Call for Studies that Examine Predictors of Future Sexual Behavior or its Consequences

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: September 5, 2023

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks studies to include in a systematic review of possible predictors of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, and associated sexual risk behaviors. Submissions are due by September 5, 2023.

Background

Rigorous impact evaluations funded by the HHS have produced an extensive body of evidence about the effectiveness of teen pregnancy prevention (TPP) programs. To date, the HHS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Evidence Review (TPPER) has identified 52 TPP programs with evidence of effectiveness in improving youth's sexual behavior outcomes and their consequences, such as rates of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and engagement in risky sex acts (Forrester et al., 2023). TPPER currently focuses solely on these sexual behavior outcomes; however, this restrictive lens might not provide a complete assessment of the effectiveness of TPP programs. HHS is exploring a possible expansion of eligible outcomes for the TPPER by identifying possible longitudinal predictors of sexual behaviors and their consequences.

Sexual behaviors (and their consequences) can be short- or long-term outcomes of TPP programs, depending on the population and content. Some programs focus on sexual health content and serve sexually active populations and might expect to see short-term outcomes on sexual behaviors or their consequences. Other programs might expect effects on sexual behaviors or their consequences in the long term, after affecting short-term measures believed to predict those longer-term outcomes. Examples of these predictive measures can include:

- Factors that are nonbehavioral: sexual knowledge, attitudes, or intentions
- Antecedent behaviors: holding hands and sexual touching
- Mediating or moderating behaviors: communication with parent about sex, substance use

Although systematic reviews have identified some of these measures (for example, Kirby, 2002; Buhi & Goodson, 2007; Ferrand et al., 2021), reviews in this area typically include cross-sectional examinations of correlations between measures rather than longitudinal studies.

Purpose

This call for studies begins an effort to identify possible longitudinal predictors of sexual behaviors and their consequences. Studies must investigate the relationship between non-

behavioral, antecedent, or mediating or moderating measures with sexual behaviors and their consequences. The analysis must be conducted using a longitudinal dataset, with the predictive measures collected prior to the sexual behavior measure.

New manuscripts will be identified through a literature search and this public call for studies. Studies submitted in response to this call should:

- **Use quantitative data, statistical analysis, and hypothesis testing to examine the relationship between potential predictors and sexual behaviors and their consequences.**

- **Evaluate a predictive relationship that links a predictor variable to subsequent sexual activity, number of sexual partners, contraceptive use and/or consistency, STIs, pregnancy, or birth.** The potential predictors can be nonbehavioral (for example, sexual knowledge, attitudes, or intentions), antecedent (for example, holding hands and sexual touching), or mediating or moderating measures (for example, communication with parent about sex, substance use). These predictor variables should be conceptualized as a potential consequence/outcomes of a TPP program – for this reason, research that shows a predictive relationship between demographic or other time-invariant variables and sexual behavior outcomes will not be examined.

- **Assess the relationship using longitudinal data.** The possible predictive variable must be collected at an earlier timepoint than the data on sexual behaviors, to enable an argument that the predictor causes a subsequent behavioral change.

- **Focus on U. S. youth ages 20 or younger at the measurement of the predictor variable.** The collection of data on the predictor variables of interest must occur while the respondents are 20 or younger, on average.

- **Provide a detailed description of the analysis, including target population, the study design, the analysis methods, and findings.** Paper abstracts, slide show presentations, and other informal study descriptions generally do not provide enough information and therefore will not be considered for review.

- **Be accessible to the public through a website, as a published journal article or book chapter, or upon request from the study author.** The studies received through this call will not be publicly distributed or published. However, to ensure transparency in the review process, any study considered for review must be available to the public. Authors should not submit confidential manuscripts or evidence that is not otherwise publicly available.

- **Be published since 2008.**

Submission Instructions

Submissions should be emailed in MS Word or PDF format to: TPPEvalTA@mathematica-mpr.com. The deadline for submissions is **September 5, 2023.** Authors will receive acknowledgement of receipt of their submission.