



# Teen Pregnancy Prevention

## Placement Description

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- In-school programming for over 1,000 students in grades 7-12 through “Vision of You” and “Healthy Choices Presentations”.
- Prevention and education program serving Harrisonburg and Rockingham County
- Distributes educational and program materials for community learning and public awareness.
- Also provides presentations dealing with teen pregnancy issues, the local problem, and how to talk to teenagers about sex to educators, providers, youth leaders, and parents.
- Holds six coalition meetings per year to keep the community and other agencies informed about the local teen pregnancy problem and the programs available through the Office on Children and Youth and the Health Department.

## Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

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- Network with other agencies, schools, and community members working towards decreasing teen pregnancy in the region.
- Facilitate discussion groups with teenagers in various settings
- Opportunity to design, implement, and facilitate lesson plans for the 10-session program “Vision of You”
- Opportunity to assist and participate in all of our interventions
- Assist with data entry and analysis
- Help design research
- Administrative tasks

## Contact Information

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Read about students’ experiences at this site below:



*Spring 2017 – Rachel Garcia*

### *Mission and Services*

The mission of the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPP) is to educate the Harrisonburg and Rockingham community, lower the teen pregnancy rate, and ensure that the youth in the community become healthier. There is a need for this program because although the teen pregnancy rate has decreased, the rate is still high in Harrisonburg compared to that of Virginia. In order to fulfill their mission, TPP offers a variety of services.

The first service they offer is the Draw the Line/Respect the Line curriculum (DTL). Teachers from the program teach this curriculum to 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. The curriculum differs based on the grade level. DTL is an evidence-based sexual education program which teaches middle school students how to set their limits and hold to them by arming them with important information about how to have safe sex and how to stand up to peer pressure. The next service TPP offers is Safer Choices which is taught in the high schools. Safer Choices is also a sexual education program that aims to inform students on safe sex practices and making smart behavioral choices. In addition to teaching, TPP has also been a part of the Teen Health Fair. The fair is held at different high schools every year and the goal is to educate students on healthy relationships, health, sex, and good communication. Lastly, TPP offers the Teen Outreach Program Clubs (TOP). These clubs help promote community service and allow teens to discuss issues they are facing, healthy relationships, and other topics.

### *Experiences and Opportunities*

My experience at TPP consisted of a variety of responsibilities. At the beginning of the semester, I was going three days a week, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. However, by the end I was going 4 days a week Tuesday-Friday. Typically, I would spend 4 hours a day with TPP, except for Wednesdays, which was 2 hours.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I spent my time in the office. On these days, I would input demographic data, assist with projects, sit in on conference calls, sit in on office wide meetings, or help the teachers prepare for their classes or clubs. My Tuesdays and Thursdays differed, unless I was working on a longer project. Toward the end of my semester with TPP, I was working on a research project that required a lot of time, thus, most of my office days were spent working on that. My office days were interesting because I had different responsibilities. It was also nice to see the backbone of the program and all the research, time, and meetings required to keep the program going. On Wednesdays, I would go to one of the TOP clubs with a teacher from TPP and help facilitate. I would help with a variety of activities, facilitate communication with the group of girls we worked with, and assist with anything else. The TOP club was my favorite because I was able to form a bond with the group of girls that were in the club. They got to know me and opened up to me which I found was really rewarding. The club was super fun because each week was different and it was evident the girls enjoyed being there every week.

Lastly, my Fridays were spent at the middle schools observing the teachers teach the DTL curriculum. I would also assist them with handing out papers, collecting papers, administering the pre and post surveys, answering questions, and making sure the students stayed on task. Usually, the teachers taught multiple lessons in a day so I would follow them to each class. I also had the opportunity to participate in the teen health fair, I had the opportunity to directly speak to high school students about healthy relationships and answer any questions they



had. Finally, since I worked with the TOP club the whole semester, and was able to observe some of the problems TPP encountered, I was able to create a parent newsletter. This newsletter was meant to inform parents about activities and lessons their kids were a part of during the TOP clubs. I made the newsletter in both English and Spanish since many of the kids were Hispanic. My goal with the newsletter was to foster communication between the students, the teachers/club facilitators, and the parents. I also wanted to make sure parents had a tool to use when discussing difficult topics with their kids, so I included a hands on activity that required parent-child communication.

I found that one of the benefits when working with TPP was the flexibility with scheduling. Because my class schedule was mixed with morning and afternoon classes, I had to find a way to make my schedule work. TPP was flexible in that the mornings I did have free I could spend in the office, and those afternoons I had free, I could spend with the TOP club. In addition, since I had no Friday classes I had mornings free and was able to go to DTL classes. Another advantage TPP has is the variety that comes with the program. Since TPP offers various services, I was able to partake in many of them and get a whole sense of the program. I learned a lot in each opportunity I had, and I was able to interact with a variety of people. The downside to this, however, is that while you are in the office, you do not get to interact with many of the teachers because the teaching schedules vary. Office time can get a bit lonely; however, there are other interns to talk to.

A disadvantage I found was that I was not able to teach any of the DTL lessons because I was not in the classes consistently. My supervisor felt this would make it hard on the students because there would be a lack of consistency in teachers and teaching style. Since I was not always able to go to the schools, I did not get a complete sense of the progress students made from lesson to lesson. Furthermore, I feel that this internship is best suited for those who are able to take initiative, complete tasks on their own, have strong communication skills, have an interest in health education, and are flexible.

#### *What I learned*

Before starting my internship with TPP, my goal was to become a Licensed Professional Counselor. I have a strong interest in Health Psychology and I wanted to work with adults and help them live a healthy, holistic life. I also knew I had a strong interest in research and that I wanted to conduct research myself. This internship gave me insight as to what it takes to run an evidence-based program, the research it takes, the work in communicating with the grant providers, and the trial and error involved. I also learned about health education and how to communicate with adolescents about sensitive topics. I realized that I do have a passion for health education, and this internship solidified my plans for my future. I still want to pursue licensure as a professional counselor, but I may want to change the population from adults to adolescents and kids. This internship provided me with many opportunities in which I became more confident in my communication skills, my ability to work on my own, and realized how important it is to educate youth about health related topics.



*Fall 2014 – Christiana McGuigan*

### *Mission and Services*

The mission statement of Teen Pregnancy Prevention is “to provide information and skills to help teenagers make healthy choices and avoid risky behaviors, such as sexual activity and drug and alcohol use by presenting quality school- and community-based prevention services. TPP strives to see a reduction in teen pregnancy, ensuring that teens in our community grow into happy, healthy adults.” Currently, Harrisonburg’s pregnancy rate is 3x state rate. 68.4% of Harrisonburg youth claim to be abstinent. Of those being sexually active, only 54.8% use condoms.

TPP offers Teen Outreach Program (TOP) Clubs which facilitate service work, discuss its importance in the community, and educate/allow for communication about teen issues. These exist as afterschool programs in some middle schools and high schools, but have recently been developing as neighborhood clubs for residential areas with a high volume of teenagers. TPP also teaches Draw the Line/Respect the Line (DTL), a middle school sexual education and anti-peer-pressure program. It focuses on teaching middle schoolers about safe sex and setting/maintaining sexual limits based on long term goals. TPP’s third main program is Choosing the Best (CTB) which is a class that encourages middle schoolers to make healthy choices and endorses youth abstinence. Lastly, and most recently, TPP has been involved in health fairs to spread our message and encourage/facilitate the education of youth when it comes to health, sex, relationships and communication.

### *Experiences and Opportunities*

My Time at TPP was split: 60% was spent in the field and 40% in the office. Many positions at TPP had a balance of field work and office work so this was a realistic taste of what someone in this field would be responsible for. I personally worked Thursdays and Fridays from 9am to 3pm.

A typical Thursday involved me driving to the school to meet with the head teachers of Draw the Line/Respect the Line (a class on healthy choices and sexual education). There, I would assist the DTL teachers with their responsibilities. This usually included writing information on the board, answering questions, collecting and distributing papers, and aiding students when they were having difficulties or needed encouragement to stay on task. The DTL program teaches 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The curriculum was designed to best fit the student’s informational needs at their particular age. The majority of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade program focuses on how to identify and avoid peer pressure and how to open communication with parents. 7<sup>th</sup> grade moves on to more specific pressures like sexual activities, drinking and poor conduct. This is the grade where they begin to discuss ramifications of sex and how to decide what they’re comfortable with now/how to say ‘no’ before they are in a pressure-filled situation. Finally, in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the program really focuses on sexual education. There is a condom demonstration (which the school needs to approve before it can be shown), as well as sections dedicated to learning



about STD's, pregnancy, and emotional consequences of sex. This is also where students are taught how to say 'no' in tougher situations (ex. if they are getting enjoyment out of the action, if their partner is not happy with their 'no', etc.). In the final year of this program, students develop and discuss life goals as well as the variables (like pregnancy) that would delay or complicate these goals. For a DTL teacher, multiple classes are often taught in a day, sometimes there are gaps but often these classes are back-to-back. I often spent the entire Thursday at a given school, and the head teachers returned to that school for many days following to complete the class curriculum. This was unfortunate because I could never start and stay with an individual class so I lacked the chance to see them develop and demonstrate their learning. It also made me unaware of who would need the extra assistance during the class. Also, it prevented me from being able to teach any of the lessons because it would have lessened the students' comfort to have an unfamiliar teacher jump-in when they were used to the original head teachers. However, I did get to see a larger variety of classes than I would have under different circumstances. Also, having the full day in the classrooms helped my office work feel more relevant.

A typical Friday consisted of office work. I was responsible for inputting attendance, and amount of service hours, for our Teen Outreach Program clubs into our excel files and then filing the sheets into the filing cabinets. After, I would check in with my supervisor who would aid me in starting a project, continuing an existing one, or assisting another worker or intern in their work. I was encouraged to pursue my interests related to the program. In my time with this organization I researched, designed and finalized a pamphlet for parents to use as a resource when discussing sexual health with their LGBTQ teens. I also researched, designed and built an extensive display/activity for a school health fair which I was able to present to students directly. When I no longer had projects to complete and no one needed assistance I was able to study the DTL materials so I could be prepared for the classes I would later assist. In the middle of my time with TPP, the opportunity arose for me to assist a Choosing the Best class (an abstinence education class) which took place every Friday afternoon. So for many weeks, I traveled to the middle school to assist the same 7<sup>th</sup> grade class. This gave me the opportunity to get to know students, anticipate problem behavior, be seen as a consistent teaching authority, and see their progress.

This internship would be ideal for anyone looking to pursue teaching, community health, health counseling, or general work with youths. The program requires people with initiative who are good communicators. Also, the value of health education is a must.

### *Influences and Areas of Learning*

Through this internship, I have learned my passion for health education. My previous goals had been exceedingly general. I wanted to become a counselor for children and teens. After participating in TPP I realized the importance of getting information to youths, especially about topics that most adults aren't comfortable discussing. I have since tailored my goals to be more involved in the field of sexual health and hope to be a counselor for youth who have experienced sexual abuse and LGBTQ teens and their families. I have learned a lot about communication with youth and how to best approach sensitive issues. I am leaving this internship with more



patience, a realization of how important sexual education is, experience with administrative work, skills for communication with youth and more confidence in myself as a health professional.