New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault

Communicating Effectively about Support Service Information: What works with Teens Seeking Help for Violence in their Lives?

Summary Report of Findings
NYC Teen Health Map Evaluation

Executive Summary

- *Participants provided their thoughts on the NYC Teen Health Map, expressing how much they liked the practical format.* In a previous study, youth emphasized that paying attention to this aspect when developing youth-specific resources was important. In the case of the NYC Teen Health Map, they were pleased that the map was small, useful, very discreet (no information on the outside), and that they could carry it with them.

- When asked *if the information provided in the NYC Teen Health Map was useful and important to them*, students agreed that it was not only important to them but also to their friends for the following reasons:
    - It was the first time they had a resource material in their hands that compiled so much information they thought should be available to all teenagers.
    - They recognized the importance of sharing this information with their peers if they knew someone who needed help.
    - The sole fact of having the NYC Teen Health Map made them feel more confident about what to do and where to look for services.

- *The participants emphasized the importance of the confidentiality aspect of the services.* They agreed that most teenagers would be more likely to seek help if they knew their parents were not going to find out about it.

- When asked *if they would like to see the information provided in the NYC Teen Health Map somewhere else*, most of the participants indicated that one of the places was their school but also on TV commercials, in this way more teens would have access to the information.

- Surprisingly, when asked what they disliked about the map or what they thought was confusing, they all agreed that some aspects of the information provided in the map should be more explicit and accurate. For instance, they pointed out the inaccuracy of the information regarding HIV/AIDS tests.

- The students suggested that *the best way to distribute the NYC Teen Health Map was in school as part of a workshop with their teacher where the map is given to all students*. They emphasized the privacy aspect of getting resource materials, and although they thought it was important to share the information with their peers, they

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also felt that looking for resource material individually could expose them to their peers' judgment and questions.

I. <u>Introduction and Objectives</u>

The Alliance is researching the effectiveness of the NYC Teen Health Map to address the problem of lack of adequate information for teens regarding access to health services. The Alliance initiated this project in February, 2006 by organizing four focus groups with teens to determine an effective means for developing and distributing resource information to young people. Youth emphasized that the more functional and practical the product, the more likely they are to keep it and use it in the future. The Alliance used this information to develop the NYC Teen Health Map, a foldable pocket subway map on one side and comprehensive adolescent-friendly services resource guide on the back.

After its distribution to four high schools and several youth-serving organizations in NYC in fall 2006, the Alliance conducted a qualitative evaluation of the Map's utility and appeal to the youth that have received the map and gathering youth input about any revisions that should be made.

The main objective of this study is to revise the NYC Teen Health Map based on youth feedback. Revisions may include changing the language, clarifying options for teens, and/or changing the layout and appearance of the Map to make it more useful for teens.

II. <u>Methodology</u>

For the revision of the NYC Teen Health Map, the Alliance used a focus group discussion as an informative tool to obtain young people's thoughts and feedback on the NYC Teen Health Map. To find out about the effectiveness of the material produced, three main areas were covered:

1. Questions on the format of the NYC Teen Health Map
2. Questions on the content of the NYC Teen Health Map
3. Questions on the distribution of the NYC Teen Health Map

Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 18 teenagers. The participant's ages ranged from 14-17 years and parent consent forms were obtained for all of them. All the focus groups were conducted at the High School for Leadership and Public Service during June of 2007. Each discussion lasted for approximately 45 minutes, and all groups were moderated by the Research Associate of the Alliance.

Following is a summary of the findings from these research groups.

III. Findings

General thoughts on the usefulness and the format of the NYC Teen Health Map: Young people's feedback

- When asked what they thought about the NYC Teen Health Map and whether they could tell what kind of information was listed in the Teem Health Map, *a significant number of participants mentioned to be pleased to have a useful tool that also provided important information to them*:
  - "Yes, and it's actually very helpful because there were times that I was looking for this and I didn't' know what to do." *Male student 15*
  - "I think is actually good because certain teens would not want to go to their parents to tell them certain things, you know… like their boyfriend might hit them or something, or somebody in the school might hit them… they wouldn't wanna go to their parents to tell them, so it is good that they have different programs around the city in every borough that teenagers can go to and talk to somebody about it and get help." – *Female student 16*
  - "I also like how you can go to a doctor without telling your parents because for some people that might think they might have contracted something and don't wanna tell their parents that they are sexually active or they have a boyfriend, to see a doctor without their parents knowing, I think is pretty nice." *Male student 15*
  - "I think is very efficient too because not everybody want to talk to anybody, but is like if anything happens suddenly you can know where to go so you can talk to somebody." *Female student 15*
  - "Is really helpful, like it tells you places to go, how to get there, know what they do… and it tells you languages they speak, you know, is really good and really helpful, tells you stuff that I didn't know." – *Male student 15*
  - "I like that it gives you a bunch of places that you can go and then if you see one that is close to where you live you just turn the map and 'oh! It's right here!'… I can take this train or this." – *Male student 15*
  - I think is creative and very helpful because a lot of people, a lot of kids I mean, they always like… they end up getting pregnant or something, they have problems, they worry about who should they run to talk, because is always hard to go and talk to your parents right away, and this is a way to help them. – *Female student 15*
  - "There is nothing I really dislike about it. Is cool that you have a map on the other side and then the directions on the other." *Male student 16*

- The participants were also asked about the foldable format and the colors of the NYC Teen Health Map, and the color on the outside, *and all of them thought it was the right size, easy to carry with them, and the colors caught their attention to the information even more:*
  - "Is good because is easy to take it anywhere" – *Female student 14*
  - "I can put it in my wallet, it fits perfectly!" – *Male student 16*

- □ "They are [the colors] vibrant and they stick out… like if it was all in one color it would be boring." – *Female student 16*
- □ "It catches your attention. The colors is like, ok I got to look at this cause is so colorful or something. If is a plain color I am going to look at it and I'm gonna be like 'eh'" – *Female student 17*
- □ "I like the different colors in the sections because it shows you where it is, what to look at" – *Female student 17*
- □ "The good thing with the colors is that it narrows it down, and you know where to look" – *Male student 16*
- □ "Is cool because no one knows what it is… it doesn't say "map" – *Female student 16*
- □ "Yes, I would [carry it with me] and it would be nice to have more to hand them out to friends because they are small and they can fit in your wallet." *Male student 15*

Revising the information: teens' opinions on the content of the NYC Teen Health Map

A. General
- When asked if the information provided in the NYC Teen Health Map was important to them, the students strongly emphasized that aside from being important to them, it was also important to their friends. The shared their thoughts about ways in which they could help their friends:
  - □ "Yes, because you might know somebody who is in a situation and you can actually help them. It can happen to you, it can happen to anybody and you can give it to them." *Female student 16*
  - □ "You know, you got to check this things up every once in a while, keep the information just in case." *Male student 15*
  - □ "Of course! Because is not only important to you, like you are not in a situation where you need to talk to somebody, but you don't know, maybe your friends needs it and they haven't talk to you but when they bring that up with you then you are like "oh, I don't need it, but this [the map] comes straight to your mind, oh I got this, maybe they can use this. Give this to them, oh you see what this says, they can read it over and it can help." *Female student 15*

- Another important aspect of the Map is the confidentiality policy of the services listed, and the participants were asked whether or not this was clear to them. Overall, although almost all participants indicated that they liked the fact that they did not have to tell their parents about these places when they needed help, their opinions were mixed regarding the confidentiality aspect:

  → Some students responded positively and suggested changes to the format:
  - □ "Yeah. Most the organizations you go to are based on confidentiality so I don't think that will be a problem for anyone." *Male student 16*

- ▫ "Yep [is clear]. Well, it should highlight the whole section where it says "without your parents' permission." Because I look at this and I think, wow, what if they send a bill to by house saying that I went to get checked there or whatever…" *Female student 17*
- ▫ "I think this part where it says 'in private and without your parents' permission for free" should be bolded or something." *Male student 15*

- → Another group of participants showed to be reluctant and questioned a situation in which the service provider should inform the parents:
  - ▫ "But isn't that when you brake the law or something they have to tell your parents?" *Female student 15*
  - ▫ "I don't believe this that they are not gonna tell your parents." *Female student 14*
  - ▫ "Me neither, because people always say that 'I have to tell your parents because you are a minor and your family need to know'." *Male student 15*
  - ▫ "Is like, if a 15 year old is dating somebody who is 32 and goes and talks to them, you are telling me that they are not gonna tell their parents? That's illegal." *Female student 15*

- Also, the participants also shared additional thoughts on the language, quantity of information, and other aspects:
  - ▫ "First it tells you what it does, then it tells you the phone numbers and then it tells you the locations, so is in good order." *Male student 15*
  - ▫ "You shouldn't put too much information, so it's good it has the numbers, address and what it does." *Female student 16*
  - ▫ "The information on how to get there is helpful. It tells you where you can go and what trains to take." *Female student 17*
  - ▫ "Can suicidal hotlines be included in this information?" *Female student 17*
  - ▫ "The titles are big so that you know what they are talking about" *Male student 15*
  - ▫ "Maybe it should highlight what you guys think is most important for victims to know." *Female student 17*

B. The different sections and aspects of the Map: Teens concerns and suggestions
- A significant number of participants understood what the different section meant, however, also a great number of students brought up interesting comments regarding the information. Following, the aspects that created confusion or concern among the students, and their comments:

  1. *If it happened up to 4 days ago… If it happened more than 4 days ago.* Although they had to read through this twice to understand, some participants felt that if it did not happen within that time limit, they just could not get help. They referred to this aspect as "exclusive" (leaving other teens out) and

indicated that the opportunity to get help should be open to everybody, regardless of when it happened.

- ▫ "What I don't like is that if it happened more than 4 days ago you don't have many options… -- "what if it happened 4, 5 years ago?"
- ▫ "Because is giving them a time limit. You know, if it happened a week ago and they are still scared at the fact that it happened, you know… 4 days ago, I can't go now because they might not let me in because it happened a week ago." *Male student 15*
- ▫ "But some people also feel that if it happened like 5, 6 years ago it doesn't really matter anymore even though it affects their lives, they feel that they can put it behind them, which is like "good" to break it down if it happens a week ago than if it didn't." *Male student 15*
- ▫ "What if they just want help? Maybe somebody can help them through it, instead of you know, because things happened in the past, in the present and –God forbid- they could be scared of the future, so yeah, this gives them a 'time limit' and it shouldn't do that." *Female student 16*
- ▫ "Are the same options still valuable whether or not it was more than 4 days ago? If yes, then why don't just leave it as a whole list of options without the time." *Female student 17*
- ▫ "You can have pointers where ' right away' or something rather than "4 days ago" *Female student 17*
- ▫ "The 4 days is kind of screwed. Does it really matter whether or not it happened before than 4 days or more than 4 days to go to ask for help or call a hotline to know where to go? Or can you just go to any of these places regardless? Is not clear then." *Male student 15*
- ▫ "Well, if I was to read this, like when it comes to public I get really picky about things then, if I were to see that then I would be like "there is a problem. It was more than a month ago. Why does that make me any more different? I would be scared, I would be like… they are not going to be able to help me as much probably and that's why they keep on separating and categorizing into two different things." *Female student 17*
- ▫ "What don't they say "IF IT HAPPENED RECENTLY", because that "4 days ago" you know, some people might be like 'wait' but… you know" *Female student 17*

2. *After someone forced you to have sex or hurt you sexually YOU CAN GET HELP… You can get an HIV test.* Some participants noticed that this information was not accurate indicating that it takes up to three months for an HIV test to show whether someone is positive or not. Some of their comments were:
   - ▫ "It says if you are rape, and it happened up to 4 days ago, one of the things that it has under here is that you can get and HIV test, but is not gonna show… so, what do they put that as an option? Because it takes three months for it to show in your blood." *Female student 17*

- "We want the information to be more accurate, because you can say 'oh I don't have HIV this day, but then you come later on and then you are like 'what the heck is this'" *Male student 15*
- "Cause I mean, is gonna come out negative when you get it done, and so three months later if you happened to get it, is gonna come up positive and then you are gonna be like "wait a minute, I came up negative how come I am positive now?'" *Female student 17*

3. A small number of students were concerned that going to see a doctor would imply revealing their parents' insurance information. In that same line, they also felt that calling a hotline that had a 1-800 number was risky and their parents could find out by checking the phone bill.
   - "Yeah because if it shows up on your parent's bill or something they would be like "what is this number you are calling to… what numbers are these, I am gonna call them right now!" *Male student 15*
   - "What about the time? Are these a 24 hr hotline? Because sometimes like the thought won't leave your mind and what if you want an answer at 2 o'clock in the morning, you can't sleep and you want to talk to somebody? Or maybe thinking about killing yourself at 2o'clock in the morning but there is no one to talk to? So should specify timing…" *Female student 17*
   - "I think the whole think "without your parents permission should all be highlighted, all in red" because it says 'without' but then you might think oh yeah I won't need health insurance, probably that's what they mean by 'without.'" *Female student 17*

4. One student pointed out that at least one hotline that dealt with suicidal kids should be added to the list
   - "I think it's fine, but I also think that it should say that … I don't know why I keep getting this in my mind that they should specify that they will be willing to talk to suicidal kids, cause some people when you first get raped, you know, you are really like traumatized, you don't know what to do, you might get depressed and sometimes when you get depressed you get suicidal. So, it should say like "if you are feeling any type of emotion or suicidal or whatever that they can also help with that." *Female student 17*

Where to access and distribute the NYC Teen Health Map

- The participants came up with different ideas on where to distribute the NYC Teen Health Map. A significant number of students indicated that the best way to do this was through a workshop or as part of a class where all students can receive a Map. Some of their suggestions were:
  - "Health programs"

- "Don't distribute them in the streets because when I get something that way I just throw it away as soon as I cross the next block." *Male student 15*
- "Yeah, in schools, because the teacher who is handing them out will explain first what this is about so we have the option to keep them… rather than hand them out in the middle of the street." *Female student 16*
- "Or maybe have something like a set up [in school] with a table where you have this and other information… - [someone replies] But that wouldn't work because then people would ask you "are you getting beaten by your boyfriend?" *Female and Male students, 17 and 15*
- "Have small groups discussion that hand them out so that they… people would actually value them more, they will want to keep them." *Female student 16*

- In addition, the participants were also asked to mention places where they could have access to the NYC Teen Health Map, and these were their suggestions:
  - Nurse's office
  - An opening page on the computers at school (a screen saver)
  - "Oh! You know what they did, in the girls bathroom… In the girls bathroom, you know the thing they put up, on the back of the door when you are gonna use the bathroom, and when you close the door and you are gonna pee, you look up and that thing is right on your face!" You are like 'oh wow, thanks'" *Female student 17*
  - "Well, the same thing they can put in the boys bathroom." *Male student 15*
  - In school.
  - Teen centers
  - Hospitals
  - Computers
  - Tape it on the pop-corn box. Hey, kids go to the movies and they will see this because they get pop-corn.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the findings from the youth focus groups, some changes to the NYC Teen Health map are suggested:
→ Clarify what it means to have access to the services within the 4-day time frame. Youth emphasized this was not clear to them and suggested instead pointers, such as: "If it happened recently," "get help right away."
→ Also, make the first section (Just in case you need help) as one list of things teens can do, instead of breaking it down into two parts depending on how long ago it happened.
→ We need to make sure that all the information in the Map is accurate. Specify the time needed for an HIV/AIDS test to show positive or negative results.
→ Highlight all the parts that indicate "In private and without your parent's permission."
→ Highlight what services are offered to teens for free.

→ Indicate whether the hotline numbers are free of charges and take out the 1-800 numbers. Also, highlight the NYPD hotline since is the only one that specifies "they might tell your parents if they are under 18 and decide to report"