Effective curricula #1: Safer Choices

The Safer Choices intervention consists of five primary components:

1. **School Organization**, featuring a School Health Promotion Council involving teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community representatives;

2. **Curriculum and Staff Development**, which includes a sequential 20-session classroom curriculum with 10 lessons for ninth-grade students and 10 lessons for tenth-grade students as well as staff awareness and training events;

3. **Peer Resources and School Environment**, which involves establishing a Safer Choices peer team or club that hosts school-wide activities;

4. **Parent Education**, featuring activities for parents such as parent newsletters, student-parent homework activities, and other parent events; and

5. **School/Community Linkages**, which involve activities to enhance students’ familiarity with and access to support services outside school, such as homework to gather information about local services, resource guides, presentations by HIV positive speakers.

**Training**

Training is an important aspect of the following components: School organization, Curriculum and Staff Development, and Peer Resources and School Environment. The developers recommend a one-day Program Overview Training for school teams made up of an administrator, school health coordinator, 9th and 10th grade teachers.

**Program Costs**

The Safer Choices program sells for $189 and includes:

- the two 10-lesson curricula, plus two workbooks;
- the Peer Leader Training Guide, plus two workbooks;
- the Implementation Manual; and
- a Safer Choices Activity Kit.

**Contact**

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Evidence-based Sexuality Education Curricula

Effective curricula include reproductive and anatomical facts and also practice skills to resist peer pressure and negotiate contraceptive use. The best sexuality education curricula offer opportunities for adolescents to clarify their beliefs, build values, and acquire skills in negotiation, compromise, assertiveness, and accessing services.³

To date, 6 curricula have particularly strong evidence of success in changing sexual risk-taking behaviors, including Safer Choices, described here.

The Minnesota Sexuality Education Resource Review Panel (MSERRP) has reviewed some of these curricula; visit www.moapp.org/projects/mserrp.asp

For more complete information on these curricula visit the ETR/RecAPP website:
www.etr.org/recapp/programs/index.htm

**Remember!**

Evaluated programs that have been found effective have common characteristics:

- Information about abstinence and contraception,
- Theoretical basis that emphasizes skill building,
- Focus on active learning through experiential activities,
- Acknowledgment of social and media influence on behavior,
- Age appropriate information and activities,
- Developmentally appropriate information and activities,
- Culturally appropriate messages,
- Exploration of personal values and feelings,
- Training for those implementing programs.

Successful interventions should include these components and may include other components such as community service, or may address additional topics such as gender roles or sexual orientation issues.

Successful programs will not decrease unsafe sexual activity in every situation nor prevent adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease transmission in every community. But by building on what is effective, you can create programs to help more adolescents become sexually healthy adults.