

AMTC NEWS



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AMTC & Associates Newsletter

www.amtcassociates.com

January/February 2017

Presenters at this Year's TPP Conference:



Angela Tuner, Principal of AMTC & Associates



Melanie Porterfield, AMTC Senior Evaluation Associate



Torri Childs, AMTC Field Research Associate

Strong Collaboration at AMTC & Associates Teen Pregnancy Prevention Conference

When I reflect on the amazing work that we have accomplished since the New Year began, our core value of collaboration is front and center. We work together to achieve goals. This was certainly the case at the AMTC & Associates Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Conference that took place on January 3rd through the 5th, in Amelia Island, Florida. This year 53 individuals were in attendance, representing five TPP organizations: Better Family Life, Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee, Mission West Virginia, OIC of South Florida and Trinity Church. The conference provided opportunities to network and build relationships.

While we certainly had business to cover at this conference, I am most grateful for the opportunity we had to truly motivate and inspire each other to keep doing important work in our communities. We each walked away with strategies for implementing real change back home. Our collective goal is to significantly reduce rates of teen pregnancy and births and address disparities in resources for at-risk individuals. Stakeholders strive for this goal by implementing evidence-based TPP programs that are taken to scale.

While I don't think we have traditionally thought of ourselves as community mobilizers, we are formally required to do so for this cycle of pregnancy prevention funding. As part of this effort, focus groups help communities learn from various stakeholders. Attendees learned how to conduct focus groups, establish effective partnerships, and begin working towards an effective sustainability plan through community mobilization efforts.

Please enjoy a brief description of some activities and sessions from our conference in the pages that follow. I also wish to mention that two of our TPP clients, Better Family Life and Trinity Church, were recognized in an Office of Adolescent Health (OAH) publication, titled, "OAH Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program: Spotlighting Success." Way to go! Together we are making significant strides towards strengthening communities that are most at-risk.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela M. Tuner".

Angela Turner, Principal

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AMTC's Annual TPP Conference Deepened Learning and Relationships

Nowadays a lot of work can be accomplished remotely. Still, in-person collaboration is important because it enriches relationships and fosters learning from shared experiences. That is just one reason why AMTC & Associates hosts an annual Teen Pregnancy Prevention (TPP) Conference. Melanie Porterfield, a Senior Evaluation Associate for AMTC, noted, "The purpose of this year's conference was to bring all five clients operating TPP grants together for training, team-building, staff development, and the sharing of real time solutions to issues or challenges amongst the grantees."

The following broadly describes a few of the sessions and activities that were held during the conference.

Island Survivor Challenge Photos:



Team Building

Our work centers on building relationships. We can only accomplish our goals if everyone is on board and working together. Reducing teen pregnancy does not fall on the shoulders of a select few. It is important for each team member to understand that she or he plays an essential role for the good of the whole. It is equally true that he or she can only function at full capacity when working in concert with others. As such, building better relationships was a focus of the conference. By forming bonds across the different organizations, participants could connect more deeply based on their shared knowledge and experiences. This was no small task considering that the conference lasted for two and a half days.

A discovery activity opened the conference based on the format of "speed dating." Participants interviewed each other for two minutes to ask essential questions to discover as much as possible about another person. This process continued until each person met and interviewed approximately 20 people in 45 minutes. Participants were intentionally not told the goal of the activity.

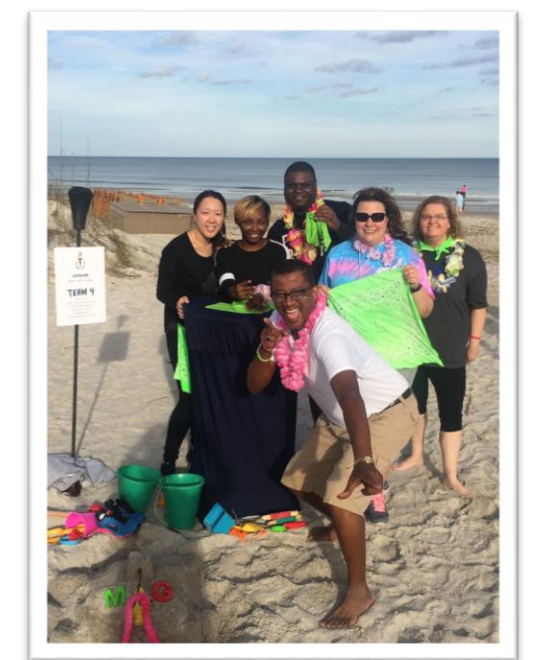
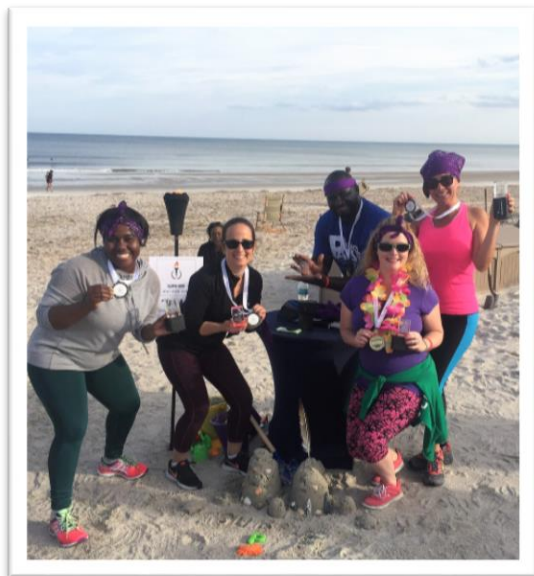
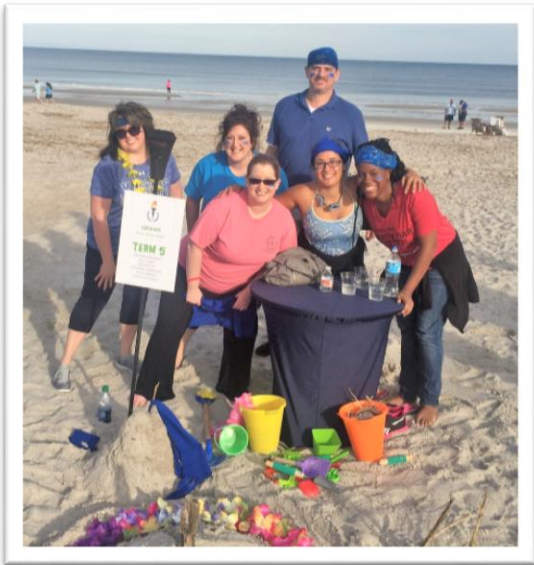
The next morning each person was asked to identify two individuals who would be the best matches to have on their work team. Principal Angela Turner reflected, "As one of the participants, I went into this activity not sure where we were headed. The next day, when it was announced that we had to identify two people we would work well with in our work environment, it became clear how important it is to know what work needs to be accomplished in your organization and community before selecting your team."

This opening activity set the stage for the next day's teambuilding activities, which included obstacle courses. We face obstacles every day. We overcome those obstacles by working as a team. Everyone was mixed into different teams and had to work on tasks to solve physical and mental challenges—together. These tasks required thinking outside the box, direct communication, problem solving, and along the way a lot of fun.

"The most powerful parts of the conference were getting to know the other grantees and how they run their programs and the differences between the two cohorts. I really enjoyed the 'speed dating' game for that reason! I also learned a lot during the sustainability part of the training. It helped me generate new ideas on how we can sustain the programming after funding is done."

- Julie Divjak (Rothwell), United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County

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“The team building activities gave tools to attendees to use within their agency to think outside the box using team strengths and weaknesses to achieve goals and outcomes.”

- Erica Driver, Better Family Life, Inc.

Evaluation & Sustainability

Individuals that work with TPP programs are dedicated to carrying out their duties to the fullest. In this session, grantees developed a common understanding of updated evaluation requirements for this current OAH grant cycle, spanning 2015 through 2020. This current grant includes components that previous grants never required. These differences were discussed so that organizations could more effectively reduce teen pregnancy in their communities. For example, each target community must have a teen birth rate above the national average. After a five-year period, the expectation is that teen pregnancies, births and/or other health issues (such as STDs) should decline. OAH also requires referrals for youth-friendly healthcare services to ensure that at-risk individuals receive much needed services.

These expectations and requirements contribute to the sustainability of the TPP program. After all, funders prefer to continue supporting efforts that demonstrate results! Sustainability must be established from the very beginning of the grant cycle and all the way through the life of the grant. OAH identifies eight key factors that determine sustainability, which were discussed during the conference. Each person plays a role in the sustainability of a program, and practical steps to achieving this goal were highlighted.

“To be in a room with other dedicated men and women who do the same work is inspiring.”

- Jim Pettus, CASE WV

Community Involvement

Diverse input from individuals living in the community can lead to new avenues to improve programming, services and achieve results. One way to solicit feedback from stakeholders in the community is by conducting focus groups. During the conference, a hands-on activity engaged participants in the process of forming and conducting different types of focus groups. Participants were given a type of mock focus group with a specific goal, and they had to set-up the focus group through a planning template. They decided upon roles, how to market it to their focus group audience, determined focus questions, and more. As a follow-up to this topic after the conference, Torri Childs, a Field Research Associate for AMTC, conducted a webinar to discuss next steps.

Although some individuals might not have previous experience with community mobilization, attendees developed new skills to engage the community. They received training on how to conduct focus groups as well as information about



implementing larger public forums. Grantees left better prepared to tackle this new work. “Every year the grantees need to do a community needs assessment, and with a public forum you could get direct feedback from community members who may not be a part of your program’s advisory group and have their own take on TPP,” Porterfield said. It is important, however, that topics addressed at a public forum are not too controversial or your forum could escalate into a situation that is disorderly rather than productive. Strategies were discussed for publicizing a public forum, such as the use of slogans, social media, flyers and posters.

“The most powerful moments for us were when our partner organizations were able to work together as a team to problem solve potential situations, discuss how we are implementing programming, CAGs, YLCs, sustainability, etc. It was nice to be able to get together and work through some of the challenges we have been having, and talk about successes and what is working.”

- Erin Kline, Mission West Virginia

The Conference Overall

“Participants enjoyed the conference immensely,” said Childs. “We surveyed what type of sessions participants wanted prior to the conference. We based the conference on those responses, so attendees found it meaningful and practical. Participants could use the knowledge and skills they gained upon their return home.” These sentiments were validated by a survey that was administered shortly after the conference. The vast majority of respondents rated the conference overall as “Excellent” or “Very Good,” and there was not a single negative reply. AMTC & Associates wishes to thank everyone involved for making the TPP conference a success.

“The most powerful parts of the AMTC TPP Conference held at Amelia Island were the combination of insight and application. I gained insights into the inner workings of the TPP grant, how all of the moving parts are connected and function. Applying processes and strategies to address each deliverable were instrumental to me as an educator and community outreach coordinator. Those components were helpful in providing guidance, direction and clarity of the TPP grant’s expectations.”

- Nema Smith, OIC of South Florida

