

Reducing Teen Childbearing among Latinos: An Innovative Anti-Poverty Strategy

Overview

Child Trends seeks to scale up and test a goal-setting program to reduce teen childbearing as a way to increase educational achievement and ultimately to reduce poverty among Latinos. To do this, we have developed a culturally relevant program that helps students in high schools with high Latino populations to develop behaviors, knowledge, attitudes, and relationships that support their ability to avoid pregnancy and achieve their educational goals. The program focuses on goal setting, but it also includes lessons and activities to help students delay sexual activity and to know about, and feel empowered to use, LARCs (long acting reversible contraceptives) to avoid pregnancy. The program is divided into three arcs: (1) El Camino and STAR (State your goal, Track your goal, Assert your goal, Reach your goal), (2) Reproductive biology, contraceptives, and condoms, and (3) Communication and healthy relationships.

Child Trends has been working collaboratively with a curriculum developer, school staff, expert advisors, community members, and students to develop and implement this intervention with diverse student populations; assess student acceptance, learning, and change in attitudes and behavior; assess parent and faculty acceptance; revise the curriculum as needed; and conduct a pilot test of the intervention, in preparation for an eventual rigorous evaluation.

Theory of Change

A program that facilitates positive peer, parent-child, and partner relationships, and emphasizes reducing the risk of teen pregnancy in the context of high educational achievement and academic supports will reduce exposure to unprotected sex, either by increased abstinence or improved contraceptive use, which will then reduce early pregnancy and thereby increase educational attainment and lower the risk of poverty.



Partnership

Child Trends has tested *El Camino* with diverse groups of students in Washington, DC; East Chicago, IN; Tacoma, WA; Baltimore, MD; Los Angeles, CA; and Philadelphia, PA. We have found that students resonate to the image of a road to reaching their goals, and student responses in the post-test survey indicate both that students liked *El Camino* and that they felt it affected their intentions and behaviors. As shown on the next page, they said that they were less likely to have sex and more likely to use contraception if they did have sex. The next step in this exciting project is to bring the curriculum to additional schools and then conduct a rigorous evaluation.

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Preliminary Data & Findings

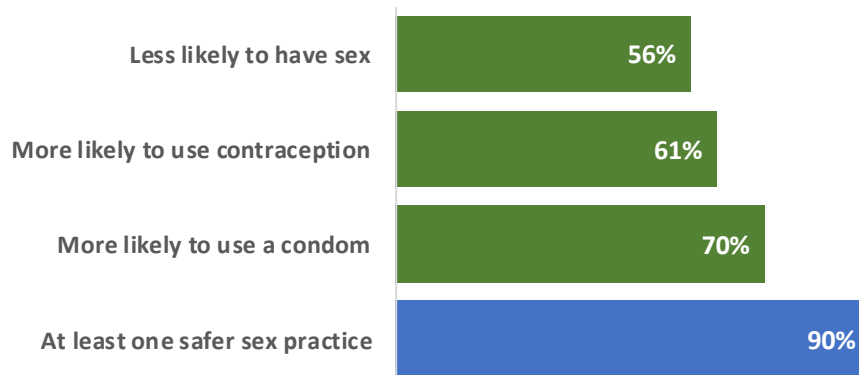
Student Demographics

To date, more than 320 students have participated in *El Camino*; we were able to collect survey data from about 120 students. The responses to our surveys indicate that we have served students from a assortment of racial or ethnic backgrounds, and who span a range of ages and with varying levels of sexual experience.

- **Age:** 14-20 years old; 16 years on average
- **Gender:** 57% female, 42% male
- **Race/Ethnicity:** 71% Hispanic, 22% black, 2% multiracial, 5% another race
- **Sexually experienced:** 44% of students reported they ever had sex at the time of pre-test

Preliminary Outcomes

At the post-test survey, we asked students if they thought *El Camino* made them more or less likely to have sex, and if they were to have sex, if it made them more or less likely to use contraception or a condom. Results were very encouraging, with the vast majority of students –90 percent– reporting it made them either less likely to have sex, more likely to use contraception, or more likely to use a condom.



Additionally, we assessed changes in students’ responses to questions from the pre- to post-test surveys. There were several notable changes across multiple sets of items, noted in the table below.

Outcome of interest	Number of items	Pre-test	Post-test	P-value
Self-efficacy about consent for sex (1-4; higher is more confident)	6	3.1	3.5	p < 0.01
Contraceptive knowledge (average % of correct responses)	3	49%	74%	p < 0.001
You have goals you want to accomplish before you have a child. (% of students strongly agreeing)	1	64%	80%	p < 0.05
At your age right now, having sexual intercourse creates problems. (% of students strongly agreeing)	1	28%	33%	p < 0.1