

**Teen Outreach Program (TOP):
Little Evidence of Effectiveness¹ and Significant Evidence of Harm**

A Summary of Eight Studies

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Study's First Author	Sexual Initiation	Unprotected Sex	Condom Use	Recent/ Frequent Sex	Number of Sex Partners	Pregnancy	STDs
Allen, et al, 1997 ²	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	End of Program only (no long-term measure)	Not Measured
Daley, et al, 2015 ³	No Effect at 10 Months Post-Program (only at end of 9-mo. program)	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	No Effect at 10 Months Post-Program (only at end of 9-mo. program)	Not Measured
Francis, et al, 2015 ⁴	No Effect	No Effect	Not Measured	No Effect	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured
Seshadri, et al, 2016 ⁵	Not Measured	No Effect	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured
Philliber, et al, 2016 ⁶	Not Measured	Not Measured	No Effect	No Effect at 12 Months Post-Program (only at end of 9-mo. program)	Not Measured	Negative Effect (Increased for females)	Not Measured
Robinson, et al, 2016 ⁷	No Effect	No Effect	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured	Not Measured
Walsh-Buhi, et al, 2016 ⁸	Subgroup Effect (Females only) at end of 9-month program	Not Measured	Subgroup Effect (Females only) at end of 9-mo. program	Negative Effect (Increased for Sexually Experienced youth, Cohort 2)	Not Measured	No Effect	Not Measured
			Negative Effect (Decreased for a Male subgroup, Cohort 1)				
Daley, et al, 2019 ⁹	Subgroup Effect (Males only) at 10 mo. Post-Program	Not Measured	No Effect at 10 months Post-Program	No Effect at 10 months Post-Program	Not Measured	Subgroup Effect (Females only) at 10 months Post-Program	

Color Key: Red=Negative/Harmful Effect, Tan=No sustained effect for target population, White=Did not measure, Grey=Positive effects rendered irrelevant by negative/harmful program effects.

Even though the *Society for Prevention Research* and *Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development* stipulate that negative effects should disqualify a program from the label “effective,” HHS’s *Teen Pregnancy Prevention* website includes *Teen Outreach Program* on its list of programs “showing evidence of effectiveness,” in spite of multiple negative program impacts on important outcomes as found in two studies.¹⁰

Teen Outreach Program (TOP) Summary of Evidence

- In 8 studies, there was no evidence of program effectiveness:¹ no findings of positive impact for the target population (i.e., both males and females) that lasted beyond the end of the program.
- There were more null and negative effects than positive effects (all 8 studies were conducted by independent evaluators).
- The few positive effects were only for a subgroup of the target population or were not sustained beyond the end of the program.
- There were multiple negative effects found for TOP participants: an increase in teen pregnancy for females in one study; in another study, a decrease in condom use for males who initiated sex and an increase in sexual activity for youth who were already sexually experienced (males and females). These negative effects should negate TOP's designation as an "effective" prevention program.¹⁰

Notes & References

1. "Effectiveness" is defined here according to scientific standards or criteria grounded in the scientific field of prevention effectiveness research. These criteria are: long-term protective effects (lasting at least 12 months after the program), for the intended or target population of program recipients (not just a subgroup or subsample), on a key protective outcome (abstinence, condom use—especially consistent condom use, pregnancy, or STDs/STIs), without other negative program effects occurring on important outcomes, and taking into account the preponderance of evidence (especially studies by independent evaluators, i.e., not the program authors). See the work of: Flay BR, Biglan A, Boruch RF, Castro FG, Gottfredson D. (2005). Standards of Evidence: Criteria for Efficacy, Effectiveness and Dissemination. *Prev Sci*, 6(3):151–175; Gottfredson DC, Cook TD, Gardner FEM, Gorman-Smith D, Howe GW, Sandler IN, Zafft KM. (2015). Standards of Evidence for Efficacy, Effectiveness, and Scale-up Research in Prevention Science: Next Generation. *Prev Sci*, 16(7):893-926. doi: 10.1007/s11121-015-0555-x; Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development: Blueprints Standards. Available at: <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/blueprints-standards/>
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