



AMTC SEPTMBER/OCTOBER 2018

News

Enthusiasm Grows for the Illinois State Abstinence Program

“I am motivated by the tremendous demand from youth, parents, and educators—and by the fact that we’re making a positive impact.”

— ANGELA TURNER

While there’s much work ahead of us, we’re excited to tell you about our accomplishments so far with the Illinois State Abstinence Program (ISAP), funded by the **Illinois State Board of Education**. The enthusiasm is growing. As I shared in our January/February newsletter, AMTC & Associates has the good fortune to work on this program with **Abstinence and Marriage Education Resources (AMR)**, a leader in the field of abstinence education. AMR’s highly effective curricula has been utilized in all 50 states, and its staff offer top-notch trainings.

AMR’s vision has come to life, and we’re privileged to be a part of it. In less than six months, we put administrative systems in place and provided access to the program statewide through a massive marketing effort. Additionally, we implemented effective evaluation systems, recruited and trained committed and talented Regional Coordinators, and served several thousand youth in Illinois.

All this has been accomplished in just one year’s time, and we are poised to reach even greater heights in the time ahead. I have been struck by everyone’s enthusiasm and how

they are all personally invested in the mission. I am motivated by the tremendous demand from youth, parents, and educators—and by the fact that we’re making a positive impact.

A significant feature of this program is that lessons are delivered by classroom teachers (*learn more on page 3*). While many educators are excited to learn about the curricula, some are skeptical. Yet after attending AMR’s exceptional training, almost everyone leaves invigorated. Scott Phelps, the President of AMR, is one of the best trainers I have ever met. I invite you to read more about this exciting program, and of course if there is anything AMTC & Associates can do for you, don’t hesitate to let us know.

Angela Turner
Principal



AMTC News

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ISAP Update

Educators engaged in training

Partnering together to impact thousands of youth

Six months ago we announced a new initiative to bring abstinence education to students across the entire state of Illinois. Named the Illinois State Abstinence Program (ISAP), it is funded by the **Illinois State Board of Education**. We are pleased to provide an update and a brief review.

The aim of the ISAP is to provide abstinence education to 10,000-20,000 youth across the state in its first year through engaging presentations about the benefits of postponing sexual intercourse. Youth learn the “success sequence,” helping them to reach goals with fewer barriers. The success sequence is an ordered progression: graduate from high school; complete post-high school training and/or secure employment; and have children within the context of marriage.

To accomplish these goals, AMTC & Associates partnered with **Abstinence and Marriage Education Resources (AMR)** and contracted with Regional Coordinators (RCs). AMTC and AMR both have extensive experience in working with youth to ensure healthier outcomes. AMR provides four tracks of curricula (by age group), as well as trainings for educators, at no cost to schools and community agencies.

These curricula have been used in all 50 states with a successful track record. AMTC supports the ISAP in many ways, including policy and procedure development and training, implementation and performance evaluation, measurement tool development, data collection assistance, and technical assistance to RCs. The RCs conduct outreach, recruit schools and other program sites, enter attendance data, and more.

The initiative began in September of 2017, and according to AMTC Associate Jaclyn Schiessl, who is the Project Director, it had nearly reached its target numbers in just nine months! (*See details in sidebar.*) Educators will soon have greater access to trainings; AMR will launch online sessions this fall for some of its curricula, and AMTC will offer webinars for fidelity log procedures and educator observations.

For Schiessl, the work has been eye-opening: “Nearly a dozen organizations came together to work on this project. We pooled our insights, talents, and desires to provide a service to thousands of youth in nine short months! That reveals a lot about the people, organizations, and mission brought forward in this program.”

ISAP Facts

ISAP was launched in September 2017, with the goal of reaching 15,000 students in its first year. Here are a few measures of the impact in its first nine months:

Youth served

11,424

Parents served

471

Educators trained

368

Educator training sessions

20

Schools served

169

Replicating

Success

ISAP's multi-faceted approach makes it a perfect candidate for replication nationwide.

This approach includes highly engaging curricula, strong partnerships with schools, real-time evaluations with measurement tools and data analysis, and a model that allows us to reach thousands of youth. This not only bodes well for youth in Illinois but gives the program the potential to be successfully replicated in other states and across the country.

Unlike abstinence education in some other states, which is run through their human services departments, a strong advantage of ISAP is that it is sponsored through the state's board of education. It may lend more credibility among school staff to know that sexual risk avoidance is supported from an institution that specifically oversees the state's educational system. Additionally, educators can rest assured that the curricula are aligned to state standards for health education. Educators can even earn continuing education credits by attending the trainings.

Will it be effective in different circumstances?

Considering that each region in the country has its own circumstances and specific needs, one may question whether replication would work elsewhere. No matter where youth live, they are bombarded by certain messages. "Abstinence education is extremely important, especially considering that social media and television is promoting just the opposite message on a daily basis. While sex is natural, we must help our youth understand that there are serious consequences to random sexual relationships," emphasized AMTC Associate Jeanette Stevens, an Implementation Evaluation Consultant for Workforce and Family Programs who is highly invested in the ISAP.

Forming strategic partnerships

Another strength of the program is identifying lead agencies that are highly qualified; in this case, **Abstinence and Marriage Education Resources** and AMTC have vast experience. Developing strong partnerships in regional areas is also essential. By forming relationships with regional partners who have their finger on the pulse of their communities, along with organizations that are experts in the field, it is a win-win for all those involved. As Stevens noted, "I hope that ISAP becomes a social movement that spreads beyond Illinois."



A conversation with Dr. Stan E. Weed

CO-FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF THE
INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Please briefly highlight your work history with abstinence education programs.

I started in 1988. The main function has been to evaluate programs around the country, to help clients understand the impact on youth, and then to give advice about what clients could do to improve programs to make them more meaningful and impactful for youth, their families, and communities. I've collected data on over 100 programs and a million students, some internationally.

What role do you have with the ISAP project?

I help to develop the research methods and tools to evaluate the impact of this program on the students who participate in the short-term: we'll look at attitudes, beliefs, and intentions. Long-term, we hope to track the impact of their actual behavior.

Why did you choose to come out of retirement to work on this project?

I've been trying to retire but I never really have, and this project had interest to me. I've worked with both Scott Phelps [AMR President] and Angie Turner [AMTC Principal] in the past, and they do good work. They're trying to help kids in significant ways and I felt that it was important to contribute to that effort.

Meet our *Associates*

Our diverse team delivers fast, relevant results for our clients. Here are two associates who work closely with the ISAP program.



JACLYN SCHIESSL
PROJECT DIRECTOR FOR THE
ILLINOIS STATE ABSTINENCE
PROGRAM (ISAP)
WITH AMTC SINCE 2018
EDUCATION: University of
Wisconsin-Stevens Point

What is your educational background?

I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication.

What do you find most meaningful about your work with AMTC and the Illinois State Abstinence Program (ISAP)?

I am a lifelong learner, and I value my role because it allows me to explore best practices and to implement what I learn. I thrive on the many moving parts in program development, capacity building, and program model evaluation.

What do you feel you've accomplished so far with the ISAP?

I believe my role is to offer the team knowledge and support, anticipated and requested, in as close to real-time as possible. They in turn provide feedback and clarifying concerns for continual quality improvement of the program. For everyone involved, the goals are continuous customer satisfaction, which includes the schools, educators, decision-makers, parents, and youth. I am proud of these accomplishments, which are ongoing.

What are your ultimate hopes for the ISAP?

My goal is to provide the most useful and comprehensive support in order for the team as a whole to meet the objective of reaching 15,000 youth in the first year of programming. Additionally, I want to create a foundation to allow this program to grow over the coming years and potentially be offered in other states.

Outside of your work, what do you enjoy?

Hanging out with my favorite human, who is thankfully my son.



JEANETTE STEVENS
IMPLEMENTATION
EVALUATION CONSULTANT
WITH AMTC SINCE 2016
EDUCATION: Alverno College,
Milwaukee, WI; DePaul Univer-
sity, Chicago, IL; Marian
University, Fond du Lac, WI

What is your educational background?

I have a Bachelor of Science degree from Alverno College, a Masters of Science in Public Administration from DePaul, and I completed all coursework towards a PhD in Leadership Studies at Marian University.

What do you find most meaningful about your work with AMTC and the Illinois State Abstinence Program (ISAP)?

For many youth, this is their first exposure to abstinence education. All kids, but especially African Americans, need to understand that marriage is not bad; healthy marriages and strong families were the foundation of our race.

What do you feel you've accomplished so far with the ISAP?

We have served over 10,000 students and are on target to reach 15,000 by the end of the program year, with abstinence messages being provided through their classroom teachers. This design allows the maximum number of youth to participate—a major first step.

What are your ultimate hopes for the ISAP?

I hope youth will stop and think, "This is how I want to go forward in my life." Youth should understand that they don't have to have sex just because everyone else is or just because a person likes them.

Outside of your work, what do you enjoy?

I like to spend time alone because it allows me to shut out all of the madness that is going on in the world. It helps with my psychological well-being. At the same time, I am spending more time with family and friends.