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**Addendum to “Condom Availability” Paper:
No Condom? No Way! Campaign (NCNW)**

Author: Tracey Hagedorn

Problem Description:

Several studies reveal that a significantly higher proportion of Milwaukee teens engage in unprotected sex compared to teens in many other major cities. While a majority (59.8%) of Milwaukee public high school students reported that they are currently sexually active, nearly one-third (32%) stated that they did not use a condom during their last sexual intercourse. Inevitably, the rates of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STI) among Milwaukee teens consistently rank at or near the nations highest.

Issue Paper Addendum Summary

In response to this health crisis, the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) initiated the No Condom? No Way! Campaign (NCNW) in the fall of 2002. This social marketing campaign not only encourages teens to identify and abstain from high-risk sexual behavior, but also promotes the correct and consistent use of condoms to sexually active teens. A major component of this campaign focuses on making free condoms and information on safer sex easily accessible in a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional outlets. NCNW primarily offers “prevention kits” and comprehensive, bi-lingual safer sex brochures for free to teens through partnerships with various establishments that serve as condom distribution sites. Each prevention kit includes 4 condoms, one packet of water-based lubricant and a bi-lingual insert that contains illustrated instructions for proper condom use and a comprehensive list of available reproductive health resources.

To date, the No Condom? No Way! Campaign has fostered 110 community partnerships and the Campaign is continuously expanding. The MHD has thus far distributed more than 720,000 condoms to at-risk teens through these partners; more than 115,000 alone during the summer months of 2006. Our partners include (but are not limited to): small health clinics that serve very specific populations; large family health centers, community based organizations, youth advocacy agencies, a few churches and alternative (non MPS) high schools, music and clothing stores that cater to teens, coffee shops, an all-ages nightclub, several entertainment production/promotion companies and of course, all Milwaukee Health Department clinics. The singular characteristic that emerges amid the diversity represented by this wide range of establishments is a primary focus on youth. While many of our partners may offer comprehensive services to a broad client or customer base, there must be an aspect of the agency or program that deals specifically with teen-aged youth. Our retail partners must also cater to youth

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interests; i.e. music, urban sportswear, entertainment. Location is another important factor in determining which partnerships to solicit. Establishments located within zip codes with high rates of teen pregnancy, in close proximity to high schools, and in high foot traffic areas frequented by teens make the most ideal condom distribution locations.

The manner in which condoms are distributed or made available varies from site to site, but distribution policy is negotiated and agreed upon by the MHD and the community partner at the time the partnership agreement is commenced. Condoms are usually offered to teens in one of three ways:

- Condoms are contained in a “fishbowl” in a visible and easily accessible location and teens are free to take them at-will on an anonymous, walk-in basis. All retail partners maintain this policy but many other partners distribute this way as well. Several youth-serving clinical or agency sites use this distribution method to offer condoms not only to their clients but to *any* teen that walks in.
- Condoms are *only* offered to patients, members, program participants or clients of the agency. They may either use the “fishbowl method” within the site so condoms can be taken at-will, teens may have to specifically request them, or condoms are only distributed during related sexual health programming.
- Condoms are distributed to teens via street outreach and/or at special events such as health fairs, concerts, parties and festivals. Many partners regularly maintain a presence at larger events and will offer free condoms at their reserved spaces or distribute them to teens in an outreach fashion.

Several of our partners have opted not to distribute condoms, but have signed on in support of NCNW and do offer our safer sex brochure and other comprehensive sexual health education materials. Although teens served by these partners cannot obtain free condoms at these particular locations, they are provided with resources that will connect them with all of our distribution sites. Our NCNW “STD brochure” prominently advertises both our website www.nocondomnoway.com and the number to our phone tree: (414) 286-3631.

Both the website and phone tree link teens to the telephone numbers and addresses of all of our free condom distribution sites. It should be noted that only the sites that distribute condoms to *all* teens on an anonymous, walk in basis are fully advertised. The sites are sub-divided by area of town so teens may quickly find the location nearest them. While these systems allow any teen with a phone and/or a computer quick access to information on where to get free condoms, “word of mouth” is perhaps the primary way that this information is shared amongst youth. Retail businesses are especially quick to observe this type of communication among their customers. Several of these partners will recount witnessing a single customer’s discovery of the free condom bowl and then many

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subsequent return visits by that same teen. Each time the teen may be accompanied by a different group of friends (who may then return again on their own or along with entirely different sets of acquaintances). Many partners report that they now have several individuals or groups of teens that only visit the site for the sole purpose of obtaining free condoms; they no longer purchase any merchandise. This should be noted as a major concern among retail partners, although many accept it as an inevitable sign of success for the NCNW program. Offering free condoms to teens in retail locations by way of a “fishbowl” is clearly an attempt to reduce perceived barriers of access and embarrassment. There are obvious drawbacks to this method as well. Successful retail locations are most often (but not always) larger, well established businesses that employ enough staff to more closely monitor condom distribution. It should be noted that several partners have pulled out of the Campaign or ceased to offer free condoms because they are unable to control litter or other disruptive behavior. There have been several instances of groups of mostly younger neighborhood children causing disruption in retail sites by littering, using profane language and taking large numbers of the free kits to sell or otherwise use for unintended purposes. However, it is asking quite a lot of our retail partners to distribute condoms in another manner other than via “fishbowl”.

Recommendations

It has been nearly four years since the No Condom? No Way! Campaign began distributing free prevention kits and safer sex brochures to teens throughout the city of Milwaukee. While much has been accomplished and learned during this time, several issues have also arisen that are crucial to the successful continuance of this Campaign:

- ***The NCNW Campaign must be marketed to a “Mainstream” audience through “Mainstream” means.***

The only “social marketing” NCNW has been allowed thus far is an advertising campaign on city buses and transit shelters. Further advertising, including media, such as radio and/or television would be ideal. NCNW has been approached in the past by representatives from “V100” to advertise on their radio station. This particular station is widely listened to by our target population, and has the data to prove it. It was made clear by the station representative that neither V100, nor Clear Channel (their parent corporation), would object to the marketing of condoms and/or safer sex messages to their audience. Radio advertising such as this could promote the Campaign and comprehensive safer sex messages to thousands of teens, and would likely facilitate broad expansion of the condom distribution campaign.

Also, due to the sensitive nature of this campaign, our free condom distribution sites tend to be independent rather than corporate-owned. The owners or managers of independent sites tend to be much more accessible, independent minded and socially/politically progressive. Neither are they (usually) beholden to

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strict franchise policies or stockholders. While I believe this has lent NCNW an air of “underground credibility”, the effects of teen pregnancy and STD infection are widespread and definitely mainstream. No doubt that more teens can be reached through mainstream media outlets like radio, or by offering free condoms in mainstream retail outlets such as Wal-Mart. Increased advertising and subsequent demand for free condoms could also ultimately lead to more mainstream retailers offering to serve as distribution sites. There is a wealth of evidence to support the assertion that the business community is often an integral partner in promoting important public health initiatives. Although there will undoubtedly be controversy surrounding any health initiative involving teenagers and sex, I believe that support from key, mainstream area businesses can and must be obtained if we are to reach our target population.

- ***A permanent, part-time staff member should be hired to assist the Program Coordinator.***

Until quite recently, there has not been a full time staff member solely devoted to working on the NCNW Campaign. However, NCNW has continued to expand at an exceedingly rapid pace. During the summer of 2006, an intern was hired to assist with the Campaign for a full 6 weeks. Her objectives included creating ten (10) new partnerships, facilitating one volunteer packaging event and completing at least one planned focus group session. While these were indeed ambitious goals, the six week period while the intern was employed proved to be extremely productive. NCNW succeeded in creating almost 40 new partners, distributing about 75,000 condoms, packaging about 50,000 condoms, and successfully finishing the script for the focus groups. The focus groups were unable to be completed since time ran out, and the rapid growth of the campaign has quickly expanded the duties and responsibilities of one single, full-time appointee. The most obvious obstacle is maintaining a sufficient inventory of packaged condoms. One case of 1,000 (which makes 250 packages- the standard amount for distribution to partners) requires 1 and ½ hours for a single person to complete, and the full time coordinator has far too many responsibilities to concentrate any real amount of time on this activity. A part time staff person could package condoms as well as oversee volunteer groups for this activity. The daily operations involved with maintaining condom distribution for 110 partners now consumes so much time and effort, that any additional projects (of which there are always several) put the campaign in serious jeopardy of being unable to keep up with demand. A part time staff person could be easily trained to assist with the maintenance part of this project; a teenager that could serve in the dual role of peer ambassador would be ideal.

- ***Creation of the corresponding peer ambassador initiative should become a top priority:***

Several studies have revealed the efficacy of youth to youth programming. Local teens who have participated in our own focus groups have also widely reported

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that they feel much more comfortable discussing reproductive health issues with their peers, rather than with adults.

The desire to create an outreach program that involves the hiring of several teenage “peer ambassadors” has been on the NCNW “wish list” for quite some time. However, without adequate funding, this aspect of the broader project has remained elusive. Now that there are sufficient funds to staff an outreach component for NCNW, the creation of this program and the hiring and training of several youth peer ambassadors should become a top priority. Since there is currently only one person devoted to NCNW full time, assistance should be given to the project coordinator in order to help facilitate the creation and establishment of the peer initiative. The program coordinator should be trained and properly equipped to instruct and otherwise support a part-time peer staff (who will also need to be thoroughly trained in both comprehensive sexuality education and outreach education). Training in such specialties is currently available through local organizations such as Planned Parenthood (whose programming in these specific areas is quite successful) and should be utilized at the present time. Other MHD staff that have had sufficient experience in this field(s) could offer assistance jump starting this portion of the program.

- ***Outspoken, cooperative and vocal political support for condom distribution and comprehensive sexuality education for all teens is crucial:***

Clear and strong support for comprehensive sexuality education for all Milwaukee teens and condom distribution to sexually active teens would be an extremely helpful tool for soliciting support from potential partners and other community leaders. Milwaukee officials must not continue to shy away from addressing issues surrounding teens and sexuality. The cooperation of local officials, such as Aldermen would provide keys links into target neighborhoods where the teen pregnancy rates are highest.

- ***The cooperation of the Milwaukee Public School System is key:***

Partnership between the MHD and the Milwaukee Public School (MPS) system has long been a goal of the MHD. Cities in which public school students readily have access to condoms and reproductive health information tend to have lower rates of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease infection among their teen population. Mr. Borzon provides a wealth of evidence for this in his paper, so I will not elaborate much further on this subject.

One of the primary objectives of the No Condom? No Way! Campaign is to provide access to condoms and quality sexual health information wherever there are large groups of teens. Being prohibited from reaching teens in the one place where they gather en masse on a daily basis has definitely impeded our efforts to ensure condom access, as well as provide teens with information about where to obtain

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free condoms. The campaign has been greatly affected by this MPS policy, and it has played a major role in shaping the very nature and direction of NCNW. The MHD has to seek out specific community partners that have access to teens, since we cannot directly access them while they are in school. It has been difficult to secure partnerships near high schools, since several of them do not have any viable businesses nearby that could dually serve as condom distribution sites.