



# Evaluation of the Making Proud Choices! HIV/STD Program in Washington, DC Schools

OCTOBER 2007

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes changes in self-reported sex and drug-use risk behaviors and behavioral intentions among Washington, DC youth following completion of the Making Proud Choices! comprehensive HIV/STD prevention program during the 2005–2006 school year. Survey responses from 806 youth in 11 senior high and 2 junior high schools were analyzed. Over 80% of respondents were African American and the average age of respondents was 15 years old. Forty-three percent of respondents lived east of the Anacostia River and 29.5% reported living in Ward 5.

The findings demonstrate significant positive changes in the behavior and behavioral intentions of Making Proud Choices! participants. From start to finish of the program, participants reported:

- decreased sexual activity;
- positive changes regarding condom use in sexually active youth; and
- decreased sex after alcohol or drug use and increased intentions to avoid this type of behavior.

Our findings demonstrate the effectiveness of a science-based, comprehensive HIV/STD prevention course reaching an audience of high school youths in DC schools. These findings support Metro TeenAIDS' firm commitment to complete and medically accurate sex education that equips teens and young adults with all the knowledge and skills needed to avoid risky behavior and make healthy decisions.

This data was collected as part of Metro TeenAIDS' commitment to understand the population we serve. We hope these findings will prove valuable to nonprofits and government agencies that work to implement effective HIV-prevention strategies for young people in the Washington, DC area. The resulting data will also inform our on-going efforts to support young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS and to provide effective services that meet their needs.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF MPC! PARTICIPANTS

### AGE GROUP

13–15 years old	55.2%
16–20 years old	44.8%

### GRADE LEVEL

7th	4.3%
8th	9.6%
9th	24.6%
10th	31.8%
11th	16.9%
12th	12.8%

### GENDER

Female	51.5%
Male	48.5%

### ETHNICITY

Hispanic or Latino	6.5%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	93.5%

### RACE

Black/African American	81.0%
White/Caucasian	4.9%
American Indian	0.7%
Asian/Pacific	2.1%
Islander	5.3%
Other Multiple Races	6.0%

MPC! participants report positive changes related to sexual risk-taking behaviors.

Medically accurate, unbiased comprehensive HIV and sex education is fundamental to helping youth make healthy decisions and decreasing new adolescent HIV infections in our city.

### Background on HIV and Youth in Washington

Washington, DC, has the nation's highest rate of new reports of AIDS—almost ten times the national average. Approximately one-half of all new HIV infections nationally occur among people under 25 years of age, and youth in the District of Columbia are no exception: HIV infection rates among the District's young people tripled for the period 2000 to 2005 compared to the previous five years.

Individual behaviors play a large role in the alarming growth of these rates. Although the proportion of students in Washington, DC engaging in sexual intercourse early has declined dramatically in the last decade, still 14% of local high schools students reported first having sexual intercourse before age 13. And in a previous Metro TeenAIDS survey, almost one-half (41%) of all sexually active youth polled

reported that they use a condom only "sometimes" or "never." Additionally, local STI rates for DC's youth are almost twice the national average. This puts many young people at especially high risk of HIV infection, as many studies indicate that a person infected with an STI is four to nine times more likely to contract HIV if exposed to the virus.

Based on this data, it is clear that youth are engaging in sexually risky behavior and there is a great need for extensive educational interventions and prevention efforts that arm youth with all the necessary information they need to make healthy choices. Young people in our city face many economic and social challenges and Making Proud Choices! is a firm foundation to increasing the many skills needed to decrease unhealthy behaviors and to combat their more systemic barriers.

### The MPC! Curriculum

Metro TeenAIDS, in partnership with City Year Washington, DC, administered a CDC-approved HIV/STD prevention curriculum, "Making Proud Choices!" (MPC!), in DC schools. The purpose of the program was to build skills and confidence in students to decline sex and/or negotiate safer sex using interactive modules which consisted in role-playing, brainstorming, small group discussion, and video presentations.

MPC! objectives included:

- increasing knowledge about prevention of HIV, STDs, and pregnancy;
- increasing positive attitudes and confidence to negotiate safer sex if having sex; and
- lowering the incidence of STD/HIV risk-associated sexual behavior.

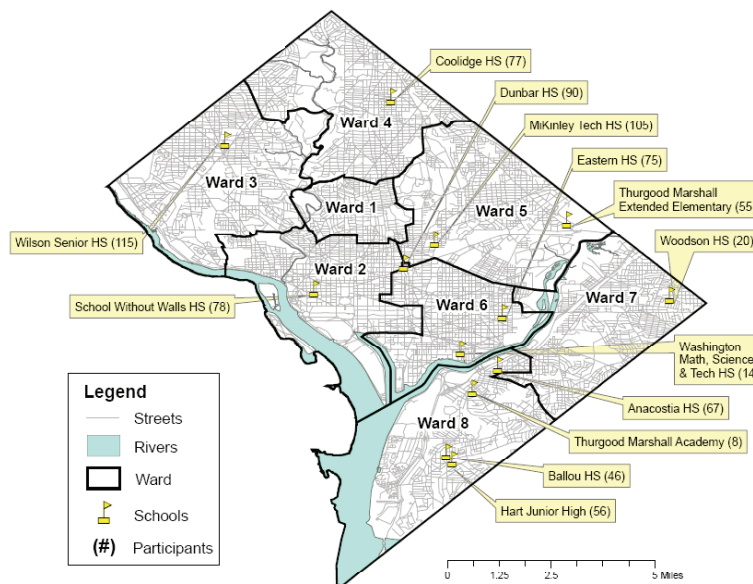
### Survey Method

Surveys were distributed to students before and after the completion of MPC!, which consisted of 5 to 11 sessions and was implemented in 13 DC schools during the 2005–06 school year. Survey questions included demographics, behavior in the previous 30 days (sex, condom-use, alcohol or drug-use), and future behavioral intentions.

Key behaviors and behavioral intentions analyzed were:

- Sex in the last 30 days
- Condom use in the last 30 days
- Alcohol and drug use in the last 30 days
- Intention to use condoms during oral, vaginal, or anal sex
- Intention to avoid sex after alcohol or drug use

### SCHOOL LOCATIONS FOR MPC! 2005–2006



Increasing condom use among sexually active youth is a major success and likely prevents the transmission of many new STIs and HIV infections.

## Results

A comparison of participant pre and posttest surveys taken before and after the program show that students who completed Making Proud Choices! exhibited various positive behavioral changes:

In the past 30 days	Pretest	Posttest
Sex	29.4%	27.5%
"Always" condom use among participants reporting sex after alcohol or drug use	75.6%	81.5%
Sex after alcohol or drug use	23.0%	18.2%

### Finding #1: Overall, MPC! participants reported a decrease in sexual activity.

- The frequency of self-reported sex in the last 30 days decreased from 29.4% to 27.5%
- Older participants (16–20 years old) were significantly more likely than younger participants (13–15 years old) to report having had sex in the past 30 days.

### Finding #2: Sexually active MPC! participants demonstrated positive changes regarding condom use.

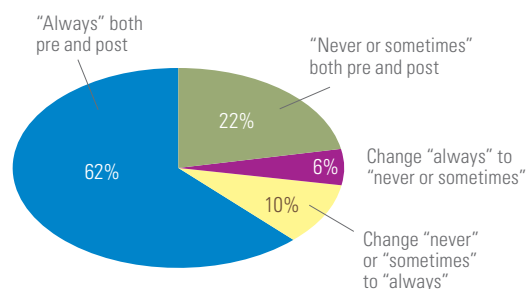
- 10% changed from "never" or "sometimes" using a condom at pretest to "always" using a condom at posttest; and
- Approximately two-thirds (62%) consistently reported "always" using a condom.

In addition, MPC! participants showed an increased intention to use condoms in the future:

- Both males and females reported a significantly increased intention to use a condom during vaginal sex;
- Males reported a significantly increased intention to use a condom during anal sex; and
- Females reported a significantly increased intention to use a condom during oral sex.

The latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicates that 31% of DC's middle school students and 58% of high school students have had sexual intercourse. Therefore, increasing condom use among sexually active youth and increasing intentions to use condoms in the future is a major success and prevents a significant number of potential STI and HIV infections and teen pregnancies.

### CHANGES IN CONDOM USE CONSISTENCY



### Finding #3: Sexually active MPC! participants reported a decrease in sexual behavior after alcohol or drug use.

- Overall, the percentage of participants reporting sex after drinking or getting high decreased from 23% to 18%;
- Among sexually active youth who reported having sex after alcohol or drug use at pretest, 13% reported a change to not having sex after alcohol or drug use at posttest;
- Among participants who reported having sex after alcohol or drug use, there was an increase in "always" using a condom from 76% to 82%;
- Participants showed a significant increase in intention to avoid sex after alcohol or drug use; and
- Participants attending more than 75% of MPC! sessions showed a significant decrease in alcohol or drug related sex.

## REPORT SUMMARY

The goal of MPC! was to initiate and reinforce behavior changes known to be associated with reduced risk for HIV infection. This analysis demonstrates the effectiveness of MPC! in encouraging and creating positive behavior changes and decreasing the risk of HIV infection in youth.

While parents, peers, community groups, and churches function as important avenues for HIV prevention messages, schools have the opportunity to provide a foundation for presenting HIV prevention to all students. According to new Youth Risk Behavior Survey findings, the level of in-school HIV/AIDS instruction over the past decade in Washington, DC middle and high schools has decreased considerably. DC schools must reverse this trend by increasing HIV education, mandating sufficient health education in a student's school career, and by allotting appropriate resources to train teachers and fund these programs.

While quantity of HIV education is vital, the quality of instruction is just as important. We believe that a complete, medically accurate, and unbiased HIV and sex education—lessons which provide young people with all the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy choices—is fundamental. Ensuring that students receive a comprehensive HIV and sex education and helping youth avoid risky behaviors and decrease their risk of HIV infection should be one of our city's chief priorities. Metro TeenAIDS believes that schools must play a pivotal role in the fight against HIV and we will continue to support them in this process.

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### CITY YEAR

City Year Washington, DC, a proud member of the AmeriCorps network, unites a diverse group of 17 to 24 year-olds for a year of full-time, team-based community service. The young idealists who serve with City Year, called "corps members," provide critically needed services to some of DC's most underserved youth including substance abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention education and literacy tutoring and academic support. Corps members also organize and implement leadership development opportunities for middle school students, and engage children and adults in transformative community service projects so that others can experience the power of service. One of seventeen City Year sites located across the country, City Year Washington, DC helps children and youth succeed, develops leaders, and improves the community.

To learn more, contact City Year Washington, DC at 202.776.7780 or visit our website at [www.cityyear.org/dc](http://www.cityyear.org/dc).



### METRO TEENAIDS

Metro TeenAIDS is the only local community health organization dedicated to supporting young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Through education, support, and advocacy, MTA prevents the spread of HIV; promotes responsible decision-making; and improves the quality of life for young people infected with, or affected by, HIV/AIDS. We will continue to seek out data and support research that can provide greater insight into how HIV/AIDS affects young people in our community.

To learn more, contact Metro TeenAIDS at 202.543.9355 or visit our website at [www.metroteenaid.org](http://www.metroteenaid.org).