

AMTC NEWS



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AMTC & Associates Newsletter

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Relationships Propel Growth

Both in personal relationships and in business, much of our growth is through our relationships. As 2017 came to a close, I reflect on AMTC's long and successful relationships with like-minded organizations and how this history propels us forward. Twenty years ago, the very first project that AMTC & Associates worked on was that of abstinence education through a Title V program. Title V is a federal grant program that promotes the well-being of children and their families. It is a strength-based prevention initiative that is still in effect today and is just as relevant now as it was then.

It was for this project in 1998 that I first had the pleasure of working with AMTC's Ann Wolter. Our relationship has lasted for two decades and counting. We have since worked on many projects together that have made tremendous impact throughout the country, along with other teammates who have also come on board. Ann is currently a Senior Evaluation Associate for AMTC.

Shortly after Ann and I began working together, we attended a training in Wisconsin among the Title V grantees that was led by Scott Phelps of Abstinence and Marriage Resources (AMR). I loved Scott's enthusiasm for helping young people and knew after meeting him that we would stay connected. Scott and his talented staff are passionate about improving the lives of youth through clear presentations about the benefits of delaying sexual activity until marriage. Their multi-faceted approach has been, and continues to be, life-changing for many individuals. Since that initial training in Wisconsin, our two organizations have stayed connected.

Nurturing this relationship throughout the years created the perfect opportunity for us to collaborate. This past year, AMR and AMTC joined forces to provide educational services throughout the entire State of Illinois which is the focus of this newsletter.

We are thankful to have the opportunity to work with AMR and look forward to building the relationship even further. Both organizations put a premium on relationships, whether with each other or with all of our respective stakeholders.

With this in mind, I invite you to reach out to us. Whether you're interested in a new relationship or working together again, AMTC & Associates are here to lend our expertise and build for the future.

Angela Turner, Principal

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Angela Turner,
AMTC Principal

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OUR VALUES

INTEGRITY:

We do what is right and just.

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE:

We continually strive to exceed the expectations of our clients.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

We take responsibility for our individual and collective commitments.

COLLABORATION:

We work together to achieve goals.

The Illinois State Abstinence Program

In 2017, Abstinence and Marriage Education Resources (AMR) and AMTC & Associates joined together to provide abstinence education across the entire State of Illinois. AMTC and AMR are excited to join forces. Not only does AMTC have extensive experience in this area, but AMTC and AMR have had a longstanding, successful history of working together. AMTC applied for a grant through the Illinois State Board of Education in partnership with AMR to offer abstinence education training and resources for schools across the entire state. The project, named by the partners as the Illinois State Abstinence Program, is managed through regional leadership and is funded through The Illinois State Board of Education. AMTC was privileged to be awarded this grant through a competitive process.



Scott Phelps, President of AMR (on left) and Becky Doran, Principal Consultant for the Illinois State Board of Education (on right), Lead a Training in Illinois

Between 10,000-20,000 youth are expected to be served throughout Illinois

AMTC has a long, successful track record of providing and evaluating programs that focus on teen pregnancy prevention, including abstinence education. It was a natural fit to work together with AMR; it's an organization whose staff members are leading experts in the field of abstinence education. AMR's goal is to provide clear and accurate information for teens, nationwide, about the benefits of delaying sex.

Between 10,000 and 20,000 total youth are expected to receive education through the Illinois State Abstinence Program. All public and private schools throughout Illinois are eligible, as well as non-profit organizations that serve youth. These institutions do not incur a cost for enrolling in the program, nor is there a fee for accompanying student workbooks or trainings for educators.

Services available through this program matter; teen sex presents serious risks such as pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and emotional instability, just to name a few. Should a teenager become pregnant, there are life-altering choices that come into play: becoming teen parent(s), abortion, adoption, taking time away from school, and much more. There are consequences for the baby, too, who might enter this world with a parent who is not mature enough to handle the responsibilities of raising a child.

The table below shows the 2015 birth rates of Illinois females ages 15 to 19 (most recent data available) compared to national birth rates for females of the same age group.¹

Illinois and U.S. Birth Rates to Females Ages 15 to 19, Year 2015		
Total	Illinois	United States
Females under 20 years of age	21.1	22.3

Females aged	Illinois	United States
15-17	9.7	9.9
18-19	38.5	40.7

To help teens make informed choices, the Illinois State Abstinence Program offers a choice from four sets of curricula. Each one includes eight total lessons and is developmentally appropriate for a certain range of ages. The names of the curricula and their corresponding age levels are: *Game plan*, grades 6-9, *Quest*, grades 7-10; *Aspire*, grades 8-12; and *Navigator*, grades 9-12. The curricula are authored by AMR's President, Scott Phelps. These curricula have already been used throughout the country, both in Illinois and in other states, reaching some two million students since 2001.

Four Sets of Curricula



To briefly highlight how the curricula is aligned to certain age groups, *Game Plan* uses sports analogies as a framework for middle school students. Lesson titles include: *TV Time-Out: What's Up with Sex in the Media?* and *Avoiding the Penalties: The Risks and Consequences of Sex Before Marriage*. Individual lessons can incorporate storytelling, role playing, drawing and many other teaching methods. *Navigator* for high school youth addresses more mature topics such as pornography and substance abuse. Participants learn about a “success sequence,” meaning the chronological steps to avoid poverty and increase the likelihood of positive life outcomes: graduating high school, working full-time, getting married and having children after age 21.

The Illinois State Abstinence Program is implemented through twelve “regional coordinators,” each serving a particular geographic area in Illinois. In these regions they develop relationships with educational sites, market the program and provide support in performance measurement.

The curriculum trainings provided throughout the state are conducted by AMR. Through an arrangement with the Illinois State Board of Education, educators who attend these trainings can receive professional development credits. Additional resources are available for professional development, and trainings have been underway since November of 2017. In addition to serving as the primary curriculum trainer, AMR is the lead technical assistance provider to educators regarding the curricula.

Regional Coordinators work with AMR to support training and technical assistance efforts. Regional Coordinators promote trainings within their regions. They also serve as a liaison between educators within their region and the grant managers, AMTC and AMR.

AMTC’s role is in project management and evaluation. AMTC manages financial and administrative aspects of the program, as well as develops and oversees the program’s evaluation. AMTC monitors various aspects of program performance; for example, staff track curriculum delivery through the AMTC Online Participant Tracking System (OPTS) that utilizes educator observations, fidelity logs and an evaluation survey. These functions are imperative to making sure all stakeholders are reaching desirable outcomes.

Phelps had this to say about AMTC: “We are thrilled to be working with AMTC once again. Angie [AMTC’s Principal] and her team are really the leaders in this field, and we are so glad to be able to partner with them on this significant project with the Illinois State Board of Education. Together with AMTC our goal is to reach thousands of youth across the State of Illinois with the clear and compelling message on the benefits of abstinence until marriage and instruction on preparing for a healthy future marriage.”

Project Director Jaclyn Schiessl had an opportunity to attend an educator training facilitated by AMR and saw firsthand the impact of the curriculum for adults. She is excited to see its impact on youth who are being served by this project. Schiessl spoke with some of the educators who wished they had been offered a program like this as students. Many who attended AMR’s trainings made similar comments.

The good news is that across the U.S., including high-need neighborhoods in Chicago, teen birth rates continue to drop. In 1999, there were 85.2 births per



Scott Phelps,
President of AMR



Jaclyn Schiessl,
Project Director

1,000 girls in Chicago between the ages of 15 and 19. By 2015 (when statistics were last made available), there were 27.5 births per 1,000 girls between the same ages. This is a 67-percent drop since 1999.² Yet, our work is not done. All teens should receive important information to make informed decisions that will affect the rest of their lives. It is our privilege to promote abstinence until marriage for youth throughout the entire State of Illinois.



Sources

¹Power to Decide: <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/national-state-data/teen-birth-rate> and the National Center for Health Statistics: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db259.pdf> and the Office of Adolescent Health of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services: <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/facts-and-stats/national-and-state-data-sheets/adolescent-reproductive-health/Illinois/index.html>

²WTTW, Chicago Public Media's Public Broadcasting Service: <http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2017/11/13/chicago-teen-birth-rate-drops-new-low>
Illinois Map Free Clipart: <http://www.clipartx.com/map-clipart/illinois-126635>