expansion of after-school programs to reach every middle school student in

need of one—nearly 120,000 young people. The program, called School's Out New York City (SONYC), was launched in September 2014 by DYCD and the NYC Department of Education (DOE).[ii]

Recognizing the evidence supporting a service learning strategy, CEO and DYCD have included service learning in other programming for young people. CEO has incorporated service learning as a component in several program models including NYC Justice Corps, Project Rise, and Justice Community. Most recently, DYCD leveraged the Teen ACTION model and curriculum to incorporate service learning into 16 Beacon youth councils in fiscal year 2014. Going forward, CEO will continue to research these and similar youth development strategies with the goal of bringing effective practices to scale.

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Introduction

The report provides the results of an evaluation of the Teen ACTION program conducted by the Urban Institute between October 2013 and February 2014. The report begins with an overview of the history and background of the Teen ACTION program (Chapter I). We then briefly describe the structure of the program. In Chapter II, we describe the objectives of the evaluation and the data collection methods. Chapter III provides an overview of the needs of the areas served as well as the sites' program start-up and implementation experiences. Chapter IV examines the recruitment and enrollment into the program across the sites, identifying challenges to recruitment and the effective recruitment methods. Chapter V provides an overview of the key services offered to participants across the sites, including the service, reflection, and classroom activities. Additionally, this chapter highlights the focus on sexual and reproductive health by the program and the integration of services within programs. Chapter VI examines the key resources that are necessary to support the program sites' service delivery. Chapter VII describes the staff and participants' perspectives on the effects of the Teen ACTION program related to several different facets of teenage behaviors, attitudes, and goals. Chapter VIII weaves together the findings of the previous chapters to identify the successes of the program, as well as potential opportunities for improvements, to offer recommendations. Finally, Chapter IX highlights the limitations of the evaluation study.

Chapter I: Overview of Teen ACTION Program

A. Motivation for Developing Teen ACTION Program

Promoting healthy behavior and positive school outcomes is essential to New York City (NYC)'s future. In 2010, teenagers in New York City had more than 7,200 births, which is approximately 50 percent higher than the national average[5,6] In Mott Haven, one of NYC's poorest neighborhoods, teenagers had a pregnancy rate nearly three times the city average (16 percent). Further highlighting the risky behaviors of NYC teenagers, the 2011 New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that 38 percent of NYC High School students had engaged in sexual intercourse, and of that group, 35 percent did not use a condom, and 87 percent did not use birth control pills during their last sexual encounter.[7]

Several communities in New York City report particularly high rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). A 2010 survey found that one in three NYC zip codes are in the top quintile nationally for multiple STIs, with the Bronx and Manhattan showing the highest STI incidences. Furthermore, NYC teenagers comprise more than one in four diagnosed STI cases in NYC, with the Bronx having the highest rate.[8]

NYC teenagers also have low high school graduation rates. In NYC, the four-year high school graduation rate is 58 percent. Among Black and Latino males the rate is 34 percent.[9]

The effects of teen pregnancy, risky behaviors, and poor school performance cannot be overstated. Teenage mothers are more likely to live in poverty and be unemployed while their children are more likely to have health and developmental issues and perform poorly in school. In addition, teenage fathers have a 25 to 30 percent lower probability of graduating from high school than their peers who are not fathers.[10] The cycle often repeats itself as the children of teenage parents are more likely to have children as teenagers, themselves.

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[5] Summary of Vital Statistics 2010. The City of New York, Dec. 2011.
http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vs/vs-population-and-mortality-report.pdf
[6] Kost K and Henshaw S, U.S. Teenage Pregnancies, Births and Abortions, 2008: National Trends
by Race and Ethnicity, 2012, <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/USTPtrends08.pdf>
[7] HIV, Other STD, and Teen Pregnancy Prevention and New York City Students. Rep. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control, 2012.
[8] "NYC Teen - Sexual Health & Pregnancy - Sexually Transmitted Diseases." NYC Teen - Sexual Health & Pregnancy - Sexually Transmitted Diseases. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Jan. 2014. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/teen/html/sexual-health-pregnancy/sti-facts.shtml>.
[9] Small Schools, Few Choices: How New York City's High School Reform Efforts Left Students with Disabilities Behind. Parents for Inclusive Education, Oct. 2006.
<http://www.nylpi.org/images/FE/chain234siteType8/site203/client/DLC%20-%20Education%20-%20High_School_Report.pdf>.
[10] Covington, R., Peters, H. E., Sabia, J. J., & Price, J. P. (2011). Teen fatherhood and educational attainment: Evidence from three cohorts of youth.

B. Origins of the Teen ACTION Program

To reduce teen pregnancy and other risky behaviors, New York City aimed to implement innovative programs to engage male and female at-risk youths. The Teen Outreach Program (TOP) was identified as one such promising model. TOP is a nationally replicated model designed to reduce risky behaviors (including pregnancy), school failure, and school suspensions among teens through intensive, structured, volunteer community service that is linked to classroom-based discussions about future behavior. A random assignment evaluation of 25 TOP programs found that participants receiving TOP services had a 42 percent lower risk of school suspension, a 39 percent lower risk of course failure, and a 41 percent lower risk of teen pregnancy.[11] A follow-up study reinforced these findings. Furthermore, the impact on subsequent teen pregnancy rates was substantial. Teen parents who received TOP services were only one fifth as likely to have a second pregnancy relative to teen parents who did not receive TOP.[12] These studies demonstrate the efficacy of service learning for reducing risky behaviors among teens.

Using the TOP, as well as other service-learning programs as a model, the city developed the Teen ACTION (Achieving Change Together in Our Neighborhood) program. Designed by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO), this program seeks to reduce risky behaviors, especially those that might result in teen pregnancy, promote positive youth development, and promote community engagement through afterschool service-learning initiatives. The program has focused on both teenage males and females with the belief that each faces similar factors that could lead to teen pregnancy and the adoption of risky behaviors.

Founded in October 2007, the program was originally implemented in 60 sites throughout NYC (47 in schools and 13 in community or youth-based centers) and targeted youths ages 13 to 21. In its first year of operation, the Teen ACTION program served 3,124 participants, increasing to 3,411 participants in its second year. The program was revamped in 2011 to focus on younger youths (grades 7-10), under the theory that younger teens would benefit more from the program. In addition, the program expanded the focus on sexual reproductive health (SRH) and STI prevention. Teen ACTION began collaboration with Planned Parenthood to help deliver the SRH services.

Currently, the program is located in 17 sites operated by community-based organizations (CBOs) in high-risk areas throughout the city. In City Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, it served 1,404 participants who received a total of 154,777 service hours during the year. The program had a budget of $1.6 million in FY 2012.

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[11] Allen, J.P., Philliber, S., Herrling, S., & Kupermic, G.P. (1997). Preventing Teen Pregnancy and Academic Failure: Experimental Evaluation of a Developmentally Based Approach. Child Development, 64 (4): 729–42.

[12] Allen, J.P., Philliber, S. (2001). Who Benefits Most From A Broadly Targeted Prevention Program? Differential Efficacy Across Populations in the Teen Outreach Program. Journal of Community Psychology, 29, (6): 637–55.

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Though much of the focus of the Teen ACTION program is to reduce risky behaviors and the rate of teen pregnancy, other objectives include:

- Cultivating an ethic of service and civic engagement;
- Developing life skills and critical thinking skills;
- Encouraging use of health and mental health services; and
- Promoting a commitment to academic achievement.[13]

C. Teen ACTION Program Components and Structure

Teen ACTION is an intensive after-school learning program comprised of three main components: structured learning, service learning (community service), and reflection. The program is provided during the NYC school year (September to June), typically for a few hours a week. However, as we will describe later, several programs provide Teen ACTION services almost every day of the week, including weekends, for multiple hours a day. Figure 1 provides an overview of the Teen ACTION program logic model.

The structured-learning activities are described in the Teen ACTION curriculum (developed by The After-School Corporation (TASC) and The Global Kids, Inc.). The curriculum seeks to provide youth with an understanding of the environment they inhabit (such as their communities and the natural environment), youth development and interpersonal skills (such as team-building, leadership skills, and peer-to-peer interactions), and risky behaviors and sexual reproductive health. In the past two years, the Teen ACTION program has partnered with Planned Parenthood to provide teenagers with education about prevention of risky behaviors and teen pregnancy.

Service learning activities, as described in the Teen ACTION curriculum, "are an experiential approach to developing […] academic, civic, leadership, and life skills." Service learning consists of activities, typically designed by the youth that create meaningful change in their communities. The goal is to connect youth more strongly to their communities and, in the process, reduce the youths' risky behaviors and improve the lives of others. Examples of service-learning activities, which are described in greater detail later in this report, include cleaning up local parks and conducting charity walks.

Reflection activities tend to be less structured than the other two components. They aim to link the structured learning and service learning components. Reflection activities typically take place in the classroom and primarily include discussions of what the participants have learned from the activities in which they have participated. The goal is to support cognitive and behavioral development by providing participants with the opportunity to reflect on and gain a broader understanding of these activities.

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[13] "DYCD - After School - Teen ACTION." DYCD - After School - Teen ACTION. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Jan. 2014. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/afterschool/teen.shtml>.

The number of hours required of participants has changed since Teen ACTION was launched. When it was first implemented, the program required youth to participate in 120 total hours throughout the course of a school year, including at least 40 hours of structured learning and at least 40 hours of service learning activities. . Currently, youth are expected to participate in 150 total hours throughout the course of a school year, including at least 50 hours of structured learning and at least 50 hours of service learning activities. However, many participants engage with the providers for far more than 150 hours, as the CBO's providing Teen ACTION often link Teen ACTION participants and their families with the CBO's other programs and services to further contribute to the holistic wellbeing of the participants. In addition, some programs provide youth with the opportunity to engage in activities within Teen ACTION at a considerably higher level than the required minimum. These extra hours are driven by the participants' strong desire to engage in more activities, as well as the resources available to the providers. Participants are permitted to remain in Teen ACTION for as long as they are eligible; this means that participants may be active participants for multiple school years and thus receive maximum services and support through Teen ACTION. Participants may also choose to re-enroll in Teen ACTION if they had to leave the program for a time. This allowance is particularly useful for students who engage in other extracurricular activities, such as sports, or for students who need to take time off from Teen ACTION to focus on their school work. Because Teen ACTION participation is continuously available to the target populations at each site, more youth are able to remain engaged in the program.

The variation in service provision will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

Figure 1: Teen ACTION Logic Model

Goals*	Resources	Target Population	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes**	Long-term Outcomes**
• Cultivate an ethic of service • Develop life skills and critical thinking skills • Reduce risk behaviors that may result in teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS • Encourage use of health and mental health services • Promote commitment to academic achievement	• CEO funding • Teen ACTION curriculum • Online data system • Technical assistance • Planned Parenthood partnership • 17 program site providers, many operating other youth programs and services • Provider linkages to schools and other community organizations • Provider linkages to health care services and clinics • Youth participants, who actively contribute to program and activity planning	• Youth in grades 7th through 10th from high-need neighborhoods in NYC	**Recruitment and Enrollment** • Effective outreach, recruitment, and enrollment strategies **Structured learning** • Structured activities guided by curriculum to educate youth on topics relevant to themselves, their challenges, and the challenges of their local and global communities • Focus on sexual reproductive health, including lessons and workshop activities **Service projects** • Meaningful, youth-initiated services that translate curriculum knowledge to action • Activities benefit recipients and develop connection between youth and community **Reflection** • Reflection on activities to evaluate service implementation, promote growth, and hold youth accountable for knowledge and actions **Other activities** • Workshops • Guest speakers • Trips (ex. colleges) • Referrals (ex. health, tutoring, other youth programs)	• Number of individuals enrolled (varies by program site) • Healthcare referrals • Service hours and community engagement	• Increased engagement in the community • Improved life-skills • Improved decision-making skills • Increased self-confidence • Improved school attendance / reduced truancy • Decreased school suspension rates • Increased use of health and mental health services • Reductions in risk behaviors	• Increased credit accumulation and grade promotion • Increased high school graduation rates • Reduced teen pregnancy rates

*Source: DYCD website document
**Source: DYCD online policy and procedures

There are currently 17 CBO's located in high-risk areas of NYC that provide Teen ACTION. Many of these providers were chosen because of their track record in delivering services to high-risk youth. We will provide more detail about these organizations in the Chapter III; however, table 1 in Appendix A provides an overview of the 17 Teen ACTION providers, their location of organization, their service area, and their service target population.

Teen ACTION providers vary in several ways. While all Teen ACTION programs are operated by CBOs, the majority of Teen ACTION providers (13) are located in public schools, with four located within the CBO's themselves. This is an important distinction between program sites because the location of the program affects many aspects of program operations, as we detail in the remaining chapters. Additionally, three organizations (Children's Aid Society, Global Kids, Inc., and Sports & Arts in School) operate multiple Teen ACTION programs in different locations. Fourteen programs target high school students (generally students in the ninth and tenth grades).

Most of the programs are located in three boroughs (Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx). This reflects the higher rates of teen pregnancy, disconnection, and poverty in these three boroughs. For example, East Side House, Inc. serves Mott Haven, which has the highest teen pregnancy rate in the city, as mentioned earlier. Teen ACTION providers are concentrated in the neighborhoods with the largest need.

D. DYCD's Role in Teen ACTION

DYCD acts as a resource to the Teen ACTION program and site providers. Each month, DYCD holds a mandatory, two hour meeting that either a program director or coordinator from each provider attends. These meetings typically focus on professional development and peer sharing. The first two meetings each academic year are used to describe Planned Parenthood's role and technical assistance support, as well as the expectations surrounding community service projects. After the initial meetings, the topics and professional development activities focus on areas and concerns that the provider staff request. In the past, these meetings have discussed resources available for program staff and the youth to locate clinics and SRH resources in their neighborhoods, reviewed information on popular drugs and how to identify drug use among youth, and identified other youth programs that may benefit the Teen ACTION participants in summer months when Teen ACTION is out of session. The meetings also provide a time for Teen ACTION staff to participate in peer sharing to discuss their activities, questions, successes, and challenges with all Teen ACTION program staff. For providers that miss the meetings, a follow-up email with agenda is sent to them. This information, along with provider contact information, is recorded on Teen ACTION's online dashboard so that program staff have access to this information at all times.

While Teen ACTION is a relatively small initiative within DYCD, DYCD's goal is to provide comprehensive support and resources to the providers of the initiative. In addition to the meetings and support DYCD provides each Teen ACTION program, DYCD staff also conduct a minimum of three visits to each program during an operating period (September 1st to June 30th). At least one of the visits is a full site visit, during which DYCD collects information on the programs

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through a program quality assessment tool, which is used for all DYCD programs. This tool collects information on specific program information, such as addresses, emails, and initial contract details; administrative requirements, such as ensuring correct safety procedures, licensures, and agreements and contracts on file; partnerships and relationships, such as community partnerships, professional development opportunities, and targeted populations; leadership and management; and technical assistance and action plans. DYCD staff also observes program activities in action. During these visits, DYCD ask program staff to share their concerns and challenges implementing the program with the goal that DYCD may provide and/or organize additional support for each program when needed. DYCD must also visit the programs at least two other times throughout the operating period and typically attend the programs' community visits and action activities (service hours).

When new staff are assigned within provider sites to the Teen ACTION program, DYCD also provides training. While many of the new staff members are typically already provider staff and are just newly assigned to the Teen ACTION program, DYCD brings them up to speed in terms of expectations. In addition, at the beginning of each program year, DYCD reviews program expectations, definitions, DYCD's role, etc., as well as providing an orientation session of the DYCD database to the new staff members as needed.

The monthly meetings, site visits, thematic curriculum, and other resources provided by DYCD aims to ensure that program staff and DYCD have a shared vision of Teen ACTION.

Chapter II: Overview of the Teen ACTION Evaluation

In May 2013, The Urban Institute (UI) was awarded a contract by CEO to conduct a qualitative evaluation of the Teen ACTION program. A previous evaluation of the Teen ACTION program was completed by Westat/Metis in 2009. The Westat/Metis evaluation, a quantitative, quasi-experimental design, suggested that Teen ACTION resulted in increased knowledge of risky behaviors and sexual reproductive health (SRH). However, it showed no impact on participants' behaviors, possibly, in part because of the study's limitations, including that the survey utilized to capture outcomes was not anonymous, the study was conducted as post-test only, and difficulties with the constitution of the comparison group. The 2009 evaluation made several recommendations, including that DYCD and CEO focus on support for high fidelity program implementation and that there should be greater efforts to "raise community awareness and involvement with its activities and increase communities' support of the youth and the program."[14] Teen Action has implemented some of these recommendations, including using high-fidelity sites.

A. Evaluation Objectives

UI's evaluation differs from the previous evaluation because it focuses on the Teen ACTION program after the 2011 changes and uses primarily qualitative methods to address the following objectives:

- Describe the services received by participants, their experiences with the services, and their satisfaction with those services, with a particular focus on the SRH curriculum;
- Document the implementation of the Teen ACTION program across the sites, including: (1) the relationship between the program logic model and implementation of the program; (2) fidelity of implementation to the curriculum, and (3) challenges to implementation, particularly the implementation of the SRH curriculum;
- Describe the self-reported short-term outcomes of participants, particularly related to risky behaviors, sexual health, and academic achievements;
- Describe the experience and perspectives of staff members; and
- Report lessons learned, particularly those that relate to addressing the programs' targeted outcomes and program effectiveness.

Using these objectives to guide the research plan, the UI team sought to assess the Teen ACTION program from the perspective of the participants and the staff. By speaking with these individuals, we developed an understanding of how the program functioned on the ground. This, in turn, informed an analysis of the efficacy of the program and identified opportunities for change in the program.

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[14] Quinn, Liz, Manual Gutierrez, and Frank Jenkins. Teen ACTION: Final Evaluation Report. Rep. Rockville, MD: Westat and Metis Associates, December 2009.

B. Methodology of Evaluation

To perform the evaluation, UI conducted site visits with seven[15] Teen ACTION providers in four boroughs and analyzed administrative data from all 17 sites. The seven sites were selected by DYCD and CEO to capture variation in location, age of participants, and service delivery among providers to provide the evaluation team a wide range of Teen ACTION program operations. The chosen sites were also considered by DYCD to be either high or moderate performers, providing a comprehensive overview of service provision.

The one-day site visits were designed to collect in-depth information about services and to understand the perspective of both the participants and staff. Prior to the site visits, the team developed an administration and staff protocol, a focus group discussion guide, and a one-on-one participant discussion guide. The administrator and staff protocol and focus group and participant discussion guides (included in this document as Appendices C-E) include a range of questions related to the evaluation's objectives. For example, questions are asked about each program's activities and schedules, focus on risky behaviors and SRH, concerns facing the youth participants, aspects of the program that are most and least effective, and program effects on youths' behaviors, attitudes, and goals. We also collected recommendations from both staff members and participants about how the Teen ACTION program could improve the delivery of services and potentially achieve a greater impact.

Prior to the visits, the UI team worked with Teen ACTION directors at the seven sites to identify the best date and time for the visit, the staff to interview, and the ideal number of participants to include in the focus group and one-on-one interviews. Interviews with the programs' director and staff were conducted to obtain a range of information surrounding program implementation, including program creation and structure, recruitment, intended outcomes, and perceived impressions. Focus groups typically included seven or eight participants chosen by the sites and were conducted to obtain information on the participants' program knowledge and involvement, including knowledge and comfort surrounding SRH components, main concerns they face in their communities, future goals, and personal change. Three to five one-on-one participant interviews were also conducted at each site and typically included youth who also participated in the focus groups. These one-on-one interviews allowed the UI team to obtain more detailed information on participants' knowledge and experience with sexual reproductive health and risky behaviors; the discussion guide included additional questions on these topics and the one-on-one approach allowed the youth to discuss knowledge and experience away from their peers.

Although the visits differed somewhat by site, all visits occurred on a weekday during the late afternoon and early evening. Typically, two UI team members first conducted an interview with the provider's project director to achieve a broad overview and understanding of the program. The UI team would then interview other site staff members, when available, to gather their perspective

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[15] We originally were to visit eight sites, but we were unable to schedule a time for one site visit.

on the program. This was followed by the focus groups with participants, and finally the one-on-one interviews with four participants. Most of these site visits occurred on days in which Teen ACTION events were being held to maximize attendance and were conducted in two waves (late November and early December).

In many sites, the one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants who also participated in the focus groups. However, for some sites, one-on-one interviews were conducted with participants who did not participate in the focus groups. Participants were paid $20 for their participation in the focus groups and $20 for their participation in the one-on-one interviews.

The site visits were highly successful in gathering information about the respective Teen ACTION programs and their providers. In total, 46 focus groups, staff and participant interviews were conducted across the seven sites. For the ten Teen ACTION sites that the team did not visit, DYCD provided UI with administrative data that included background characteristics of the participants and services provided, which we provide in the following chapters. Table 2 in Appendix A provides a breakdown of the data collected from sites.

After completing the site visits in early December, the project team analyzed the collected data to address the evaluation objectives. We developed a template to organize the notes gathered from staff and participants. We used NVivo software to categorize the hundreds of pages of notes collected during the site visits. Based on this process, we identified key themes about the Teen ACTION program operations and providers, which we describe in this report.

Most of the research objectives are addressed through the information gathered from the site visits; therefore, the information comes solely from the seven sites we visited, and excludes the ten other sites. This approach may limit somewhat our understanding of the entire Teen ACTION program. To offset the possible limitation of our site visits, we selected the seven sites to represent the diversity of the Teen ACTION providers. We also provide analysis of administrative data from all 17 sites wherever possible. Therefore we are able to comprehensively address the research objectives. Table 3 in Appendix A provides an outline of our research questions, based on the research objectives, and the data source we use to answer them.

In the following chapters, we describe the findings from the study. In addition to answering the key questions, we report on the most and least effective elements of the Teen ACTION program and ways to improve them, as described by the staff and participants. Based on our analysis of the data, the project team also offers additional recommendations for improving Teen ACTION.

Chapter III: Needs of Areas Served and Initial Implementation of Program

Chapter III focuses on the needs of the areas served by Teen ACTION, the organizational context in which Teen ACTION was implemented at the program sites, and the issues staff encountered during the 2011 implementation of the re-focused Teen ACTION program. Our key findings are that Teen ACTION provides an important service to youth who face key risks. We find that the organizations that implement Teen ACTION have a long history of serving these communities through a wide range of services. Their program services that go beyond the Teen ACTION curriculum are also important to serving youth. Finally, the primary challenge that program sites encountered during the 2011 implementation was building a relationship between the local schools and Teen ACTION; most program sites relied heavily on that key partnership. We describe other challenges to service provision in later chapters.

A. Needs of Areas Served

Teen ACTION meets an important need. Teens living in the communities where Teen ACTION is located face many risks. Both staff and participants in Teen ACTION described serious challenges facing their communities. Alcohol and drugs, peer pressure for risky behaviors, teen pregnancy and STIs, and violence and gangs were overwhelmingly the greatest concerns affecting the communities. Participants noted that peer pressure and the stress of their social lives often led participants to engage in risky behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use and sexual behaviors.

For example, at Mission Society, participants described a community environment surrounded by risky behaviors. Many youth noted that it was safer to be in the Mission Society "than on the street because of gun violence." One youth described a family member who was shot at random, while outside on the street.

The participants at St. Nick's expressed a particular concern about racial profiling and stereotypes. Participants described their perception that when they left the neighborhood, they were judged negatively based on their skin color. However, they also felt when they were in their neighborhood that they were judged for "speaking more intellectually". They expressed a range of concerns among youth in their neighborhood, including sexual health, suicide, and homelessness.

The concerns of BronxWorks, Child Center, Hope Academy, and El Puente were more varied across staff and participants, but reflected similar concerns.

A noted exception to this pattern was expressed by the participants at SCO. They did not believe that sexual health was a major concern for the participants in their high school. In fact, most SCO participants said that they did not see many risky behaviors in their high school and they expressed the belief that many of the issues identified by other program sites were not 'real concerns' for them. The participants at SCO were most concerned about their future employment

and college acceptance. Teen ACTION staff at SCO, however, did view most risky behaviors and peer pressure as a concern at SCO and some participants expressed interest in learning more about how to prevent risky behaviors during one-on-one interviews.

Table 4 in Appendix A identifies the main concerns facing the target populations by organization site.

B. Initial Program Implementation

1. The organizational history affected initial implementation

The organizational history of the program affected the initial implementation of Teen ACTION. All of the study site providers had their own programs that pre-dated Teen ACTION- many of which aligned with Teen ACTION objectives- supporting their capacity to implement Teen ACTION. Independent of Teen ACTION, five of the organizations provide services to youths in the 6th grade and younger and six organizations provide services to 7th-10th graders. All of the program sites serve youth in the 11th grade and older, typically providing other developmental programs for the youth after school. Five of the organizations offer additional services for families and for the elderly. The availability of these other services at the sites provided a base for Teen ACTION staff in terms of resources, including implementation experience and referrals. Table 5 in Appendix A describes the target populations that each program site aims to serve beyond their Teen ACTION program.

Exhibit 1 below provides additional background information on the seven study sites.

Exhibit 1: Background Information Teen ACTION sites

BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy (BronxWorks) is a community based organization providing Teen ACTION services to high school students at Validus Prep Academy in the Bronx. BronxWorks serves Teen ACTION participants inside the Validus school, allowing the participants to have access to the program director throughout the day. A health expert is located in the BronxWorks building, where the youth can go to ask questions and receive sexual protection.

The Child Center of NY- MS 72 (Child Center) is a mental health agency with locations throughout Queens and Brooklyn that provides mental health services within their building. Child Center provides the Teen ACTION services in both a middle school and high school. Here, Teen ACTION is referred to as TIPP: Teen Impact Prevention Program. Child Center is also able to serve 11th and 12th grade students as a part of TIPP through a 21st Century grant. Prior to Teen ACTION, Child Center did not have a program solely for high school students.

Children's Aid Society – Hope Academy (Hope Academy) is an adolescent center whose mission is to develop participants' skills and motivation so that they ultimately go to college. Hope Academy serves high school students at their site location, as well as older students through their Keystone program. Here, Teen ACTION participants engage in many of the other programs offered through Hope Academy throughout the week. They can connect the services to Teen ACTION mission and service hours.

El Puente is an established community based organization that has provided services to teens in Bushwick for about 20 years. Many of the participants and participants' family members were affiliated with El Puente long before enrollment in Teen ACTION. El Puente serves middle and high school students at their site location, and participants refer to Teen ACTION simply as El Puente. Most youth remain active in El Puente when Teen ACTION ends after the 10th grade.

NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse (Mission Society) is an established community based organization that has served Harlem for 40 years. Many grandparents, parents, and siblings of the Mission Society participants engaged with the center in their youth. As an agency, Mission Society has a tradition of including leadership development in all of their programs. More recently they began embedding academic achievement into all of their programs, and are using Teen ACTION as a model to incorporate service components. Mission Society serves high school and middle school students at their site location.

SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School (SCO) is a service provider to the Sunset Park community and provides Teen ACTION to Sunset Park High School 10th graders. Teen ACTION is a segment in the school's ladder of leadership, in which students are offered a transition to high school program in the 9th grade, Teen ACTION in the 10th grade, and a transition to adulthood program in the 11th and 12th grades. SCO is an umbrella organization, and the sub organization that specifically provides the Teen ACTION services is the Center for Family Life (CFL).

St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV (St. Nick's) is a community based organization in Brooklyn that has served the surrounding community for the last 10-15 years. St. Nick's provides the Teen ACTION services to the students of a local, public high school. Their program is based on the motto "I'm in Teen ACTION; you're in Teen ACTION; we're a family." Participants are invited to engage in all youth and education activities provided by St. Nick's.

2. The organizations' larger mission affected the implementation of Teen ACTION

The larger mission of each grantee organization also affected how Teen ACTION was implemented and the range of services available to Teen ACTION participants. The comprehensive services provided in the organizations allow the Teen ACTION participants to engage in a range of activities that support their overall development. Of the seven service providers in our study, three had pre-existing tutoring or academic assistance programs, three had pre-existing leadership programs, three had pre-existing arts programs, and two had pre-existing summer employment programs. Next we describe how the mission of each organization affects the services that Teen ACTION participants receive.

Organizational Missions of Study Sites	
Hope Academy	The mission of Hope Academy at Children's Aid is to 'get kids to college.' Many of their programs provide opportunities for participants to develop marketable skills for college acceptance and future employment. The organization offers a menu of programs for participants to choose from each day. They have a leadership program through Madison Square Garden where youth gain the skills to develop a 10 second advertisement clip, which is ultimately aired on TV. They provide summer employment opportunities with employers such Chase, J.P. Morgan and Merrill Lynch for participants to develop professional skills.

	Youth may also engage in the Excel program for scholarship, which offers tutoring and facilitator training. They have the option of taking poetry classes and Street Law, a program familiarizing participants with the justice program, and Financial Literacy and Peer Leadership programs. The programs help youth explore a range of employment options, while keeping youth on track for college.
BronxWorks	BronxWorks provides support services to all members of the community, including youth, families, and the elderly. For children and youth, services include Early Childhood Learning Centers, after-school and summer programs for youth and teens, and GED training and testing. BronxWorks serves families through foster care prevention, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), and aquatics at the Community Center swimming pool. Elderly services include housing assistance, abuse assistance, and a mental health program. BronxWorks further supports specific subsets of the targeted population through programs providing assistance with immigration services, eviction prevention, homeless services, chronic illness support, workforce development and benefits assistance.
Child Center	Child Center is a health agency that offers physical and mental health services to all community members. The site affiliated with Teen ACTION is a mental health clinic, with most of the building reserved for those services. Youth are served through their early child education, youth development, and child abuse prevention programs. Child Center additionally provides services for individual and family counseling. The programs are developed to promote emotional wellness.
El Puente	The mission of El Puente is enhancing the holistic well-being of youth. This goal is met through academic support, comprehensive arts enrichment, leadership development, mentorship, and service opportunities revolving around civic enrichment and engagement. El Puente has an academic support program which includes homework help, SAT and college preparation, and high school and college admissions support. Their comprehensive arts program includes dance, theatre, visual arts, spoken word, and photography. Youth have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through public speaking and political classes. The organization has a mentoring program that pairs youth with community adults.
Mission Society	The Mission Society's initiatives are focused on the principle of mission. The organization aims to serve the community and its programs seek to instill a sense of civic engagement within youth. The organization offers 23 programs, including Out of School Time which runs for 3 hours a day after school and during breaks. These youth programs offer a holistic approach to after school engagement, including homework help, martial arts, and dance. Mission Society serves older members of the community as well. Learning to Work is offered to individuals enrolled in one of NYC's transfer high schools for over-aged and under-credited students; Mission Society provides the participants support by holding them accountable for attending classes, offering counseling, tutoring, and college preparation and working with the participants to obtain job skills and work experience. Other programs include pregnancy prevention, family services, foster care, restorative justice, and an anti-gun violence program, which is part of the NYC Young Men's Cure Violence initiative.
SCO	SCO offers an array of support programs to all community members of Sunset Park and the students of Sunset Park High School. The organization serves older teens through the DYCD-funded In School Youth, which is a 2-year transition to adulthood program and follows youth a year after high school graduation. They serve younger teens through DYCD's Out of School Time, assisting them in the transition to high school. SCO serves family and elder populations through programs such as Medicaid, foster care, worker

	cooperatives, family counseling, and a community service program which includes a food pantry for emergency food needs. Beacon programs are also offered through SCO.
St. Nick's	The St. Nick's organization provides support to diverse members of the community. Outside of Teen ACTION, their programs provide programs for elementary and middle school students, families, and the elderly. St. Nick's has the Summer Youth Employment Program, during which youth work in day camps, television broadcast, law firms, etc. Other programs include Learning to Work, Beacon programs, Out of School Time, housing programs, and elderly programs.

The unique missions and services of the sites described above shape the implementation of the Teen ACTION programs. While all sites are required to follow the same curriculum and program hour requirements, Teen ACTION is very much shaped by the community which the program serves. The resources of the CBO's and their connection to the communities in turn influence the types of resources, service activities, and referrals readily available for Teen ACTION participants. For example, the sites with summer employment programs easily connect Teen ACTION participants to summer internships; sites with health experts aptly emphasize the importance of health by providing sexual protection options or connecting participants to mental health resources; sites with tutoring and college preparation services infuse homework help into their programs; and sites that serve families are able to address home issues by connecting and referring participant families to needed social supports.

Table 5 in Appendix A provides a brief overview of the pre-existing services by grantee.

3. Program sites faced several challenges to initial implementation

The study sites mentioned key features of the organizations that were challenges to the initial implementation and operations of the program. These include the physical space in which the program is provided; the relationship between the grantee organization and the school (if Teen ACTION is affiliated as a school-based program); and the connection of the grantee organization to the surrounding community.

The space devoted to Teen ACTION staff and participants affected implementation. BronxWorks, Child Center, SCO, and St. Nicks' have offices or rooms in their target high schools to hold meetings and Teen ACTION activities. This allows staff increased access to schools' teachers, administrators, and students. The more closely Teen ACTION staff worked with the school staff, the more administrators and teachers welcomed Teen ACTION staff into their classrooms to promote the program. Teen ACTION staff described easier recruitment of participants when they could see Teen ACTION participants throughout the day. Staff also noted that increased access helps them earn insight about issues in the school that affect their participants and it gives them more access to guidance counselors who also provide support to Teen ACTION participants.

As an example of the importance of a close relationship with the target school, one site described developing a "symbiotic relationship" with the school and the effects on program

operations. Initially, the site did not have access to the school or students during the school day. Over time, however, the principals in the target schools came to see the value of Teen ACTION and gave them access to the school during the day. The principals specifically wanted help with the 'hard-headed kids' in Teen ACTION, which were the kids who attended Teen ACTION but skipped school frequently. The Teen ACTION staff used their access to the school to talk with these students during the school day. Teen ACTION staff used program participation as an incentive, by creating rules that participants could only attend Teen ACTION if they attend their school classes. Teen ACTION staff also provided youth with help on their homework. Due to the success of program staff influencing participants to improve their school performance, the high school has given the Teen ACTION program more support and greater resources in the school.

The CBOs presence in the community affected how easily they were able to implement the Teen ACTION program. Those CBOs who did not work within schools, such as El Puente and Mission Society, did not find it challenging to provide services outside the schools because of the length of time they had been operating in their communities. El Puente has provided services in their community for about 20 years and the Mission Society for 40 years. Because they are such well-established community organizations, they had sufficient space, resources, and recruitment pathways.

Chapter IV: Recruiting and Enrolling Participants

Chapter IV focuses on the program sites' efforts to recruit Teen ACTION participants. The data suggest that program sites used a range of effective recruitment methods and, for the most part, met their recruitment targets. The recruitment methods were often determined by whether the Teen ACTION program was located in a school or a CBO; however, positive word-of-mouth was cited as the most effective recruitment tool for both school-based and CBO-based sites. We describe the range of reasons that participants enroll in Teen ACTION. Participants typically did not enroll initially because of the Teen ACTION curriculum, though as described in later chapters, they found the program curriculum engaging once they did join. Participants cited the social benefits of having a safe place to spend time with friends as a major draw of the program. Finally, we describe some of the key challenges that the program sites face in keeping participants enrolled, which primarily include conflicting after school programs in some locations.

A. Recruiting the Target Population

Recruitment and enrollment of eligible participants into the Teen ACTION program differs by site, depending on a range of characteristics. It varies based on the target population (middle or high school), the location, whether the provider is school-based or CBO-based, and the expected number of participants to be enrolled in the program. Exhibit 2 below provides an overview of the target populations for the seven program sites in the study.

Exhibit 2: Specific Characteristics and Requirements of the Targeted Teen ACTION Participants by Site

Teen ACTION Provider	Age Target of Participants	Other Characteristics and Requirements of Target Participants
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	9th-10th grade	
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	7th-8th grade	
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	9th-10th grade	
El Puente	7th-10th grade	
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	8th-10th grade	
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	10th grade	Participants must be enrolled at the local Sunset Park High School
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV	7-10th grade	Participants are typically in the 10th grade

The providers serve youth who either reside in their community or who attend school in their community. (In NYC, some students attend high school in communities where they do not

reside) For example, SCO serves 10th graders attending Sunset Park High School, which includes students who reside in Sunset Park as well as students who live in locations outside of Sunset Park that they described as "harder to reach" areas of the city. Similarly, BronxWorks, Child Center, and St. Nick's serve students from their affiliated high schools and middle school; however, some of the participants at these providers noted that they resided in different neighborhoods and boroughs throughout NYC. El Puente and Mission Society serve youth who primarily reside in their communities of Bushwick and Harlem, respectively. Hope Academy serves students in their broader community; however, there was not much consistency among where teens lived or attended schools.

B. Timing of Recruitment and Enrollment

Teen ACTION recruitment typically begins in September at the start of the school year; however, programs continuously recruit participants until they meet enrollment goals. Programs sometimes recruit at different points in the year based on the students' school schedule. For example, the El Puente program does an initial recruitment drive that begins in late summer, prior to the beginning of school. They then do a second intensive recruitment effort in January when the school semester ends and students have more time.

The timing of recruitment depends on whether the Teen ACTION provider is school-based. The El Puente example demonstrates that programs that are based in CBOs will begin enrollment prior to the school year, sometimes beginning in July and August. Because these providers do not have a formal presence in the schools, they will recruit youth before youth become engaged in other school extracurricular activities.

A CBOs ability to leverage their other programs is critical for them to meet their enrollment goals. CBO-based Teen ACTION providers also recruit youth in the summer in concert with the other programs they operate. For example, the Children's Aid Society, which operates the Hope Academy in Harlem, recruits participants in the summer through their summer job program.

C. Outreach Methods

Providers and participants reported that the most effective recruitment tool was positive word-of-mouth. Teen ACTION participants' positive experiences in the program led to a large influx of fellow students into the program. In fact, many participants reported that they enrolled because they wanted to spend time with their friends or siblings in the program.

Teen ACTION providers, particularly those based in CBOs, use a wide range of more formal methods to recruit students. CBO-based programs often conduct recruitment open houses, in which the program staff give presentations that highlight the benefits of enrolling in Teen ACTION. As of November, the Hope Academy, which is based at the Children's Aid Society, had conducted two recruitment open houses in the 2013-2014 school year. Similarly, El Puente, another CBO-based program, had conducted several open houses for community outreach. In contrast, the providers located in schools rarely mentioned using this recruitment approach. Typically public schools could rely on their location to come in contact with potential applicants.

CBO-based and school-based programs reported using flyers and posters as effective recruitment techniques. In addition, some programs, such as the Child Center, used public address (PA) announcements in schools to recruit. CBO-based programs handed out flyers and hung posters in their neighborhoods, local stores, and community centers.

Both CBO-based and school-based programs recruited during school events. CBO-based programs would acquire the cooperation of school administrative staff to participate in these events. Parent-teacher nights were used to inform parents of the program so they could, in turn, encourage their children to join. Teen ACTION staff and participants at BronxWorks presented at the town hall meetings at the associated high school, Validus Prep Academy, to inform students about Teen ACTION and encourage enrollment.

None of the study sites used paid advertising or other public service announcements to recruit for the program. The study sites were largely able to meet their target enrollment goals using the methods described above.

D. Referrals for Recruitment

Programs typically developed relationships with local schools to recruit students, with similar methods used if the program is located in a school or at the CBO itself. For example, St. Nick's, located at the Frederick Douglass Academy, meets every year with their school partners to introduce themselves to the teachers and describe the Teen ACTION program to them. As a result of this effort, teachers let the staff give presentations about Teen ACTION in their classrooms; the teachers give students extra credit for attending the Teen ACTION program, providing an incentive for students; and St. Nick's staff are given access to the schools to hand out flyers in the hallways. Similarly, El Puente, located off school grounds, works with the local high school to recruit students. Program staff meet with guidance counselors and gives homeroom presentations about the program.

The programs also worked with other unique partners to facilitate recruitment. In the past, one program site worked with local homeless and family transition shelters to recruit students, though this partnership dissipated in recent years. Some of the sites also use the other programs they operate to recruit for Teen ACTION, as well as to supplement the Teen ACTION curriculum (which is described in greater detail in the next chapter). Some participants are initially recruited for the other programs within a CBO and ultimately connected and enroll in Teen ACTION, just as the sites often connect Teen ACTION participants to other programs within the CBO. This fluidity of service provision across the CBO creates a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the targeted youths.

The methods providers use to recruit students appear to be successful, as most programs meet their enrollment goals.

E. Reasons Participants Enroll in Teen ACTION

Motivations for Teen ACTION enrollment varied by participant, with motivations overlapping across program sites. Some participants enroll in the program because they want to engage in an after school activity and hang out with friends; some enroll because they feel safer in Teen ACTION than on the streets; some enroll because they want a substantive commitment on their resume for college applications; and some enroll because their parents sign them up at school events.

Participants enroll in Teen ACTION "for something to do." Several participants report they enroll because they want to engage in after-school activities. And for some of the served neighborhoods, Teen ACTION is one of the few programs that fills the need for afterschool programs. The lack of safe and free afterschool activities is particularly true for the younger students. Many participants are drawn to Teen ACTION by the safe, warm, and friendly environment. As one student at El Puente noted, she started coming to the program because she didn't, "have anything else to do so I'd prefer to be here."

Participants enroll in the program for social connection. Other participants enjoy engaging in a program with their friends and participating in a variety of activities. As one student from the Child Center of New York reports, "I was told just to come to help out and then I stayed because I enjoyed the program. And I didn't think I was going to have fun and make new friends."

Many participants view attendance in Teen ACTION as critical to their future college and professional careers. Older participants are attracted to help with college applications and resumes that many of the programs offer, though this is not a core component of the Teen ACTION curriculum. In addition, some are able to obtain employment either directly or indirectly by attending Teen ACTION. This is a particular draw for the older students. For example, one student at BronxWorks notes that he "decided to stay in Teen ACTION because it was a fun learning experience and good for academics because he is getting a health credit." A number of Teen ACTION providers also offer trips to universities to cultivate a desire and understanding of the importance of college early in high school and connect youth with college prep help when they are older, as described in the next chapter.

Some participants enroll for the incentive payments. Teen ACTION providers typically offer some incentives for participants, which can bolster enrollment. We describe the use of incentives in more detail in subsection 1.

The youths' initial motivations for enrolling in Teen ACTION are not always the same factors that contribute to their continued engagement in the program. Most participants cite the connection with staff, social and community education, and opportunity for personal growth as the components and outcomes of the project that are most meaningful to them. These aspects are discussed in greater length in the following chapters of the report. Participants did not report enrolling because of the core content of Teen ACTION, particularly the focus on SRH. In fact, some students initially had reservations about this focus of the program.

F. The Enrollment Process

Once students express an interest in attending Teen ACTION, they can enroll. Providers reported that they rarely turn a student away, unless the program is at capacity and does not have the flexibility to serve more participants. Prior to enrollment, some providers reported that they were careful to describe the requirements of the program (and in particular, the hour requirements). However, in other program sites, participants were unsure of the hour requirements for Teen ACTION; staff at these sites noted that they did not stress the requirements as the youth always surpassed the allotted hours.

Enrollment itself is a fairly straightforward process that does not differ much across sites. Typically, interested students will fill out a program application, a standard form developed by DYCD, which collects background information about the student. Staff reported that the form's length deters some students from completing the application, leaving some data gaps for programs. Program staff input the application information into the DYCD database to help track participants during the year. In addition, a parent or guardian must sign a form to allow the student to enroll in the program. Some programs, especially the CBO-based programs, have additional application materials required by the provider.

The Child Center of New York also requires that a parent or guardian come in for a program orientation before enrolling students. Even though most programs do not require that parents attend an orientation, they all strive to make parents aware of the program expectations. The program is time-intensive, requiring several days a week and some weekends, and thus it is important for parents to understand the commitment.

G. Success in Meeting Enrollment Goals

Enrollment goals, which are based on program capacity and organizational history in serving participants, typically range between 50 and 75 participants during the program year. Programs are typically allowed to overenroll if there is enough funding. For example, one of the visited program sites is slotted to have 54 students enroll this program year, but has enrolled four additional students. As of January 15, 2014, 12 of the program sites surpassed their 2013-2014 enrollment goals, two sites reached their enrollment goal, one site was at 99 percent enrollment, and two program sites were below 50 percent enrollment.

On average, programs met 101 percent of their enrollment goal, enrolling nine more participants than their target. This suggests that providers use effective outreach and recruitment techniques, as described above.

A second goal for the providers is to meet a Rate of Participation (RoP) of 70 percent throughout the year. This means that 70 percent of their enrolled participants receive 150 hours of Teen ACTION activities, the full participation in the program as described in the curriculum. At the end of the school year, providers will determine whether they met this goal, although many have as of January.

A CBO-based program site that did not met the enrollment goal by January 15, 2014 discussed difficulty recruiting, highlighting the disadvantage CBO-based programs can experience during recruitment as they cannot directly recruit youth through the schools.

H. Recruitment Challenges

Though programs were typically successful in meeting recruitment goals, program staff identified nine challenges to recruitment, which we describe in this section

1. Changing target populations

Some providers face challenges to recruitment when their target population changes. One provider changed their affiliated high school to a more disadvantaged high school for the 2012-2013 school year, creating a challenge as the students were unfamiliar with Teen ACTION. However, the staff felt they overcame this issue through extensive outreach in the school.

Another program also experienced recruitment challenges after moving to a different target location. Staff perceive the youth in the new high school as less motivated to engage in Teen ACTION. For example, students often do not bring back their applications for enrollment. This program also changed the way the program recruited outside of the school. In previous years, they partnered with area shelters for referrals to Teen ACTION, but this year phased out programming at the shelters and lost those youth. To address recruitment challenges, the program staff hope to expand their knowledge of the new high school's programs. They have also changed the Teen ACTION lessons to focus on one theme per cycle and to have more structure, as a way to spark greater engagement.

2. The importance of identifying motivated youth

Mission Society reported experiencing challenges recruiting participants who remained engaged for the first year of the program. Staff members were successful meeting recruitment goals, but did not feel they had reached motivated participants. They began targeting youth who participate in other activities, such as youth active in counsel and student government, and they learned that serving participants who demonstrate a desire for action and engagement result in committed and motivated Teen ACTION participants. Mission Society now connects with youth programs needing additional support around the community as a part of their recruitment process. Teen ACTION brings the members of these groups together to provide a service and leadership development component to the pre-existing group activities. The different groups include the NYPD Explorer Clubs, the Bomb, which is a group of youth who are leadership driven, active, and organized, and the Impact group, which is a group of artists and actors who were nominated for an Oscar and produced the music for the movie August Rush.

3. After school programs sometimes conflicted with Teen ACTION.

Some of the communities served by Teen ACTION tend to have available other after-school programs for the middle and especially high school students. Some after school programs conflict with Teen ACTION schedules, preventing potential participants from engaging in Teen ACTON. The high school served by BronxWorks has an extensive, popular sports program. During basketball season, many of the male, Teen ACTION participants are absent from the offered Teen ACTION lessons and activities. Similarly, an El Puente participant mentioned coming to Teen ACTION less regularly in the fall during volleyball season, which is an after-school sport offered through her school.

Some of the served communities offer Beacon and Cornerstone programs, which fulfill similar needs as Teen ACTION. These programs are seen as substitutes for each other, and thus participants may only count in the enrollment numbers for one of those programs. The communities served by Child Center, St. Nick's and SCO offer Beacon and/or Cornerstone programs, and thus limit the number of participants that can actively engage and enroll in Teen ACTION.

On the other hand, the community served by Child Center experienced an increase in the availability of after-school programs offered to their target population, which Teen ACTION staff and participants view as primarily beneficial. When Child Center began, Teen ACTION was the only after-school activity offered to the community's high school students. After the school administration changed, the school increased the number of after-school programs. These programs compete with Teen ACTION's scheduling, but also offer the students increased support and involvement. One participant mentioned that even with the increase in after-school activities, she appreciates that Teen ACTION is a free program because she is unable to participate in after-school activities that require fees. This emphasizes the importance of Teen ACTION in providing after school activity and encouraging the social, educational, and community engagement of participants in neighborhoods with limited after-school activities and resources for youth.

4. Participants and their parents had some initial skepticism about the program

Some sites noted that there has been a lot of initial skepticism about their programs on the part of the parents and students which they have had to work strenuously to overcome. Many students are generally used to going home after school and some are initially wary about having to commit 150 hours to something that they know little about. Some parents do not want students walking home after dark or learning about SRH, preventing some students from participating in Teen ACTION and sometimes reducing the participation rate in the winter when it gets dark earlier. Staff members have attempted to allay these fears by highlighting the benefits of their programs and of the other programs that they offer, especially if it is a CBO-based program. Some sites have reduced the gap between parental concern and Teen ACTION by presenting Teen ACTION at parent-teacher nights and by inviting parents to orientations, service opportunities, and presentations or plays presented by the Teen ACTION participants. The engagements are generally critical in overcoming these issues, as is the positive word-of-mouth.

5. Drop outs were not a major issue for the program

Teen ACTION staff did not consider drop-outs to be a major challenge to the program. Teen ACTION has a unique attendance policy; while there are attendance expectations for participants, there are not programmatic consequences for participants who attend sporadically. This approach is possible for two reasons. One, many participants' level of participation far exceeds the programs' expectations, as we describe in more detail in the next chapter. Two, staff recognize that the participants often have multiple pressures in their lives and that the Teen ACTION is not always their top concern. All visited programs wholeheartedly welcome participants back to the program, even after long absences.

Despite the programs' accommodation of participants' somewhat unpredictable lives, some programs were more affected by drop-outs. Some providers note that the male participants were less likely to come during the sports season. However, these participants will typically explain to program staff why their attendance is less regular and will attempt to rejoin the program in the off-season.

Some participants dropped out because of poor grades. Most of the interviewed participants believe that the program has a positive impact on their grades; however, sometimes the time commitment of the program is viewed by their parents as a cause of failing or declining grades. In these cases, parents sometimes remove participants from the program. Staff from one program site noted that, "A lot of parents signed kids up because they thought the program was focused on teaching and tutoring," and many lost interest once they realized that Teen ACTION had a "community-based focus."

The focus on SRH was cited as a potential cause of dropping out of the program, though not a common reason. Some participants and their parents, particularly the younger participants, believe SRH is not an appropriate topic for discussion.

Program staff also noted that some participants drop out when they do not fully connect with the Teen ACTION program, staff, and participants and choose to spend their extracurricular time elsewhere. Staff described that these participants "fell back into their old way," or disengaged from both Teen ACTION and the commitment to focus on reducing risky behaviors and serving community. Again, this is not viewed as a common reason for dropping out.

Overall, program staff do not view drop-outs as a major challenge to the program. This suggests that the activities are engaging and the program staff provide an important resource for the participants.

6. Giving participants ownership of the program was important

Youth-led decision-making is one of the core elements of the Teen Action model. Both staff and participants indicate that this integrated youth determination of topics and projects developed

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leadership and self-confidence among the participants and foster program engagement. Program sites found that giving participants more ownership of the program was the key to keeping them engaged. Three of the programs experienced some challenges with keeping participants engaged in the program during the first year of implementation. All three noted that when they increased participants' role in determining service activities and structured learning topics, participants became more motivated. Across the study sites, participants reported that they were involved in the program topics and structure, and they felt that created a more welcoming and interesting program

7. Space for service delivery was sometimes limited

During implementation, one provider did not have a space at a serviced school to develop the Teen ACTION curriculum and engage with youth during the day. However, since the program has proven a beneficial resource to that school, the relationship between the school administration and Teen ACTION has changed and the school has provided more space in the school to the Teen ACTION program. Initially, Teen ACTION was seen as a babysitting service by school staff, but having events in the school and connecting with the typically less-motivated participants gained the program recognition within the school staff. The relationship with the school has come a long way since implementation. Teachers invite program staff into the classroom to talk about lessons covered each month and in general the program is more visible in the school. Instead of Teen ACTION staff imploring the administration to allow the program to engage the school through an event or presentation, now the school staff come to Teen ACTION to request services and workshops. The program staff are now at the school during the day and assists in motivating the Teen ACTION participants during school hours.

8. Keeping older participants in the program could enhance Teen ACTION

Several programs noted the challenges that came with ending the program after 10th grade. And most program staff see this as a weakness of the current program structure. Four sites use outside funding to serve 11th and 12th grade participants as an extension of Teen ACTION. Hope Academy extends Teen ACTION to older youths through the Keystone program; Keystone and Teen ACTION participants combine activities and lessons. This structure allows the Teen ACTION participants to engage with the older Keystone participants in leadership and development activities. August Martin, the high school affiliated with Child Center, received a grant through 21st Century so that the Teen ACTION program can serve 11th and 12th grade. El Puente continues engagement with Teen ACTION participants past 10th grade; the structure of the organization allows for the continued development of the participants so that they remain engaged, active, and on track to college. For SCO, Teen ACTION is part of a leadership development ladder, providing transition to high school programs in 9th grade, Teen ACTION in 10th grade, and transition to adulthood in 11th and 12th grades.

Chapter V: Key Services Offered to Participants

In this chapter we describe the fidelity to the services program sites provide. We describe the services that are part of the Teen ACTION curriculum, as well as the additional services provided in the sites. We describe the variation across sites in the structure of the program. Overall, our data revealed that program sites reported high fidelity to the Teen ACTION logic model and curriculum, though each site had unique foci. The unique foci reflect the other programs the sites run, as well as the organizational history.

A. Fidelity to Teen ACTION Model

All program sites reported that they use the Teen ACTION curriculum and logic model as the cornerstone of their program design. As described in Chapter III, the Teen ACTION program integrates structured learning, service learning activities, and reflection periods to support its key objectives. Program staff reported that the content of the program supported the objectives of youth empowerment, leadership, academic enrichment, connection to communities, and improving participants' ability to make thoughtful decisions about risky behaviors. The program educates participants on topics that support these objectives, including poverty and hunger in their community, self-image, healthy minds and bodies, and healthy relationships. According to program staff, the focus on SRH went beyond what is provided in school by giving participants the insight and knowledge they will need to make SRH decisions that are best for them.

The structure of the Teen ACTION program also aims to support its objectives. Program staff asserted that the focus on participant-led activities and service projects increase participants' engagement and leadership skills. The service projects provide the youth with a presence in and connection to their community, while also empowering them. The team work required in the program helps participants develop their decision making skills and helps them learn how decisions lead to successful (or less successful) outcomes.

B. Additional Foci in Each Site

Sites incorporated subject matter and activities beyond the core curriculum that they believe serve their youth well. In each program site, staff discussed key topics, beyond those identified in the core curriculum, which they emphasize in their program. Several providers mentioned their specific focus on reducing high school drop-out (BronxWorks, Hope Academy, Child Center, and Mission Society). These providers noted that academic achievement is correlated to a range of short- and long-term, positive outcomes. Academic achievement and success open the doors for participants by developing both knowledge and self-confidence among the youth, so that they are empowered to make informed decisions about their future and strive for their highest potential. .

Staff at St. Nick's focus on educating youth to be peer educators in helping other students avoid risky behaviors and promote healthy lifestyles. They witness youth entering the program with

overconfidence in their knowledge about risky behaviors. However, upon learning the new information, they see participants becoming peer educators to their friends.

Staff at Child Center and Mission Society both mentioned their belief that risky behaviors often reflect deeper underlying issues. Staff noted that if youth have sex at a young age, the actions may reflect an earlier or ongoing trauma. They emphasize the importance of youth reflecting on their own thought process in decision-making to reduce impulsive decisions.

The Teen ACTION program at SCO is structured somewhat differently from the other program sites visited. The program serves only 10th graders and is one rung on a ladder of leadership development programs that are offered at Sunset Park High School. The logic model for these programs focuses on leadership development. They focus on providing participants with opportunities to think critically through purposeful activities.

C. Structure of Services

Though all Teen ACTION participants are required to complete 50 hours of structured learning, 50 hours of service activities, and some reflection hours, providers structure service delivery differently at each site. In this section, we describe how each site structures service delivery.

Table 6 in Appendix A outlines the various services provided across the seven sites.

1. Study sites varied in the structure of services

In this subsection, we describe the varied ways program sites approach structuring the service delivery in Teen ACTION. Program sites structure the program to address the needs of the participants. They often develop flexible programming to allow participants to engage in other after school activities, yet also be part of Teen ACTION. Another key finding is that program sites offer much more programming time than the 150 hours per year that is required by Teen ACTION. This is a response to both demands from the participants, as well as a way to offer flexible programming.

Structure of Services Across Teen ACTION Study Sites	
Hope Academy	The Teen ACTION program at Hope Academy is set up like a menu, offering varied activities and educational focuses throughout the week. Participants choose the individual activities they attend throughout the week; some youth come to Hope Academy every weekday, while others come less regularly. The participants are not required to come to specific programming, and their hours may vary depending on their interests. On Mondays, Hope Academy offers tutoring and college and scholarship preparation assistance through the Excel program; on Tuesdays the site offers Peer Education and peer facilitation skills training; on Wednesdays the site offers programming focusing on financial literacy; on Thursdays the site offers leadership development and reviews the Teen ACTION curriculum; and on Fridays the site offers SRH lessons and reflection activities, as the participants cook a meal and eat a 'family dinner' together. The Teen ACTION curriculum runs in six six-week cycles. During each cycle, participants brainstorm, plan, and implement a service project relating to the cycle's theme. The participants typically work on one service project per cycle. While the curriculum review and SHR lessons on Thursdays and Fridays and the service project implementation are the only Teen ACTION-specific activities

	offered throughout the week, the Teen ACTION participants are encouraged to engage in all educational and developmental activities throughout the week.
BronxWorks	BronxWorks offers Teen ACTION activities Monday to Friday. Structured learning and planning for service projects occurs Monday to Thursday, 2:50pm – 5:30pm, and reflection occurs on Friday during the school day at advisory meetings. Service activities take place on most weekends for two or four hours. Each day has a different focus: Monday is leadership development, Tuesday and Thursday are sexual health, and Wednesday is career building. Some weeks, participants may go to workshops on SRH or resume building, or they might participate in college preparation programs. Other activities are offered, such as Zumba on Wednesdays, to encourage youth to remain active. Participants in the focus groups said they typically attend Teen ACTION activities three days a week. All of these offered activities are Teen ACTION-specific.
Child Center	The Teen ACTION program intensity at the Child Center differs between the high school and middle school. Teen ACTION staff engage with the high school participants for structured learning, service projects, and reflection three days a week - Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday- for 2.5 hours a day. The participants also come to the staff members' offices located in the school throughout the school day. The program covers the Teen ACTION curriculum with an added focus on mental health. Topics include homelessness, bullying, sexual harassment, sexual health, STD's, and college readiness. On Mondays, the program staff present new material from the Teen ACTION curriculum. Participants are encouraged to engage in conversation and share their perspectives. A reflection period occurs at the end of the lesson. On Wednesdays the program invites other CBOs to deliver additional information on relevant topics. And on Thursdays the participants plan or implement service events and activities. These activities are exclusive to Teen ACTION participants and the 11th and 12th graders engaging in the program through the site's 21st Century grant.

The middle school participants at Child Center engage in Teen ACTION activities on Friday for 2.5 hours. The middle school program mirrors the same structure as the high school program, but is condensed to one day a week. Participants go on occasional trips and additional service activities on the weekends. The participants receive school credit for Teen ACTION as an elective if they complete a certain number of hours, but the participants noted that they typically go over the program hour requirements. These activities are Teen ACTION specific. |
| **El Puente** | El Puente offers Teen ACTION activities and services Monday through Friday. While the program meets every day, not every participant attends every day. El Puente requires that youth come to El Puente at least 5 hours a week for one hour of leadership development, one hour of academic development, and three hours of other activities. The Teen ACTION group meets twice a week for an hour and a half for structured activities. All other activities El Puente offers are available to the Teen ACTION participants to satisfy the holistic development of the youth in the program. The staff encourage participants to come at least two or three days per week and will typically call participants' parents if the participants miss several days. |
| **Mission Society** | At Mission Society participants are encouraged to complete two hours of structured learning, one hour of reflection, and one hour of service each week. The participants meet with their groups throughout the week, which included activities and meetings that are not exclusive to Teen ACTION, and engage in the Teen ACTION learning and reflection on Fridays. The participant groups at Mission Society engage in community service as often as possible. The youth participated in service projects once a week, but as the program has |

	developed, the youth are choosing to plan larger and more impactful events throughout the community which require additional time to plan and implement the services.
SCO	SCO participants engage in both the Sunset Leaders Club (structured learning component) and Sunset Leaders Presents (service component) once a week. Both components are offered Tuesday through Thursday and participants have the option of coming one day for these two components or dividing their participation over two days. On each day, the community service component is offered from 3:30pm – 5:00pm and structured learning is offered from 5:00pm – 6:30pm. These activities, service projects and mentorship hours are all Teen ACTION specific. In addition, youth are asked to engage in three 'flex' hours with another after school program during the week; ideally, Teen ACTION participants should spend 6 hours in programming each week.
St. Nick's	Participants at St. Nick's meet on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for 2.5-3 hours. The first 30 minutes is devoted to Teen Talk, when the participants discuss their day. The Teen ACTION curriculum and academic enrichment is covered over the next 2 hours, followed by 30 minutes of reflection. Each of the program's five components - SRH, jobs and careers, college career and job expectation, advocating for jobs, and healthy minds healthy bodies - is covered over a month and a half to two months through the Teen ACTION curriculum. Typically, the first 4 weeks of a component is structured learning and the remainder of the time is devoted to service project development and implementation. When participants have a school day off, they have an action day, or a service day, with Teen ACTION. These activities are all Teen ACTION specific.

Across the 17 sites, some participants engage in Teen ACTION activities several days a week and complete the required hours halfway through the year; other participants attend Teen ACTION less frequently, engaging one day a week or less. As of January 30, 2014, seven of the program sites had average service learning hours per participant that exceeded 50 percent of the required service hours, one site had average service hours that reached 50 percent of the requirement, and nine sites had average service hours below 50 percent of requirements. This lower service hours at the halfway mark of the school year may be accounted for by the larger service projects that the sites build up to at the end of the year, focusing more of the service hours and activities towards the second half of the year when the youth have gained the knowledge and leadership skills to informingly serve their communities. For example, El Puente and St. Nick's both discussed large service projects which the programs focus on throughout the year in lessons and activity hours, as well as service planning hours, and fully implement by the end of the academic year. Service hour activities are discussed in detail later in this report.

2. Study sites leveraged other programs to support Teen ACTION objectives

Some program sites offer activities in conjunction with Teen ACTION to expand the services provided to participants. The Mission Society offers a wide range of after-schools programs, and the structure of Mission Society allows participants to engage in the other activities as well as Teen ACTION. The Sunset Park High School, where SCO is located, provides a wide-ranging network of

after school programs, including a tutoring program run by the school's teachers. These types of coordinated after school activities offer the teens additional resources.

Providers described how they leverage other services they provide to support the objectives of Teen ACTION. For example, at El Puente and Mission Society, youth create presentations and performances through activities such as dance, photography, theatre, and band that bring awareness to issues facing the community and that sometimes raise money to implement their service learning projects. Participants involved in the arts programs at El Puente report using those projects as a form of reflection. Hope Academy supports overlapping service activities. For example, they developed a recycling project related to their structured lessons and plan to use the money earned from the recycling efforts for the AIDS charity walk.

The majority of the Teen ACTION providers also support the participants academically. Staff encourage youth to attend tutoring hours and receive homework assistance. Three providers (Hope Academy, El Puente, and Mission Society) offer tutoring through their organizations. Three of the other sites (Child Center, SCO, St. Nick's) have program staff that assist with academic work and refer participants to additional tutoring if necessary. Three sites (Hope Academy, Mission Society, and St. Nick's) have referred participants to outside programs to develop their other academic interests, such as summer science programs.

Exhibit 3 below describes an example of how Teen ACTION participants may become involved in the Teen ACTION program and how the services and activities are intertwined.

Exhibit 3: Example of Flow of Participant into Teen ACTION Services

Recruitment: Participant is a 14 year-old high school Freshman girl. At the beginning of the school year, she sees a presentation for Teen ACTION by the local director of the program, which is a neighborhood CBO.
Orientation and Intake: The participant attends one of the workshops to learn about the program. She decides she wants to continue attending the program. She and her parents sign a form to participate in 150 hours of Teen ACTION services during the school year (with service learning, classroom and reflection activities provided). She is informed that she is expected to attend classes a minimum of three hours a week and to attend all activities.
Provision of Teen ACTION Services: After joining the Teen ACTION program, she begins attending classes at the provider every week. She attends the program daily and begins receiving, on average, ten hours a week of services. Only a few hours a week are devoted specifically to Teen ACTION services. She also receives assistance with her math, science, and reading classes from the Teen ACTION provider. She joins a women's club that meets weekly and discusses pertinent topics, such as how to prevent STI's, pregnancy, and how to establish long-term goals. She begins identifying college prep courses and activities she would like to participate in. She also participates in several service learning activities, such as an AIDS walk designed to raise money and awareness of the disease. And, she begins meeting with other Teen ACTION classmates every other weekend to clean up the local park and basketball courts.
How Activities are Related: Through the activities and services provided to the participant, she establishes longer-term goals and her school performance improves. Many of the classroom activities focus on preventing risky behaviors and connecting with one's community. The service

activities put the classroom activities into action. She engages in activities that aim to improve her community and to understand her outside environment. The reflection activities, such as the discussion in the women's group, provide links between the classroom learning and the service activities. Additionally, the other services provided by the Teen ACTION provider (tutoring, leadership, college prep) support her success as she continues through the program.

3. Sites used incentives to ensure participation

Providers reported using incentives in many different ways. Some programs provide small monetary incentives to students as a reward for completing certain Teen ACTION activities or at the end of the academic year as a token of appreciation for the student's time and commitment to the program. For example, in the SCO Family Services program, participants can receive up to $40 a month if they meet an allotted number of credit hours. In the New York Mission Society program, participants receive $150 for every six weeks of attendance and participation in program activities. Some use Teen ACTION funds for incentives, while others use funding from other programs to provide incentives.

Some programs do not advertise incentives to students until they demonstrate program commitment. Child Center of New York does not tell participants about incentives until after they complete Teen ACTION at the end of the academic year. Staff use this approach to minimize the expectation of receiving a reward for volunteering, but to also address the understanding that it "takes a lot of time so they want to give the students something so they have some money."

Other programs provide non-monetary incentives for completing particular program components. At St. Nick's program, participants receive an array of small incentives, such as t-shirts or gift cards, for completing particular classes. And as staff noted, "For every component of the program, there is a celebration." BronxWorks staff take youth to the movies after completing Saturday community service, an incentive that the participants described as a "win-win."

Table 7 in Appendix A outlines the mission of each organization and the other resources they provide to participants to achieve both their organization's mission and the Teen ACTION objectives.

D. Teen ACTION Program Components in Study Sites

In this section we describe the types of activities the study sites support within the key components (services activities, structured learning, and reflection activities) and important focus (risky behaviors and SRH) of the Teen ACTION program.

1. Key service activities across sites

The most common examples of service activities reported by the study sites included community presentations/performances, food assistance, charity walks, and community clean-up activities. All seven study sites did presentations/performances in the community to raise awareness and

sometimes to raise money for service project implementation, six of the sites reported collecting and distributing food to needy community members, five took part in charity walks, and five did community clean-ups. Sites also tend to hold service activities during holidays or other community events. In this section we provide detail about the most common examples of service activities reported by the seven study sites. Table 6 in Appendix A presents a summary of the services provided by site.

2. Details of service activities across sites

As youth-led decision-making is one of the core elements of Teen ACTION, the participants play a pivotal role in determining the service activities that each site engages in. Participants brainstorm and plan for service activities by researching local events on the internet and finding already planned events to participant in, by discussing relevant topics in the Teen ACTION curriculum and identifying services and information lacking in their communities, and by following local events and creating service activities and presentations as a reaction to those events. While program staff also offer ideas for service activities, the participants typically noted that they determine their involvement in such activities after learning background information on those activities and then making a decision as a group if they would like to engage. The most common service activities that the youth participated in were presentations and performance, food assistance, charity walks, and community clean-up projects.

Teen ACTION participants plan **presentations and performances** that provide entertainment for community members and raise awareness of important issues. Some examples of events that provide entertainment include a haunted house that Mission Society and El Puente put on for children in their community on Halloween. Child Center performs a poetry slam at their high school, and St. Nick's organized a talent show. SCO participants organize Winter Wonderland at their high school, which includes gingerbread making, arts and crafts, and other stations. Many of these events are free, but some sites request food or monetary donations that they donate to their communities or use as funds to implement other service projects. These events offer participants opportunities for leadership, while also providing a service to the community.

Teen ACTION participants also present on issues to raise awareness in the community. Again, planning these events offer participants leadership opportunities, as well as providing participants a chance to put into action information they learn in Teen ACTION. Examples of these types of events include a World AIDS Day, which BronxWorks and SCO both organized at their respective high schools. Hope Academy and Child Center coordinate health fairs, with an emphasis on sexual health, in their school and communities. Hope Academy and St. Nick's presented information on bullying and bully prevention. SCO participants selected and presented a movie with themes of leadership, community, and friendship to their school, followed by a youth-led discussion of the movie's themes.

The sites also use unique approaches to community events that integrate many of the lessons from Teen ACTION and provide a space for youths' reflective learning. El Puente draws on their

arts programs to support the Teen ACTION community events. Following the Trayvon Martin shooting, the El Puente participants choreographed a dance to process their feelings. St. Nick's participants develop shows for their school that communicate key lessons from the Teen ACTION program throughout the year. The participants produce all the materials themselves, including songs, scripts, and promotional materials. They incorporate information from the structured learning activities, such as comparisons of their community's drop-out rate with other communities. This year, the participants will present a show on bullying.

Four of the programs provide **food assistance** to their communities by running food drives or distributing food to community members. This service activity is typically integrated with structured learning as the participants learn about poverty and hunger in their community before the food assistance program. Four sites have volunteered with other organizations that provide food assistance, such as Meals on Wheels, community food banks, and churches. Three sites volunteered at food banks on Thanksgiving or distributed food at Thanksgiving. This service activity also involved an opportunity for reflection for some participants. Some participants reported that they had received assistance from food banks in the past, and this activity provided an opportunity to serve others in the same way.

The **charity walks** that the youth participate in raise money to further research on a range of health causes, such as AIDS, breast cancer, kidney disease, leukemia, and lupus. Members of the BronxWorks site also participated as a part of the ING marathon cheering team. The objective of participating in the charity walks is to help the participants understand that their actions have an impact on their community.

Sites reported integrating the charity walks with the reflection activities. Participants discussed their sense of empowerment as they realize they can make a difference in their community through participating in the walks. Sometimes the reflection activities focus on how to improve their success in the event. Hope Academy youth reported that they participated in the AIDS walk last year, but did not successfully meet their fundraising goals. Their reflection activities focused on how they could improve their success in the current year. They plan to participate in the AIDS walk again and have devised new approaches to fundraising, such as organizing a recycling initiative and putting that money toward their fundraising.

The intensity of the **community clean-up** activities varies across the study sites. Child Center, Mission Society, and St. Nick's activities include cleaning up garbage and planting flowers throughout their community. BronxWorks helped build houses outside of NYC with the organization Build On. SCO cleaned up the community garden as their first service project of the year.

Some sites integrate this service activity with structured learning. For example, Mission Society participants take photos and create charts to identify areas of the community that need help. SCO participants learn about the history of the community garden and the importance of growing nutritious food.

El Puente's program has integrated their community clean up service project, rehabilitating the community park, into all aspects of the program. The participants chose this project in response to a shooting at the park that occurred while neighborhood children were playing there. The youth developed a multi-pronged platform of work that centers on rehabilitating the park. Participants began by learning more about community parks and then performed dances for the community to raise awareness of their efforts and created a video about gun violence to raise community awareness of the issue. They also engaged in community activism. They petitioned elected officials to put lights in the park. Every week, participants work on actions related to the park.

In addition to the most common types of service activities described above, the study sites undertook many more community service activities. St. Nick's participants handed out voting stickers on Election Day after they learned about the low rate of voter participation. They also read to middle school students for Black History Month. Mission Society sponsored a toy drive during Christmas. El Puente participants sent thank you notes and made posters for the community fire department on September 11th. Hope Academy participants helped with the opening of a clinic at Jervis High School in Staten Island by compiling ideas to engage youth in the clinic and to reduce the clinic stigma. Participants from El Puente and St. Nick's also mentioned that they try to show appreciation for all community members. For example, St. Nick's made cupcakes to distribute to the community.

3. Participants perspectives about lessons learned from service activities

Participants reported many benefits from the community service activities. The service activities reinforce the information they learn in workshops or classrooms. Youth feel better prepared to handle risky situations because they gain experience making good decisions through the service activities. Service projects help them appreciate their communities. Before engaging in community projects, some participants felt that their communities had 'bad people' in them; however, the service activities enabled them to experience the good in their communities. Participants noted that they learn selflessness through the service activities. As one participant stated "the community service we undertake helps you make better choices and realize there are other people in need. It ensures that you don't just think about yourself and think about others in the community. Everybody here in this community is connected." Finally, participants felt the service activities brought them respect as part of the Teen ACTION program because community members look up to them for their service.

4. Key structured learning activities across sites

The study sites identified the main topics covered in the structured learning as community issues; healthy mind, bodies, and relationships; and gaining leadership and confidence. Community issues were typically tied to the service activities and included topics such as poverty, world and local hunger, homelessness, and child abuse.

Staff at all program sites stated that they follow the Teen ACTION curriculum closely, while also including special topics of relevance to their sites' target population. Most program sites cover topics requested by participants in addition to the Teen ACTION curriculum, such as stress workshops and college and career activities. As youth build relationships with staff and other program participants, they become more comfortable speaking up about personal and/or community issues they experience. Staff take the youths' concerns and ideas into consideration when developing special workshops and molding the Teen ACTION curriculum to best fit the lives of participants. Staff of the programs located within a school also identify potential stressors and issues through first-hand experience working in the school and talking to school staff. At St. Nick's, participants asserted that bullying and stereotyping were severe concerns at their high school. This was covered in the program by discussions about bullying. Participants also learned about stereotypes and breaking through their stereotypes.

Several study sites focus on communication development as an integral component of the structured learning. Two of the study sites noted that they integrate vocabulary relevant to the Teen ACTION material into their structured learning regularly (Child Center, St. Nick's). Staff aim to help participants develop their communication skills and gain confidence in their ability to express themselves through the vocabulary, group discussions, and spoken word classes.

Table 9 in Appendix A outlines the main topics covered by program sites.

5. Variation in structured learning activities across sites

Structured learning activities are typically presented as group discussions and active participant engagement is encouraged, rather than lectures. Several study sites use an open forum, such as a question of the day, to begin the structured learning activities. The lessons often include interactive work, skits, role playing, and workshops. Staff believe that this approach engages participants and helps them master the material. As a program staff member said at BronxWorks, "When you are facilitating you can't just look at a book and read to the kids, you need to break it down by doing icebreakers and doing feedback questions and asking them what wasn't clear to them. We do reflection and feedback and see if they got it, because if they didn't, we can do that same lesson again. "

Program sites have different methods to ensure that the participants master the curriculum. Hope Academy and Mission Society participants met once a week to review Teen ACTION curriculum, intertwining the lesson and the reflection period. At both study sites, the participants are expected to master the learning topic before implementing a project. As one Hope Academy participant described, "First if we are going to do something, we need to learn it and then put what you know into the project. First we master it here. Everything starts here." Similarly, Mission Society staff noted that they expect participants to be able to talk about hunger, homelessness, and poverty before undertaking food assistance programs in the community.

Study sites use other approaches to ensure participants master the lessons. For example, BronxWorks participants take surveys throughout the year to measure their understanding of lesson topics. If the surveys show that the participants do not grasp the material, the group will further review the information. In each session, Child Center participants review the material taught in the previous sessions. El Puente staff also noted the importance of participants' understanding of the topics, "We don't rush those things. We like to go back. If it is something we discuss because they have those interests, we address those."

6. The important role of reflection in Teen ACTION

The reflection periods offer Teen ACTION participants an opportunity to become more aware of their own feelings and decision making processes. For example, El Puente offers arts-related activities to facilitate self-expression. St. Nick's program is structured around communication and discussions. At St. Nick's participants describe using the reflection period to better understand their internal decision making process, which helps them react more thoughtfully in social situations.

The reflection period also helps participants better understand the perspectives of others. Participants at Hope Academy and Child Center noted that they come from a range of backgrounds, and the reflection period offers an opportunity to learn from each other's unique experiences as they discuss the day's lesson. For example, when they learned about community homelessness at Hope Academy, some participants entered into the lessons with the belief that homelessness was a choice. Other participants shared stories about their own experiences with homelessness. Sharing these experiences built a deeper understanding of the issues of homelessness in their community. The Child Center participants also reflect on their lessons in a journal. The group discusses their thoughts and periodically review participants' reflections to ensure the participants are implementing their reflections into their daily lives.

SCO's reflection focuses on leadership skills and the process of leading activities. Each lesson starts with a discussion on the importance of leadership, followed by a leadership game. After the game, the group reflects on their experiences, including what worked and what did not work.

E. Risky Behaviors

The inclusion of a focus on risky behaviors, specifically SRH, is an innovative component of the Teen ACTION program. The SRH lessons focus on a range of topics. Participants receive information about HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancy, STI prevention, abstinence, condom use, birth control, healthy relationships, and sexual harassment. For the SRH components, program staff follow the guiding principles of communication with participants, which they learn from Planned Parenthood. Staff have a goal to teach participants about the facts and the importance of sexual health within the context of the mission of the organization. Staff are discouraged from incorporating their personal values into the program.

1. The structure of sexual and reproductive health lessons

The study sites approach the SRH component in different ways. Five sites bring in outside educators and workshops to discuss SRH and risky behaviors (BronxWorks, Hope Academy, Child Center, El Puente, and Mission Society). Mission Society and BronxWorks draw from their own organizational capacity for the SRH expertise. Mission Society's SRH educator comes from the HAPPY program at a local hospital, which teaches participants about sexual health every Wednesday. The health expert employed by the larger BronxWorks organization comes to the Teen ACTION program to answer questions for the participants.

The study sites are sensitive to gender in presenting SRH. Two program sites usually teach SRH components in all-male and all-female settings to increase participants' comfort level. For example, BronxWorks participants engage in the SRH component of Teen ACTION through Gentlemen Equality and Girls for Girls, the all-male and all-female groups within Teen ACTION. Male and female El Puente participants also learn about sexual health in separate settings. St. Nick's sometimes splits groups by gender depending on the topic. Hope Academy has a male staff member answer questions for the male participants when they request personal information regarding sexual health.

Table 10 in Appendix A summarizes the SRH topics covered by program site, as described in detail in the following sections.

2. Approaches to teaching about risky behaviors and sexual and reproductive health

The program sites use different approaches to present information on sexual health to participants. Participants at one program created materials identifying STI testing locations, while participants in another program also presented research to the group on an STI and risky behaviors. At one program site, participants looked for clinics both inside and outside of their community so that those who were not comfortable going to a clinic in their community had other options.

Another program addresses risky behaviors primarily through discussions on prevention and empowerment. They organize workshops for the participants and bring in speakers using approaches such as role playing, videos, and presentations to teach the participants about risky behavior prevention. Participants also create plays and skits to reinforce the information they learn.

3. Participants perspectives about the sexual and reproductive health component

Across most study sites, participants reported that they gain important SRH knowledge in the Teen ACTION program. Participants in six sites reported that they receive the necessary information to prevent pregnancy and STI's, and that they had received most of that knowledge from the Teen ACTION program. While some participants had previous knowledge of SRH, one participant noted that Teen ACTION "feeds it to you to make it stay in your head". Some participants stated that they like learning about SRH in Teen ACTION because the other participants are mature. When the same topics are discussed at school, the male students laugh and the issues are not discussed

seriously. Participants at six sites would like to learn more about SRH and preventing risky behaviors.

Participants at six of the study sites asserted that they are comfortable addressing the SRH and risky behaviors topics. The participants indicated they are comfortable talking with Teen ACTION program staff about these topics. Participants at three sites said they sought out program staff regularly to discuss personal issues. Participants at three other program sites said they would confide in at least one of the program staff members if they were confronting a serious issue.

One program's participants did not feel comfortable asking the health expert for advice about sexual health because they did not work with her as frequently, but they did feel comfortable asking the Teen ACTION program staff questions. One middle school participant was also uncomfortable with the topic; she had attended Teen ACTION for only a short time and had not fully engaged in topics of sexual health with the program or her family at the time of the program visit.

4. Meeting the health needs of participants

The health needs of participants are met often through their participation in Teen ACTION. Across the board, Teen ACTION participants believe they have ready access to the health services they need. In part, participants are aware of these health services because of projects they undertake within Teen ACTION. Participants in two programs researched the surrounding health clinics for a Teen ACTION project, with one resulting in a website that displays a map of the surrounding health clinics available in their community. Participants also learn about health clinics outside their communities and health clinics specializing in male health so that they knew of a clinic option outside of their immediate community and that met their particular needs in order to ensure to privacy and comfort.

Some of the grantee organizations are co-located with health clinics, which provide access to services for participants. The high school in which SCO is located has a health clinic in the school buildings, as well as three other health clinics that participants and staff are aware of within the Sunset Park community. The Child Center building is also a mental health facility, which offers mental health services to the community.

5. Challenges to presenting the sexual and reproductive health lessons

Sexual and reproductive health lessons often cover sensitive topics and issues that some participants have not discussed before. Some participants find the conversations uncomfortable and some parents are hesitant allowing their children to partake in such lessons, as discussed earlier. Program staff also noted challenges demonstrating and providing participants' protection methods due to school or organization laws and rules. Some program sites also experienced resistance conveying the

SRH lessons to participants whose religions prohibited them from engaging in the risky behaviors discussed. Program staff used varied measures to resolve these challenges.

A challenge to the SRH lessons for program sites located in public schools is that they cannot provide condoms to participants. One site cannot even bring condoms into the school to demonstrate proper use. These programs provide participants with information about how to obtain free condoms, and they use flashcards to present information regarding correct condom use.

One Teen ACTION site faced challenges in delivering the SRH curriculum when they began to work with a new high school, which had a large, highly religious demographic. The staff encountered difficulties connecting with the participants, especially the females, who often found the SRH conversations overwhelming. The director surveyed the participants to find ways to change the structure to better meet the needs of the participants. Following the survey, the program implemented a new structure with different Teen ACTION topics taught each day, and only one day per week focusing on SRH. This new structure helps the participants feel less overwhelmed because SRH is not discussed every day.

Unlike the other study sites, one program site had not yet begun the SRH component of Teen ACTION at the time of the visit. This was reflected in the participants' unease with the topic. At the time of the site visit, participants said they would feel uncomfortable seeking out program staff to discuss this issue; most said they would turn to friends for advice on SRH. Participants said they gained most of their SRH knowledge from TV and the internet. These participants mostly expressed that they were hesitant to discuss SRH topics as a group. This may change as the topic is discussed in the program. Program staff had just begun talking about unhealthy relationships at the time of the site visit. Their aim was to build a feeling of safety within the group before covering SRH topics. Their plan is to first address the issue of media and sex, then move onto the anatomy of sexual reproduction and sexual health protection.

6. Teaching about healthy relationships

The healthy relationship topic area includes discussions of sexual harassment and characteristics of unhealthy relationships. Hope Academy and Child Center provide handouts that identify characteristics of unhealthy relationships. Participants also learn about sexual harassment, and one's right to say "no, I'm not comfortable."

Participants at many of the sites are affected by this topic, with several participants acknowledging that they were previously in unhealthy relationships and were not aware that the relationship was unhealthy. One participant said, "I had an older boyfriend by 2 years, and I didn't realize that could be a type of rape. And I learned that in Teen ACTION, because they [older partners] would pressure you into it."

F. Use of Data to Inform Program Services

All of the program sites reported using participant data, such as administrative data, staff-administered surveys, and report cards, to inform the structure of the program. In addition, all of the program sites use administrative data to track program hours and participant achievements. Mission Society employed part-time staff to analyze and report on the administrative data. This allows Mission Society to not only ensure that they are meeting program targets, but also allows them to inform staff on the effectiveness of specific program components.

Some program sites use additional sources of survey data to inform program development. For example, BronxWorks surveys participants about their engagement in and comfort with the activities and lessons. Last year, Child Center conducted a school-wide needs assessment in order to inform the program for the current year. Additionally, Child Center collects outcome measures for program participants. They survey participants at the beginning and end of each year about self-esteem issues and feelings of connection to the neighborhood in order to assess their growth and development.

Many of the program sites also use a more informal approach to gathering data from participants. For example, El Puente staff ask the participants' opinions about activities. Participants reported that they asked for baking classes, and the director responded by finding a teacher to provide a baking class.

The program sites also reported using their connections with schools to gather information about participants' school attendance and academic records. Some of the sites utilize additional sources of information from the schools. For example, BronxWorks, Child Center, SCO, and St. Nick's reported that their presence in the schools gives them access to the participants' teachers and guidance counselors. Additionally, El Puente works with the sites to identify which participants need supplemental ESL, as many of their participants are English learners whose ESL assistance from schools is declining as school funds decrease

Chapter VI: Key Resources

In this chapter we describe some of the key resources that were necessary for successfully implementing the Teen ACTION program. These included partnerships, committed program staff, and levels of funding.

A. Partnerships with Other Organizations

Maintaining partnerships with other organizations helps staff provide necessary services. Across program sites, the Teen ACTION staff asserted that the benefits of partnering far outweigh the challenges. According to staff, partnerships with outside organizations provide a way to expand the resources available to Teen ACTION participants. They also provide a new environment, often outside their neighborhood, for the youth to experience.

Partnerships in the Study Sites	
Hope Academy	Hope Academy thrives on partner connections. They take a strategic approach to pursuing new partnerships; they evaluate not only the new information the partner brings to the youth, but also whether the partnership will introduce the youth to new neighborhoods in the city. The organization connects with Madison Square Garden, Chase, JPMorgan, and Merrill Lynch for their leadership, internship, and employment programs. They also partner with Milbank for the SRH component, in addition to the support they receive from Planned Parenthood.
BronxWorks	BronxWorks is an example of a site that vigorously pursues multiple partnerships. The program has partnered with several outside organizations, including Montefiore Hospital and the Health Coordinator at BronxWorks for the SRH component; the Door, a service provider empowering teens in NYC; and Build On, a local community organization that builds houses and provides service activities for Teen ACTION participants. BronxWorks coordinates with other Teen ACTION locations as well to share resources and events and to help facilitate lessons. They network to find outside experts to conduct workshops for participants. BronxWorks views these partnerships as important for participants to learn from multiple experts, to keep the conversations fresh and lively, and to help participants see the importance of the knowledge they gain.
Child Center	Child Center of New York runs their Teen ACTION program targeting 9th and 10th graders at a local high school. The Child Center had to work to gain the trust of the teachers and to explain the goals of Teen ACTION at that high school before gaining the desired access and space in the school. Child Center staff believe the relationship with the school grew out of the success of the participants in the Teen ACTION program, as well as working with the principal and holding events at the school. . For Child Center, their connections with the school has created a space for and added more resources to their program. They also reach out to the community for information on topics which the staff do not have expertise.
El Puente	El Puente's long history in the community keeps the organization well connected to local, available resources. Examples of the partnerships El Puente pursues include MIC – Women's Health Services for SRH resources, Summer Search for college access

	opportunities, and local high schools to obtain participant data and to identify participants' ESL needs. They also partner with community organizations for service-learning projects, including elected officials, the 83rd Precinct, Community Board 4, Cornell, and Pratt. These partnerships not only provide an opportunity for participants to participate in the political process and thereby create tangible impact on the community; they also provide an opportunity to explore new areas of the city. El Puente continues to search for organizations that will provide relevant presentations to Teen ACTION participants for free.
Mission Society	Mission Society has over 20 partners, including Harlem Hospital's Happy Program which provides the SRH lessons; other youth programs, like band and Junior Achievement program which provide potential recruits; Hostos Community College; Bronx Community Colleges; and SUNY B Teacher's College. Staff members also leverage their own community involvement to bring in resources, to identify community service opportunities for participants and to identify potential new Teen ACTION participants.
SCO	SCO ensures that Teen ACTION participants and their families can utilize all of their organization's resources and information. For example, for the SRH component, SCO connects with the Lutheran Health Clinic, a free, full clinic. The Teen ACTION participants can go to the clinic for illness, vaccines, and sexual health questions. Teen ACTION staff introduce participants to the clinic staff as a program activity so that the participants feel comfortable going to the clinic. SCO also partners with local organizations, such as the community garden, for the service learning projects.
St. Nick's	St. Nick's utilizes its own organizational resources to expand Teen ACTION resources. Teen ACTION participants are able to participate in any St. Nick's service or event that is either youth or education related. For example, during Black History Month, participants went to a St. Nick's sponsored Black poetry reading. Periodically, interns from the youth and education division of St. Nick's provide workshops to Teen ACTION participants.

Table 11 in Appendix A summarized the outside programs and services provided to Teen ACTION participants through these partnerships.

1. Partnerships were key to providing sexual and reproductive health components

Across program sites, partnerships are considered invaluable in providing the SRH components of Teen ACTION. Connecting with clinics gives participants an opportunity to become familiar with the staff and procedures so that the youth are more comfortable approaching the clinic if they find themselves needing to attend the clinic for themselves or with a family member or friend in the future. Additionally, clinics, SRH educators, and health providers can provide participants with condoms, which many Teen ACTION providers are not permitted to provide due to local laws or organizational rules.

Additionally, program sites described a beneficial relationship with Planned Parenthood. For example, BronxWorks and Child Center followed Planned Parenthood's recommendations to provide a resource manual of neighborhood clinics to participants and found this useful for their participants. BronxWorks plans to attend the Planned Parenthood teen nights in order to impress upon participants the importance of SRH. Child Center keeps Planned Parenthood pamphlets

readily accessible in order to provide SRH information to participants who are uncomfortable asking staff for this information. St. Nick's echoed the importance of the connection with Planned Parenthood, Teen ACTION's technical assistance provider. The staff use Planned Parenthood's SRH lessons in their program. They also noted that they found the three-day Planned Parenthood training extremely beneficial. Additionally, Planned Parenthood provides a list of local clinics which St. Nick's provided to participants.

B. Program Staff

A successful Teen ACTION program depends on a deeply committed and experienced program staff. All of the Teen ACTION directors, as well as all of the participants in focus groups, noted that dedicated staff members are the key resource of the program. The staff members described the importance of connecting with the youth and understanding their needs. Staff members are aware of the importance of making the activities engaging, and they challenge each other to ensure that presentations of the Teen ACTION curriculum meet the needs of the participants.

The staffing arrangements at each of the study sites are varied. Retaining longer-term staff members was highly beneficial to the program and the participants. Though the Teen ACTION staff are typically small in number, they often have deep roots in their respective organizations. The organizations visited devote up to 5 staff members to the Teen ACTION program. Each organization has a director who has background in teen development programs. Four of the directors received services from their respective organizations as youth. Most of the Teen ACTION staff members were part of the organization before placement in the director role of Teen ACTION. Staff noted that, while the individual staff members have specific roles in the program, all staff helps with 'a little bit of everything.'

1. Opportunities for more staff support

Though Teen ACTION staff members were praised very highly across the board by the participants, some staff noted ways in which they would benefit from more support. Many programs described sufficient communication and resources from DYCD, which were discussed in detail in Chapter I; however, some staff mentioned feeling isolated from other Teen ACTION sites and DYCD. For example, some staff would like to use the monthly meeting with DYCD to learn more about activities at other Teen ACTION sites and to connect with other sites for collaboration. They would like to have the opportunity to compare and learn about what worked (and did not work) across Teen ACTION sites. Many of the staff members that communicated such desires were newer to the Teen ACTION program and not yet acclimated to the informational structure and resources provided by DYCD.

Some staff members noted that increased access to professional development opportunities that took place at their individual site locations would help retain and motivate staff. While DYCD provides professional development at their location in Manhattan, not all program staff were able to

attend these workshops and meetings, as the staff were engaged in other organization responsibilities during those times.

Staff at one study site wanted a manual of local health facilities and resources to share with participants. While providers were given a guide of clinics that were specifically identified as being teen-friendly, the staff member seemed unaware of the resource.

C. Funding

For the most part, program staff believed the financial resources are adequate to meet the program goals. However, there are several ways in which staff suggest improving access to resources in order to help them better serve participants.

Some study sites would like additional funding to take the participants on more service activity trips, college trips, or trips to health clinics that specialize in serving the unique needs of some participants. Many sites currently take the participants on such trips, and feel that the trips not only serve a key function in teaching the youth about community involvement, the importance of their futures, and SRH, the trips also provide an important opportunity to expose participants to new places outside of their immediate community. Staff would like to take the participants on more of these trips, and noted the desire to take participants on college tours outside of NYC and NY State to open their eyes to the innumerable opportunities that lie ahead.

While providers are allowed to submit budget modifications throughout the year, staff at one site noted that a more flexible budget would benefit the program's ability to devote resources across budget categories. Teen ACTION budgets do not have many restrictions, and thus the described stringent budget categories were likely reflective of the budget prescribed by the provider itself.

Chapter VII: Participant Outcomes

In this chapter, we will describe the participants' perceived outcomes from the Teen ACTION program, the components of the program that participants and staff consider most valuable, and the components of the program that can potentially improve to better meet participants' needs. In the interviews and focus groups, we asked about participants' and program staff's attitudes toward the program and their perceptions of the effects of the program in key areas of participants' lives. Participants and program staff appeared candid about their perceptions of the program. However, these data are limited because they reflect only the perceived effects of the program; we do not measure changes in behavior or goals. Additionally, all the data are retrospective; we do not measure the participants' behavior and goals before and after enrollment in the program.

A. Participants' Long-Term Goals

As noted earlier in this report, many of the participants described their communities as subjected to many risk factors. The participants themselves tend to experience risk factors in their own lives, such as living in lower income families or with single parents. Prior to entering the program, the participants perceived these risk factors as having a negative effect on their long-term goals.

Setting goals and understanding how to achieve them were key outcomes of the Teen ACTION program. Several participants described their discouragement about succeeding in their future prior to entering the program. A substantial minority of participants mentioned that before entering the program, they did not have any goals for the future, or if they did, they did not know how to reach them.

Because participants had disparate goals upon enrolling in the program, Teen ACTION providers utilize several techniques to help participants develop their long-term goals. For example, several providers noted that they believe by treating participants respectfully, the participants gain greater ownership of their lives and develop longer-term goals. At the Hope Academy, in a Teen ACTION precursor program during the summer months, participants set goals every Monday and discuss whether they achieve their goals at the end of the week; Teen ACTION participants then continue to discuss their goals throughout the academic year as a part of Teen ACTION. At the Child Center of New York participants noted that to accomplish their goals, staff "help us make positive decisions and make sure we're on track."

Goal determination is also supported through reflection activities within the Teen ACTION program. Staff and participants both mentioned how the program's reflection activities, which often took place as a group discussion, help set the tone for goal attainment. Staff at the Hope Academy said in regards to the participants' future that group discussion "forces them to connect and think about it." At El Puente, weekly discussion groups, especially among the females in the program, are critical in clarifying participant goals. Other providers are optimistic about the participant-led

discussions about the program activities. They believe these help participants develop a clearer vision about their futures.

Several participants noted that the Teen ACTION program has positively impacted their career goals. While many participants still do not have a fixed idea about their future profession, a number said that they are interested in becoming police officers, doctors, lawyers and other prestigious, obtainable professions now that they are in the program. One participant at the NYC Mission Society said that before the program, "he wanted to dance and sing, but now he is looking into more things like becoming a doctor or be a lawyer because he wants to fight for people's justice and be a doctor to help save people lives and continue having an impact on community." Another participant at El Puente succinctly summed up how the program supports her career goals, stating, "They inspire you. They help you push through your dreams. They will always respect your career. They never tell you yes or no, they just let you know."

Other participants highlighted the importance of the program for providing clarity about their future ambitions, especially if they were in high school. One participant at the Hope Academy mentioned that the program "gives you an eye-opener about what you want to do. And the program matures your decisions." This thought was echoed by a participant at the NYC Mission Society who noted that while he knew prior to entering the program that he would go to college, he has developed back-up plans in case his initial goals do not work out. A participant at the SCO Family Services program further elucidated this point, claiming that while she initially wanted to be an editor or writer, she learned in the program that she is a good oral communicator and that teaching is a better profession for her. Finally, one participant at the Hope Academy said that any concerns she had about usefulness of some the service activities she participated in were allayed by the fact that "All of this helps us later in the life and in our present life."

Another important aspect of the program is reinforcing goals and helping participants achieve them. At the Child Center of New York one participant stated that, "staff helped me in a way to pursue my passion and how to turn that into a career." Other youths at this center had the same experience, saying "before I knew what I wanted to do but I didn't know how to get there." At the NYC Mission Society, participants noted that the program brings maturity and helps them understand that not everything in life is "a joke." The participants said that the program gives them the tools to mature and to understand and develop goals more clearly as a result.

Not every participant believed that the Teen ACTION program elevated their goals; however, no one thought the program had a negative effect on their goals.

B. Participant Knowledge about Risky Behaviors

A key goal of the Teen ACTION program is to develop knowledge about the negative consequences of risky behaviors and to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to avoid such behaviors. Participants are expected to develop these skills through the integration of the lessons

and activities in the program. The impact of these activities on participant knowledge is described next.

A number of participants believed that the Teen ACTION program has increased their knowledge of risky behaviors, especially as it relates to SRH. Although a number of participants mentioned that they learn about sexual reproductive health and risky behaviors in school, particularly if they are in high school, Teen ACTION provides the information in a format that resonates with the participants. One participant mentioned that she has gained greater knowledge about preventing pregnancies and STI's (though she knew this before the program) and that Teen ACTION strengthens this knowledge. Other participants stated that they are more aware of ways to protect themselves from STIs; several mentioned the focus on condom use as crucial. While participants noted that abstinence is part of their education, they appeared to find lessons about safe sex more useful. Many of these participants spoke positively about the knowledge they gain from guest speakers, often provided by Planned Parenthood, and said the knowledge is useful, though at times redundant and they would like to learn more about risky behaviors and prevention methods.

For some participants, the Teen ACTION program is their first exposure to learning about SRH. Some participants said that prior to the program they had no knowledge of STI's while others said they had a vague understanding but did not know which behaviors could spread diseases. Other participants said the knowledge they gain in Teen ACTION will inform future decisions. For example, a male participant said that knowledge from Teen ACTION teaches him that, "Even though I won't have sex, it's about using a condom and using the right one." Another male participant also said that what he learns through the program reinforces his decision to be a father to his future children.

Several participants feel they can take on a role as peer-educator based on the knowledge they gained in the program. Several participants state that they would know how to link their peers to community resources in the case of a sexual health emergency. Again, many participants had knowledge of SRH resources prior to entering the program; however, they are more aware of how to obtain such resources because of the program.

Though SRH knowledge is a main focus in the Teen ACTION curriculum, participants also gain knowledge surrounding other risky behaviors. The focus on reflection, clear communication, and mediation at several sites teach participants the importance of talking through problems, rather than rashly acting out or becoming violent. Staff and participants also described outside violence and gang activity as stressors in the local communities; while some programs cover these topics through lessons, workshops, and reflection, all program activities reduce the risk of participant involvement by providing youth an outlet to get off the streets and away from the violence. Participants also learn about drugs, alcohol, and positive body imagine.

Importantly, the learning that takes place in Teen ACTION appears to beget more learning within Teen ACTION. Staff at BronxWorks said that because participants learn so much through

the program, they are motivated to learn even more as the program year continues. In their opinion, this leads to high attendance and a greater effect of the program.

C. Reductions in Risky Behaviors

Only a few participants said their behavior toward sex had changed, with most stating they plan to wait to engage in sexual behaviors; however, others noted they will be more thoughtful about the topic. One participant said, "Before I came to the program I thought I was invincible and I didn't need condoms but once you were teaching us and not just trying to scare us, I had to think about my behaviors." Another participant said that he and his girlfriend are taking more precautions in their sexual relationship. Many participants do not view abstinence, at least in the short-term, as their likely course of action.

Participants also reduced their engagement in other risky behaviors. One participant noted that the program changed his interaction with his friends because he will no longer smoke marijuana with them. Another participant said, "I probably wouldn't have done half the things I am doing now before Teen ACTION." Other participants claimed that they had become less angry or violent as a result of the program's group discussions. One participant said that before Teen ACTION, he would have been "quick to throw a punch but now he won't" and that he seeks peaceful solutions. Another participant, who had attended over a year of weekly therapy sessions with little improvement in her anger issues, noted that her subsequent participation in Teen ACTION provided her with the ability to deal with frustration through mediation and clear communication.

The program instills in many participants a self-confidence that encourages them to say 'no' to risky behaviors and peer pressure. Participants at El Puente and St. Nick's described learning to feel comfortable and happy being themselves and making decisions that are best for them. One youth described that although she has not changed her friends, Teen ACTION has given her the knowledge and confidence to disengage from the risky behaviors that she participated in with those friends. Many participants share their knowledge with their peers. During one focus group, a participant commented that he told his brother not to have too many sexual partners because, "You can catch something." Others talk with their peers about either waiting or using protection when having sex and provide information on where to seek help should problems arise. Some staff discussed goals to educate the participants so that they become the providers of this information to their peers.

D. Effects on School Work

Participants noted a positive effect on their school participation because of skills they learn in Teen ACTION. At the Hope Academy, one participant noted, "I am learning in life and I connect what I learn in here at school. I learn paraphrasing, facilitating. Especially when I get called up to the center of the class to say something—since I did programs with speech and doing narrating or talking about any specific subject—it helps me later on in school because I can project my voice, stand up straight and show confidence." Another participant said that Teen ACTION helps him think more

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about the ramifications of acting up in school and the poor reputation one will earn from behaving badly. Finally, a participant at the Child Center of New York said, "The program is a resource for different topics and you can learn from them knowing you leave knowing more than when you came in. So learning so much because then you know what to do and not to do."

Many of the educational activities offered by the programs fall outside of the Teen ACTION program, but are available to Teen ACTION participants, and these activities are critical to boosting participant educational outcomes. Participants are highly influenced by the tutoring services offered by several of the providers which are not part of the Teen ACTION program. The tutoring and other educational services offered by the providers help participants feel prepared for higher education. For example, a participant at the Mission Society said that the tutoring transformed him from a failing student to a B student, and encouraged him, "to start thinking about the future." Another participant noted that as a result of the tutoring and additional educational opportunities he was not, "planning on going to college until I came here, and now I want to go. I didn't know where to start with the college thing, where to look and be ready to go to a college, but now I have a better understanding." Several other participants talked about how they had some college plans for the future, but did not know the steps needed to achieve those plans. For example, some participants mentioned that as a result of going on field trips to local universities and listening to guest speakers, they now want to obtain graduate degrees to further their careers. One participant at the Child Center of New York said, "Before this program I thought that I wouldn't have gotten that far but now that I got help and know where I am going, I have Teen ACTION there. I knew I would graduate, but grade wise wouldn't be that good, so I've improved my grades a lot. And the help is counselors helping with homework and giving us time to do homework and calling them over and talk about what we know." It appears that the services offered in conjunction with Teen ACTION play a critical role in changing participant goals for educational achievement.

Many participants believed the Teen ACTION program has bolstered their academic performance. Some participants credited the tutoring and peer support that they received in conjunction with Teen ACTION. Although this is not generally part of the Teen ACTION program itself, the support contributes not only to improved grades in school, but also improved attendance in other Teen ACTION activities. Examples of improved academic behavior were mentioned by a number of participants, especially in difficult subjects such as math, reading and science. Others credited the overall atmosphere of the program, with one participant claiming, "I wasn't coming to school much before, but [staff] said I had to come to stay in the program and started getting my report card and talking to my teacher."

E. Additional Soft Skills

Some participants noted that they learn empathy for individuals and groups coming from different circumstances through their involvement in Teen ACTION. At one program site, staff noted that the participants had excluded a peer for getting pregnant. Staff talked to the participants about the circumstances that could lead to this situation and discussed withholding judgment about the girl. The program staff believe the participants became more accepting of the girl, as a result. At the

Hope Academy, discussions of homelessness in the community have led participants to feel greater empathy with these individuals in their community. Similarly, at BronxWorks and St. Nick's, the participants learn about homelessness, which leads them to give more to homeless people.

Participants described improving their social interaction skills through the program. At St. Nick's a participant said that he, "learned not to follow" through Teen ACTION. At the NYC Mission Society, a participant said that while everyone tells them not to be followers, this program shows them how to lead. Other participants described becoming more respectful in school. Another participant claimed that he, "learned to be truthful with others and be honest," leading him to tell a friend who was acting up in school to show more respect to the teacher.

Participants also believed that the program improves their interactions with their parents. One participant highlighted the improved relationship with her mother because the program taught her to express her feelings more openly. Finally, a few participants stated that the camaraderie fostered through the program's activities make them calmer and more interactive.

F. Community Connection

The Teen ACTION program seeks to cultivate an ethic of service and civic engagement. Based on the interview and focus group data, the program appears to meet that goal. Participants from all seven sites noted that they were disconnected from their communities prior to joining Teen ACTION. This may have been attributable to the problems they saw in their communities. Several participants mentioned issues plaguing their communities that created disconnection for them, such as drug and alcohol abuse, crime, gangs, gun violence, graffiti, and litter. The program enhances the participants' connection to their communities by fostering discussions of ways teenagers can improve these areas and take ownership of their futures. Additionally, Teen ACTION providers also lead several trips into these communities so participants can generate ways things can be improved.

The service activities have a profound effect on the participants' knowledge of their community. At the Hope Academy, participants noted that the service opportunities change their view of the community as, "it makes you more aware of what is going on. It opens our eyes." Another participant at this CBO said, "I didn't notice there were so many liquor ads before I did the project. And I was more aware of that when I did the project." At El Puente participants in the focus group said the program, "taught us community is home. So we need to take care of us. So if it is dirty, it is our job to clean it up. Even if it's not your fault, you still need to clean up." Many participants are able to better conceptualize their community and envision what they want it to be in the future.

Participants said that the classroom lessons improve their view of their local communities as well. Some participants mentioned that learning about the spread of disease and hunger in the world led them to think locally about what could be done in their own community. Participants also spoke positively about discussions to plan and reflect upon their service activities. Participants' engagement in the service activity decision-making processes appears to increase participants' investment in the

activity. It appears that the Teen ACTION program increased participant investment in the community through hands-on activities, as well as through discussions and classroom learning.

1. Links between service and connection to community

Participants mentioned that the service learning projects, especially when they revolve around cleaning up local areas, boost their connection to the community. At El Puente, a participant noted that through cleaning up the local park, she was growing more attached to Bushwick. A participant at the NYC Mission Society also described how cleaning up the areas in the community led to changes in his own behaviors, such as not littering anymore.

Participants noted that these activities are a catalyst for their desire to work with others to improve their communities. At the Child Center of New York, a participant said that before he engaged in service activities he thought the, "community was bad because of people. But now he knows it's not just the people themselves. He now understands that the community has to come together to resolve the issues because one person cannot transform a community by themselves." A participant at St. Nick's said that the service activities she participates in are specifically designed to benefit the community. She explained that if, "People see one person from the community doing well, other people will do the same thing." At the Hope Academy, another participant said that the service learning opportunities have changed her view of the community; Teen ACTION provides her with the tools to fulfill her goals to give back to the community.

G. Connections between Staff and Participants

The data from focus groups and interviews demonstrates the importance of the connection between participants and program staff. As noted earlier, many participants exceed the Teen ACTION hour requirements, often spending substantially more hours per week at the program. Participants often spend a great deal of time one-on-one with program staff that teach, tutor, listen, and guide the participants. At several sites, specific staff members are assigned to participants at program enrollment. These staff members meet with participants each week, one-on-one, to assess goals, expectations, and other topics participants raise. Staff develop a close rapport with many participants. In some cases, staff members fulfill a maternal or paternal figure for participants. In this section, we describe how the relationship between staff members and participants affect knowledge, behaviors and goals.

Participants rely on staff's knowledge and guidance because they are available to the participants and become key figures in their lives. Participants at St. Nick's note that if they ever have a question about their homework, staff will help them. Other participants commented on how staff make themselves available if participants have any sort of question, no matter the context. Participants remarked that staff gain their trust and respect because of their openness, and this is a key factor in participants' engagement with the program.

Participants are highly positive about the staff's impact on helping them pursue their goals. As noted above, staff often have participants outline their goals on a consistent basis (sometimes

weekly), which helps participants achieve their goals through accountability. Participants at El Puente noted that staff check regularly on their school performance and how participants are working toward attaining their goals. This feeling was echoed at other providers, such as the Child Center of New York in which participants said "Staff helped me in a way to pursue my passion and how to turn that into a career."

Participants also spoke positively about the effect of staff on their behaviors. One participant who was in counseling prior to Teen ACTION, prefers to discuss her challenges with the Teen ACTION staff because, "they ask you before they jump. They give you the space when you need it so you can talk when you are ready to." At the Child Center of New York, participants claimed that staff will not let you feel down and will do anything to cheer you up and improve your attitude and behavior. Several participants described how staff seek to provide a positive example of how one should act around others. Participants work to emulate this in their own personal lives.

For many participants, their relationship with program staff resemble a friendship or a parental figure. As a result, some participants feel comfortable sharing their personal histories with risky behaviors. Some participants said that they are more likely to speak with staff about these issues than their parents because staff will be less judgmental and the conversation will be less embarrassing. One participant said that they can discuss these issues with staff, "because she is like a friend and a teacher at the same time." Other participants said they can speak with staff because they know that their job is to help and not to judge. Despite their readiness to discuss these issues with staff, most participants noted that they had not yet had to talk about these sensitive topics because they had not engaged in risky behaviors.

It should be noted, not every participant feels as comfortable speaking with staff members about risky sexual behaviors. A sizable minority of the interviewed participants said they are uncomfortable discussing these issues with staff members. No discernible difference between middle and high school students on this topic is apparent. Nevertheless, the rapport that is developed by some providers fosters an ability to speak to participants not as teacher-student, but almost as peers. And for some programs, that helps deepen the success and understanding of what they were trying to accomplish.

H. Participants' Perception of the Program

1. Most successful program component

There is no unifying theme surrounding participants' favorite component of the program because participants like most aspects of the program. Participants find every component of the program useful including the SRH lessons, the service learning activities, the classroom learning, the reflection discussions, and the leadership focus. Among the service learning activities, a number of participants said they enjoy the charity walks because they like having the opportunity to give back to their communities. Participants enjoy the reflection discussions because they give the participants the opportunity to express their feelings and connect with peers. Others like learning about the

world and issues faced by their community. A few participants spoke positively about the leadership components which they believe empowers them to stand up for themselves and the community.

Participants also benefit from the activities that are not part of Teen ACTION, but are provided in conjunction with the program. (Participants typically did not know which activities are funded by Teen ACTION and which ones are not.) The linkage between the Teen ACTION program and the other services is important to the program. One participant at the NYC Mission Society noted this by remarking positively, "Once you are in this program, you will probably join another program, so it gets you connected to other programs." It is important to note that while these activities are not specific to Teen ACTION, program staff work to integrate the knowledge gained from them into the overall rubric of the program.

There are other aspects of the program that keep participants engaged, but are not classified as an activity. For example, a few participants noted they like having a place to visit on an almost daily basis. Before Teen ACTION, many of the served communities had few afterschool options that provided emotional and intellectual sustenance for the youth. Other participants mentioned the positive impact of being in the program on their future goal attainment. One participant at the Child Center of New York said that the most helpful component of the program is that, "it is free, allowing students to be a part of a meaningful club." Some viewed their participation in Teen ACTION as helping their college application. Overall, Teen ACTION provides participants with a safe, enjoyable, and informative environment that helps satisfy participants' desire to attain individualized goals.

2. Least successful program components

Few participants mentioned components of the program they disliked or would like changed. In fact, only two participants in the interviews identified components of the program that they thought were lacking when asked about program recommendations. One participant mentioned that he does not learn much from his program's focus on HIV/AIDS because he has learned about this topic in school. This confirms the description above that the focus on SRH is at times redundant of what is taught in schools and that the youth may benefit more from a wider array of risky behavior knowledge and greater detail of how to prevent this behavior. Another participant mentioned that he believes the community activity his program did that involved planting flowers did not benefit the community as much as a food assistance program would have. The community garden service activity is the first service activity of each academic year at this site, and is a service activity which the youth do not self-select.

A few participants noted that they did not immediately see the benefits of the program. A participant at Hope Academy noted "In regards to community service at first I thought that it's boring but then you look at what you did and you're proud about it." Other participants said that they were nervous at first about discussing SRH or did not want to discuss the topic because they already learned about SRH in school. However, no one in the focus groups or interviews believed that this topic was ultimately not useful to them. This may be because the program staff members

are able to create an overarching vision for their programs by linking each activity and working to determine relevancy for participants.

Staff described more opportunities for improvement in the program. Some staff members believe that the recommended and required courses on SRH are not in the right order or flexible enough to accommodate the participant's inconsistent schedules. As one staff member noted, "Sometimes kids that need to be at the workshop have a test the next day, so they don't always see the workshop on time so the order of this class can complicate things." However, staff at Child Center work to resolve this issue by briefly reviewing the topics covered at the previous Teen ACTION discussions to re-instill the information in the minds of the youth who attended the previous session and highlight the information provided for those youth who did not attend that previous session. Other staff members believe that the SRH component should have more focus on "alternative lifestyles" and be incorporated into more aspects of the program.

I. Staff Perspectives on Participant Outcomes

Program staff were mostly positive about the effects of their programs on the participants' school outcomes, attitudes, behaviors and knowledge. Staff were quick to caution, however, that while they are very positive about the program, they do not view it as a panacea for participants. Program staff try to temper expectations about the program at enrollment. At one site, staff said that while the program is, "great at giving them the information, the participants are going to do what they want with the information," and the participants decisions will not always lead to improved outcomes.

Other staff members said that their programs have not necessarily led to better grades for the participants or avoidance of risky behaviors. For some staff, the programs have not operated long enough this program year to provide them with a strong sense of the effects of the services. Despite this, there was a general feeling that the programs are successful across all sites, at the very least, in giving participants the tools they need to succeed in life. Though the results are not tangible for all participants, the participants are increasing their personal tools and resources to effectively lead them to make positive and healthy life decisions in the future, and the seeds for such decision-making skills are actively instilled upon the participants throughout their involvement in Teen ACTION

Program staff offered varying opinions on the program components that are most successful for the participants. A number of providers noted that the reflection activities are both popular and effective. Staff at the Hope Academy said that class discussions help participants think about decisions and "they have a framework for how they make decisions so that may help them down the line." Program staff also believed giving participants leadership opportunities in the program is beneficial stating that, "their risky behaviors go down because they become leaders and they realize the risky behaviors would bring them down." At St. Nick's, staff said that the group discussions are crucial and that, "some kids are automatically leaders and some kids are shy, so we try to make Teen ACTION as comfortable as possible and make sure that no one laughs at anyone else or says

anything outside of the Circle." Program staff noted that having a caring adult focused on the participants' outcomes helped improve participants' self-esteem.

Staff members, like the participants, also talked about the positive impacts of various non-Teen ACTION activities on participant outcomes. Several staff members believed that offering tutoring to participants is beneficial. Other program staff noted that when they give participants a choice about the activities they participate in it increases participant investment in the program, and ultimately improves outcomes. This is particularly true at El Puente, where many participants choose non Teen ACTION activities, such as dance, spoken word, photography and art as their classes, which in turn leads to increased participation in Teen ACTION lessons and discussions according to staff.

Some staff members highlighted the program's effect on school outcomes. Staff at the Child Center of New York stated that prior participants will come back to tell them that Teen ACTION was the main impetus for their getting into college. Staff at El Puente said that their spoken word component facilitates literacy and writing and is instrumental in improving academic outcomes for several participants. At St. Nick's staff see improved graduation rates among the middle school students as a result of the program, commenting that they've seen, "kids walk around the school in Teen ACTION gear, with the teachers saying thank you."

While staff offered several activities that highlight the success of the program, few said that there is one specific activity or "silver bullet" that makes the key difference for participants. Almost every provider said they try to create an environment in which activities are well-integrated, and this approach generates positive changes in behaviors and attitudes. Other providers noted that more successful participants are more likely to participate more enthusiastically in activities. Staff at the NYC Mission Society claimed that, "For the kids who are successful, they tend to also be involved in another program" within the Teen ACTION provider's purview. This belief was seconded by staff at SCO Family Services who said that perseverance is a hallmark of success for participants in their program. They expounded on this point, stating that participants, "may be late or skip school, but they always come to mentoring and Sunset Leaders. It takes a while, but it does translate." It therefore appears that having a variety of different services and programs that were well-integrated helped generate a successful program.

In general, staff were positive about the effects of the Teen ACTION program on their participants. Most mentioned the holistic approach to the program as critical to its success. Perhaps more importantly, these providers said that they are determined to build trust among the participants to ensure their continuous attendance and inclusion in program activities. In the end, this connection between staff and participants appears to be the critical element for these programs.

Chapter VIII: Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Achieving Enrollment Goals

Chapter IV demonstrates that almost all of the sites have successfully met their target enrollment goals- many in the first few weeks of the program year. The Rate of Participation (RoP), which is critical to the program's success, will not be complete until June. However, Chapter V suggests that many participants far exceed the 150 hours, spending several hundred hours a year on program activities. In addition, participants are heavily engaged in non-Teen ACTION activities, such as tutoring, leadership programs, college prep and other services, which appear to also benefit the participants greatly.

B. Establishment of Innovative Service Delivery Models

While all Teen ACTION sites follow the same program objectives, this study highlights the innovative service delivery methods sites create for their target populations. All programs give participants ownership of the programs and allow youth to select the themes and activities that guide the program implementation; some programs allow a greater degree of involvement from the youth in the decision-making and leadership components of the themes and activities. This youth-driven model appears to increase youth engagement, participation in discussions, and investment in the program. Encouraging the youth to "partner" with the program staff in shaping the program seems to contribute to their holistic development.

The incorporation of soft skill or social interaction development into the program influences the service delivery model. Programs seamlessly provide soft skills training through a range of activities, helping to improve participants' ability to communicate and express themselves. In addition, youth do not just participate in lessons and projects; they are guided to think critically about those lessons and projects. These activities help participants become more aware of their motivation for engaging in certain behaviors, which allows them to think critically about the consequences of those behaviors.

The consistent and intensive interaction between program staff and participants is key to a holistic approach to service delivery. Participants feel connected with the staff. At some sites, the participants are able to approach the staff for advice whenever they need to. This provides some participants with a caring, trusted adult figure who can help them think through the consequences of engaging in risky behaviors. The staff also play a large role ensuring that participants continue in the program. At some sites, staff call home or wait for students in their school hallway to make sure they came to the program or to follow up with the participants if they miss a few days of the program. Thus, staff hold youth accountable for their engagement, while providing them ownership of the program.

Connection to the schools is beneficial to service delivery. Staff who are well-connected to the schools often receive information from guidance counselors and teachers about participants.

Being connected to the school provides staff awareness of issues emerging within the school. Staff are able to be responsive to these issues and address potential, risky situations or to hold participants accountable for their actions in school. Some programs require participants to attend classes during the day in order to participate in Teen ACTION after school. The programs see underachieving students begin to attend classes more regularly so that they can continue to engage in Teen ACTION activities. This interconnectivity between the schools and Teen ACTION seems to lead to improvement both in school and out of school for participants.

C. Program Effects on Study Participants

This study is limited because the data only come from focus groups and interviews at one point in time with participants and staff who are in the program. Thus, there is no comparison group of students not in the program and no longitudinal data to assess participants' progress during the course of the program. However, the qualitative data suggest the program has positive effects on participants' knowledge, behaviors, school performance, and interpersonal relationships.

Both participants and provider staff are highly positive about the program services. Furthermore, participants can articulate how program activities affect their outcomes. For example, participants discussed how service learning activities improve their connection to the communities. They described how goal setting activities increase their desires to change their behaviors to ensure a more promising future. Finally, the SRH lessons seem to help participants figure out how to better negotiate dating relationships and sexual activity as they become more aware of the potential negative consequences of engaging in risky sexual behavior.

No one activity or service is highlighted as the most enjoyable or effective. It appears that the range of integrated activities, provided by a caring staff, is the highlight of the program. Participants are highly enthusiastic about the program staff, and they entrust the staff with information about their own personal lives which participants sometimes feel uncomfortable divulging to anyone else. The staff appear to be the glue that connects the range of services participants receive, and staff are the key instrument in ensuring a successful experience for participants.

Other elements of the Teen ACTION program are identified as being important to participants, even though these elements are not necessarily part of the Teen ACTION curriculum. For example, Teen ACTION provides a safe place to be on an almost daily basis for several hours after school. This is a particular benefit for participants who attend schools or live in neighborhoods that lack other after-school activities. Being able to come to the Teen ACTION provider almost every day, even when Teen ACTION activities are not offered, is critical to participants' lives. It also appears to improve attendance and participation and strengthen the connection with the program.

Being able to visit these programs on a daily basis highlights a recurrent theme in the data - the positive impact of services provided to Teen ACTION participants that are outside the Teen ACTION program. These services are often used as a recruitment tool because the draw of tutoring

and college prep is appealing to participants. Additional homework help is the most common helpful non-Teen ACTION activity mentioned by both staff and participants. Several participants come to the providers on days when Teen ACTION services are not offered to receive help with homework. These activities help improve academic performance, develop rapport between participants and staff, and improve participant morale and attendance in Teen ACTION. Thus, additional services cannot be divorced from the Teen ACTION program. They provide additional support that buttressed the Teen ACTION program.

D. Key Implementation Achievements and Challenges

One primary implementation challenge stems from too few resources. A key deficit is lack of resources to take youth on trips. A number of providers highlighted the visits they conduct. However, the Teen ACTION program does not provide specific funding for these visits and sites have to use funds at their discretion for this activity. The trips are viewed as important to exposing participants to new parts of the city, which staff and participants feel help the youth better understand how they can build their own communities. Trips for service activities, activism, and college visits are also important to participants' growth as they help them experience a larger community and help them visualize a future in higher education.

For other programs, the reliability of funding was also an issue, with one program noting that they were unsure whether they will be funded the next year with the contract period ending and the transition of the city government. According to staff, the lack of stability regarding funding affects their ability to plan for next year and establish activities that would benefit participants according to staff members.

Space is also an issue for some sites. Programs located within schools are most likely to experience this. Schools sometimes do not provide the Teen ACTION staff or program their own room within the school.

Some sites face challenges with recruitment and retention. Recruitment challenges are most prevalent in program sites that serve participants in neighborhoods or schools that have competing after school activities. Those same sites experience difficulty with program retention when the weather becomes warmer, or when sports teams begin in different seasons. Other sites experience different difficulties enrolling participants in Teen ACTION; some youth are not immediately interested in the program, and other youth have prior obligations such as walking their siblings home, going to tutoring hours, or parental rules requiring them to be home before dark. However, staff noted that they were able to overcome some of these challenges by increasing their relationship with the targeted communities and schools and implementing new recruitment strategies. Once participants enroll and participate in Teen ACTION, they attend more regularly and recruit other youth to join the program through positive word-of-mouth..

The flexibility of the curriculum creates an overall successful program allowing staff and participants to mold the program into an environment and learning experience effective for each

target population. Staff regularly connect with the participants, gaining insight on the topics most affecting youth through open discussions, one-on-one conversations, and surveys. Both staff and participants engage in program implementation, accomplishing a program structure that almost seamlessly connects structured learning, service hours, and reflection. The flexibility of the curriculum also allows growth within the program, as the programs are able to make changes to their structure to meet the needs of their participants each year.

Staff members themselves are also a key accomplishment of the program. Participants credit their growth in the program to the staff. Many of the program staff have similar demographics as the participants, and some of the staff were even served by the organizations themselves when the staff members were teens. Both staff and participants acknowledge that this helps build a connection between staff and participants. The staff are role models, and even parent figures, to the youth. Participants engage with staff regularly and seek out staff for advice. This connection that the staff creates allows for a trusting atmosphere promoting individual growth and development. Following the phrase of one Teen ACTION site, "You're in Teen ACTION, I'm in Teen ACTION, we're a family."

E. Recommendations for Program

This section describes the recommendations that program staff made for improving the Teen ACTION program.

1. Target students who are in the 11th and 12th grades

Staff at several sites believed that the program should return to enrolling 11th and 12th graders. Staff believed that older students benefit more from the focus on risky behaviors and other services offered by these providers. A few providers still serve a small number of 11th and 12th graders in their Teen ACTION programs, using funds for other programs to support them. The logic behind this recommendation is that these students, who are viewed as more likely to be engaged in risky behaviors, could benefit from the service activities and the discussions on how to either abstain from such behaviors or how to manage them more effectively. Additionally, many of these providers interwove soft skill development such as college prep, tutoring assistance, and links to internships into the Teen ACTION programs to motivate youth to start working towards their futures and believe that such assistance would be very beneficial for older students as they are nearing entrance into college or the workforce. Though these services are not Teen ACTION specific, the services in conjunction with the Teen ACTION activities demonstrate a holistic approach to the youth development that many of the staff find imperative to positively affecting the youths' current ambitions and future goals.

2. Increased opportunities for training

Some providers said that although they receive critical support from DYCD, as discussed in detail in earlier chapters, the agency could provide more support in shaping lessons. One staff member said that while, "DYCD does a really good job of setting up help for sexual health; they do not do as well

for other things." This individual specifically highlighted a lack of guidance on ways to reduce violence among participants and believed that DYCD should offer greater support on this topic. Other program staff said that DYCD should provide greater oversight or coordination for service activities, specifically recommending that DYCD help coordinate service activities with the program and the high school if the program is located there. Another staff member recommended that DYCD infuse more professional development into the provider meetings.

However, many of the staff also commended DYCD on their efforts to support the programs. These staff members found the monthly meetings at DYCD informative and actively engage in making connections with other Teen ACTION sites to share resources and ideas. They also found helpful the emails that DYCD provide to the program staff that includes the monthly meetings overview and relevant information for serving the youth in Teen ACTION.

A more transparent and cohesive support system, including on-site training if necessary, is seen as a potentially beneficial tool. The staff members that seemed the least aware of the resources provided by DYCD are new Teen ACTION staff for the 2013-2014 academic year. Though DYCD does provide new staff training, scheduling DYCD staff visits to the sites with new program staff at the beginning of the academic year could help to connect the new program staff and thus their programs to the resources provided by DYCD; this would help to create greater awareness in terms of available resources provided by DYCD and the accessibility of relationships with other Teen ACTION sites.

3. Increase focus on mental health

A few staff members relayed that mental health concerns are a big issue in the served areas and that the program should seek to target this topic in future years. One staff member said that mental health issues are a major topic, "because people with mental issues tend to get picked on because they aren't mentally stable." Though staff did not identify the specific ways the program could tackle this issue, there appeared to be some consensus that some programmatic resources should be devoted to the topic.

4. Increased and more reliable funding

Staff felt the participants and program would benefit from additional funds to expand important services. Hearkening to the recommendation about serving 11th and 12th graders, programs said they believed increased funding could allow them to expand outreach of the program to older students. Several other programs suggested increased funding could expand the activities the program undertakes with one stating that they would use the increased funds to sponsor more college trips. This opinion was voiced not only by staff but also by participants, who were particularly attracted to the program because of the travel opportunities.

5. Increased health resources

Considering the strong focus of the program on reducing risky behaviors and improving participant health, some providers were concerned that the program did not offer any clinical health support itself beyond referrals. One staff member said that in her school, they would take the participants to get checkups or give them support if someone got pregnant, and lamented that such support was not offered through Teen ACTION. Although this may be the purview of the schools or for other providers, one Teen ACTION provider succinctly noted that one method of health support Teen ACTION could provide would be to have a master list of all hospital and clinics in NYC because, "those are where we will refer the kids to." While providers were given a guide of clinics that were specifically identified as being teen-friendly, the staff member seemed unaware of the resource.

F. Conclusions

In this section, we synthesize the findings reported above to suggest ways in which the Teen ACTION program might be improved. These are based on the observations of the study team, rather than direct recommendations of the program staff.

1. Develop a more coordinated plan for serving participants based on age and/or grade

The providers appear to successfully serve participants of different age and grade levels, seeking to comingle participants if necessary. However, some providers noted difficulties serving participants in both middle school and in high schools. Although most providers serve participants in only one of these categories, some serve both leading to difficulties. Due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed, as well as perhaps the different maturity levels and needs of both groups of participants, it is important for providers to develop plans to serve specific groups of participants based on their age and/or grade level with a goal of focusing on only one set at a time, if possible. It may benefit the program to further demarcate participants if necessary based on other background information if they feel that it will better serve their programs. Accomplishing this could engender a more concise delivery of services enabling greater impacts.

2. Provide transitional services for older participants

For most programs, when a participant finishes the 10th grade (or the 8th grade if the program targets only middle school students) their time with Teen ACTION ends. As aforementioned, many providers disagree with this policy for older students. Some programs, such as the Hope Academy and Child Center, integrate 11th and 12th grade participants with younger participants in their program, offering additional tutoring and college prep courses. It could be helpful for DYCD to offer guides for providing transitional services for 8th or 10th grade participants out of Teen ACTION for those programs serving middle or high school participants, respectively. If these providers cannot link these participants with other services, then it could benefit participants in the 11th and 12th grades to remain in the program.

3. Create separate funding specifically for trips

A number of providers highlighted the visits they conduct, whether it is to the other boroughs, to visit colleges, or to visit other parts of the state, which are highly appreciated by staff and participants. For many participants, viewing a different community is an eye-opening experience that bolsters their goals. However, the Teen ACTION program does not provide specific funding for these visits and sites have to use funds at their discretion for this activity. Because of the apparent success of these visits and as a way to structure them for sites, it may make sense for DYCD and CEO to consider creating separate funding for site visits giving leeway for sites for how to use this money, while providing some parameters. Earmarking funds specifically for site visits will not only provide the impetus to accomplish these activities, but also provide guidelines for how to accomplish them.

4. Develop two or four-year plans for participants

Many providers noted that the participants they recruit tend to switch from year to year and that they had to start over with these participants annually. This could at times lead to trust issues and delays in implementing the program's curriculum. Though the program is intended to provide services to many participants on an annual basis, a more structured two or four-year plan could improve outcomes by ensuring a long-term vision for services and reducing duplicative efforts on a yearly basis. For example, a program that serves 7th and 8th or 9th and 10th graders could develop plans for recruiting and enrolling participants as they enter the 7th or 9th grade and plan on a two-year program with specific goals and outcomes to be achieved. If a program serves participants from 7th through the 10th grades, then a three or four-year plan could be developed. This could not only reduce the annual turnover, reducing the time needed to recruit and enroll participants as well as establish relationships, but also establish benchmarks by which the program could measure successes or failures and take action to remedy them.

5. Consider re-focusing the sexual reproductive health classes and splitting classes, if necessary

Although many participants spoke positively about the sexual reproductive health classes they receive, there are some who believe the classes are redundant of what they learn in school, though many of those participants still acknowledged that they would be interested in learning about other types of risky behaviors. For a subset of participants, these classes could be roadblocks to their enjoyment of other activities that their program offered. Programs could seek to avoid this problem by gauging participant knowledge of sexual reproductive health and other risky behaviors prior to the beginning of these classes, and if necessary, splitting up classes to focus on different knowledge levels. This effort could be conducted in concert with Planned Parenthood if possible. This could allow for more targeted dissemination of this information.

An additional recommendation based on this study finding is to modify the focus of these classes to revolve more around interpersonal relationships. While a number of participants are aware of STI's and the risks of engaging in particular behavior, others are less certain of how to ward off peer pressure and how to interact with others in their cohort. Though the factual knowledge learned from these classes should not be diminished, it may be important for providers to focus on enabling

participants to avoid these activities by successfully interacting with their peers. Many participants said that they learned how to engage in interpersonal behavior somewhat from these classes, but often learned more simply by working one-on-one with program staff. If interpersonal relationships became an even greater focus of this topic, it may lead to an even greater impact on reducing risky behaviors.

6. Officially integrate the Teen ACTION curriculum with other programs offered by providers

A recurring theme across the site is that participants are very active in and enjoy many of the non-Teen ACTION services that program sites offer. Though participants enjoy a number of aspects in the program's curriculum, resume and college help, tutoring, internships, and other activities are also an important draw for participants. Though most programs work diligently to integrate these activities with that of the Teen ACTION program, based on our data, it appeared that this work had rarely been codified. Teen ACTION providers could be encouraged to work in concert with DYCD to tailor their curriculums to their own extant programs with a goal of developing a logic model that successfully serves program youth. Accomplishing this will not only provide an understanding of how each activity works for each other, but also provide a rubric for future program years and other providers.

Chapter IX: Limitations of Analysis

Despite the considerable amount of data collected through this evaluation, there are several limitations to this analysis.

A. Self-Selection by Sites

Most participants who were interviewed both through the focus group and one-on-one were chosen by the sites. The team lacked the resources to recruit participants without working in close conjunction with sites. There may have been a bias in who we spoke to during our visits and the information that was gathered. We may have spoken with participants who were the most positive about the program, reducing the team's exposure to negative opinions about the program which could have identified different ideas about the program and what changes could have been made. That said, we conducted interviews and focus groups without program staff in the room. And we assured the participants that their responses would be kept confidential. We believe that if there were significant problems with the program, we would have heard more about them under these circumstances.

B. Performance of Study Sites

A potential limitation to our study was the representativeness of the sites themselves. As previously mentioned, the seven sites the team visited were chosen by DYCD and CEO and were considered high or moderate performers by those organizations. The team did not visit any sites that were considered low performers. This could have skewed our understanding of the operation of the Teen ACTION program and the fidelity of sites to the Teen ACTION curriculum, how well the programs are operated, and how successful the programs are for participants.

C. Modest Number of Interviews

A final limitation could be attributed to the number of participants included in the focus groups and interviews. Although the team spoke to more than 60 participants in total, this is only slightly more than 4 percent of the more than 1,400 participants who received these services in 2012. Interviews with more participants at different sites could have provided a wider understanding of the Teen ACTION program.

Appendix A. Report Tables

Table 1: Overarching Characteristics of Teen ACTION providers

Teen ACTION Provider	Location of Organization	Service Area	Service Target (Middle or High School)
Beer Hagolah Institutes	CBO	Brooklyn	High School
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	CBO located in a Public School	Bronx	High School
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	CBO located in a Public School	Queens	Middle and High School
Children's Aid Society- Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School	CBO located in a Public School	Bronx	High School
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	CBO	Manhattan	High School
Children's Aid Society- IS 218	CBO located in a Public School	Manhattan	Middle and High School
East Side House, Inc.- Mott Haven High School	CBO located in a Public School	Bronx	High School
El Puente	CBO	Brooklyn	Middle and High School
Global Kids Inc.,- Curtis High School	CBO located in a Public School	Staten Island	High School
Global Kids Inc.,- John Adams High School	CBO located in a Public School	Queens	High School
Inwood House- MS 363- Academy-for Professional Leadership & Excellence	CBO located in a Public School	Bronx	Middle School
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	CBO	Manhattan	Middle and High School
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	CBO located in a Public School	Brooklyn	High School
Sports & Arts in School- Brooklyn Collegiate	CBO located in a Public School	Brooklyn	High School
Sports and Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc.-PS 129	CBO located in a Public School	Queens	Middle School
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV	CBO located in a Public School	Brooklyn	High School
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCO) - PS/IS 218	CBO located in a Public School	Bronx	Middle School

Table 2: Data Collection by Program Site

Teen ACTION Provider	Site Visit	Admin Data Collection
Beer Hagolah Institutes		✔
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	✔	✔
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	✔	✔
Children's Aid Society- Fannie Lou Hamer		✔
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	✔	✔
Children's Aid Society- IS 218		✔
East Side House, Inc.- Mott Haven High School		✔
El Puente	✔	✔
Global Kids Inc.,- John Adams High School		✔
Global Kids Inc.,- Curtis High School		✔
Inwood House- MS 363-Academy-for Professional Leadership & Excellence		✔
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	✔	✔
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	✔	✔
Sports & Arts in School- Brooklyn Collegiate		✔
Sports and Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc.-PS 129		✔
St. Nick's-Frederick Douglass Academy IV	✔	✔
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCO)- PS/IS 218		✔

Table 3: Data Collection Questions and Sources

Research Questions	Data Source
How well did the sites adhere to the Teen ACTION curriculum and model outlined by DYCD and CEO?	Site Visits
What activities did Teen ACTION providers use most frequently in their respective programs?	Admin data; Site Visits
How well did sites recruit participants? Did they meet their enrollment goals?	Admin Data; Site Visits
Did Teen ACTION lead to an increase in knowledge about risky behaviors among participants?	Site Visits
What Teen ACTION activities were the most successful and enjoyable for participants? What were the least successful and least enjoyable?	Site Visits
What effect did the Teen ACTION program have on participant behaviors, goals, and school performance?	Site Visits
What changes can be made to the Teen ACTION curriculum or implementation to improve the experiences of participants and achieve better outcomes?	Site Visits

Table 4: Biggest Concerns Facing Communities Served by Site, as described by Teen ACTION staff and/or participants

Teen ACTION Provider	Alcohol and drugs	Peer Pressure and bullying	Teen pregnancy and STI's	Violence and gangs	Other
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	✔	✔	✔	✔	Poverty, school, college
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	✔		✔	✔	
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	✔	✔	✔	✔	Social media
El Puente	✔	✔	✔	✔	
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	✔	✔	✔	✔	
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	✔	✔		✔	Self-confidence, dropouts, college acceptance, traffic
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV	✔	✔	✔	✔	Racial profiling, suicide, dropouts, homelessness

Table 5: Pre-Existing Services Provided by Teen ACTION sites

Teen ACTION Provider	Tutoring	Leadership Activities	Summer Employment	Other
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	✔	✔	✔	Sexual health promotion through leadership, Regents (state testing) prep, high school and college placement assistance, workforce development, chronic illness, eviction, homelessness, and immigration services, and early childhood, family, and senior programs
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	✔	✔		Mental health clinic, job preparation and placement, Beacon programs, peer education to prevent aids and teen battering, individual and family counseling, early childhood education, and child abuse prevention

Teen ACTION Provider	Tutoring	Leadership Activities	Summer Employment	Other
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	✔	✔	✔	Poetry and Street Law classes, internship program, Financial Literacy, and Peer Leadership
El Puente	✔	✔	✔	SAT and college prep, high school and college admissions support, dance, theater, visual arts, spoken word, photography, public speaking, and politics classes, and mentorship programs
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	✔	✔		Out of School Time, martial arts, dance, Learning to Work, pregnancy prevention, family services, foster case, restorative justice, anti-gun violence
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	✔	✔	✔	Mentorship, In School Youth, Out of School Time, Beacon programs, Medicaid, foster care, worker cooperatives, family counseling, and a community service program with a food pantry
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV			✔	Learning to Work, Beacon programs, Out of School Time, housing programs, and elderly programs

Table 6: Examples of Services Provided Across the Eight Sites

Teen ACTION Provider	Service Learning Activities	Structured Learning	Reflection Activities
BronxWorks-Validus Prep Academy	Charity walks, building houses, AIDS day presentation to school	Teach lessons and offer workshops throughout the week on SRH, academic enrichment and career building	Discuss lesson topics and reflect after every service activity
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	Presentations on risky behaviors to school	Teach lessons and engage in conversation with the participants regarding topic of the day	Participants share opinions on lesson of the day and discuss the different opinions compared to the facts; focus on discussing thought process involved with decisions and risky behaviors
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	Recycling project, charity walks	Tutoring and peer mentorship available; discuss Teen ACTION curriculum on Friday	Discuss curriculum lessons
El Puente	Renovating neighborhood park, perform plays and dances	Discuss curriculum in gender groups	Discuss lessons, reflect on service activities; focus on learning successful decisions, improvement areas, and youth empowerment; staff always available for one-on-one discussions
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	Hand out food to community, collect, hand out Christmas gifts to needy, perform for community	Lessons on curriculum every Friday	Reflect on Fridays as a Teen ACTION community
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	Present movie to school; put together school's Winter Wonderland night	Teach lessons once a week on Teen ACTION curriculum centering around leadership; play leadership games and have a question of the day	Reflect on leadership building, lessons, and service activities at end of the day
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV	Charity walks, hand out food to community, basketball tournament promoting healthy lifestyles	Teach and discuss curriculum through 5 components: sexual reproductive health, jobs and careers, college career and job expectation, advocating for jobs, and healthy minds healthy bodies	Discuss and reflect on lessons every day; focus on self-empowerment, confidence, and acceptance; staff always available for one-on-one discussions

Table 7: Main Services Provided by Teen ACTION Providers

Teen ACTION Provider	Mission	Tutoring	Leadership	Employment experience	Referrals	Workshops	Other
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	Help individuals and families improve their economic and social well-being*		✔	✔	✔	✔	College preparation, zumba classes and other health activities
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	Help at-risk children and youth succeed in life*	✔		✔	✔	✔	Access to youth during school, vocabulary review
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	Get youth to college through academic improvement and leadership development	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Poetry, Street Law, Financial Literacy and Peer Leadership; internships; summer employment if meet hour requirements
El Puente	Inspire leadership for peace and justice	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	SAT and college prep; high school and college admission support; arts, public speaking and politics classes; mentorship
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	Improve life of community through leadership and mission	✔	✔		✔		Band, Explorer Club, the Bomb, martial arts, dance, photography
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	Support academic achievement and develop thinking skills, leadership to mold youth into members of the local, global communities	✔	✔	✔	✔		Academic mentoring; access to youth during school day
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass	Improve quality of life; help youth become lifelong learners and thrive as	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Vocabulary review, play and song writing

Teen ACTION Provider	Mission	Tutoring	Leadership	Employment experience	Referrals	Workshops	Other
Academy IV	adults.*						

*Mission found on program websites

Table 8: Main Service Activities by Organization Site

Teen ACTION Provider	Charity walks	Community clean-up	Food assistance	Presentations and performances	Other
BronxWorks-Validus Prep Academy	✔	✔	✔	✔	
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	✔	✔	✔	✔	Internet research for community events
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	✔		✔	✔	Create materials for clinic opening at Jervis High school
El Puente		✔	✔	✔	Distribute thank you notes to firemen for 9/11, thank community for their contributions
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	✔	✔	✔	✔	Christmas toy drive
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School		✔		✔	Advocate in Albany, NY for Summer Youth Employment and funding for School Based Health Centers
St. Nick's-Frederick Douglass Academy IV	✔	✔	✔	✔	Read to middle school for Black History month, hand out stickers for Election Day, bake for community

Table 9: Overview of Structured Lessons by program site

Teen ACTION Provider	Healthy minds, bodies, and relationships	Careers, college readiness	Bullying	Community issues	Soft skills	Other
BronxWorks-Validus Prep Academy	✔	✔		✔		
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	✔	✔	✔	✔		

Teen ACTION Provider	Healthy minds, bodies, and relationships	Careers, college readiness	Bullying	Community issues	Soft skills	Other
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	✔			✔		
El Puente	✔	✔		✔	✔	
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse		✔		✔		Financial literacy, pollution
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	✔		✔		✔	Sexual images in media
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Stereotypes

Table 10: Risky Behavior Focus across the Seven Sites*

Teen ACTION Provider	HIV / AIDS	Teen Pregnancy / safe sex	Abstinence	STI Prevention	Healthy relationships	Other
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Neighborhood resources, health insurance, birth control, morning after pill, how to get tested
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Sexual harassment, neighborhood resources
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Sexual harassment, neighborhood resources
El Puente	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	Alcohol, drug use, body image, gang and violence prevention, clinics
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	✔	✔	✔	✔		Gun violence, sexual peer pressure
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School					✔	
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	How to pick partners, positive body images, neighborhood resources, birth control, how to deal with a crisis

* Focus of risky behaviors during the 2013-2014 academic at the time of site visits.

Table 11: Outside Programs and Services Provided to Teen ACTON Participants through Partnership with Teen ACTION sites

Teen ACTION Provider	Community service	SRH	Leadership, internship, employment	Programs within organization	Other
BronxWorks - Validus Prep Academy	✔	✔		✔	Other Teen ACTION programs
The Child Center of NY- MS 72				✔	Schools, other outside organizations to obtain knowledge of different services for teens
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy		✔	✔	✔	Hostos and Bronx community colleges, SUNY Brockport Teacher's College
El Puente	✔	✔	✔	✔	Schools, Summer Search, elected officials' 83rd Precinct , the Community Board 4, Cornell, Pratt
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse		✔		✔	
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	✔	✔		✔	
St. Nick's- Frederick Douglass Academy IV				✔	

Appendix B. Who Are Teen ACTION Participants

Although demographic data providing information on participant socioeconomic status, household status, and some other background information was not provided, the team did have access to some basic background information on participants (race, gender, and grade). In this section, we will look at the basic demographics of participants across the 16 sites for which there is data as well as look at the average across sites.[16]

Gender

A majority of participants across the sites were female (58 percent), but with a substantial minority being male (42 percent). This statistic dispels the notion that this program, with its focus on teen pregnancy and sexual reproductive health, is targeted specifically to females. Instead, the relatively balanced gender breakdown denotes programs that sought to target and enroll both sexes with equal fervor. Exhibit 18 below provides a gender breakdown across the sites.

Table 12: Gender Breakdown by Site

Teen ACTION Provider	Females (%)	Males (%)
Beer Hagolah Institutes	60	40
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	79	21
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	53	47
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	70	30
Children's Aid Society- IS 218	60	40
East Side House, Inc.- Mott Haven High School	49	51
El Puente	74	26
Global Kids Inc.,- John Adams High School	70	30
Global Kids Inc.,- Curtis High School	47	53
Inwood House- MS 363-Academy-for Professional Leadership & Excellence	35	65
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	60	40
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	59	41
Sports & Arts in School- Brooklyn Collegiate	58	42
Sports and Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc.-PS 129	39	61
St. Nick's-Frederick Douglass Academy IV	63	37
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCO)- PS/IS 218	57	43

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[16] This section reviews the participant demographics of the 16 program sites that enrolled participants as of January 23, 2014. At that time, one program site had not yet enrolled participants and there was no demographic data to include in the report.

Teen ACTION Provider	Females (%)	Males (%)
Total	58	42

* Data as of January 23, 2014

Table 12 shows that the majority of sites (12) were majority female. However, most were not overwhelmingly so, with several having 40 percent or more male enrollment. In five sites, males represented the majority of their enrollment, with MS 363-Academy-for Professional Leadership & Excellence having a 65 percent male enrollment. These numbers demonstrate a varied gender breakdown across the sites and highlight a program goal of conducting outreach to both genders as they tried to get each involved in preventing risky behaviors.

Ethnicity

Across the sites there was a wide variation in the ethnic backgrounds of participants that were enrolled largely reflecting the breakdown of the neighborhoods they recruited from. Exhibit 19 shows the different ethnic backgrounds of participants across the sites.

Table 13: Ethnic Breakdown by Site

Teen ACTION Provider	White (Non-Hispanic) (%)	African-American (Non-Hispanic) (%)	Hispanic (%)	Asian (Non-Hispanic) (%)	Other (%)
Beer Hagolah Institutes	79	0	0	0	21
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	2	59	38	0	2
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	0	72	8	2	18
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	0	57	35	4	4
Children's Aid Society- IS 218	0	2	95	0	2
East Side House, Inc.- Mott Haven High School	0	26	73	0	1
El Puente	2	5	90	0	3
Global Kids Inc.,- John Adams High School	0	34	28	8	31
Global Kids Inc.,- Curtis High School	5	57	12	3	22
Inwood House- MS 363-Academy-for Professional Leadership & Excellence	0	22	70	0	7
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	0	85	12	0	3

Teen ACTION Provider	White (Non-Hispanic) (%)	African-American (Non-Hispanic) (%)	Hispanic (%)	Asian (Non-Hispanic) (%)	Other (%)
SCO Family Services-Sunset Park High School	0	14	63	11	13
Sports & Arts in School-Brooklyn Collegiate	0	92	3	1	3
Sports and Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc.-PS 129	2	36	42	0	20
St. Nick's-Frederick Douglass Academy IV	0	83	15	0	1
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCO)- PS/IS 218	0	10	76	0	14
Total	6	42	41	2	10

* Data as of January 23, 2014

Table 13 shows that approximately five-sixths of participants were either Hispanic or African-American, with small numbers of White, Asian, and other participants. A number of programs were largely dominated by African-American or Hispanic participants, with only one program, the Beer Hagolah Institutes, located in a primarily Jewish community in Brooklyn, serving a largely white population. These numbers are a reflection of the neighborhoods that they served and do not denote a specific type of ethnic outreach by these programs.

School Grade

The final demarcation of participants for which we have data is the school grade they are in. Exhibit 20 provides a comparison across the 16 sites.

Table 14: Grade Breakdown by Site

Teen ACTION Provider	7th (%)	8th (%)	9th (%)	10th (%)
Beer Hagolah Institutes	0	11	35	55
BronxWorks- Validus Prep Academy	0	0	33	67
The Child Center of NY- MS 72	2	2	35	62
Children's Aid Society- Hope Academy	5	9	9	77

Teen ACTION Provider	7th (%)	8th (%)	9th (%)	10th (%)
Children's Aid Society- IS 218	26	51	9	14
East Side House, Inc.- Mott Haven High School	0	0	46	54
El Puente	8	10	16	66
Global Kids Inc.,- John Adams High School	0	0	46	54
Global Kids Inc.,- Curtis High School	0	0	14	86
Inwood House- MS 363-Academy- for Professional Leadership & Excellence	43	54	4	0
NYC Mission Society- Minisink Townhouse	4	28	29	38
SCO Family Services- Sunset Park High School	0	0	0	100
Sports & Arts in School- Brooklyn Collegiate	0	0	34	66
Sports and Arts In Schools Foundation, Inc.-PS 129	39	61	0	0
St. Nick's-Frederick Douglass Academy IV	1	32	37	30
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCO)- PS/IS 218	51	40	8	1
Total	11	20	23	46

* Data as of January 23, 2014

Table 14 shows that, unsurprisingly, the majority of participants were in the 9th and 10th grade confirming the targets of these programs as demonstrated in Exhibit 5 in Chapter III. Of the programs targeting high school students, approximately twice as many participants were in the 10th grade than the 9th grade. This may demonstrate how these programs sought to target participants who they thought were more mature and in need of education on sexual reproductive health. It could also highlight the other programs offered by these providers, such as college and resume help which will be delineated more fully in the next chapter. Of note is the fact that of the programs targeting both middle and high school students, there is rarely a relatively even distribution across the grade levels, with programs such as WHEDCO and the Children's Aid Society Program located at IS 72, enrolling far more middle school students than high school students and the exact opposite occurring at the Hope Academy. It is possible that these providers believed that a strict demarcation should occur between the grade levels. Finally, what is not shown in table 14 is that a few programs,

especially the Sports & Arts in School program located at the Brooklyn Collegiate School, served 11th and 12th grade students, though the program is technically limited to 7-10th graders.

Other demographic Information

Though the data provides some background on the demographics of participants, the site visits also provided some background. For the majority of the programs visited, participants came from the area which the provider was located in- especially if it located in a school. However, programs operated solely by CBO's at their offices, appeared to be more likely to recruit participants from beyond the initial service area. The Hope Academy drew participants from several different schools and boroughs in large part because it did not work directly with a school and cast a wider net in its recruitment. Though located in Harlem, some participants came from as far as lower Manhattan, several miles and subway stops away. Similarly, the Child Center of New York, located at MS 72 in Queens, drew participants from both Queens and Brooklyn.

The majority of program participants as stated by program staff were minorities, primarily African-American or Hispanic. However, there are some differences within these populations. The BronxWorks program targets African-American immigrants who primarily emigrated from Africa and are Muslim. Further, while some programs were relatively homogenous in the demographic backgrounds of the teens recruited, others had a wider mix of participants from varying extractions.

Several of the programs highlighted the family situations of participants. A number of providers mentioned that their target population came from single-parent families or foster homes and in many cases, the parents were not a strong role model and were frequently absent. One provider noted that, "Even if parent is home, they don't know much of what youth are doing in their room or if they are out in the street." Many of these providers also mentioned that most of their participants had siblings and the combination of lacking a strong parental presence and having a sibling who oftentimes went through these programs, provided a strong impetus for recruitment.

Although there is no specific demographic data regarding family background for participants, it appears that most Teen ACTION participants are minority and many come from single-parent or foster homes. The desire by many of these participants to find after-school activities that get them away from these situations does appear to be a motivating factor in encouraging recruitment and continued attendance in these programs.

Appendix C. Teen ACTION Administrator and Staff Protocol

Administrator and Staff Protocol Combined

Teen ACTION EVALUATION

(Note: This is a guide, not a script. Moderators may vary topics and probes to accommodate particular sites and groups)

Respondent Background

1. How long have you worked for [organization]?

2. What position do you hold at [organization]?

3. What was your employment background before coming to [organization]?

4. Please provide background on this [organization]?
   a. How long has this [organization] been in existence?
   b. What programs does this [organization] operate besides Teen ACTION?
   c. What are the targets of these programs?
   d. How many staff work at this [organization]? How many work on Teen ACTION?

Program Creation and Design

1. [Director of Teen ACTION services for provider] How did the Teen ACTION program come about? When did planning begin and who were the main planning partners?
   a. What was the motivation for the program?
   b. Was it modeled after other programs and if so, which ones

2. Does everyone have a shared vision for Teen ACTION? Does anyone see the program as accomplishing different goals?

3. Has the program changed over time at all? If so, in what way?
   a. Have the programs goals you just described changed over time?
   b. Has the structure/organization of the program changed over time?

4. As far as you know, does Teen ACTION have a 'logic model' or theory of the program and how program activities are linked to intended outcomes?
   [If none:]

a. What are key resources and features that go into the program (e.g., staff, partners/collaborators, students, financial and other resources)?
　　　b. What are key outputs (e.g., enrollment, participation in classes and groups)?

5. [Director of Teen ACTION services for provider] Can you describe any program relationships with organizations that the program works with?

6. Do you feel like the program has adequate resources? These include things like staff, space for offices and program services, equipment (or access to equipment), and support/partnerships from schools or city agencies?
　　　a. [If No] Do you feel the lack of these resources affects your ability to accomplish your job? What additional resources are needed most?
　　　b. [If Yes] Are there opportunities where additional resources could make an even bigger difference?

Program Structure

7. Can you briefly give an overview of the Teen ACTION program?
　　　a. How are the classroom, community involvement, and reflection components of Teen ACTION structured? How do those components connect?

8. We'd like to hear more about the academic portion. Please tell us about the classes, curriculum, schedule, goals, structure etc.
　　　a. What material is covered in the classroom?
　　　b. How are the lessons structured? (i.e., are they lecture, interactive, conversational, some combination, etc.?)

9. We'd like to hear more about the community involvement component and how it is structured and organized
　　　a. Discuss some service and community activities organized by Teen ACTION
　　　b. Discuss the frequency of student involvement in the community activities.
　　　　　i. Are some students more active than others? If so, who?
　　　c. Does the community component reinforce lessons learned in the classroom?
　　　　　i. If yes, how?
　　　　　ii. If no, why do you think lessons and service activities do not connect?

10. We'd like to hear more about the risky behavior component and how it is structured and organized.
　　　a. What are the main concerns young people face in the community today? What information does the program provide?

11. What are the typical number of hours students spend on Teen ACTION in a given week? How is this broken down between classroom learning, reflection, and service activities? Do

the students have to maintain a certain level of involvement or meet certain criteria to remain enrolled in Teen ACTION?

12. Please tell us about any other components of the program that we have not yet talked about.

13. Which part(s) of the program do you think are most essential for helping reduce risky behaviors among teens?

14. Is there capacity to increase the program?

15. How does the program engage the relationships between the teens and program staff?
    a. How comfortable are teens asking program staff to review topics or for advice relating to risky behaviors?

16. How is Teen ACTION similar or different from other programs you are familiar with that work to reduce risky behaviors among teens?

17. Have you noticed any differences among the cohorts of teens that allow some teens to succeed more than others?
    a. Different demographics/background?
    b. Success in completion of program?
    c. Maintaining outcomes after program completion?

Data Tracking and Evaluation [All except other partners and working group]

1. How do you collect data on the participants' demographics and background information, and activity in [the program]?

2. Do you collect any other data on participants?
    a. Do you collect and record data on health referrals and workshops?

3. Do you have access to additional data on participants, such as academic performance data? Are you able to track this data after the participant leaves the program?

4. How often do participants refuse permission to track their data?

5. How do you currently use the data that you track to better inform program initiatives or actions?

Target Population, Recruitment and Outreach [CFA Program Staff]

6. Please describe the recruitment process for teens
   a. What types of outreach are done?
   b. When do you begin recruitment?
      i. Do you recruit students at the beginning of each year? Or are you continuously recruiting students for the program?

7. What type of teens do you try to recruit? Are there any eligibility requirements?

8. What are common characteristics and family background of a typical Teen ACTION participant?

9. How well did recruitment go for the current cohort?
   a. How many applicants?
   b. Quality/ enthusiasm of applicants?
   c. [If not well] What barriers did the program encounter?

10. What are the steps in the enrollment process?

Program Role

11. Please describe your typical workday.
    a. What role do you have working with the teens?
    b. What is your interaction with other Teen ACTION staff?

12. What are the greatest difficulties you face doing your job?

13. Is there anything that Teen ACTION could do to more effectively to support your role?

Program Objectives and Outcomes

14. The program's stated goals are to reduce risky behaviors, especially those that might result in teen pregnancy, promote positive youth development and promote community engagement through afterschool service-learning initiatives.
    a. Do you feel that goals are accurate?
    b. Are there any additional goals that you would add?
    c. Overall, how well does Teen ACTION achieve these goals?
    d. Is there any one goal that you feel is the most important?

15. [Teen ACTION program staff only] What are some outcomes that you see?
    a. What are the intermediate outcomes during the program? Discuss progress during enrollment and outcomes toward the end of program.

b. As far as you know, what is your impression of the longer term outcomes occurring after the participant has left the program?

c. What would you consider a 'success story' for the Teen ACTION program? Can you provide some examples of student success stories?

16. Do teens typically drop out of the program? If so, why?
    a. Please describe any other challenges you experience engaging youth.

17. How can the Teen ACTION program better address teens at high risk of risky behavior who are not achieving these goals and/or dropping out of the program?

Overall Program Impressions

18. How would you describe youths' experiences in the program? What aspects of the program do you think youth particularly like? What aspects do you think they like less? Why?

19. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the program overall? Why?
    a. What do you see as the biggest challenges for the program?

20. Describe any challenges you have experienced, or other staff at your program site have experienced, implementing the program.

21. If you were to offer Teen ACTION one suggestion for how to improve its program, what would that be?

22. Are there any other aspects of the program, including challenges or successes, which we have not covered? If so, please discuss these aspects.

23. Are there any questions that you would like us to ask participants?

Appendix D. Teen ACTION Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Teen ACTION EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

(Note: This is a guide, not a script. Moderators may vary topics and probes to accommodate particular sites and groups)

Facilitator Note: Be sure to reference the programs using the same name they are known by in your particular site.

Logistics: Follow "scheduling guidelines" document. Arrange to do each discussion in a private location, ideally a room or office with a door that can be closed. In cases when a cubicle is the only option (e.g., small offices), then arrange to do the focus group in the most private space available to make sure your conversation cannot be overheard. No program staff will be in the room. Facilitator plus one person from our team will be taking notes.

Introduction

I am (we are) from the Urban Institute, a private, nonprofit research organization which conducts policy-related research on a variety of social policy and economic issues. We are conducting research on the effect of the Teen ACTION program on risky behavior, sexual health, and academic achievement. We believe there are important stories to tell about how this program has worked and affected your lives. We are visiting eight sites throughout New York City to talk to people like you that have been enrolled in the Teen ACTION program. We are talking to a range of participants who will provide a great deal of information about the program.

We would like to ask you a few questions about the Teen ACTION program and its impact on you.

> **Confidentiality Statement:** I also want to let you know that although we take notes, these interviews are completely confidential. None of the information you provide us will ever be linked back to you. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all interviews is compiled and presented so that no one person could be identified. We also would not ever share your information or the information of anyone you mention with any person outside of the research team. It is very important that everyone here not share information you learned about others outside of this group. We ask that you respect the privacy of others in the group and not repeat anything you hear in this discussion outside the group. However, we cannot guarantee confidentiality regarding what you say outside of the focus group, which could put you at a potential risk.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. I (we) know that you are busy and we will try to be as focused as possible. We have many questions and are going to talk to many different people, so please do not feel as though we expect you to be able to answer every question.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

<center>***</center>

Background

1. Let's start by sharing a little background information. How long have each of you been part of the _____ (**name of program or grantee organization**) program?

Knowledge of programs

2. What kinds of services or activities have you been involved with since starting the program? [_Probe: education and classes, service activities, reflection, health referrals_]

3. How often are you involved in these activities?

4. How do you think your voice, or your ideas and opinions, have influenced the program's projects?

5. How would you describe the program to other people your age?

Staff support

6. Do you have one person that you mainly work with? Can you tell us about the person/people you feel you can talk to, trust, or seek advice?

7. How often do you engage with the program staff?

Education and skill development opportunities

8. What education opportunities were most important to you? Is any education opportunity more important and useful than another? Are any less useful or not as educational as the others?

9. How do the community service and reflection aspects of the program affect the way you think about the lessons you learn in school?

10. How have these opportunities affected the way you make decisions?

11. What have these opportunities taught you about leadership? How have you developed your leadership skills through these opportunities?

12. Tell me about a time when you were able to apply one of the lessons to help you make a decision about your future.

Involvement in other activities, community outlook

13. How have the service opportunities changed your view of and connection to your community.

14. What service activities do you believe were the most useful for you and your community? Why?

15. What activities did you find to be the least useful? Why?

16. How are you involved in choosing and planning these service activities?

17. Tell me about a time when you were able to apply your service experiences to help you make a decision about your future.

Risky behaviors knowledge, sexual behaviors knowledge, and academic interest and performance

18. What are the main concerns young people are facing in your community today? Would you feel comfortable asking an adult for advice on how to deal with any of these concerns? Who?

19. How comfortable are you asking program staff to discuss topics about risky or sexual behaviors? Are you learning about topics that are helpful for you and others your age?

20. If you had a health concern, what would you do? What health services are not available to you that you would like to receive?

21. What do you know about preventing pregnancy and STD's? Did you learn this through the program? Would be you be interested in learning more?

Program satisfaction, service component receipt

22. What do you find most helpful about the program?

23. Overall, has the experience been as you expected? If no, what was different than you thought it would be?

Life and future opportunities outlook

24. How has being in this program affected the way you think about your future?

25. Are there any other opportunities or programs you will be undertaking once the program is over?

26. Do you have any suggestions for other services that would help improve your outlook of the future?

Personal change, goals and aspiration

27. How have your goals changed since your involvement in the program?
    (Probe as to whether these goal changes, if any, were related in part to program participation, and if so, what activities may have led to these goal changes).

28. How have your behaviors changed since your involvement in the program?
    (Probe how their dating, health and educational behaviors have changed. Find out if these behavioral changes were perceived to be as a result of the program or if not, and if so, what service or learning activities may have generated the greatest impact).

Final comments

29. What advice would you give other people your age who are looking for help with making decisions about behaviors that could put their future at risk?

30. Let's summarize the key points we've heard today…… Does anyone have any final thoughts, comments or recommendations?

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Thank you very much for your participation today. The information that you shared with us will help us better understand the Teen ACTION programs from the perspective of participants.

Appendix E. Teen ACTION Student Interview Discussion Guide

Student Interview Discussion Guide

Teen ACTION EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

(Note: This is a guide, not a script. Moderators may vary topics and probes to accommodate particular sites and groups)

Facilitator Note: Be sure to reference the programs using the same name they are known by in your particular site.

Logistics: Follow "scheduling guidelines" document. Arrange to do each discussion in a private location, ideally a room or office with a door that can be closed. In cases when a cubicle is the only option (e.g., small offices), then arrange to do the interview in the most private space available to make sure your conversation cannot be overheard. No program staff will be in the room. Facilitator will be taking notes.

Introduction

I am from the Urban Institute, a private, nonprofit research organization which conducts policy-related research on a variety of social policy and economic issues. We are conducting research on the effect of the Teen ACTION program on risky behavior, sexual health, and academic achievement. We believe there are important stories to tell about how this program has worked and affected your lives. We are visiting eight sites throughout New York City to talk to people like you that have been enrolled in the Teen ACTION program. We are talking to a range of participants who will provide a great deal of information about the program.

We would like to ask you a few questions about the Teen ACTION program and its impact on you.

> **Confidentiality Statement:** I also want to let you know that although we take notes, these interviews are completely confidential. None of the information you provide us will ever be linked back to you. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all interviews is compiled and presented so that no one person could be identified. We also would not ever share your information or the information of anyone you mention with any person outside of the research team.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. I know that you are busy and I will try to be as focused as possible. I have many questions that I would like to discuss with you, so please feel free to share as much information as you feel comfortable to answer each question.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

***

Background
31. Let's start by sharing a little background information. How long have each of you been part of the _____ (**name of program or grantee organization**) program?

Knowledge of programs
32. What kinds of services or activities have you been involved with since starting the program? [*Probe: education and classes, service activities, reflection, health referrals*]

Staff support
33. Do you have one person that you mainly work with? Can you tell us about the person/people you feel you can talk to, trust, or seek advice?

Education and skill development opportunities
34. What education opportunities were most important to you? Is any education opportunity more important and useful than another? Are any less useful or not as educational as the others?

Involvement in other activities, community outlook
35. How have the service opportunities changed your view of and connection to your community.

Risky behaviors, sexual behaviors knowledge and behaviors, and academic interest and performance
36. What are the main concerns young people are facing in your community today? Would you feel comfortable asking an adult for advice on how to deal with any of these concerns? Who?

37. How comfortable are you asking program staff to discuss topics about risky or sexual behaviors? Are you learning about topics that are helpful for you and others your age?

38. If you had a health concern, what would you do? What health services are not available to you that you would like to receive?

39. Do you feel like you know how to prevent pregnancy and STD's? Where did you learn this information? Did you learn this through the program? Would be you be interested in learning more?

40. What advice would you give a friend who wanted to start having sex? Was this something you talked about in the program? What did you learn from the program?

41. What advice would you give a friend who had concerns or fears about a past sexual experience? Was this something you talked about in the program? What did you learn from the program?

Program satisfaction, service component receipt

42. What do you find most helpful about the program?

Life and future opportunities outlook
43. How has being in this program affected the way you think about your future?

Personal change, goals and aspiration
44. How have your goals changed since your involvement in the program?
    (Probe as to whether these goal changes, if any, were related in part to program participation, and if so, what activities may have led to these goal changes).

45. How have your behaviors changed since your involvement in the program?
    (Probe how their dating/sexual, health and educational behaviors have changed. Find out if these behavioral changes were perceived to be as a result of the program or if not, and if so, what service or learning activities may have generated the greatest impact).

Final comments
46. What advice would you give other people your age who are looking for help with making decisions about behaviors that could put their future at risk?

47. Do you have any final thoughts, comments or recommendations?

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Thank you very much for your participation today. The information that you shared with us will help us better understand the Teen ACTION programs from the perspective of participants.

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[i] See http://wymancenter.org/nationalnetwork/top/
[ii] See http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/439-14/new-york-city-launches-sonyc-largest-after-school-expansion-middle-school-city-s-history/#/0 or visit www.nyc.gov/afterschool