

Preventing STD's and Pregnancy Among Juvenile Justice Youth The Writers' Pool—July 2005

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system are at higher risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and for adolescent pregnancy. GUIDE's juvenile justice Family Intervention Specialists (FIS's) in Prince George's County (Amina Aleem and Lisa Britt) were



provided the opportunity recently to address these issues through a special grant from the Prince George's County Interagency Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (ICAPP). The special community incentive grant provided funding for Ms. Aleem and Ms. Britt to obtain prevention materials and

evidence-based curriculum in support of the fourth annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (the National Day), which was held on May 5th, 2005. The purpose of the National Day program that is sponsored by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, is to focus the attention of youth on the importance of avoiding teen pregnancy and other serious consequences of sex. While there are encouraging declines in teenage pregnancy and birth rates, 34% of young women in the U.S. still become pregnant at least once by age 20. (From The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (2005). [Online]. More information about the National Campaign and the National Day can be obtained by visiting at www.teenpregnancy.org.)

Two groups of youth involved in the juvenile justice system in Prince George's County were provided an opportunity to participate in activities associated with the National Day through workshops provided by Ms. Aleem and Ms. Britt. On May 4th a late afternoon/evening workshop was provided to youth who attend the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) Evening Reporting Center, and on May 5th a similar program was offered to youth who are part of the FIS Intensive Aftercare, "Just for Guys Group." Both programs provided

prevention activities and information about making good and better decisions and choices when it comes to sexual behavior. Average scores achieved by youth participants on a myths and truths test improved from 61.5% before the workshops to 72.7% after completing the program. Beyond the obvious immediate benefits to the workshop participants, the grant provided for the FIS workers to collect and develop materials that can now be made available to DJS caseworkers as well as other GUIDE personnel in Prince George's County.

The ongoing activities provided through GUIDE's FIS workers are part of State of Maryland's DJS Intensive Aftercare (IA) Initiative. The FIS component brings to the intensive aftercare initiative licensed mental health professionals to provide family assessment and case management; individual, family and group counseling; and, referral and support services. Ms. Aleem has been with the project since GUIDE began in the IA effort in the fall of 2002, and Ms. Britt is just now completing her first full year with the project. GUIDE a regional non-profit organization has been providing mental health services to the juvenile justice system since 1968.