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Exploring Sexual Transmitted Infections Rates within the High School Populations and Sexual Health Behaviors within a Community College Population: The Need to Provide Effective Sexual Education Programs

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Exploring Sexual Transmitted Infections Rates within the High School Populations and Sexual Health Behaviors within a Community College Population: The Need to Provide Effective Sexual Education Programs*

Erika McPhetridge and Sarah Baron, Ed.D, MPH

Abstract

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) is an umbrella term for bacterial, viral and parasitic infections that are transmitted through sexual contact. California Department of Public Health data ranks Kern County second worst in the state for congenital syphilis and chlamydia, third worst in the state for primary and secondary syphilis, and seventh worst in the state for gonorrhea. The incidence rates continue to increase in Kern County and especially within teenage and young adult populations.

This study explored the patterns and characteristics of STI incidence rates in Kern High School District (KHSD) and sexual health behaviors in a local community college. After reviewing five-year incidence rates of 18 high schools representing both urban and rural areas, there appeared to be no clear pattern among demographics, poverty and rural area between the schools and corresponding STI incidence rates. Key informant interviews were conducted to further investigate underlying contributors to the varying STI rates within Kern County.

The second part of the study explored young adult sexual health behaviors. Serving as a strong pipeline from high school to community college, approximately one-third of the Kern High School District attend the Kern Community College District. Bakersfield College completed an American College Health Association Health Assessment (ACHA) to assess health center needs. The study reviewed ACHA survey data (n=1483) to identify sexual health behaviors. Results from the study will be presented to local public health professionals and school educators to examine the need for more comprehensive and effective sexual health programs.

KEYWORDS: Sexually transmitted infection; sexual behavior; teenagers; young adults; high school; comprehensive sexual health programs; sex education; sexual behaviors

*The STEP-UP HS program is supported by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health, Grant number: 2 R25 DK098067-06.



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