



AMTC

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News



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— ANGELA TURNER

AMTC News

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Data Drives Success

Data excites us. It drives our work and impacts real lives, whether that's by working to decrease sexually transmitted infections (STIs), teen pregnancy or other social issues. In this newsletter's first article, we examine the rise in STIs, despite a decline in teen birth rates, and what we can do about it. Whether facing STIs or other issues, our collaborations with clients allow us to use data in real time to align programming with lessons learned from that data. Being able to share data with frontline staff is critical to secure buy-in when making program improvements.

One of the benefits of partnering with AMTC & Associates is that we use an online data tracking system, so educators and frontline staff can collect essential information on participant demographics and attendance. We also provide tools, such as surveys to track attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and customer satisfaction. Our data collection efforts present positive outcomes and areas for improvement.

Every day we see how data is used to improve our lives. From online shopping to TV streaming, to

preventing crime, data has become an important asset to companies. The same is true in helping our clients with topics like reducing STIs. Data helps us choose the right programs and approaches to help young people make responsible decisions. In our second main article, we examine major components of what makes data-gathering successful.

Successful outcomes are what we're all about, and data drives us towards this goal. Please let us know how we could help you reach your goal.

Angela Turner
Principal





Fighting the Epidemic of SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

Left: AMTC associate Lori Roller leads a session at the pregnancy prevention conference held recently in Nashville.

Epidemic. We have been hearing this word a lot lately in news reports about the coronavirus, opioid use and other public health crises. There's another epidemic occurring in the United States that receives less attention in the popular media—sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Despite a decline in teen pregnancy rates and overall birth rates, the incidence of STIs like syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia has surged over the past five years. The sexual behaviors that lead to pregnancy and STIs are similar, so why the disparity in rates? And what can AMTC & Associates and its partners do to combat STIs in the communities they serve?

In January 2020, AMTC hosted a pregnancy prevention conference in Nashville, Tennessee. AMTC's Lori Roller discussed answers to both of these questions with participants. "One big reason STIs are on the rise is the decrease in both federal and state funding for public health

services. Some clinics have had to reduce hours, reduce services or even shut their doors. Without access to these services, many people have no place to turn for STI testing and treatment. As a consequence, STIs spread." Roller also explained that not all youth in the US are getting the information and skills they need to make healthy decisions about romantic relationships and sex in a timely way.

Roller outlined three actions that community-based organizations can take to help stem the STI epidemic.

- *First*, continue deploying trained and caring educators to deliver evidence-informed programs that prepare youth to make healthy decisions about sex. Although abstinence provides the safest protection against STIs, the latest data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System indicates that 40% of high school students have had sex. Teens who choose to have

sex need accurate information, skills and self-efficacy to: 1) talk openly with their partners about STI risk and protection, 2) use condoms every time they have sex, even if they are using a contraceptive method (like the IUD, implant, or pill—none of which provide protection against STIs) and 3) be tested regularly for STIs, even if there are no signs or symptoms.

- *Second*, connect with community organizations, especially those that provide sexual and reproductive health services, and form partnerships. Refer young people to youth-friendly health services and follow up when appropriate.
- *And third*, educate community members (e.g., schools, communities of faith, local government, local media) about the STI epidemic and partner with them in spreading STI prevention messages.

STIs in the United States

In 2018, STIs surged for the fifth straight year, reaching an all-time high. (www.cdc.gov/std/)

1.8 million

CASES OF CHLAMYDIA

19% increase since 2014

583,405

CASES OF GONORRHEA

63% increase since 2014

115,045

CASES OF SYPHILIS

19% increase since 2014

1,306

CASES OF SYPHILIS AMONG NEWBORNS

185% increase since 2014

Data is **ESSENTIAL**

We take data seriously. It's integral to every program and has real-life impact. AMTC Principal Angela Turner knows this well. She recently led a presentation on data-informed program development at a pregnancy prevention conference held in Nashville, Tennessee. Following are some points she shared.

- **Continuous quality improvement:** When it comes to fighting the rise in sexually transmitted infections (STIs)—or any other public health concern—data is essential in making decisions. Tracking data on participants in real-time with frontline staff can lead to program updates. “At AMTC we get important data to frontline educators and work with them to interpret results, so they can emphasize relevant lessons and address specific challenges that participants are experiencing,” said Turner.

- **Measuring outcomes:** Long-term data validates whether strategies for a grant were successful. Outcome

data can be utilized to make modifications or to justify future funding.

- **Program outcomes:** AMTC staff examine the potential impacts of data for participants, for outcomes and for long-term implications for clients. For example, declining teen birth rates indicate successes of adolescent pregnancy prevention (APP) programming. However, it could also mean that funders might be less likely to see a continuing need for APP. AMTC works to anticipate such interpretations. “You have to make the case that this trend co-existed with the federal program, so without programming, rates may go back up. Or, help funders understand that there could be significantly declining birth rates, but STIs could be going up—a reality in many of our clients’ communities,” noted Turner.

- **Community needs:** Data helps determine the unique needs and challenges of each community.

AMTC helps its clients utilize data from the local and state level to thoroughly and accurately assess strengths and areas of need.

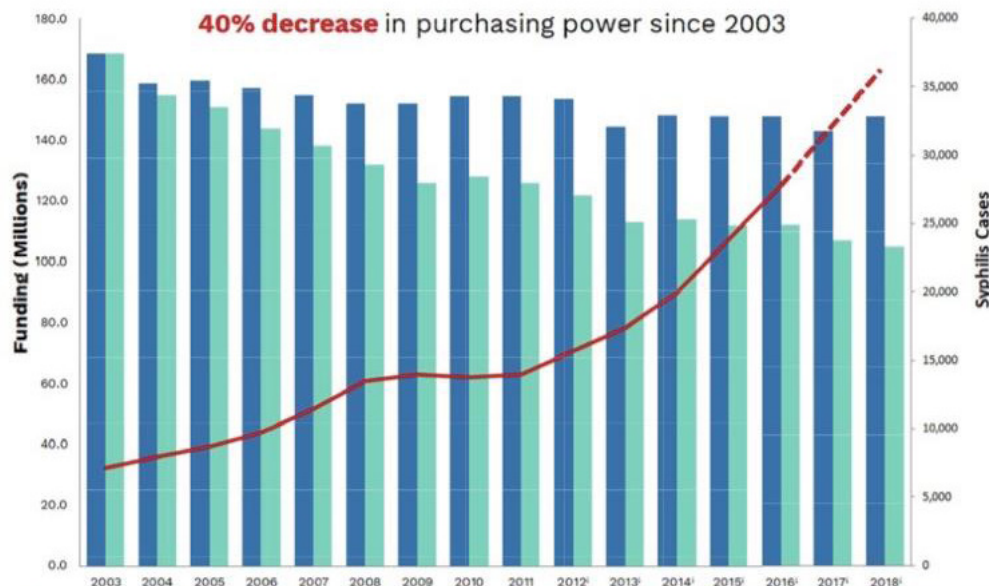
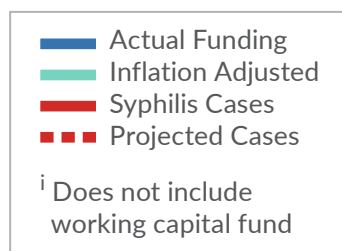
Brandon Osborn, an AMTC Evaluation Associate, helped facilitate the conference, emphasizing data collection: “Data is integral to the entire program. Without it, we don’t understand what the program should be or the needs of the youth.”



Angela Turner (center) with associates Brandon Osborn (left) and Melanie Porterfield.

Annual CDC STI Prevention Budget

FY 2003 – FY 2018



Source: National Coalition of STD Directors

Meet our *Associates*

Our diverse team delivers fast, relevant results for our clients. Here are two associates who contribute to those efforts.



LORI ROLLERI

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION
CONSULTANT

WITH AMTC SINCE 2015

EDUCATION: Cornell University,
University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill

What is your educational background?

I earned a BS in Policy Analysis from Cornell University, and an MSW and MPH from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

What is your role at AMTC?

Program evaluation, training, and writing of reports and program tools.

What do you find meaningful about your work?

Innovating new interventions that help teens navigate relationships, peer pressure, emotions, personal identity, sexual expression, and helping youth build their confidence and agency to make healthy decisions is very rewarding.

Name some significant prior experiences in your field.

I've had many significant experiences: a Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras; working with my mentor, Douglas Kirby, on projects that in some ways revolutionized sex education; working with Ministers of Education in 15 sub-Saharan countries for sexuality education programs; and testifying to Congress on the need for sexual education. However, directly witnessing change in communities in which I worked is what I treasure most.

Moving forward, what do you hope to accomplish?

I'd like to publish a practitioner-friendly guide on how to shift social norms, in particular gender norms, that affect health behavior.

Outside of work, what do you enjoy?

I like learning about different cultures—traditions, language, cuisine, religion, economies, politics, history, etc. This year, I plan to tour Ireland and Scotland.



BRANDON OSBORN

EVALUATION ASSOCIATE

WITH AMTC SINCE 2019

EDUCATION: California State
University–Long Beach,
University of California–Irvine

What is your educational background?

I earned a Bachelor of Science in Health Science and have completed all coursework toward a PhD in Public Health. I also have extensive training in data science and geographic information systems.

What is your role at AMTC?

I provide evaluation support to AMTC clients, with a primary emphasis on teen pregnancy prevention performance measurement and data analysis. A majority of my time is devoted to working with large data sets we capture from surveys. I also analyze other performance measurement data that we collect, and assist with survey development and research design.

What do you find meaningful about working at AMTC?

I love working with data and producing statistical findings in order to assist AMTC clients in better serving their communities.

Name some significant prior experiences in your field.

Working with community-based organizations to address social and health-related issues. However, I am most proud of my research on health disparities.

Moving forward, what do you hope to accomplish?

By developing data-informed approaches, I hope to help our clients improve their programs and thus improve their communities' outcomes.

Outside of work, what do you enjoy?

I enjoy cooking plant-based dishes, watching movies and cycling with my wife outdoors.